

December – Gardening Calendar for Temperate Australia

(<http://deepgreenpermaculture.com/>)

December is the first month of summer, and with the warmer weather gardens explode into life - lush, abundant and awesome to behold. With the days getting longer as we progress towards the longest day of the year, the summer solstice, there's more time to enjoy the garden and the great outdoors!

During this time, temperatures can reach extremes as the days heat up, and gardens can get quite dry, so keeping up with the watering is important. Pests will also emerge with the warmer weather so keep an eye out for them!

'Chop & Drop' any broad beans or peas after harvesting, 'chop' the tops at ground level, and 'drop' on top of the soil as mulch, leave the roots in the ground to return any nitrogen in the root nodules to the soil

As strange as it may seem, early summer is the time to sow some winter brassicas such as broccoli, brussels sprouts, cauliflower and swedes, so they can be harvested in winter.

Things to Do This Month:

- Top up or add extra mulch around fruit trees and plants to retain moisture in the soil and prevent water loss from evaporation (*keep mulch away from plant stems and trunks as this can cause stem rot/collar rot*).
- Propagate climbers by layering and propagate strawberries by pegging down runners onto soil.
- Propagate plants by taking softwood (green) cuttings from now till January (*after which they begin to harden off*).
- Last chance to plant potted fruit trees and vines to beat the summer heat (*having roots, can be planted anytime, but best in spring & autumn*). Make sure you pick a day when the weather is mild!
- Continue tying growing vines and brambleberries such as blackberries and their hybrids back to supports or wires.
- Thin out fruit on plum trees if there is a risk of branches breaking.
- Last chance to plant tomatoes and capsicum seedlings.
- If you need to add new fish to ponds or water gardens, this is an ideal time as they acclimatise easier in the warmer weather.

Vegetables and Herbs to Sow:

Sow in December		Harvest (weeks)	Sow in December		Harvest (weeks)
Amaranth	ds	7-8	Kohlrabi	d	7-10
Asparagus Pea	d	8-11	Lettuce	ds	8-12
Beetroot	ds	7-10	Mustard greens	d	5-8
Borage	ds	8-10	Oregano	s	6-8
Burdock	d	17-18	Parsley	ds	9-19
Cape Gooseberry	ds	14-16	Pumpkin	ds	15-20
Carrot	d	12-18	Radish	d	5-7
Chilli	s	9-11	Rosella	s	21-25
Chives	ds	7-11	Sage	d	18 months
Choko	d	2	Silverbeet	ds	7-12
Climbing beans	d	9-11	Sunflower	ds	10-11
Cucumber	d	8-10	Sweet corn	ds	11-14
Dwarf beans	d	7-10	Turnip	d	6-9
French tarragon	d	30-40 days			

Key: d = sow directly into ground, s = sow in seed tray, ds = sow directly into ground or seed tray

January – Gardening Calendar for Temperate Australia

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It's January, and we find ourselves right in the middle of the summer season. It's in this month and the next that we experience the hottest day-time and night-time temperatures of the year. With the weather so hot and dry at this time, and with hot north winds blowing, it's important to keep up with the watering, especially for plants in containers.

The occasional heavy rains raise the humidity, and the warmth brings insects, so keep a lookout for any diseases or pests in the garden.

Cover peaches and nectarines with bird-netting to protect the fruit, and if you choose to thin out fruit on apples and pears now is the time to do it. Plum trees can bear very heavily and the brittle branches can break under the weight of the fruit, so it's best to tie branches to supports or prop them up if they look too heavy.

Not forgetting the vegetables, it's now time to harvest early potatoes, garlic, shallots and globe artichokes. Sow some winter brassicas such as broccoli, brussels sprouts, cauliflower and swedes at this month, so they can be harvested in the winter season. To ensure that indeterminate (tall growing/staking variety) tomatoes ripen their fruit this late in the season, pinch out the growing tips to stop further green growth and remove any side-shoots, so the plant's vigour is directed towards the fruit.

Things to Do This Month:

- Continue tying growing vines and brambleberries such as blackberries and their hybrids back to supports or wires.
- Prune summer fruiting raspberries – after fruit is picked, cut out old canes and tie new canes (that have grown this year) to supports.
- Propagation of semi-hardwood (semi-ripe) cuttings is done in mid-late summer, use rooting hormone, and plant in moist commercial propagation mix, or make your own with one part coarse propagating sand (washed river sand) and one part peat or coconut coir.
- Cut and dry herbs for winter use.
- Harvest seed from perennial plants
- Last chance to sow vegetable seeds for harvesting in autumn.
- Keep an eye on water gardens and ponds, water levels can get low due to evaporation. Aquatic plants, including oxygenators, can become overgrown and require thinning at this time of year.

Vegetables and Herbs to Sow:

Sow in January		Harvest (weeks)	Sow in January		Harvest (weeks)
Amaranth	ds	7-8	Mustard greens	d	5-8
Asparagus Pea	d	8-11	Oregano	s	6-8
Beetroot	ds	7-10	Parsley	ds	9-19
Burdock	d	17-18	Radish	d	5-7
Carrot	d	12-18	Rosella	s	21-25
Chives	ds	7-11	Salsify	d	14-21
Climbing beans	d	9-11	Silverbeet	ds	7-12
Cucumber	d	8-10	Sunflower	ds	10-11
Dwarf beans	d	7-10	Swedes	d	10-14
Kohlrabi	d	7-10	Sweet corn	ds	11-14
Lettuce	ds	8-12	Turnip	d	6-9
Marrow	d	12-17	Zucchini	ds	6-9

Key: d = sow directly into ground, s = sow in seed tray, ds = sow directly into ground or seed tray