

January



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What to Plant in January

Vegetables

Lettuce (*Lactuca sativa*)

- Planting: Sow seeds directly in the ground or in seed trays for transplanting.
- Care: Keep the soil moist and cover lightly with soil.

Spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*)

- Planting: Sow seeds directly in the ground.
- Care: Ensure the soil is well-drained and rich in organic matter.

Onion (*Allium cepa*)

- Planting: Seeds or small bulbs.
- Care: Plant in well-prepared soil, leaving enough space for bulb growth.

Carrot (*Daucus carota*)

- Planting: Sow seeds in rows in well-dug soil free of stones.
- Care: Keep the soil moist to ensure optimal germination.

Broccoli (*Brassica oleracea var. italica*)

- Planting: Seeds in seed trays, transplant the plants when sufficiently grown.
- Care: Plant in nutrient-rich, well-drained soil.



Herbs

Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*)

- Planting: Sow seeds in containers or directly in the garden.
- Care: Prefer partially shaded areas with well-drained soil.

Dill (*Anethum graveolens*)

- Planting: Sow seeds in rows or scatter in the garden.
- Care: Keep the soil moist and plant in a location with direct sunlight.

Fruits

Strawberry (*Fragaria × ananassa*)

- Planting: Transplant cuttings or young plants into pots.
- Care: Ensure the plants receive plenty of light and good drainage.

Citrus (*Citrus medica*)

- Planting: Small citrus trees in well-prepared soil.
- Care: Provide protection from the cold with covers or transplant into pots.



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Flowers:

Pansy (*Viola tricolor*)

- Planting: Seeds in seed trays or directly in the garden.
- Care: Ensure the soil is rich and well-drained.

Anemone (*Anemone coronaria*)

- Planting: Anemone bulbs at a depth of about 5-8 cm.
- Care: Prefer sunny locations with well-drained soil.

Carnation (*Dianthus caryophyllus*)

- Planting: Cuttings or young plants in a sunny spot.
- Care: Plant in well-drained soil and water regularly to maintain moisture.

Green Plants:

Fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*)

- Planting: Fern plants in cool, shaded areas.
- Care: Keep the soil moist and protected from direct sunlight.

Asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*)

- Planting: Asparagus roots in deep, well-drained soil.
- Care: Ensure the soil is well-prepared and rich in organic matter.

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Soil Preparation:

1. Garden Cleaning

- **Removing Previous Crop Residues:** Collect plant residues left from previous crops. These residues can harbor diseases or pests, so it's essential to remove them.
- **Weed Removal:** Pull out weeds by the roots to prevent their growth in spring. Use a weed removal tool for better results.
- **Collecting Fallen Leaves:** Gather fallen leaves and other organic materials. You can use them for compost production.



2. Soil Enrichment

- **Adding Compost:** Compost is rich in nutrients and improves soil structure. Spread a 5-10 cm layer of compost over the soil and incorporate it with a hoe or spade.
- **Using Manure:** Manure adds organic matter and nutrients to the soil. Ensure the manure is well-decomposed to avoid burning plant roots.
- **Leaves and Other Organic Materials:** Leaves and other organic materials can also improve soil texture. Spread them and incorporate them into the soil.



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3. Soil Aeration

- **Use a Spade or Aeration Tool:** Use a spade, hoe, or special aeration tool to lift and loosen the soil. Be careful not to completely overturn the soil as this can disrupt beneficial microorganisms.
- **Breaking Compaction:** If the soil is too compacted, you may need to dig 15-20 cm deep to aerate it properly.
- **Adding Organic Materials:** During aeration, you can add organic materials like straw or composted materials to help retain moisture and enhance soil structure.



Additional Tips for Soil Preparation:

- **pH Testing:** Measure your soil's pH and add lime or sulfur to adjust it according to your plants' needs.
- **Erosion Protection:** Use layers of straw or leaves to protect the soil from erosion during the rainy months.

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GARDENS

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Pruning Deciduous Trees and Shrubs:

Removing Dead or Diseased Branche

- **Plant Inspection:** Before you start pruning, inspect the plant to identify dead, broken, or diseased branches.
- **Use Clean Equipment:** Ensure your pruners, saws, and other tools are clean and sharp. Clean them with alcohol before and after pruning to prevent the spread of diseases.
- **Cutting Branches:** Cut dead or diseased branches just above a healthy bud or branch. Try to make clean, angled cuts.

Thinning

- **Density Evaluation:** Look at the overall density of the plant and identify branches that are too close together or crossing.
- **Choosing Branches for Removal:** Remove branches that block air and light circulation inside the plant. This helps prevent disease and encourages the growth of the remaining branches.
- **Thinning Technique:** Cut branches as close as possible to where they join the trunk or a main branch. Ensure not to leave large "nodes" that can become gateways for diseases.



Size Reduction

Pruning Plan:

Before you start pruning, plan how you want the plant to look after pruning. Decide the desired height and width and which branches need to be removed or reduced.

Pruning for Size Reduction:

Start from the upper branches and work your way down.

Cut branches just above a bud that faces the outside of the plant. This will encourage outward growth and keep the plant open at the center. Remove about one-third of the plant's total mass. If you need to prune more, it's better to do it gradually over two years.

Balance and Aesthetics

Maintain balance and symmetry of the plant. Avoid pruning only one side.

*Constantly check the plant's shape during pruning and adjust your cuts accordingly.



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Additional Tips for Pruning:

- **Use Supports:** For young trees or shrubs, you can use supports to maintain their shape after pruning.
- **Pruning Tools:** Invest in good quality pruning tools like pruners, pruning saws, and large scissors. Clean and sharpen your tools regularly.
- **Protect Cuts:** In areas with high humidity or where diseases are common, you can apply protective coatings to large cuts to reduce the risk of infection.
- **Do Not Prune in Rainy Weather:** Avoid pruning in wet weather as moisture can promote the growth of fungi and other pathogens on the cuts.

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Composting

Choose a Location

- **Shaded Area:** Choose a shaded area of your garden. Shade helps retain moisture and prevents the compost from overheating, which can kill beneficial microbes.
- **Good Drainage:** Ensure the area has good drainage. Compost should not sit in standing water as this can cause rot and a bad smell.
- **Accessibility:** Place the compost bin in an easily accessible area so you can add materials and stir the compost regularly.
- **Away from Residences:** If possible, place the bin away from your residence or areas where you spend a lot of time to avoid any unpleasant odors.

Collect Materials

- **Green Materials (Rich in Nitrogen):** Grass clippings, Fruit and vegetable peels, Coffee grounds and tea (with their filters), Fresh branches and leaves
- **Brown Materials (Rich in Carbon):** Dry leaves, Straw and hay, Small branches and twigs, Paper without ink and cardboard
- **Avoid:** Meat and fish, Dairy products, Fats and oils, Diseased or infected plants, Pet waste



Create Layers

- **Base Layer:** Start with a layer of brown materials at the bottom of the bin to ensure good drainage and aeration. The thickness of this layer can be about 10-15 cm.
- **Alternate Layers:** Add a layer of green materials on top of the brown layer. The thickness of the green layers can be about 5-10 cm. Continue alternating layers of brown and green materials, trying to maintain a ratio of 2:1 (two parts brown to one part green).
- **Moisture:** The compost should be moist but not too wet. Use the "squeezed sponge" test: the compost should be so moist that when you squeeze it, only a little water comes out. If the compost is too dry, add some water. If it's too wet, add more brown materials to absorb the moisture.



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Stir Regularly

- **Regular Stirring:** Stir the compost every few weeks to ensure good aeration and speed up the decomposition process. Use a spade or rake to mix the compost and bring the outer materials to the center.
- **Moisture Check:** While stirring, check the moisture of the compost. If it's too wet, add more brown materials and stir again. If it's too dry, add some water or more green materials.
- **Odor Check:** If the compost starts to smell bad, it means that anaerobic decomposition has started due to excessive moisture or lack of aeration. Stir the compost well and add more brown materials.

Completing the Process

- **Compost Maturation:** The compost is ready when it has a dark brown color, pleasant earthy smell, and uniform texture. This usually takes 2-6 months, depending on conditions.
- **Using the Compost:** Use the mature compost as fertilizer for your plants. Mix it into the soil to improve its structure and add nutrients.

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Rainwater Harvesting

Choose a Collection System

- **Placing Barrels or Containers:** Place barrels or containers under your roof's downspouts to collect the water that flows from the roof. These downspouts direct water from the roof downward, making them an ideal spot for collection. Ensure the containers are placed on sturdy bases to avoid accidents.
- **Choosing Containers:** Choose containers that are durable and suitable for outdoor use. Plastic or metal barrels are ideal for this job. Make sure the containers have a lid to prevent insects, leaves, and other pollutants from entering. Prefer containers with a tap at the base for easy use of the water.

Important Tip

Rainwater is not suitable for drinking or cooking. Additionally, it requires regular maintenance.



Install a Filter

- **Adding a Filter:** Add a filter at the entrance of the barrel to prevent leaves and other debris from entering. Filters can be made from metal mesh or plastic, blocking larger particles from entering the container. The filter should be easily removable for cleaning and maintenance.
- **Cleaning the Filter:** Clean the filter regularly to ensure that water flow is not obstructed and to prevent the accumulation of debris. Check and replace the filter when needed.

Important Precautions

- **Do Not Use for Drinking or Cooking:** Rainwater collected from roofs may contain pollutants, bacteria, or other substances that are not safe for consumption. Do not use rainwater for drinking, cooking, or washing dishes without proper treatment (e.g., boiling, filtering with activated carbon filters, or using water purification systems).
- **Regular Maintenance:** Regularly check barrels and filters for damage or clogging. Empty and clean containers every few months to prevent bacteria and algae buildup. Ensure the barrels are securely fastened and that there are no leaks.



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Using the Water

- **Garden Irrigation:** Collected rainwater is ideal for irrigating your garden as it doesn't contain the chemicals often found in tap water. Connect a hose to the tap on the barrel for easy distribution of water in your garden. Water the roots of plants early in the morning or late in the afternoon to reduce evaporation.
- **Tool Cleaning:** Use rainwater to wash your gardening tools. This helps save drinking water and is less harsh on tools due to the lack of chemicals. Fill a bucket with rainwater and wash the tools after each use to keep them clean and functional.
- **Car Washing:** You can also use rainwater to wash your car. It's a great way to save drinking water. Use a soft cloth and rainwater to wash the exterior of the car. Rinse with rainwater to remove soap and dirt.



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