

Gardening Tips

By Wendy L. Wilber

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Vegetables

Even though it is getting a bit late to plant many vegetables, there are a few you can still plant. When possible, choose summer-loving varieties or those which mature in less than 60 days. Buy transplants, not seeds, especially if you want to grow tomatoes. Crops like lima beans, okra, southern peas (blackeyes, crowders and others), eggplant, hot peppers and sweet potatoes love the summer heat. You can also plant tropical vegetables including luffa, boniato, bottle gourd, malabar spinach and chayote squash.

The downside to gardens planted in late spring or early summer is that they will be reaching their peak about the same time as summer pest problems. Be prepared for diseases and insect pests. They are much easier to control when they first occur. Try to prevent small problems from becoming big problems by scouting for insects and disease every day.

Weed control is best accomplished by hand-pulling, hoeing or mulching. Control is easier when the weeds are small. Do



Peaches like *Flordacrest* will be coming into fruit by the end of the month.

not allow weeds to go to seed, dropped seeds are future weeds.

Your garden needs regular watering to be productive. The garden needs 1 to 2 inches of water a week either from rain water or irrigation. So irrigate 2 or 3 times a week to apply the 1 to 2 inches.

Water during early morning hours to decrease your chances of disease. Use mulch to retain soil moisture and to keep the soil

temperatures down. If you have increased the organic matter content in your soil, you may be able to water a little less than those gardeners with very sandy soil.

If you have built up your soil by adding peat compost or manure over a period of time, you can get by with less fertilizer. Look for clues from your plants, if they show reduced color and vigor, you may need to fertilize.



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

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Hydrangeas perform well in shady spots with organic soil. They are blue in acid soils and pink in alkaline soils.

Remember it is possible to over fertilize! Rule of thumb: add 2-4 pounds of 6-6-6 or 8-8-8 fertilizer per 100 square feet. Your garden needs to be fertilized 2-3 times during the growing season.

Aphids, mites, beetles, thrips and leafhoppers have been pesky problems this spring. Repeated sprays of insecticidal soaps or a homemade soap solution (2 tbsp mild dishwashing soap/gallon water) are effective for controlling soft bodied insects. Botanical insecticides like Pyrethrum, Rotenone and Sabadilla are sold and may control hard bodied insects like beetles and grasshoppers. For the environment's sake, it's surely worth a try. If you are having trouble with caterpillars try hand picking then if needed use a Dipel, Thuricide which contains Bt a bacterium which targets only caterpillars.

For more information about these products, call the extension office

to request **Natural Products for Insect Pest Management** (ENY350).

Sticky traps like yellow index cards painted with Tangle Foot for whitefly control and barriers, like 'dixie' cups around stems for cutworm control, or a homemade beer trap for slugs (tray filled with stale beer plus 1 tbsp flour) can be tried.

If you have noticed that squash plants are flowering, but no fruits are forming or fruits get just so big and wither and die, the problem may be pollination. On most cucurbits, the first flowers to appear are all male flowers. They open and just fall off. Later female flowers should come on and given all conditions are right, weather, bees, temperature and timing, pollination should occur. Cucurbit relatives (squash, cucumbers, melons, pumpkins) require bees for pollination.

COMING EVENTS

Alachua County Master Gardener Plant Sale

May 16th, 8:00 am - noon

The Master Gardeners will be selling plants that they have propagated from their gardens and landscapes. Plan on arriving early for the best choices and growing advice from the local experts. The sale will be held at the Extension Office parking lot, 2800 NE 39th Avenue. Please bring a wagon or boxes if you can. Call (352) 955-2402 for more information.

Rain barrel Sale

May 23rd from 9 am to 4 pm

Sponsored by Alachua County Waste Watchers. Sale at the NW 13th Street Home Depot parking lot. High quality low cost rain barrels available to the public this one day.

Growing Fruit in Alachua County

May 7th 6:30 - 8 pm at the Extension Office 2800 NE 39th Ave Gainesville, FL

This class will cover growing citrus, blueberries, persimmons peaches and more in your back yard. Please call (352) 337-6209 and leave a message to register or call (352) 955-2402.

Butterfly Gardening with Perennials

May 21st 7:00 - 8:30 pm at the Extension Office 2800 NE 39th Ave Gainesville, FL.

Learn which plants bring in the butterflies and attract the caterpillars. Please call 352 337 6209 and leave a message to register or call (352) 955-2402.



Also cloudy, rainy weather or temperatures below 60 degrees can adversely affect bee activity and pollination set.

Herbs

Herbs that thrive in warm weather can be planted now. They include basil, sage, marjoram, horehound, ginseng, ginger, catnip, comfrey, chives, thyme, summer savory, borage, hyssop, lemon verbena, rosemary, tarragon, mint, and oregano.

The flavor of herbs is due in most part to volatile or essential oils contained in the leaves, seeds and fruits. Flavor is retained longer if herbs are harvested at the proper time then properly cured and stored.

Fruits and Nuts

You can plant any containerized fruits or nuts. Be sure to dig the hole 1-2 times the diameter of the root ball. It needs to be planted slightly higher than as it was in the container.

Citrus trees need to be fertilized in May or June. Use a complete fertilizer (6-6-6 or 8-8-8) or 'Citrus Special'. For newly planted citrus trees apply one pound of fertilizer per tree. Increase application by one pound per tree age until each application is ten pounds. Mature citrus trees need three applications of fertilizer per year. These trees should receive a maximum of 30 pounds of fertilizer per year.

For peach, plum, pear, persimmon, apple, and fig, apply about 1 pound of 10-0-10 or a similar complete fertilizer per tree during May of the first season. Each February in succeeding years,

apply about 1 pound of 10-0-10 or a similar complete fertilizer for each year until a maximum of 15 pounds per tree is reached.

Flowers

There are quite a few warm season annuals that can be planted now. So if you are thinking "what will grow in the heat?" Try amaranthus, begonia, celosia, coleus, cornflower, crossandra, dahlberg daisy, dusty miller, gazania, geranium, golden shrimp plant, gomphrena, heliotrope, impatiens, kalanchoe, marigold, Mexican sage, nicotiana, ornamental pepper, portulaca, rudbeckia, salvia, tithonia, thumbergia, vinca, and zinnia.

Perennials that can be planted include African iris, blackberry lily, blue-eyed grass, butterfly bush, butterfly weed, cigar flower, coneflower, coreopsis, daisy bush, dayflower, daylily, firespike, fleabane, Mexican daisy, gaillardia (blanket flower), gaura, gerbera

daisy, goldenrod, jacobinia, lion's ear, pentas, Philippine violet, phlox, plumbago, rudbeckia, salvias, shasta daisy, shrimp plant, Stokes aster, swamp sunflower, verbena, and yarrow.

Many of these plants work well as nectar sources in the butterfly garden. You can also plant larval host plants like milkweed, parsley, wild lime, passion vine, and calico vine to round out the butterfly garden.

Deadhead or pinch off dead and dying flowers, especially on geraniums, marigolds, and salvia. These flowers do not naturally shed their flowers.

Trees and Shrubs

If you have not fertilized your trees or shrubs and they are not thriving, you can do it now. Use a complete fertilizer with a 3:1:2 ratio. In mulched areas, spread the fertilizer on top of the mulch about 1 to 2 times the canopy



Mexican sunflowers are a must have annual for any butterfly garden.



area. Be sure to water after fertilizing so the nutrients can get to the roots.

This is a good time to fertilize and plant palms; use a complete fertilizer formulated especially for palms 8-2-12 if the best analysis for palm fertilizer in Florida

Check out gardening questions and solutions at http://alachua.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/ask_wendy/index.shtml

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

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