

November Gardening Guide

By: Patricia Porchey

Should the predictions for El Nino and a wetter-than-usual-winter not happen, there is something you can do to lessen the need for supplemental watering. Simply adding mulch to all of your beds and around young trees in your yard will maintain soil moisture by reducing evaporation. Mulching around all of your trees also prevents damage from lawn maintenance equipment. However, avoid mounding it up around the base of trees as this can lead to moisture accumulation around the trunk and eventually disease such as root rot.

Additional benefits of mulch are numerous. Mulch aids in moderating soil temperatures by cooling the soil in the summer and warming the soil in the winter. As organic mulches decompose, they can improve soil aeration, texture and fertility. In our sandy soils, mulch slows the leaching of nutrients through the soil. Adding 2-3 inches of mulch is sufficient to block the light from weed seeds in the soil and prevent their germination. The look of your landscape will be enhanced by the addition of mulch; it gives planting beds and trees a finished look.

The marketplace is full of mulch choices, but organic mulches are still the most beneficial. Rubberized mulch is great for walks and under playground equipment, but does tend to become hot in the full sun. The old vision of a xeriscape yard was one full of gravel. However, gravel and shell absorb and reflect heat thus increasing the watering needs of your plants unless they are desert-type plants. The pH is also raised by the limestone and shell so plants tolerant of higher alkalinity are needed to thrive there. The colored hardwood mulches are often the result of shredded pallets and too much color can be aesthetically overwhelming.

Some good organic choices are pine and eucalyptus. Cypress is not recommended as mulch because the harvesting of our native cypress trees is depleting our wetlands. A relatively new mulch in the marketplace is melaleuca. It is recycled from the bark and wood of the invasive melaleuca tree and is more repellent than any of the other organic mulches to termites. Many times mulch is already available in your own yard as pine needles, leaves, or clippings from shrubs. The county has a recycling program and provides free mulch as well as compost to county residents at the county landfill and at several parks throughout the county. Call 861-5000 for the location nearest you.

Gardening activities:

- Before watering, let plants tell you they need water. Most will curl their leaves as an indicator.
- As temperatures drop, apply less irrigation to lawns and beds. Over irrigating can lead to fungal problems.
- Plant shrubs and groundcovers in lieu of grass to reduce water consumption.
- Plant annuals and perennials for fall and winter color. Unlike annuals, which give you one season or year of color, perennials will bloom for many years.
- Plant cool-season vegetables for a winter harvest.

- Plant ornamental and fruit trees. Consider alternative fruit trees to citrus to reduce the threat of citrus canker and greening diseases in your dooryard.
- Now that the temperature has dropped below 85 degrees, herbicides can be used on lawns without damaging the grass.

Upcoming educational classes:

You may now register for classes on-line at our website:

<http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/EdSched.htm> or call the numbers listed below.

- “Palms in the Landscape” at Shamrock Park, November 2 at 2:00 pm. Call 861-9900.
- “Palms in the Landscape” at Florida House, November 7 at 2:00 pm. Call 316-1200.
- “Spiders!” at Florida House, November 21 at 2:00 pm. Call 316-1200.
- “Citrus” at Shamrock Park, December 7 at 2:00 pm. Call 861-9900.

Planting guide

Vegetables & Herbs: Anise, basil, beets, Borage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celery, chervil, collards, coriander, dill, fennel, garlic, leek, lettuce, mustard, onions, parsley, peas, potato, radish, rutabaga, sage, spinach, strawberries, Swiss chard, thyme, tomato, and turnips.

Annuals: Ageratum, Alyssum, Begonia, Calendula, Celosia, Coleus, cosmos, dusty miller, foxglove, geranium, Impatiens, Lobelia, marigold, Melampodium, nasturtium, pansy, Pentas, petunia, Salvia, snapdragon, and statice.

Perennials: African iris, aster, blue daze, bush daisy, Chrysanthemum, cigar plant, Coreopsis, Dianthus, Gaillardia, Gerbera daisy, Liatris, Mexican petunia, Salvia, Scabiosa, Shasta daisy, society garlic, and Verbena.

Fruits in Season: Atemoya, avocado, banana, carambola, citrus (calamondin, grapefruit, key lime, lemon, lime, orange, tangelo and tangerine), kumquat, papaya, pecan, persimmon, pomegranate, sea grape, and sugar apple.

Blooming plants: Allamanda, bottlebrush, Bougainvillea, Cape honeysuckle, Cassia, Cordia, firecracker plant, firespike, goldenrod, Liatris, lion’s ear, oleander, Philippine violet, red and yellow shrimp plants, Plumbago, Salvia, thryallis, Turk’s cap, Thunbergia, and yellow elder.

If you have questions concerning your landscape, please call or visit our office at Twin Lakes Park. The **Master Gardener Help Desk** is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 am-Noon and 1-4:00 pm (861-5000). We have satellite service at the **Downtown Farmer’s Market** every second Saturday of the month to answer your questions.

(Patricia Porchey is a Horticulture Courtesy Agent with University of Florida/IFAS, Sarasota County Extension)