

# Gardening Tips

By Wendy L. Wilber

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## Vegetables

By now you should have selected a site for your spring garden, had the soil tested (at least the pH), tilled in some organic matter (manure or compost), and selected the vegetables you want to plant. If your soil test indicates that your soil pH is low, add lime to raise it to the recommended level. The optimum pH range for garden soil is between 5.8 and 6.3. Lime needs are best met when lime is applied 2 to 3 months before the garden is to be planted.

However, lime can be added 1 or 2 weeks prior to planting if you mix it into the soil (6-8") and water to initiate the necessary chemical reaction. Your site needs to have at least 6 hours of direct sunlight and should be close to a water source.

Planting the second week of March is generally safe to avoid any injury or loss to cold. The average last killing freeze is March 10<sup>th</sup>.

Three to four weeks prior to planting, incorporate aged compost or animal manure into the soil at a rate of 25-100 lbs/100 square feet.



The dogwood blooms have finally arrived. Spring is here.

Till in any green manure or cover crops.

Fertilizer grades such as 6-6-6 or 10-0-10 should be broadcast over the entire garden plot at 2-4 lbs/100 square feet. Add micro-nutrients if the pH is above 6.3.

At planting time apply 3-5 ounces per 10 foot row in 1 or 2 bands 2-3 inches to the side of the row and 1-2 inches below the soil. Side-dress just beyond the leaves but be careful not to get any

fertilizer on the leaves. Fertilize the garden 2-3 times during the growing season using the banded rate (5oz/10ft row).

Warm season vegetables like green beans, lima beans, corn, cantaloupe, cucumbers, eggplant, okra, southern peas, pepper, sweet potatoes, squash, tomatoes, and pumpkins should be planted after March 10<sup>th</sup> (our last freeze date).



For more information, contact the Alachua County Extension Office at 2800 NE 39th Avenue, Gainesville, FL 32609 (352) 955-2402 or TDD/TYY (352) 955-2406

*Wendy Wilber*

Wendy Wilber, Environmental Horticulture Agent  
wilbewl@ufl.edu

## Fruits and Nuts

Now is the time to plant balled and burlapped or bare-root fruits and nuts. Potted fruit trees can be planted any time during the year. Plant as soon as possible so you allow plenty of time for roots to grow before leaf flushes.

Ask for Fact **Sheet #8, Fruits and Nuts for Alachua County**, to get the right varieties.

## Herbs

Herbs you can plant now include: basil, chamomile, cilantro, scented geraniums, Mexican oregano, perilla, and summer savory. Perennial herbs that can be planted include: chives, costmary, fennel, lemon balm, lemon grass, lemon verbena, lovage, oregano marjoram, sweet marjoram, mints, Greek oregano, oregano, variegated Cuban oregano, parsley (biennial), rosemary, sages, salad burnet, French sorrel, French tarragon, Mexican tarragon, thymes, and winter savory.

## Lawns

March marks the beginning of the lawn care season. By now many of the grasses that were dormant over the winter are greening up. All lawns need to be fertilized this month. If you had your soil tested, apply lime to increase pH (alkalinity) or sulfur to lower pH (acidity). Then apply a fertilizer.

Fertilizers formulas have changed because of Florida law. You will find products like 10-0-10 or 15-0-15 (N-P-K). Phosphorus occurs naturally in our soils, and is rarely deficient, your lawn will be fine with the new formula. Try to find a fertilizer with at least 30-50% of

### CURRENT EVENTS

**Kanapaha Spring Garden Festival**  
March 21<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> at Kanapaha Botanical Gardens

**Composter Sale and Rain Barrels**  
March 28<sup>th</sup> 8am - 4pm  
Earth Machines and barrels at a reduced rate – Home Depot (North west 13<sup>th</sup> street) parking lot – sponsored by Alachua County Waste Management

**Florida Friendly Plant Choices**  
March 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 11:00 am  
Some plant just thrive in Florida. Learn about the best trees, shrubs and plants for your home landscape in North central Florida. At the Gainesville Home Show (show admission required) at the UF O’Connell Center .

**Turf Boot Camp**  
March 18<sup>th</sup> 6:30pm-8:00pm  
Learn how to fertilize and water your lawn grass. This class will also the cover diseases, weeds, and insects that you may encounter in your lawn. Please call (352) 337-6209 to pre-register for this free class, to be held at the Alachua County Extension Office 2800 NE 39<sup>th</sup> Ave, Gainesville, FL.

**Super Tough Plants for Your Landscape**  
March 20<sup>th</sup> 3pm - 4:30pm  
Learn how to incorporate tough plants into your low maintenance landscape. Please call (352) 337-6209 to pre register for this free class, to be held at the Alachua County Extension Office 2800 NE 39<sup>th</sup> Ave, Gainesville, FL.

**The Live Oak**  
March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1pm  
The Live Oak tree is a symbol of strength and longevity. Come learn more about this Southern tree, and see great photos of area live oaks. At the Kanapaha Spring Garden Festival (festival admission required).

the nitrogen in a slow release or insoluble form.

Calibrate your fertilizer spreader to be sure that you are applying the amount you intend. After applying fertilizer, wash residue off the leaf blades by following up with a light irrigation.

Weeds can start early in the lawn. Weed killers (herbicides) usually kill a few of the weed seeds and weed seedlings. Pre-emergence herbicides should be applied prior to seed germination around mid March. If you had a problem last year with weeds such as doveweed or chamber bitter,





### This month is the best time to fertilize lawns.

apply atrazine as a pre-emergent herbicide.

Post-emergence herbicides should be applied when weeds are small. A good rule to remember is "Only the young die good." Multiple applications may be necessary for perennial weed control, but these herbicides may be damaging to the lawn if used improperly. Warm temperatures (70-80) increase activity, but yellowing or damage occurs when temperatures are greater than 85.

Weed control by hand is effective but very tedious. Keep weeds mowed to prevent flowering and to reduce number of weeds emerging from seed. Spot treat areas when possible with a non-selective herbicide containing glyphosate (kills anything it is sprayed on). As a last resort, use pre-or-post-emergent herbicides. It is very important to use the proper herbicide to kill selected weeds.

Weed and feed product use is discouraged, it is best to control the weeds separately from your fertilizer application.

Call for the document Weed Management in the home lawn <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP141>, it

will really help with those pesky weeds.

## Flowers

Plant ageratum, alyssum, African bush daisy, asters, baby's breath, begonia, black-eyed Susan vine, calendula, chrysanthemum, cosmos, delphinium, dianthus, geranium, gerbera daisy, heliotrope, snap dragons, statice, and sunflower. You can also plant perennials such as coreopsis (tick-seed), gaillardia (blanketflower), and salvias. Plant transplants rather than seeds to get a jump on the season.

Flowers prefer a rich and fertile soil so incorporate organic matter like peat, cow manure, or topsoil into beds at planting. Then fertilize with a slow release fertilizer. Bulbs to plant include Amazon lily, Aztec lily, blood lily, caladium, canna, crinum, dahlia, gladiolus lily, gloriosa lily, kaffir lily, walking iris, morea, spider lily, tuberose, zephyr lily, achimenes, allium, alstroemeria, begonia, gloxinia, tiger flower, and voodoo lily.

For more information on flowers, request **Circular 569 Annual**

**Flowers for Florida** from your County Extension Office.

## Trees and Shrubs

Containerized trees and shrubs may be planted now. Buy healthy plants. Be sure to select plants that are appropriate for the designated site. Consider low maintenance plants and try native species.

Palms, dogwoods, and redbuds benefit from additional Mg (magnesium sulfate). High quality fertilizer blends of palm or citrus special contain adequate amounts of Mg.

March is a safe time to prune trees and shrubs if you have not done so already. Delay pruning freeze damaged trees and shrubs so you can be sure which branches are dead. New growth from supposedly dead branches may surprise you. **Prune spring bloomers like azaleas, camellias, spirea, and hydrangeas after they bloom.**

Cut back pampas grass, and clip old growth that has turned brown



**Composting is good for your garden and the environment. Pick up a low cost composter on March 28th.**



or is damaged on liriopie to encourage new growth. March and April marks the safest time to plant poinsettias outside.

Camellias can be plagued with scales and spider mites. Scales can usually be found as white clusters on the leaves. Control with oils or insecticidal soaps. Mite damage appears as a bronzing of the leaf midrib. Mites can be controlled with regular oil sprays.

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please e-mail Wendy at [wilbewl@ufl.edu](mailto:wilbewl@ufl.edu). include your name, e-mail address and phone number.

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