

Gardening Tips

By Wendy L. Wilber

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Vegetables

Spring gardens and gardeners are winding down with summer's heat. Although we garden year round in Florida, occasionally the garden needs a rest, especially if it is intensely managed. Summer is a good time to build up levels of organic matter in the soil. Incorporate leaves, grass clippings, pine needles, green plant clippings and manures into the soil. Allow them to decompose, then till them in for the fall garden. Or consider devoting the garden to a cover or a green manure crop for the summer. Warm weather cover crops include hairy indigo, castor bean, southern peas, French marigold, velvetbean and millet. Southern peas are harvestable, contribute nitrogen to the soil and act as a nematode depressor. Best varieties are Mississippi Silver and Iron and Clay.

Although the summer heat limits the number of vegetables that can be planted now, lima beans, okra, eggplant, watermelons, peppers, sweet potatoes, and southern peas may be planted anytime during the month. You can also plant



Mexican sunflowers provide great color and really attract butterflies.

unusual or 'minor vegetables' such as boniato (Cuban sweet potatoes), chufa (a relative of common nutsage), martynia (unicorn plant) luffa and bottle gourds. Spraying vegetables that are about finished setting fruit is a waste of time and money. High temperatures, especially accompanied by low humidity and moisture, hinder fruit set in tomatoes through failure in pollination and fertilization. Daytime temperatures above 90°

F and night temperatures above 70°F result in reduced flowering and fruit set.

Insect and disease problems can be serious during the summer. Insects such as stink bugs, weevils, beetles, and others can be controlled with Sevin. Leaf-eating caterpillars can be controlled with Sevin or *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Dipel or Thuricide).



For more information,
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Herbs

Any of the warm season herbs can be planted. They include basil, chamomile, chives, Vietnamese coriander, fennel, scented geranium, lemon balm, lemon verbena, lovage, sweet marjoram, mints, Greek oregano, Mexican oregano, oregano majoram, variegated Cuban oregano, parsleys, rosemary, sage, summer savory, French tarragon, Mexican tarragon, and thyme. Herbs should be harvested during the morning hours after the dew has evaporated.

Fruits and Nuts

It is harvest season for late blueberries, bunch grapes, and some pears. Blackberries should be fertilized with 1/3 lb. of 10-0-10 after harvest. Weed control is important but should be shallow and as infrequent as possible. Prune blueberries and blackberries after harvest.

Lawns

Here come the chinch bugs!!

Chinch bugs may be observed in St. Augustine grass from April

through September causing yellow or brown patches. Blades appear brown but not wilted. Scout the hottest areas of your yard first for the chinch bugs. They are often spotted in the grass at the corner of the driveway and sidewalk and the street.

An effective way of determining the presence of chinch bugs and mole crickets in the lawn is the soap flush method. Mix 1 1/2 oz. of dishwashing soap in a gallon watering can then drench a 4 by 4 foot area with the solution. Observe the area for 2 minutes; if the insects are present they will crawl to the surface. Spot treat area with Triacizide.

The summer rains have got the weeds up and growing. Weeds like chamber bitter, crabgrass and dove weed can take over your grass quickly. Selective herbicides can be used when temperatures are above 85 degrees. Pull the weeds by hand whenever you can and treat them with a selective herbicide when the daytime temperatures cool down.

There have a few specimens of gray leaf spot brought into the extension office. Gray leaf spot

is a fungal disease primarily of St. Augustine in the summer, especially now that our seasonal rains have returned. Prolonged wet foliage and excess available nitrogen tend to increase severity and spread of this disease. Elongated, oval brown spots can occur in the leaves' sheaves or stem. Some spots may have a yellow hallow. Disease blades wither and brown giving the lawn a scorched appearance. Mow less frequently and collect clippings if you have gray leaf spot. Treatment with fungicide labeled for turf grass will be necessary to control the gray leaf spot.

If you are considering an alternative to turf, perennial peanut groundcover is worth looking into. It is drought tolerant, provides an excellent groundcover and blooms in full sun. It only needs to be mowed one time a year. The drawbacks, it doesn't tolerate traffic very well and can die back in the winter time, but many gardeners are using it as a turf grass replacement. The cultivar called needle point has elongated leaves that remind you of blades of grass. Other cultivars include eco-turf, repens golden



Crab grass is best controlled in February.



Chamber bitter is a summer weed that sometimes over winters.



Doveweed can look like St. Augustine grass except that it has a white flower.





Perennial peanut makes a great ground cover.



To extend the blooming season of crape myrtles, prune off spent blossoms before they begin to form seed pods.

glory, and waxy leaf. Plant the potted perennial peanut on 12 inch centers.

Flowers

Even though it is the hottest time of the year, there are quite a few flowers that can be planted. Plant annual hibiscus, Balsam, Blue Daze, Blue Sage, caladiums, cannas, celosias clemome, coleus, Crossandra, Dahlberg Daisy, Exacum, Echinacea, Gerbera Daisy, Golden shrimp plant, Globar Amarath, goldenrod, Impatiens, Justicia, Kalanchoe, Lantana, Lisianthus, Melampodium, Mexican sunflower, New Guinea Impatiens, Nierembergia, Pentas, Portulaca, Purslane, Salvia, and Torenia.

Bulbs to plant anytime this month include Aztec Lily and Sterbergia. Fertilize one to two times during the growing season with 2-3 lbs. of 6-6-6 per 100 sq. ft. Mulch

around the plants to reduce weeds and prevent moisture evaporation. Keep soil moderately moist.

Remove fading flowers to encourage new flowering. Fertilize every 3-4 weeks with a slow release fertilizer. Fertilize daylilies toward the end of the month with 2 ½ lbs. of 6-6-6 per 100 sq. ft.

Trees and Shrubs

Crape myrtles are in full bloom now. To extend your blooming season of this beautiful tree, prune off spent blossoms before they begin to form the green, round seed pods.

Containerized trees and shrubs can be planted now. Prune azaleas only up to mid-July because buds will come soon. Cut back poinsettias by one-half to promote increased branching. Divide and replant ferns and liriopie that are too crowded.

Fertilize azaleas, camellias and gardenias with “Camellia-Azalea Special” or other acid-forming fertilizer now. Fertilize roses with each new flush of blooms. Plant palms and potted crape myrtle in bloom. Other containerized trees and shrubs usually can be safely planted at this time.

The nine banded armadillos are making their presence known. They root and trench in mulched landscape beds and even in lawns. If you can't keep them out of your yard you may consider

WILDLIFE HAPPENINGS

Swallow-tailed kites begin gathering as do purple martins and tree swallows in preparation for migrating south for the winter.

Later this month, young alligators and crocodiles will begin to hatch.



trapping them in a Have a heart type trap. They can be lured into the trap with bait worms or cat food. To request more information on your armadillo battle, call the extension office and request the information brochure on armadillos.

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please e-mail Wendy at wilbewl@ufl.edu.

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