

January Gardening Guide

By Patricia Porchey

Did you know there are over 1 million vegetables gardens statewide averaging 300 sq. ft., the size of a home garden? In addition to supplying nutritious fresh vegetables, gardens offer their owners fresh air, sunshine, exercise, enjoyment, mental therapy, and economic savings. One cannot overlook the environmental benefits the plants provide: earth cooling effect, absorption of carbon dioxide, reduced moisture runoff, and reduced carbon dioxide emissions associated with food transportation to the grocery.

Did you know there are 4 community gardens in Sarasota County where residents can have their own plot to grow their own food? In addition, these gardens offer a place for neighbors to cultivate friendships and develop a stronger sense of community. Community gardens are for all ages, toddlers to seniors, and all races and ethnic backgrounds.

Applications for 2008 are now being accepted for all the community gardens. For more information and to get an application, visit our website <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu> or call 861-9900. We can also advise you on initiating a community garden in your own neighborhood. Gardens may be grown year-round in Florida, but spring is the preferred season.

The drought continues as we enter 2008 – we were 20 inches below normal rainfall last year and the normal January precipitation is less than 3 inches. The need for prudent watering habits continues:

- Let your plants tell you when they need water – they wilt when they need water. Once a week watering in the cooler winter months may mean your plants are being *over watered* and subject to fungal problems.
- Water turf every 14 days if there is no rain, but water annuals, perennials and vegetables more frequently. Apply up to 3/4 inch of water to grass and bedding plants and 1 inch to perennials, shrubs, young trees and fruit trees.
- Encourage your plants to develop more extensive roots systems so they can withstand less frequent watering. Do this by increasing the interval between watering.
- Water in the early morning when it's cooler and there's less wind; less water will be lost to evaporation. If using overhead sprinklers, run them before 8:00 a.m. per ordinance.
- Consider planting a tree for Arbor Day, January 18, to reduce pollutant runoff from irrigation and provide wildlife habitat for birds, etc.

Blooming & planting guide

- Vegetables & Herbs: Beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, Chinese cabbage, chives, collards, coriander, dill, eggplant, endive, fennel, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard, onion, parsley, peas, pepper, potatoes, radish, rosemary, sage, tomatoes, turnips, and watermelon.

- Annuals: Alyssum, Ageratum, Calendula, dusty miller, geranium, Lobelia, nasturtium, pansy, ornamental cabbage and kale, Petunia, Phlox, snapdragon, statice and Verbena.
- Perennials: Agapanthus, Amaryllis, calla lily, Clivia, Crinum lily, daylily, Dianthus, Gloriosa lily, blue sage, Shasta daisy, society garlic, Tithonia, Viola, and walking iris.
- Fruits in Season: Avocado, banana, carambola, Citrus (calamondin, grapefruit, key lime, lemon, lime, orange, and tangerine), hog plum, Indian jujube, kumquat, and papaya.
- Blooming plants: Bougainvillea, Chinese hat plant, crown of thorns, desert rose, Jatropha, Kalanchoe, lion's ear, mahoe, mango, Mexican flame vine, orchid tree, porterweed, red and yellow shrimp plants, Tabebuia, Thunbergia, and Turk's cap.

Upcoming classes

If you want to know more about the environmentally-friendly landscaping known as Florida Yards & Neighborhoods, there are five programs being offered this month. You can now register for classes online at <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/EdSched.htm> or call 861-9900.

- “Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles” at North Port Library, January 8 at 12:30 p.m.
- “Bedbugs” at Twin Lakes Park, January 9 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles” at Venice Library, January 10 at 10:00 a.m.
- “Water Conservation/Drought Presentation” at Twin Lakes Park, January 15 at 6:00 p.m.
- “Do You Know What Spider That Is?” at Shamrock Park, January 17 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Beneficial Insects: Learn to Recognize Good Bugs” at Twin Lakes Park, January 22 at 10:00 a.m.
- “Step By Step Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Training” at Twin Lakes Park (5 classes beginning on January 23, cost \$20.00) at 10:00 a.m.
- “Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Workshop” at Twin Lakes Park, January 23 at 4:00 p.m.
- “Rodent and Mole Management” at Twin Lakes Park, January 28 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles” at Fruitville Library, January 28 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Backyard Landscape for the Birds” Twin Lakes Park, January 30 at 4:00 p.m.

For information

If you have questions concerning your landscape, please call or visit our office at Twin Lakes Park on Clark Road east of I-75.

The **Master Gardener Help Desk** is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m.-Noon and 1:00-4:00 p.m. (941-861-9807). We have weekly satellite help desks at the four south county libraries and every third Saturday of the month at the **Downtown Farmer's Market**.

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