

Winterizing Your Garden, Part 1
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We have been enjoying a mild fall in Angelina County. The average date of the first frost is mid-November, so it is time to use some of these pleasant days to prepare our yards and gardens for winter.

First, clean up all annual plant debris by removing annuals that have finished blooming and vegetable plants that are finished. Save the seed from annuals such as zinnias, four o'clocks, celosia, and salvias to use next spring. Avoid composting plant material that has disease or insects to reduce disease and insects next year. Instead, destroy by burying or burning. Perennial plants may be trimmed back when the blooms are finished. Those that are still blooming may be pruned back after the first killing frost. Avoid severe pruning of hollow stemmed perennials (i.e. lantana, plumbago, and salvia) which may freeze if rainwater enters their stems. Mulch perennial plants with a layer of pine straw or chopped leaves to protect from temperature extremes.

Trim cannas even with the ground, dust with Dipel to control leaf rollers and mulch. The cannas will sprout through the mulch next spring. Caladium bulbs need to be dug now if you haven't already done this chore. Let the bulbs dry and dust off loose dirt. Store by putting in nylon stockings and hanging where they will not freeze during the winter.

Potted tropical plants such as bougainvillea, mandevilla and hibiscus need to be prepared to move inside for the winter. If you don't have a greenhouse, plan where you will put the plants for the winter. You may install a grow light with a timer in your garage or find a bright spot in your home. Before moving inside groom the plant by

removing dead leaves, clean the pot and check for snails. Remove insects by spraying with a blast of water. If using pest controls read labels to make sure it is safe for that plant. Bougainvilleas will become dormant and don't need bright light to survive. Bring inside the garage and water only enough to keep roots from drying out. It will lose all its leaves, and in early spring will start greening up. Tropical hibiscus needs bright light during winter. Prune it back by about one-third, as blooms form on stems that are at least six months old. The hibiscus will probably develop some yellow leaves with the change.

Water gardens need to be covered to keep out the falling leaves. If you have fish use netting and remember to clean the leaves off netting as needed.

Next week, we'll talk more about protection during frosts. To contact the Angelina County Extension call 634-5414 or visit the Angelina Master Gardener website at <http://www.go-lufkin.com/mastergardeners/>