

January Seasonal Gardening Tips – Subtropical Queensland

This month is one of the toughest to maintain your garden. With [heat, humidity and not much rain](#), plants can suffer stress quite easily. This, in turn, weakens them and can make them vulnerable to pest and disease attack.

Issues to watch out for include:

- [The Triad – Aphids or Scale + Ants + Black sooty mould](#)

This trio is linked together and if you miss the early signs, you'll end up with a domino effect with the problem worsening. Ants are the first clue to look for. These clever insects provide 'armoured guard security services' for sapsuckers like aphids and scale. These tiny insects suck the juices from citrus and many other trees and plants with new leaf growth. Follow the ant trail until the end like a good detective and look for the second clue. The ants will likely lead you straight to the culprits who are causing damage.

The ants protect the aphids and scale by defending them against beneficial predatory insects like ladybirds and [hoverflies](#). They are ferociously protective! The ants are 'paid' for this service with free food from the sapsuckers. They secrete a sweet honeydew onto the leaves that the ants feed on. A mutually beneficial relationship – but not for you! Left unchecked, this sticky substance also creates the perfect environment for black sooty mould to grow. Then you have multiple problems. This mould blocks the sunlight so the plant can't photosynthesize efficiently. This weakens the plant and slows growth, often causing other problems.

So, stop this domino effect early by detecting the presence of ants and pests. A sharp spray of water from the hose a couple of days in a row can often dislodge many of them. However, a follow-up spray of [EcoOil](#) will keep these under control, as it suffocates the sapsuckers. As they die, there's no food source for the ants, so they leave to find other paying 'customers' elsewhere!

- **Citrus Leaf Miner on Citrus Trees**

These sapsuckers continue to be a common problem over summer and mainly target new growth. While you're looking for clues, the telltale signs are curled and distorted leaves with silvery trails on them. Citrus leaf miners are tiny insects that tunnel between the leaf layers. These pest insects suck sap from leaves and stems, weakening your plants and trees. Their parents are 2mm long adult moths that are active at night.



What can you do? Leave spider webs alone if you see them in your citrus trees, as they are "Nature's nets" to capture these night-flying moths. Early detection and removal can help stop the cycle of damage. Again, EcoOil may be helpful on early leaf flushes. However, if the leaf miners have already arrived, they can spread quickly. Snip off all affected leaves and bin them.

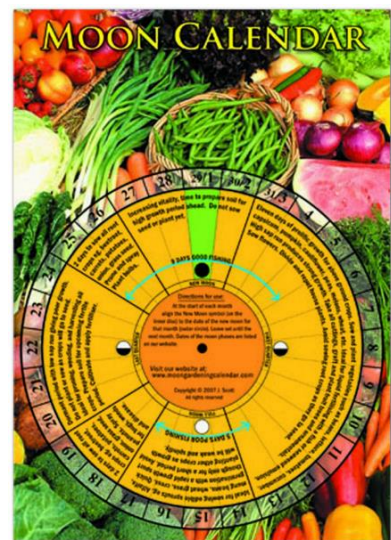
For healthy plants, keep up the nutrients with trace elements, [compost](#) and plenty of [mulch](#). Try watering early morning with a liquid tonic like seaweed or wormcast tea, either into the soil or for faster results, over the foliage.

Garden Tasks

- Fertilise citrus and fruit trees IF you've had rain or can keep up the moisture. Feed, top up mulch if needed and water well as fruits have high nutrient and moisture requirements at this time.
- Check fruit fly traps. Re-bait as necessary. Remove fallen fruit to help break the cycle and prevent diseases.
- Prune your berry bushes if you haven't already.
- Strawberries may be throwing out runners to self-propagate. Time to replant these for new plants.
- Add water to bird and bee baths to care for your beneficial insects and pest patrollers.
- Grow crops in container gardens or Vegepods for easy care and more control over microclimates.
- Add covers to protect crops from heat, storms and insect damage.
- If storms are forecast, remove any items that could become airborne. Secure tall plants, flowers and climbers to stakes or trellises for support to minimise storm damage.

Helpful Gardening Guides

Refer to my laminated double-sided [Subtropical Planting Guide](#) for what to plant now, more pests to watch out for and other key tasks. The perpetual [Moon Calendar Gardening Guide](#) also provides you with exact dates to fine-tune your planting, fertilising, propagation, grafting and sowing activities for optimum abundance. [Learn more about Moon Gardening](#) and [save money when buying both guides with this Special Offer](#).



I hope you've enjoyed these tips. May the year ahead be filled with an abundance of good health and harvests!

Kind regards,



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