

Outdoors with Jon George

# Florida Winter Gardening

By Jon George



## *Why is Now the time to plant?*

Pull out your spades and trowels! Now is the time for a landscape project. Many people are surprised to learn that gardening continues year long in North Central Florida. The truth is that the ground in our area never truly freezes, making this an ideal time for plants to experience unparalleled growth at the root zone. With increased root growth comes an advantage: stronger plants that withstand drought and temperature extremes later in the year. We continue planting trees, shrubs and zone-eight perennials during the cool season with confidence.

## *Cool Season Color*

The air is crisp, and the brilliant colors of winter catch the light unlike any other time of the year. One of my favorites, delphiniums, blooms now with the truest blue spires, towering over other plants in the garden. Nothing beats a planting of deep crimson snapdragons and brightly colored pansies, as featured in this country estate garden (below) located west of Gainesville. Here, petunias and dianthus brighten up pairs of evergreen hollies, highlighting the garden gates and the view beyond.





### *Plant these now!*

- Flowering Trees - Taiwan cherry, St. Luke's plum, oriental magnolia
- Blooming Shrubs - native azalea, antique roses, oakleaf hydrangea
- Perennials - phlox, black-eyed Susan, blanket flower, autumn sage
- Annuals - snapdragon, viola, dianthus, nemesia, dusty miller, delphinium
- Bulbs and Tubers - paperwhite narcissus, dahlia, agapanthus, tulip ginger
- Herbs and Veggies - cabbage, kale, lettuce, carrot, rosemary, thyme



### *Winter Fragrance*

Perfumes have the power to stir distant memories. I vividly remember driving through orange groves as a child and rolling down the windows of the car to catch the intoxicating fragrance of orange blossoms.

North Florida has a variety of plants that produce an alluring scent in the cool season. Tea olive is a woody shrub that begins blooming as soon as the weather cools down. The tiny white flowers exude a fragrance that reminds many people of sun-warmed peaches!

For a jasmine-like perfume, try planting paperwhite narcissus (above), a variety of daffodil that prefers our warmer winters. Blue bird nemesia (top) adds a sweet fragrance in cooler weather as well.



*Jon George* is the owner of Cottage Gardens, Inc., a Gainesville-based landscape design and installation firm. Jon has been gardening in North Central Florida for more than 30 years. You may contact his staff at [www.TheCottageGardener.com](http://www.TheCottageGardener.com) or at [cottagegardensinc@yahoo.com](mailto:cottagegardensinc@yahoo.com).

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