

OVERWINTERING

With the cold weather starting, it is time to make sure your geraniums, fuchsias and other tender plants are tucked away for winter. Remember it is always a good idea to spray plants you bring indoors with insecticidal soap (organic) to kill any pests hiding. Tender plants can be stored in three ways, as a house plant, tucked into a sheltered area out doors (porch, cozy corner or under evergreen shrubs and trees), or in the basement or garage (for dormant plants).

Coleus, citrus, and Setcreasea are a few excellent choices for overwintering as house plants. Be sure to pick an area of the house with proper lighting. Full sun plants will do best in an unobstructed southern window. If you do not have these conditions, providing artificial light with a full spectrum lamp will suffice. To successfully transition plants indoors it is best to bring them in for the night and out for the day for one week. This helps alleviate the shock from moving into a radically different environment. You may also need to prune back some of these plants so they fit in your house. Keep in mind they will not need as much water if there is little foliage.

Many plants that are “borderline hardy” or need “excellent drainage” can be successfully overwintered in a sheltered area outdoors. These potential spots can include a covered porch or patio, a south facing wall or fence with protection from our east winds or a spot under a dense evergreen. Some of these plants include Melianthus, Abutilon, Cordyline, and Agave. If your storage spot is out of the rain, do not forget to water these plants at least once a month through the winter.

Tender fuchsias, tuberous begonias, cannas, dahlias and zonal geraniums can simply be dug up (shake off excess soil), cut back, and stored in the basement or garage until spring. The root ball should be soaked two or three times during the winter.

This weather will also trigger your deciduous, hardy perennials to go dormant. Once the leaves have turned yellow, they can be cut back just above ground level. Grasses are best cut back in the spring just before the new growth emerges.

The vegetable garden can be prepared for inclement weather by placing low hoop structures over crops such as cauliflower and broccoli to support frost blanket. Most veggie crops are fine in our winters with out protection. However if we have a big storm like last year, broccoli and cauliflower should be covered.