

Garden Checklist

December

Lawns

Tall Fescue

Keep the mower deck height to cut at 3 inches. Only water if needed.

Annuals

- Continue planting hardy annuals.

Perennials

- If you haven't already, apply a layer of mulch on all of your planting beds, especially around your perennials.

Shrubs and Trees

- Plant young pecan and other deciduous fruit trees and grapes.
- Use blankets, tarps, or frost cloth to protect prized shrubs during nights with large temperature changes from daytime to nighttime. Allow the cover to drape to the ground to take advantage of the fact that ground temperatures are often warmer than air temperatures this time of year. Uncover the following morning to air out and allow sunlight in.

Fruits and Vegetables

- Start dormant season maintenance pruning of established woody plants, including fruit trees. Dormant season pruning can be done from December through February for most species of woody plants. Learn about appropriate pruning practices for the type of plant and its intended purpose. If you don't know why you are pruning, you may not need to. Huntsville Botanical Garden classes are great for this!
- Harvest Brussel sprouts, kale, cabbage, and collards.
- Use floating frost cloths to provide extra protection during unusually cold nights. Remove the next morning when air temperatures rise.
- Spread mulch over beds where early spring crops will grow to reduce winter weed seed germination.



Miscellaneous

- Consider a gift membership the Huntsville Botanical Garden for the holidays. It is a dual-purpose gift, supporting the organization while providing a thoughtful, lasting present to your family and friends.
- Scout for and apply dormant oil sprays for scale insects on woody plants and houseplants (take houseplants outside for the treatment on a mild day, then bring back inside once dry).
- Clean garden tools with a wire brush and apply a light coat of oil to protect them from rusting. Sharpen edges of hoes and spades. Clean, readjust and sharpen the blades of pruning tools. Lightly sand handles and then apply a coat of linseed oil or paint your handles a bright color like red or orange which will make them easier to spot should you lay them in the grass.
- Drain the fuel tank of the lawn mower or tiller before putting the machine away for the winter.
- Avoid rock salt, which is sodium chloride, to melt sidewalk and driveway ice. Products made of calcium chloride or potassium chloride cause less damage to plants. For traction, sprinkle sand, kitty litter, or wood ashes sparingly. Mix with a little melting compound if more than just traction is needed. Minimize de-icing and traction products to reduce pollution in storm sewers and streams.
- Start reviewing and expanding your garden notes to help with next year's plans.
- Turn compost one last time, then cover it with a tarp to prevent nutrients from leaching away during winter rains.
- Safely sharpen, clean, and oil tools and pruners.