

September Gardening Guide 2009

By: Patricia Porchey

Strolling through the produce aisle at the grocery store brings back memories of days gone by when prices were only a small percent of what they are today (this depends on one's age of course). The cost of adding fruits and vegetables to one's diet, which is promoted by health food experts, has been the impetus for the increased interest in growing one's own food. Whether it's in a community garden, a backyard garden or in containers, more residents are now growing edibles in their dooryard.

For those homeowners whose outdoor space is limited, community gardens are an option. There are presently four in the county; however, several communities are having organizational meetings to start more localized community gardens (i.e. North Port, Venice and Palmer Ranch). Growing ones favorite herbs and vegetables in containers is another option for those with limited space. Even small fruit trees can be grown in containers.

Wherever you decide to grow your plants, there are some basic steps to take for a successful garden. Our sandy soil will benefit tremendously from the addition of organic amendments. Composted manure, humus, peat, or cover crops are commonly added to improve the soil texture, which aids in the retention of nutrients and water. If you don't have your own compost pile, the count offers free compost to residents at parks throughout the county. Call 861-5000 for a location near you.

Other considerations for a successful garden

- Locate in full sun (5-6 hours/day) near a water source
- Site away from competing tree roots in well-drained soil
- Check for soil pH between 5.8-6.5 (too high, it ties up nutrients in the soil and makes them unavailable to plants; too low, some nutrients may reach toxic levels to plants)
- Use "*Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide*" to plan what to plant in your garden and the layout
- Use recommended varieties for Florida
- Maximize space by planting short- and long-season vegetables together (ex. carrots and radishes)
- Plant tall and short vegetables together (ex. corn and lettuce)
- Attend classes on gardening (see below) and visit the University of Florida website http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/TOPIC_Vegetable_Gardening
- Enjoy your harvest and share the surplus with others

Timely reminder: The Master Gardener plant sale is at Bee Ridge Park, 8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. on October 10.

Blooming & 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.

Upcoming educational classes:

Call 861-9900 to register for the following classes.

- Organic Gardening Overview Class, Orange Blossom Community Garden, 18th & Orange, 1:00 p.m. September 5
- Growing Herbs in Florida, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. September 9
- Chinch Bugs & White Grubs, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. September 9
- Butterfly Predators, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. September 16
- Butterfly Gardening, Twin Lakes Park, 2:30 p.m. September 16
- Florida Snakes, Shamrock Park, 2:00 p.m. September 17
- Organic Gardening Overview Class, Laurel Park, Collins and Forest Streets, Laurel, 9:30 a.m. September 19
- Annuals & Perennials, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. September 23
- Stinging Insects, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. September 23
- Container Gardening, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. September 30
- Edible Landscapes, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. September 30

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.

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