

March Gardening Guide (2007)

By Patricia Porchey

Shopping in the produce section of the supermarket is becoming a real adventure with all of the choices from the most common to the hard-to-find, such as Chaya. Our growing conditions afford us the opportunity to grow some of these less-familiar products. The idea of an actual vegetable garden is not always feasible due to limited space; however, there are options for you to grow produce and harvest it freshly ripe. One is to mix herbs and vegetables amongst your annuals and perennials as part of your landscape. Another is to plant in containers. Planting a few herbs and vegetables in a pot next to the kitchen door affords easy harvesting straight to those savory dishes. Sometimes just the fragrance alone, such as rosemary, delights the senses even before adding it to a dish. If your plant list exceeds your container capacity, there are community garden plots available to residents. Here you can plant and harvest organically-grown produce with other dedicated gardeners who appreciate the rewards of their efforts.

IPM Update:

Did you know Sarasota County has an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Advisory Board? You may ask, what is IPM and is it just for the government? IPM provides the guidelines for controlling pests that everyone should follow whether in the government or around your home. IPM is not a single chemical strategy, but a decision-making process to determine if, where, when, and how pest control should be applied. Pest management tactics can be cultural, including resistant or tolerant plants, biological, mechanical, physical, as well as chemical. Chemical control is the last resort, and if it is used, least-toxic products should be selected. Before taking any pest control action however, the IPM Advisory Board is most concerned that people correctly identify the pest (insect, mite, weed, or vertebrate). Proper identification is the first step, followed by regular monitoring, to determine if there is injury or a problem. Both steps are essential for determining if control is necessary. Next month, the focus will be on the importance of beneficial insects and how these organisms help keep pests under control.

Gardening activities:

- Spring is the time to fertilize all landscape plants and lawns. Always use a complete fertilizer, one that contains the three major components (Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Potassium) and a list of minor nutrients such as magnesium, iron, and manganese. An analysis of 8-2-8, 12-2-14, or similar is recommended. Nitrogen and potassium should have 30-50% in a slow-release form. Apply a maximum of one pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet. To determine the correct amount of fertilizer to use, divide the first number on the bag (nitrogen) into 100; this determines the number of pounds of fertilizer in the bag needed to supply one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn and landscape area.
- Fertilize fruit trees and palms if you didn't do it in February. Use fertilizer that is labeled for that plant. Never spray your fruit trees while in bloom.
- Inspect the tender new growth on plants as this is a favorite site for sucking insects such as aphids, mealybugs and scales. Choose a least toxic control method such as horticultural soap or oil spray if insects are present in threatening numbers.

- If your shrubs need pruning, remove no more than 1/3 of the total mass to maintain a healthy plant. Prune spring-blooming plants only after they finish blooming.

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 Buggy Critters: The Bad, Good & Harmless” at Florida House, March 6 at 2:00 p.m.
- “How Much Water Does a Plant Require?” at Twin Lakes Park, March 7 at 4:00 p.m.
- “Water Delivery Systems: Irrigation or Mother Nature?” at Twin Lakes Park, March 14 at 4:00 p.m.
- “Do You Know What Spider That Is?” at Shamrock Park, March 15 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Weather-Resistant Landscapes” at Florida House, March 20 at 2:00 p.m.
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Grant Workshop” at Twin Lakes Park, March 21 at 4:00 p.m.
- “Landscape Water Conservation Practices” at Twin Lakes Park, March 28 at 4:00 p.m.
- “Healthy Gardening” at Florida House, April 3 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Coastal Native Plants” at Shamrock Park, April 5 at 2:00 p.m.

Planting guide:

Vegetables & Herbs: Anise, basil, beans, beets, borage, cantaloupe, chervil, comfrey, corn, cucumber, cumin, horehound, kohlrabi, lemon balm, lettuce, marjoram, mustard, okra, oregano, peas, summer savory, sweet peppers, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, radish, summer squash, tarragon, thyme, tomatoes, and watermelon.

Annuals: Ageratum, alyssum, Begonia, Browallia, Celosia, coleus, Cosmos, Dahlberg daisy, dusty miller, Gazania, geranium, Impatiens, Lobelia, marigold, Nicotiana, ornamental pepper, Petunia, Phlox, Portulaca, Salvia, Torenia, Verbena, and Zinnia.

Perennials: African iris, Amazon lily, blood lily, blue daze, Caladium, Canna, Coreopsis, Crinum lily, daylily, Gaillardia, Gerbera daisy, Gaura, gloriosa lily, Mexican heather, milkweed, Pentas, Rudbeckia, Salvia, Shasta daisy, society garlic, and walking Iris.

Fruits in Season: Banana, carambola, citrus (calamondin, grapefruit, key lime, lemon, lime, orange, and tangerine), jaboticaba, kumquat, loquat, strawberry, and papaya.

Blooming plants: Angel’s trumpet, azalea, blue flag iris, blue sage, Bougainvillea, Buddleia, cape honeysuckle, Carolina Jessamine, dwarf Indian hawthorn, flame vine, fuchsia skullcap, geranium, lantana, Mexican flame vine, Nemesia, orchid tree, silk floss tree, society garlic, Surinam cherry, Walter’s Viburnum, and white bird of paradise.

Satellite Services

In addition to our four south county library locations, we have two new locations at North Sarasota Library and the Farmers’ Market. Master Gardeners are at the North Sarasota Library, Monday, 10:00 am-noon and the Farmers’ Market, 3rd Saturday of each month, 7:00 am-noon.

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