

September Gardening Guide

By: Patricia Porchey

This is the time of year when we're in a gardening frame of mind, that is - vegetable gardening. While northern gardeners are harvesting the last of their crops, we're just getting ready to plant our fall gardens.

Bed preparation is key to a bountiful garden. All of those vigorous-growing weeds have to be removed. Tilling or turning the soil to a depth of 6-8 inches can smother many weeds. However, deeply anchored woody-stemmed weeds with extensive roots, perennial grasses, and bulbous plants, such as nut grass, may need to be removed by hand. Organic amendments such as compost, humus, and composted manures should be incorporated into our sandy soils to better retain water and nutrients. Once you've planted, remember to add mulch around the plants to discourage future weeds.

If your planting area is limited and there's no room for an official vegetable garden, consider using containers for growing your herbs and vegetables. It's important to use a good quality soilless potting mix and make sure there are drainage holes in your containers. Watering and fertilizer will need to be applied more frequently as it leaches through more quickly in a container. Another consideration for planting location is to plant herbs and vegetables among the ornamental shrubs in your landscape. Just be sure there is ample light and good air circulation in addition to well-drained soil. Also, the watering requirements of all plants in the bed must be compatible.

For more information on starting your fall garden, read the "Florida Vegetable Garden Guide. It's available in our office or on-line at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>

Gardening activities:

- Test your soil to determine the pH. The optimum garden soil has a pH between 5.8-6.5.
- Fertilize vegetables monthly with a water-soluble fertilizer or less often with a slow-release formula. Use a complete fertilizer such as 6-6-6 or 8-10-10, which contains minor nutrients, especially calcium and magnesium. Organic fertilizers derived from manures can be used, but may need to be supplemented occasionally with an application of nutrient-specific fertilizer.
- Monitor for lace bugs on avocado and azaleas plants and control with horticultural soap or oil.
- Monitor for turf grass pests such as chinch bugs, mole crickets, sod webworms, and armyworms and spot treat.
- Read labels on herbicides before treating weeds in turf grass as most have a warning not to use the product if the temperature is above 85 degrees. Wait until our weather cools to apply these products.

Upcoming educational classes:

You can now register for classes online <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/EdSched.htm> or call 861-9900.

- “Invasive Plants” at Shamrock Park, September 7 at 2:00 pm
- “Florida-Friendly Landscaping (FYN) at Florida House, September 12 at 2:00 pm
- “Fire Ants” at Florida House, September 26 at 2:00 pm
- “Snakes” at Shamrock Park, October 5 at 2:00 pm

Planting guide:

Vegetables & Herbs: Basil, beans, Borage, broccoli, cabbage, celery, chervil, collards, coriander, corn, cucumber, cumin, eggplant, fennel, leek, lettuce, marjoram, mint, mustard, onions, peas, pepper, radish, rosemary, sage, squash (summer & winter), thyme, tomato, and watermelon.

Annuals: Ageratum, Alyssum, Begonia, calendula, Celosia, Coleus, Cosmos, dusty miller, marigold, Melampodium, periwinkle, Portulaca, Salvia, and Zinnia.

Perennials: African iris, Amaryllis, beach buttercup, blue daze, bush daisy, calla lily, cigar plant, Coreopsis, elephant ears, Gaillardia, Gerbera daisy, gloriosa lily, goldenrod, iris, Kalanchoe, Liatris, Mexican petunia, milkweed, Pentas, Salvia, society garlic, Verbena, whirling butterflies.

Fruits in Season: Atemoya, avocado, banana, carambola, citrus (calamondin, lemon, and lime), fig, guava, kumquat, monstera, muscadine grape, papaya, pomegranate, sea grape, and sugar apple.

Blooming plants: Allamanda, bird-of-paradise, bottlebrush, Cassia, Cordia, crape myrtle, dwarf Poinciana, false dragonhead, firespike, golden raintree, Lantana, marlberry, red and yellow shrimp plants, rouge plant, Plumbago, rose, Salvia, thryallis and Tibouchina.

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). Starting in September we will 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)