

44°F
THIS
MORNING...

TIME TO
PLANT COLOR!

By Craig Bedard, The Garden Guru





Cooler weather allows for new plantings to establish a good root system and allows the plants to acclimate themselves to the higher temperatures expected in April, May and June.

This is the time that we plant our annual or seasonal color. Pansies, Snapdragons and Stock Harmony Mix will do better in the cooler months starting in December, but with cooler weather, be prepared for things like petunias to kind of sit there, “stunted “ until warmer spring weather arrives.

Soil preparation, fertilization, and “pinch off the root system” are the basics for successful planting.

Prepare the soil bed by adding a planter mix. Work a planting mix into the native soil at a depth of 4 to 6 inches. A planting mix will aid in keeping moisture in the soil. It also allows for good water and fertilizer penetration. Don’t forget the nutrients.

It is a good idea to use a pre-plant fertilizer with a low analysis of 6-6-6. Some fertilizers say “pre-plant” on them. You may also use Miracle-Gro after planting; this makes a big difference in the success of the new plantings. As we mentioned in our last article, a granular rather than a liquid fertilizer lasts longer in the soil.

“Pinch off the root system”....yes, sounds cruel, but well worth the “pinch”. When you buy the color packs, you will notice that the root system is tightly wound. This is especially true if the plants have been sitting in the nursery for a while. Pinching off the bottom ½ “ allows for new roots to take hold, and for water to be better taken into the root system. Many times, if new roots stay bound up, there is no significant plant growth. You can pull out the plant 1 month later and notice that the roots are still in that tight ball.

December is still good for planting landscape, shrubs, and trees, It is recommended that planting is held off for “frost tender “ plants during January. Plants like Bougainvilleas and Cape Honey-suckle are easily damaged and even killed by frosts.

Frosts usually occur around January, when we have no winds and low humidity. You can prepare for frosts by listening to weather reports. Some plants can be physically covered with plastic sheeting. Citrus and Bougainvillea are covered the night before and removed in the morning. Other cultural things to do include watering before frost which allows the plants not to be stressed. New trimming should be held off before the frost season so that new growth is not encouraged...new growth is more “frost tender”.

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Fertilizer should also be held back, as this also promotes more tender growth that is more susceptible to frost. The good news is that the Desert's frost season is not long.....and many times the damage is cosmetic and recoverable. When frost damage occurs, it is like heat damage....where the damaged foliage should not be removed until the frost potential is over. The damaged foliage provides insulation for newer undergrowth

Gardener vs Landscaper – What's the difference?

Does the phrase” Mow, Blow and Go” ring a bell? This is often heard when someone is not happy with their maintenance service. Many times that is what they are paying for and that is the only thing the gardener is capable of doing.

In some cases a gardener is a “guy with a truck” and some tools. Usually they are not licensed or insured and lack the knowledge to take on many other tasks that your landscape may require.

A landscape gardener is a gardener who does both maintenance and landscape installations. Therefore they have the expertise to do the tree trimming, planting, and fertilizing as well as lighting installation. They can diagnose plant problems and come up with solutions that can prevent costly repairs or replacements. You will definitely pay more, but as the old saying goes, “You get what you pay for”.

Whether you choose to hire a landscape gardener or just a “gardener”, the main thing is communication. Our next issue will focus on communicating effectively with your gardener, even if you don't speak the same language. E

Happy planting!

Got a question for our Garden Guru? Craig Bedard invites you to email any questions you may have to GardenGuru@elementsca.com Your question and answer could be published in a future issue.