UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

IFAS EXTENSION

Highlights in Horticulture

Baker County

July 2016

Inside this issue:

Dear Extension Friends,

Escape the summer heat later this month by joining us for a gardening class that offers landscaping tips, two gardening books and a plant of choice for your yard! Additional plants will also be available for purchase—exclusively for class participants. Don't miss out!

Best Regards,

Alicia

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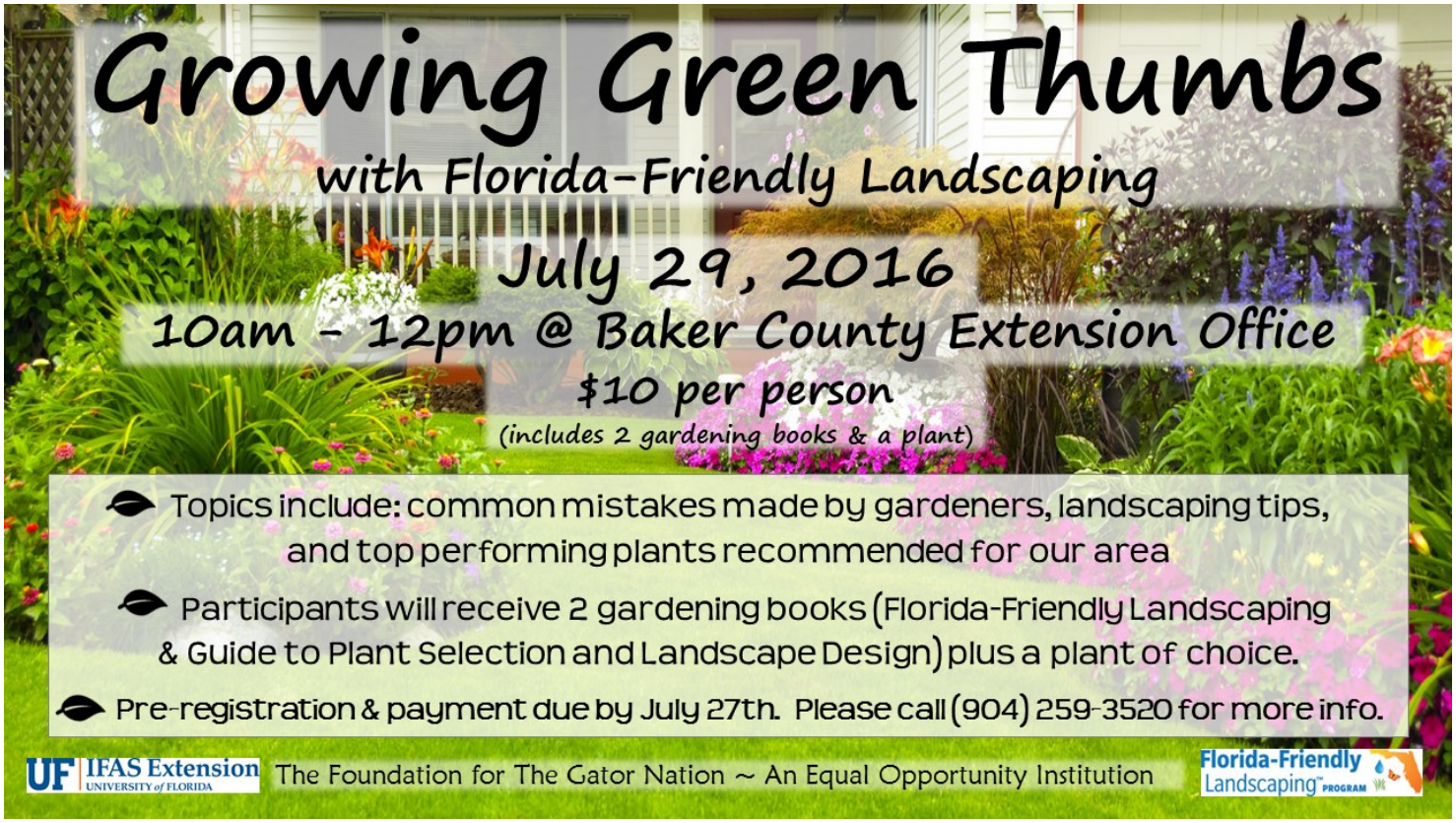

WHAT TO PLANT IN NORTH FLORIDA

JULY

FLOWERS

Angelonia* Begonia, wax
Celosia* Coleus*
Crossandra Dusty Miller
Euphorbia 'Diamond Frost'
Impatiens Kalanchoe
Marigold* Melampodium
Moss Rose
New Guinea Impations
Ornamental Pepper
Pentas* Torenia
Tropical Sage Verbena
Vinca Zinnia*

*Annuals to use as cut flowers

Selected annuals with moderate to high salt tolerance: Dusty Miller, Kalanchoe, Moss Rose, Vinca, Wax Begonia, Zinnia

VEGETABLES

Beans, lima Eggplant
Jerusalem Artichoke
Peas, southern Peppers
Pumpkin (early July)

WATERING TIPS

Install a micro-irrigation system that uses water more efficiently by delivering small volumes of water directly to the root zone of plants through low-flow emitters, such as micro-spray jets, micro-bubblers, or drip tubes.

Disease problems may also be reduced when using drip tubes and drip emitters that keep irrigation water off of leaf surfaces.

Microirrigation kits are available for vegetable gardens and flower beds, plus they are easy to install and custom design to suit the layout of your garden.

Purchase a timer that hooks up to the spigot for help making sure you don't leave the water running longer than it needs to.

Species Spotlight: Southern Live Oak

A large, sprawling, picturesque tree, usually graced with Spanish moss and strongly reminiscent of the Old South. Live Oak is one of the broadest spreading of the oaks, providing large areas of deep, inviting shade. Reaching 40 to 60 feet in height with a 60 to 120 foot spread and usually possessing many sinuously curved trunks and branches, Live Oak is an impressive sight for any large-scale landscape. An amazingly durable American native, it can measure its lifetime in centuries if properly located and cared for in the landscape. Give it plenty of room since the trunk can grow to more than six feet in diameter.

Live oaks thrive in full or partial sun and tolerate all soil types from occasionally wet to well-drained. Like other oaks, care must be taken to develop a strong branch structure early in the life of the tree. Be sure to eliminate multiple trunks and branches which form a narrow angle with the trunk as these are likely to split from the tree as it grows older. It is usually pest-free. Although insect galls commonly form on leaves and twigs, they are not a cause for concern.

Cultivars & Varieties:

Live oak cultivars are valued because they insure uniformity, and eliminate some of the unruly plant growth and variations in form and structure that are inherent in the southern live oak species.

'Cathedral Oak' - This cultivar has a pyramidal canopy when young that becomes broad to ovoid as it matures. Expect a mature height of 40 to 80 feet with a 60 to 120 foot spread.

'Highrise' - This cultivar has a uniform, upright pyramidal growth habit with a mature height of 30 to 40 feet and a spread of 12 to 25 feet, making it perfect for smaller landscapes.

'Millennium Oak' - This cultivar has the traditional, picturesque growth of live oak and has a predictable growth rate and habit. Expect a mature height of 50 to 75 feet and a spread of 60 to 100 feet.

The reddish-orange new growth of the 'Highrise' Live Oak located in the Arboretum is quite attractive. Visitors are welcome to the Arboretum during business hours.

Adapted and excerpted from: Gilman, E. and Watson, D. (1993). *Quercus virginiana*: Southern Live Oak. University of Florida: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/st564

Solarizing Your Soil

Soil solarization is a practice used in home vegetable gardens and small fields to manage weeds, nematodes, diseases, and insects in soil. The soil surface is covered with clear plastic, which allows sunlight to pass through and heat up the soil to temperatures that are lethal to many of these pests. If effective, solarization can reduce pest population levels for 3-4 months, sometimes longer.

Steps for Solarizing Your Soil

1. Where: Solarization can be done on any soil type in Florida but for best results, should be done in open, unshaded areas. If the sun is blocked by trees or buildings during the day, results can be poor.

2. When: The best times for solarization are during the hottest summer months from June through August. It has been attempted in the spring and fall, but may not be as reliable then because temperatures are cooler. June may actually be the best month, because rainfall may be lower than in the other summer months, although this is untested.

3. Site Preparation: The area to be solarized must first be cleared of existing weeds and debris. Tilling the site is helpful to increase penetration of heat into the top 6 inches of soil. Sticks, old roots, and other debris should be removed so they do not poke holes in the plastic.

4. Soil Moisture and Heat Conduction: Water helps to conduct heat, so best results occur if soil is moist but not waterlogged or muddy. If the soil is very dry and dusty, the solarization will not work as well. On sandy soils in Florida, the best conditions are when the soil received rain or irrigation the day before plastic is applied. If rain or irrigation occur just a short time before applying plastic, the soil can be heavy, muddy, or otherwise difficult to work with, and the clear plastic can get dirty.

5. Cover Soil with Clear Plastic: Solarization can be done on raised beds or on flat ground. It is better for the beds to run north-south to ensure that the raised edges receive direct sunlight in the morning or afternoon.

A clear plastic sheet or strip is stretched out over the area to be treated. The plastic piece should be a little larger than the area treated because the edges will need to be buried in soil. The plastic sheeting used must be completely clear. Other types of plastic should not be used. Black plastics or reflective plastics will get hot on the surface, but will not allow sunlight through to heat the soil below. Translucent or whitish plastics may allow some sunlight through, but are insufficient at solarizing the soil.

At present, there are no recommendations about type or brand of clear plastic to use. Some people think thinner plastic is better, but the main consideration is that the plastic should be strong enough to last for at least 6 weeks in Florida's summer sun without breaking up.

6. Seal Plastic into Soil: The plastic should be stretched tight and the edges sealed completely by burying in soil. If edges are not completely sealed, heat will leak out and problems may result in these cooler areas.

7. Solarize for at Least 6 Weeks: The plastic should be left in place with all edges buried for at least 6 weeks. If needed, keep the plastic in place and remove it only once you are ready to plant your garden. If the procedure was successful, weeds and soil pests should be reduced for 3-4 months.

For more information on solarization, visit http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in856 and http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in824

Adapted and excerpted from: McSorley, R. and Gill, H. K. (2010). *Introduction to Soil Solarization*. http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in856

These Plants Enjoy the Limelight

Photo credit: http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/

'Limelight' Dracaena

Dracaena, commonly known as "corn plant," comes in different varieties. But one variety you may not be familiar with is the 'Limelight' Dracaena, famous for its striking lime green foliage. The glossy leaves of this tropical plant will glow, lighting up the room in your home or office. In fact, keeping it in a low-light location helps maintain the dramatic lime coloring. If you want to try growing 'Limelight' Dracaena, use a standard potting mix and keep the soil moist for best results. 'Limelight' Dracaena can grow to 5 feet tall by up to 4 feet wide, but should stay smaller when grown indoors.

'Limelight' Hydrangea

Of course, every gardener is familiar with Hydrangeas. French Hydrangeas (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) tend to be the most popular, but the Florida native Oakleaf Hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) and Panicle Hydrangea (*Hydrangea paniculata*) are also available from stores. Panicle Hydrangea has smaller leaves, is the most cold-hardy of the hydrangeas and can grow quite large (sometimes trained as a small tree). Unlike French hydrangeas, its showy white blossoms last longer and soil pH doesn't affect the flower color. The 'Limelight' panicle hydrangea has white flowers that turn a bright, light green. Give it the same care as your other hydrangeas and it will reach 6 to 8 feet tall and wide.

Photo credit: http://www.monrovia.com/

'Limelight' Artemesia

Limelight artemesia (*Artemisia lactiflora* 'Limelight') is a perennial garden plant that is grown for its yellow and green variegated foliage. The flowers are not showy, but leaves are aromatic. It grows about 12-15 inches tall and can spread rapidly in a moist, well-drained site making it suitable for use as a groundcover.

Photo credit: http://www.glasshouseworks.com/

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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.