

# May Gardening Guide

## By: Patricia Porchey

During periods of drought, energy conservation as well as water conservation becomes more important. The three months of April, May and June average more sunshine hours than any other months of the year. In addition to more sunshine, the increasingly warmer weather and lack of rain equals a formula for stress to most plants, and even death to some. So how can you design your landscape to help it tolerate these adverse conditions?

The first step is to analyze your site and know the sun's orientation, where the sun comes up and where it goes down. Select plants that are appropriate for the light conditions on your site. Native plants usually will tolerate adverse conditions better than non-natives; however, this doesn't apply until they are well established. During the first 5 years of establishment, irrigate less often but deeply to encourage vertical root growth. Once established, water trees and shrubs only when they wilt; the exception is fruit trees which need water every 2-3 weeks once fruit has set. The best time to water is in the morning before 10:00 am. Install mulch around your plants to aid in water retention. Know which plants require more moisture and group those plants together or consider replacing them with more drought-tolerant plants. Eliminate pop-up heads in your beds and install micro irrigation to reduce water lost to evaporation. Retain rainwater on site by capturing it using rainbarrels, cisterns, porous surfaces and swales

Reduce energy costs by planting deciduous trees on the south, southwest and southeast facings of your home so you'll get warmth in the winter and shade in the warm months. Don't forget to shade your AC unit and improve the operating efficiency up to 10% during the day; however don't block the exhaust air flow. Use plants to direct hot winds over and around your house. On larger home sites, use a windbreak composed of layered plants to divert hot winds away from the house. Most protection occurs at a distance that is up to 5 times the height of the windbreak. Plants can also create air-insulating spaces around your home with the proper placement of a multi-layered canopy of plants. An example would be a bed with groundcover, a 3 foot shrub, a 5 foot shrub and a small tree with its canopy overhanging the shrubbery. Install all plants beyond the eave to facilitate catching rainwater.

### **Monitoring Activities**

- Monitor for chinch bugs in St. Augustine grass as temperatures approach 90 degrees; however, spot treat the affected area only.
- Monitor for mole crickets in Bahia and spot treat as needed.
- Monitor for lacebugs on azaleas and avocado and apply least toxic insecticide.
- Monitor for caterpillars on oleander and other plants; however know if it's a larval food plant for butterflies before treating.

- Monitor for mildew on susceptible plants and apply the appropriate control, but also determine if they need to be moved to a location with more light and air circulation.

#### **Upcoming educational classes:**

- “Citrus in the Urban Landscape” at Florida House Learning Center, May 9 at 2:00 pm. Call 316-1200 to register.
- “Mosquitoes” at Florida House Learning Center, May 16 at 2:00 pm. Call 316-1200.
- “Poisonous Plants” at Twin Lakes Park, May 17 at 10:00 am. Call 861-9900.
- “Basic Plant Propagation” at Twin Lakes Park, May 17 at 4:00 am. Call 861-9900.
- “Hurricanes and Trees” at Twin Lakes Park, June 7 at 4:00 am. Call 861-9900.

#### **Planting guide:**

- **Vegetables & Herbs:** Anise, green beans, black-eyed peas, borage, catnip, chervil, cilantro/coriander, comfrey, corn, cumin, dasheen, eggplant, lima beans, horehound, marjoram, mint, okra, oregano, peas, summer savory, sweet potatoes, tarragon and watermelon.
- **Annuals:** Ageratum, Begonia, Celosia, Cleome, Coleus, Cosmos, Crossandra, dusty miller, four o’clock, Gazania, marigold, morning glory, Nicotiana, periwinkle, Portulaca, salvia, sunflower, Torenia, Verbena and Zinnia.
- **Perennials:** Blue daze, Caladium, Coreopsis, Dahlberg daisy, daylily, Gaillardia, Gaura, Gerbera daisy, Kalanchoe, Mexican heather, Pentas, Rudbeckia, Salvias, shell ginger, shrimp plants, Tithonia and Verbena.
- **Fruits in Season:** Banana, blackberry, blueberry, Carambola, citrus, (calamondin, grapefruit, key lime, lemon, and lime.), guava, kumquat, loquat, macadamia, papaya, pineapple, Surinam cherry, and tamarind.
- **Blooming Plants:** Amaryllis, Australian flame tree, beach buttercup, beach sunflower, birds of paradise, bottlebrush, Bougainvillea, crape jasmine, daylily, devil’s backbone, Duranta, Gardenia, dwarf Indian hawthorn, Jacaranda tree, Jerusalem thorn, Ligustrum, Magnolia, Mandevilla, Mexican flame vine, natal plum, necklace pod, pipevine, silk oak tree, society garlic, Simpson’s stopper, star jasmine, Texas sage, wild coffee, yaupon holly and Yucca.

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 am-Noon and 1:00-4:00 pm (941-861-9807). Our satellite help desk at Selby Library is open Wednesdays from 9:30 am-Noon.

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