

Tender plants such as Angel's Trumpet, citrus and bananas are an important part of today's landscape. They are valued as container or "in ground" plants. They thrive during our Mediterranean-type summers, but will not likely survive our winter temperatures. Here are some tips to over-winter these types of plants, so they can be enjoyed for another season.

Inspect plants before bringing them indoors or storing them. Look for insects and disease and treat accordingly. Healthy plants will have a better chance of over-wintering successfully.

Plants that love warm, bright conditions like **Bougainvillea**, **Citrus**, tropical **Hibiscus** and **Mandevilla** can be wintered over inside your home if you have a sunny location. Take action to move them indoors before the nights get cold. Expect some leaf drop as your plant acclimates to indoor conditions. They will quickly adjust to new conditions. Water only when the soil is dry and give them a quarter turn weekly. Do not fertilize until late February when the days start to lengthen. When spring arrives in late April or early May (after danger of frost) slowly acclimate plants to the outdoors by placing them outside, but in the shade during the day. Gradually expose them to more sun each day. If plants are leggy, prune back to stimulate new growth.

Plants that can take cool but bright conditions like **tropical Bananas**, **Angel's Trumpet**, **Colocasia** and **Cannas** can stay in the soil in their pot, but allowed to go dormant. Trim back most of the foliage, keep temperatures below 50, but above freezing, water when the soil dries and keep in a well-lit area. The goal is to keep the tops from growing, but keep the root system viable. Some plants like Colocasias and Cannas may completely lose their foliage and can be kept in a dark area, while Bananas and Angel's Trumpets will keep some foliage.

Many tender plants need a dormant time without light or water. Dormancy is triggered by the dry season, so allowing the plant to dry will allow storage in the dark without soil. Dig plants with a tuber, rhizome, corm or bulb after the foliage has died to the ground. This group includes **Cannas**, **Colocasia**, **Dahlia**, **Ginger**, **Gladiolus** and **Callas**. Use a pitch fork or spading fork to avoid damage. Place the tuber, rhizome, corm or bulb in a container that allows air circulation like a mesh bag or a crate like a plastic milk crate. Rub the soil off and store in a dry, cool dark place with plenty of air circulation. Do not store in plastic bags. Wait until spring to divide if needed. Check periodically for rotting or desiccation. Toss out any that have rotted and mist the dry ones to re-hydrate. Don't forget to label them.

For **Cannas**, **Dahlia**s, **Gunnera** and **Callas**, just mound three to four inches of mulch over the plant after the leaves have died down. If you have good drainage and a protected site, they have a good chance of returning the following spring.