

May Gardening Guide (2009)

By Patricia Porchey

The Master Gardener program was first conceived in Washington State by Extension agents who needed help assisting homeowners whose interest in horticulture was increasing in urban areas. Volunteers were trained by land-grant college staff so they would have the knowledge to provide information and answer questions for the public. From Washington State, the program has become an important part of Extension programs in land-grant universities across the nation.

Fifty-four counties in Florida have active Master Gardener programs affiliated with the University of Florida's Extension Service. Sarasota County has one of the largest programs with 119 Master Gardeners. These volunteer educators provide research-based information to homeowners about planning and maintaining urban and suburban landscapes with an emphasis on environmental stewardship. When you call the Extension office with a question, your call will be answered by a Master Gardener at the Help Desk. They also assist homeowners at five satellite Help Desk locations.

In addition, Master Gardeners staff information booths and give demonstrations at special events, give presentations to garden clubs, work with youth groups (4-H, Scouts, public and private school students), assist with community gardens, and facilitate horticultural activities for the developmentally and physically-challenged as well as senior populations. They grow plants for their annual fund-raising plant sale in October; whose proceeds are for educational grants for community projects. They are responsible for maintaining the landscape and conducting tours in the demonstration landscapes at the Florida House Learning Center and Extension office.

Our Master Gardeners are continually recognized for their contributions to the community at the community gardens, schools, parks and other facilities. They donated over 16,000 hours of their time in 2008. In the past two years, two Sarasota County Master Gardeners have received national awards for their work in the community from the MetLife Foundation's Older Volunteers Enrich America.

Once a year, new Master Gardeners are recruited and trained to be a part of this volunteer program. There are no prerequisites, just a genuine desire to volunteer your time to assist others in the community. If you are interested, visit our website for more information <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu> or attend the upcoming orientation program on June 3.

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, oleander, pipevine, Plumeria, silk oak Simpson's stopper, star jasmine, Texas sage, and Yucca.

Upcoming classes

Call 861-9900 to register for the following classes.

- Summer Gardening-Summer Cover Plants, Orange Blossom Community Garden, 18th & Orange, 1:00 p.m. May 2
- Invasive Insect Pests, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. May 6
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. May 13
- Growing Herbs in Florida, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. May 13
- Backyard Landscapes for Native Reptiles & Amphibians, Twin Lakes Park, 3:00 p.m. May 13
- Organic Vegetable Gardening, Laurel Community Garden, Forest & Collins, Laurel, 10:30 a.m. May 16
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles, Fruitville Library, 2:00 p.m. May 18
- Invasive Plants, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. May 20
- Beneficial Insects in the Garden, Shamrock Park, 2:00 p.m. May 21
- Sex in the Garden & other Plant Propagation Methods, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. May 27
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Creating Your Florida Yard, Fruitville Library, 2:00 p.m. June 1
- Master Gardener Program: What is it?, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. June 3
- Groundcovers: Small Plants for Small Places, Shamrock Park, 2:00 p.m. June 4

For information

The **Master Gardener Help Desk** now has an email address: mghelpdesk@scgov.net to answer questions. It is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m.-Noon and 1:00-4:00 p.m. You can call (941-861-9807) or visit our office at Twin Lakes Park on Clark Road east of I-75 with landscape questions. We also have weekly satellite help desks at the four south county libraries and every third Saturday of the month at the **Downtown Farmer's Market**.

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

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