

## May Gardening Guide (2008)

By Patricia Porchey

Already this spring, we are two inches below the normal precipitation for this year. This comes on the heels of an extremely dry 2007. Of course, this time of year also brings warmer temperatures for additional stress on our plants. We also have water restrictions to observe as a result of the dry conditions. The following tips will help you grow healthy plants in spite of the drought conditions. Additional information is available at the University of Florida website:

<http://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/water/articles/index.shtml>

### Ten Ways to Conserve Water in the Landscape

1. Choose the right plant for the right place – conditions meet the sun, water and nutrient needs of the plant.
2. Water thoughtfully – water plants only when they need water.
3. Handwater when possible – less water is used than with automatic irrigation systems.
4. Check your irrigation system on a regular basis – damaged heads and out of position heads can be fixed.
5. Calibrate irrigation system – apply ½ -3/4 inches of water at one application.
6. Make a rain barrel – catch rainwater to use on your plants.
7. Use micro-irrigation – applies water directly to the plant roots where it is needed.
8. Mulch plants – apply 2-3 inches to help retain soil moisture.
9. Mow correctly – raise the height and cut no more than 1/3 of the leaf blade at one time.
10. Watch the weather – no need to water if it's rained in the past 24 hours or rain is expected in the next 24 hours.

Remember to observe local watering restrictions. Sarasota County allows once a week watering for overhead irrigation system, but micro-irrigation and handwatering has no limit. A rain shut-off device is required on all irrigation systems.

### Gardening activities

- Monitor Bahia turf for mole crickets. Free larrflower seeds are available at our office – these will attract a beneficial wasp predator of mole crickets.
- Monitor St. Augustine for chinch bugs. Treat only when needed.
- Monitor landscape plants for insect pests. ID insects correctly and apply least toxic pesticide only when it is needed.

### Blooming & planting guide

- Vegetables & Herbs: Anise, beans, black-eyed peas, borage, catnip, chervil, cilantro/coriander, comfrey, corn, cumin, dasheen, eggplant, 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, birds of paradise, crape jasmine, daylily, devil's backbone, Gardenia, dwarf Indian hawthorn, Jacaranda, Jerusalem thorn, Magnolia, Mexican flame vine, natal plum, pipevine, Plumeria, silk oak Simpson's stopper, star jasmine, Texas sage, and Yucca.

### **Upcoming classes**

If you want to know more about the environmentally-friendly landscaping known as Florida Yards & Neighborhoods, there are three 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 Principles" at North Port Library, May 6 at 12:30 p.m.
- "Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Principles" at Gulf Gate Library, May 9 at 2:00 p.m.
- "Chinch Bugs & White Grubs" at Shamrock Park, May 15 at 2:00 p.m.
- "Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Principles" at Fruitville Library, May 19 at 2:00 p.m.
- "Snakes" at Shamrock Park, June 4 at 2:00 p.m.
- "Reduce Stormwater Runoff" at Shamrock Park, June 5 at 2:00 p.m.

### **For information**

If you have questions concerning your landscape, please call or visit the **Master Gardener Help Desk** at 861-9807. The **Help Desk** is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m.-Noon and 1:00-4:00 p.m. 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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Submitted April 29, 2008