

February Gardening Guide

By Patricia Porchey

If you've been thinking about planting some fruit trees in your landscape, your first thought might be of citrus. However, because citrus canker and citrus greening diseases are plaguing our citrus industry as a result of the previous hurricane seasons, it might be advantageous to consider some alternative fruit trees. Some fruits worthy of consideration are the avocado, banana, carambola, lychee, papaya, and mango. Depending on the variety of avocado you plant, fruit may be harvested sometime between June and February. Bananas carambola, and papaya bear fruit year-round. June and July are the harvest months for lychee. Mango varieties bear fruit sometime between May and October. It's possible to have a fruitful bounty year-round in Florida. This is how sustainability can start right in your own yard! (Wait until the end of February or early March to plant young fruit trees that are cold sensitive)

February also marks the month to start planting seeds of some warm season vegetables alongside your cool season vegetables. Plant a salad: carrots, cucumber, lettuce, peppers, radish, and tomatoes in addition to all the other possibilities listed below.

Gardening activities:

- Amend your spring garden beds with organic materials such as compost, composted manures or peat humus before planting. In fact, take advantage of the free compost available to residents at several locations in the county.
- Fertilize citrus and other fruit trees this month – approximately 8 pounds of fruit tree fertilizer for a mature tree.
- As fruit sets on your fruit trees, water on a regular basis if there is no rain.
- Apply a pre-emergent herbicide to turf grass where crabgrass and other weeds were a problem in 2006. This product forms a barrier on top of the soil to stop the germination of new seeds; therefore, do not disturb the area once it is applied.
- Fertilize lawns and shrubs with a fertilizer containing at least 30-50% of the nitrogen in slow-release form. If using a weed and feed product, read the label carefully before applying near shrubs and trees.
- Prune crape myrtle and other deciduous plants that flower on their new growth at the end of this month.
- Prune and fertilize roses.

Upcoming educational classes:

You may now register for classes on-line at our website:

<http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/EdSched.htm> or call 861-5000.

- “Florida Friendly Landscapes” at Florida House, February 6 at 2:00 pm.
- “How to take a Soil Test” at Twin Lakes Park, February 7 at 4:00 pm.
- “Planning your Wildlife Garden” at Florida House, February 10 at 10:00 am.
- “Applying Fertilizer Correctly” at Twin Lakes Park, February 14 at 4:00 pm.
- “Florida Buggy Critters; the Bad, Good & Harmless” at Shamrock Park, February 15 at 2:00 pm.

- “Applying Fertilizer: Guidelines to determine your Landscape Needs” at Twin Lakes Park, February 21 at 4:00 pm.
- “Using you Landscape to Benefit the Environment” at Twin Lakes Park, February 28 at 4:00 pm.
- “Landscaping for Birds” at shamrock Park, March 1 at 2:00 pm.

Planting guide:

Vegetables & Herbs: Anise, basil, beets, borage, cantaloupe, carrots, catnip, celery, chervil, chives, collards, comfrey, coriander, corn, cucumber, cumin, dill, eggplant, endive, garlic, green beans, kohlrabi, leek, lemon balm, lettuce, marjoram, mint, mustard, onion, oregano, parsley, peas, pepper, potato, pumpkin, radish, rosemary, sage, sweet potato, tarragon, tomato, turnip, and watermelon.

Annuals: Ageratum, alyssum, Amaranth, Begonia, browallia, Calendula, Cosmos, dusty miller, Gazania, geranium, Lobelia, marigold, nasturtium, pansy, Petunia, Phlox, Salvia, snapdragon, Statice, stock, strawflower, and Verbena.

Perennials: African iris, Agapanthus, Amaryllis, Amazon lily, aster, Aztec lily, Caladium, Canna, calla lily, Clivia, Crinum lily, Dahlia, Dianthus, foxglove, Gerbera, hollyhock, Shasta daisy, society garlic, spider lily, Tithonia, Viola, and walking iris.

Fruits in Season: Banana, black sapote, carambola, cherimoya, citrus (calamondin, grapefruit, key lime, lemon, lime, orange, and tangerine), Indian jujube, kumquat, loquat, Mysore raspberry, papaya, and strawberry.

Blooming plants: Bush daisy, Bottlebrush, Bougainvillea, Carolina yellow Jessamine, Chinese hat plant, fuchsia skullcap, Jatropha, Kalanchoe, lion’s ear, mahoe, Mexican flame vine, orchid tree, palm grass, Poinsettia, powderpuff plant, purple Tabebuia, silver trumpet Tabebuia, Thunbergia, trumpet vine, Turk’s cap and Walter’s Viburnum, and yellow shrimp plant.

Satellite Services

The Extension Service has weekly horticultural outreach services to make it more convenient for residents to receive our services when they are unable to come to our office at Twin Lakes Park. In addition to our four south county library locations, we have two new locations at North Sarasota Library and the Farmers’ Market. Hours of service are as follows: North Sarasota Library, Monday, 10:00 am-noon; Elsie Quirk Library, Tuesday, 9:30 am-noon; North Port Library, 1:30-3:30 pm; Venice Library, Thursday, 9:30 am-noon; Jacaranda Library, Thursday, 1:30-3:30 pm; and the Farmers’ Market, 3rd Saturday of each month, 7:00 am-noon.

(Patricia Porchey is a Horticulture Courtesy Agent with University of Florida/IFAS Sarasota County Extension. Website: <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu>)