



Highlights in

Horticulture

Baker County

February 2016

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Dear Extension Friends,

February is typically the coldest month of the year, but there are still plenty of annual flowers and vegetables that can take the chill. See page 2 for a list of what to plant this month and plan to gear up for spring with us during our lunch-n-learn program scheduled for early March.

Best Regards,

Alicia

Alicia R. Lamborn
Horticulture Extension Agent
Baker County Extension Service

Master Gardener Lunch - n - Learn

Friday, March 4th 11am – 2pm

Join the County Horticulture Agent and Master Gardeners during your lunch break to learn about gardening!

Where: Baker County Extension Office (Ag Center)
1025 W. Macclenny Ave Macclenny, FL

Demonstrations

- Container Gardening
- DIY Tower Gardens
- Trap Crops

Free Stuff

- Gardening Information
- Answers to Your Questions
- Bring Plants/Insects for ID
- Vegetable Seed Give-away

Lunch – n – Learn: Sit down for lunch in the classroom and enjoy a free class



WHAT TO PLANT IN NORTH FLORIDA



FEBRUARY

FLOWERS

Alyssum Baby's Breath
 Calendula Calibrachoa
 Carnation Delphinium
 Dahlberg Daisy
 Dianthus Dusty Miller
 Foxglove Hollyhock
 Ornamental Cabbage / Kale
 Pansy Petunia
 Snapdragon
 Viola

VEGETABLES

Arugula Kale
 Beets Kohlrabi
 Broccoli Lettuce
 Brussel Sprouts Mustard
 Cabbage Onions, bunching
 Carrots Peas, English/Snow
 Cauliflower Potatoes, Irish
 Celery Radish
 Chinese Cabbage Spinach
 Collards Swiss Chard
 Endive/Escarole Turnips

PLANTING & FERTILIZING TIPS

Most Florida soils benefit greatly from the addition of organic matter such as compost.

Cool season flowering annuals that can take the chill will continue to thrive this month.

For longer lasting color, consider planting species that will also tolerate heat and shouldn't need to be removed until summer such as Dahlberg Daisy, Dianthus, and Dusty Miller.

Controlled-release fertilizers provide a continuous nutrient supply over an extended period of time. For best results, apply at the labeled rate or based on your soil test results.

RESOURCES :

Gardening with Annuals in Florida
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/MG/MG31900.pdf>

Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/VH/VH02100.pdf>

UF/IFAS Extension Baker County
presents

8th annual Spring Garden Festival

Saturday, April 2, 2016
 9 am - 2 pm

IN THE ARBORETUM & GARDENS

1025 w. macclenny ave
 macclenny ag center

plant
SALE

KIDS
Activities

gardening
EXHIBITS

Florida-Friendly
Landscaping
ADVICE

FREE
ENTRY

The Foundation for the Gator Nation
 An Equal Opportunity Institution

Interested in becoming a **vendor** for this event?
 Call (904) 259-3520 or Email: alamborn@ufl.edu

A Valentine's Day Plant: The Cacao or Chocolate Tree

Valentine's Day may be the one day that you allow yourself to indulge in chocolate treats without any guilt. But have you ever thought about where chocolate comes from?

Cacao, or cocoa, is an ancient crop having been harvested and used by the indigenous people of Central and South America for thousands of years. It was introduced to Europe during the 16th century, but it wasn't until the early 1800s that solid chocolate was manufactured. Then, the invention of milk-chocolate by the Swiss in 1876 led to the world-wide multi-billion-dollar chocolate processing industry. Cocoa is now grown in 58 countries and on more than 17 million acres world-wide and is worth in excess of \$4 billion to the world's economy annually.

Cocoa are small trees (25-30 feet) with few branches. At the tips of the branches are rather large leaves (up to 24 inches long by 4 inches wide) attached by a long petiole or leaf stem that allows the leaf to swivel to catch sunlight. The cocoa tree produces flowers on the older branches and trunk. A special tissue called the cushion produces up to 5 small flowers and the cushion may flower repeatedly.



After pollination the fruit that follows is called a pod. The pod takes 5 to 7 months or more to fully develop. It may be green or red, turning yellow when ripe. It has a thick peel and may be 4 to 13 inches long with a round or cylindrical shape. Pods contain 20 to 60 seeds and seeds are covered with a mucilage that tastes sweet. After seeds are extracted, the sweet mucilage can be consumed and the seeds can be processed to make chocolate.

Want a chocolate tree for Valentine's Day instead of a bouquet of roses? Cocoa plants are best adapted to hot, humid tropical environments with year round temperatures above 68°F, no freezing temperatures, and regular rainfall. So unless you are willing to move to a more tropical location, you can keep dreaming.



An Endangered Treat

Our increasing demand for chocolate combined with a decrease in supply due to drought, disease, and changes in farming practices have people calling the world's most delectable treat "endangered".

But before you run out and begin stockpiling candy bars, there are reports that top chocolate companies are helping to train farmers in sustainable production and working with scientists to battle crop disease in order to save the delicious confection.

For now though, I recommend you savor every bite!



Reference: Crane, J. H., Balerdi, C. F., and Joyner, G. (2005). Cocoa (Chocolate Bean) Growing in the Florida Home Landscape. University of Florida. <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs307>

Photo credits: www.fruitlovers.com and Wikipedia.org

Good Bug , Bad Bug: Mighty Mites

Unless you're an entomologist, identifying insects can sometimes be difficult. Some appear similar, making it even harder to determine who's who. Check out these look-a-likes of the insect world, and always remember to correctly identify a pest (we can help with that) before spraying pesticides.

Spider Mites

All mites have needle-like mouthparts. Spider mites feed by piercing the plant tissue and sucking out juices. They are found primarily on the undersides of the leaves, although most gardeners don't notice their presence until the appearance of spider-like webbing which may be spun over entire branches.

Adult mites range in color from white to tan, greenish yellow or reddish orange. Immature mites look like smaller versions of the adult. They have eight legs and are about 1/50 of an inch long. Their very small size makes viewing them difficult without a hand lens.



Webbing produced by twospotted spider mites. Photograph by University of Florida.



Twospotted spider mites. Photograph by University of Florida.

The two-spotted spider mite is considered to be one of the most destructive spider mites — attacking over 200 species of plants including landscape ornamentals, fruit crops, vegetable crops, and even greenhouse crops.

Predatory Mites

Predatory mites attack pest mites, but will also eat very small insects like thrips and will even eat pollen when mite prey is unavailable.

At least one species of predatory mite is naturally found in Florida, but there are five species commercially available for purchase. These are typically used in greenhouses as biological control agents, effectively reducing pesticide applications.

So how do you tell them apart?



Predatory mites:

- Have longer legs
- The front pair of legs is often extended forward
- They are more active and move about at a fast pace
- They are often red or orange in color
- They do not produce webs



Baker County Extension Service

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For Extension Programs offered around the state, see the IFAS Extension Web Calendar at <http://calendar.ifas.ufl.edu/calendar/index.htm>.

Extension programs are open to all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, handicap, or national origin. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person needing a special accommodation to participate in any activity, should contact the Baker County Cooperative Extension Service at 1025 West Macclenny Avenue, Macclenny, FL 32063 or telephone (904) 259-3520 no later than ten (10) days prior to the event. Hearing impaired persons can access the foregoing telephone by contacting the Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8770 (voice) or 1-800-955-8771 (TDD).