



In this Issue

Title	Page
Extension Update	1
Growing Herbs	2
Branch Failures	3
Spring Harvest	4
Blackberries	5
Upcoming Classes	6
What to Plant	6
What's That? Answer!	6

Extension Update by Larry Figart

"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they have the heart." – Elizabeth Andrew

We are taking applications for the 2022 Master Gardener Class. If you have an interest in gardening and serving your community, please read on.



Master Gardeners receive training in horticulture and in exchange agree to give volunteer service by helping their local county extension office. The training will consist of both in person and online training. Tentatively beginning on August 9, 2022, each Tuesday from 9:00 am to Noon, we will meet as a group, either in person to do hands on training, or virtually to discuss the weeks topics. You need to be a Duval County resident. If you live outside of Duval County, contact your local County Extension Office. The cost to participate is \$150. If you are interested, go to <http://btrr.im/7fg1o> and fill out an online application.

SCAN HERE!



What's That?



Damage



Nymph



Adult

Images by Larry Figart, UF/IFAS



Around the Yard by Tonya Ashworth

Did you wait a little too late to plant your spring vegetable garden and think you now have to wait until fall to grow edibles? Well, you are a bit far behind when it comes to tomatoes, but what about herbs instead? Rosemary, basil, sage, and other warm season herbs can be planted now. I like to grow them in my yard to attract beneficial insects, use in cooking, and for material for floral arrangements. Here are some tips for growing and using herbs in your garden:

- 1) To keep herbs producing large, good-quality leaves, you should pinch off flower buds to encourage vegetative growth and keep plants stockier. Often when they go to flower, leaf production slows and sometimes the leaves can become bitter. However, if you let a few of them bolt, their small flowers can lure beneficial insects to your garden to help fight off garden pests such as aphids.
- 2) Watering needs vary depending on what herb you are growing. Group herbs together with similar water requirements. For instance, lavender and rosemary like drier, sandier soils, while mint and basil prefer more rich and moist soils.
- 3) Herbs don't need a lot of fertilizer; just a handful of compost as top dressing should suffice.
- 4) Scout for insects and other issues. Basil often gets munchd by slugs, but you can spread diatomaceous earth at the base of the plants to help with this. Rosemary frequently has spider mites, which can be treated with an insecticidal soap. Fennel and dill sometimes get eaten down to bare sticks by caterpillars, but those caterpillars eventually become black swallowtail butterflies, so I always plant extra.
- 5) Plant varieties that are disease resistant or best suited to Florida. Basil typically gets downy mildew, which is a fungal disease, but there are resistant varieties such as 'Amazel Basil' and 'Besto Pesto' that you can plant. Thai basil is also less susceptible. Using drip irrigation can help keep the foliage dry and cut down on disease.
- 6) Don't be afraid to plant outside of the raised bed. Perennial herbs can go right in the shrub border and flower beds. Rosemary is a great choice, as is sage with the silvery leaves contrasting against the typical green foliage. Use thyme as a ground cover or in rock gardens. Put your dill and fennel in the butterfly garden for the black swallowtails to find. Use a container to keep mint under control.
- 7) Harvest herbs just as flower buds form. This is when the essential oils are at their peak. Oils are strongest on sunny days too.
- 8) You have the ability to harvest the herbs, but also preserve them with proper drying or freezing techniques. Many herbs such as sage, mint, thyme, and lemon balm can be tied together in small bundles using rubber bands and hung upside down in a dry, dark area after being thoroughly cleaned. To freeze, chop them into very small pieces, add some olive oil, and pour into ice cube trays.



Black swallowtail caterpillar on dill.
Image by Tonya Ashworth, UF/IFAS

Out on a Limb by Larry Figart

Recently, a large limb broke away from a very mature live oak in Riverside Park during some high winds from the passage of a cold front. This unfortunate event provided a great opportunity to investigate why some branches fail and perhaps prevent it from happening in our own landscapes. An inspection of where the branch split apart revealed a condition called included bark. Included bark is where the bark is included or embedded in the union of a branch with the trunk or another branch. The included bark acts as a barrier that gets trapped in between the two branches and does not allow a strong branch union to form. In the case of this very old tree, the included bark started forming perhaps a more than a century ago and was not revealed until the branch union could no longer support the weight of the branch.



Branch failure on mature live oak due to included bark. Image by Larry Figart, UF/IFAS

Included bark is formed when two branches that are close in size to each other originating from the same point in the trunk form a “V”. The two branches are called co-dominant stems. As the two co-dominant stems grow in diameter, the bark becomes trapped or embedded between the stems forming included bark.

There are a few things that can be done to identify and reduce co-dominant stems in the landscape. First, purchase quality trees. Trees that do not have good structure require more pruning to create better structure. The better-quality trees have a single dominant trunk.

Don't purchase trees from a nursery with co-dominant stems. Trees with two or more leaders (co-dominant stems) are weaker and may split apart as they grow.

Next, have your established trees inspected regularly by an ISA Certified Arborist. Certified Arborists are trained to identify co-dominant stems and how to correct them. Correcting defects early (when the trees are young and the branches are smaller and lighter) is much better than having to fix the problem as the trees grow older. To find an ISA Certified Arborist, go to <https://www.treesaregood.org/findanarborist/findanarborist>.

In younger trees, co-dominant stems can be resolved by structural pruning to develop a single trunk. Developing a single trunk with one dominant leader starts by identifying the stem that will make the best leader. Then either remove or shorten the competing stem(s) by structurally pruning. For more information on structural pruning of young trees, go to https://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/documents/ch_12_mw04.pdf

Pruning mature trees requires more specialized equipment and skill and is more expensive than pruning younger trees. Furthermore, larger, mature trees are less tolerant of heavy pruning, and need more time to close over large wounds. For information on pruning mature trees, look up https://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/documents/ch_13_mw06.pdf

With regular inspection of mature trees by Certified Arborists, homeowners can significantly reduce the risk by identifying defects in their trees and taking care of them before they become a problem. By planting quality trees residents can reduce the risk of future branch failures. More information on tree care and maintenance can be found on the University of Florida “Ask IFAS” website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>



Included bark on small branches. Image by Larry Figart, UF/IFAS

Growing in the Garden by Beth Marlowe



Vegetables harvested from the Urban Demonstration Garden.
Image by Beth Marlowe, UF/IFAS

The spring harvest is underway! At the beginning of May we are harvesting the last of our cool season crops like peas, carrots, strawberries and leeks. And we are just beginning to harvest the early tomatoes, peppers and eggplants. Early varieties can be a good way to squeeze in the maximum amount of production between mid-March—when we can set our warm season crops out without worry of frost—and the end of June, when the weather is getting too hot for some crops and insect pressure is much higher.

Two varieties we tried this year are Stupice tomatoes and Patio Baby eggplants. Both were planted outside in mid-March, developed vigorous plants and began producing fruits before the end of April. Patio Baby eggplants are full and compact, producing a multitude of flowers and beautiful, small-purple fruit. They are the perfect size for one person to grill, and the plants do well in containers. Stupice tomatoes are small globes and are very tasty (as I can tell you from personal experience)! Some of our bell peppers, like X3R Red Knight are currently large, blocky and green, but we'll wait until they turn red to harvest.

Elsewhere in the garden our blackberry bushes are flowering and beginning to develop fruit, which will ripen in May-



Small purple eggplant hiding beneath leaves. Image by Beth Marlowe, UF/IFAS

June. There are many thornless cultivars available, and they can be erect bushes or trailing kinds, like ours, that require trellising. With good irrigation and drainage, as well as weed control, they are easy to grow. And their beautiful flowers are reminiscent of cherry blossoms, for those who miss that annual spring show from up north.

Blackberry - first signs of fruit and flowering plants. Images by Beth Marlowe, UF/IFAS



The Urban Demonstration

Garden cucurbits are thriving in a variety of plantings. We are trying several different varieties of cucumbers, and many of those plants are flowering and beginning to produce fruit. Summer squash, like zucchini and yellow squash are coming along as well. We have also planted Seminole pumpkin and birdhouse gourds in our large in-ground garden beds.

Corn and beans are on the way, along with more warm season trials. If you'd like to see and learn more about what we're doing, sign up for one of our monthly open houses in Eventbrite. And if you can't make an open house, contact us at (904) 255-7450 for information about other opportunities.

In Focus: Blackberries for Northeast Florida

by Beth Marlowe

If you have noticed the high price of berries at the grocery store lately, you might be wondering if you can grow any of them in your own yard. The answer is yes, you can! And one of the easiest to grow is the blackberry.

Blackberries are native to north Florida, and they are related to roses. They are fond of more temperate climates and require chilling hours in the winter, so they are not as good an option for central and south Florida. Even if you can find some native black-



Images by UF/IFAS

berries, you may not care for the taste; they are often smaller and less sweet. Size is variable, and production is not especially high. Finally, their canes are thorny, making

harvesting a prickly matter.

As blackberries have become more popular, tastier new thornless varieties have been developed for home gardeners and commercial growers. Many of the best ones have been developed by the University of Arkansas, where they grow well and are named after Native American tribes. Several varieties with lower chilling requirements to look for when purchasing are 'Kiowa,' 'Osage,' 'Natchez,' and 'Arapaho.'

Blackberries are perennial plants that can live for many years. In Florida they may remain productive for around 5 years. They are often planted in winter as bare-root plants and grow best in a site with full sun, good air circulation and good soil drainage.

They need a lot of space, so plant them several feet apart within a row, and leave even more space between rows.

If you are just starting out on your blackberry adventure, you will have to be patient! Shoots grow during the first year after planting, but no berries will be produced until the following year. To care for new plants, make sure they have regular irrigation, and control weeds around them. They have shallow roots, so be careful not to hoe more than two inches deep near your plants. They don't need much fertilizer—just a small amount of a balanced complete fertilizer in late spring or summer should do the trick. You'll also need to know if your cultivar is an erect or trailing variety. Most of the newer ones are erect, meaning they stand up on their own, but some are trailing and will need to be supported by a trellis.

In order to form berries, the flowers will need to be pollinated, so do everything you can to encourage honeybees or native bees to spend time in your yard. Most of the cultivars developed by the University of Arkansas are self-fruitful and do not need another variety in order to produce fruit. Flowers generally form from March-April, and berries ripen from May-June.

Even though getting your blackberry patch set up may take a little effort at the beginning, the plants are relatively care-free once they get going. They typically don't have insect problems that need to be treated, and disease problems can be minimized by using good cultural practices (using drip irrigation, controlling weeds and fertilizing appropriately). Try planting several varieties that have slightly different flowering and fruiting dates, and have fresh berries over several months each year.

Additional Resources

[Video: Growing and Saving Blackberries, UF IFAS Escambia County Extension](#)
[The Blackberry](#)
[UF Blackberry Pest Management](#)



What to Plant in May and June

Annuals: Plants that can take summer heat include salvia, angelonia, wax begonia, and ornamental pepper

Bulbs: Planting (early, mid and late-blooming) varieties of daylily ensures months of color from these low-maintenance plants.

Vegetables: Swiss chard will take the heat as well as okra, southern pea, and sweet potato

Herbs: Continue to plant heat-loving herbs, including basil, oregano, Mexican tarragon, and rosemary

To add easy color: Don't forget salvias, coneflowers, bulbine, stokesia, gaura, porterweed, plumbago, firecracker plant, firebush, firespike, verbena, and many others that are great at providing color that require less maintenance than most annuals.

Upcoming Classes

Scan Code
for current list of
ALL Duval Extension Classes



Date, Time, Cost	Event & Registration	Location
May 18th 6-7 pm free	Choosing Right Plant for the Right Place (904) 255-2665	Highlands Regional Library 1826 Dunn Ave.
May 25th 12-1 pm \$5.00	Herbs for Lunch! Growing and Propagating Herbs Register via Eventbrite: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/325109781107	Online via Zoom
May 26th 2-3:30 pm \$5.00	Backyard Hen Training This informational course is on caring for backyard hens and is a prerequisite to receive a Backyard Hen Permit from Duval County. Register via Eventbrite: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/backyard-hen-training-in-person-tickets-321813271157	Duval Extension 1010 N McDuff Ave.

Canning Center Classes - call (904) 255-7450 or go to:

<https://FRMParks.eventbrite.com> for more information

June 6th 9 am-Noon Starts at \$25.00	Mango Lime Salsa https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mango-lime-salsa-tickets-311159736147	Canning Center 2525 Commonwealth Ave.
June 11th 9 am-Noon Starts at \$25.00	Summer in a Jar https://www.eventbrite.com/e/summer-in-a-jar-strawberry-blueberry-watermelon-tickets-323307640857	Canning Center 2525 Commonwealth Ave.

What's That? Answer! by Larry Figart

Eastern lubber grasshopper is surely the most distinctive grasshopper species found in the southeastern US. Adult lubbers are mostly yellow or tawny, with black on the farthest portion of the antennae. The hind wings are short and incapable of providing lift for flight.

Nymphs (immature grasshoppers) typically are almost completely black, but with a distinctive yellow, orange, or red stripe located dorsally (though occasionally they are reddish brown).

Young nymphs are highly gregarious, and remain that way through most of the nymphal period, though the intensity dissipates with time. Especially at night, they tend to aggregate and may climb vegetation to rest for the evening. Predators such as birds and lizards learn to avoid these insects due to the production of toxic secretions by the adult hoppers. Go to <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN132> for more information.



Adult eastern lubber grasshopper, *Romalea microptera* (Beauvois), intermediate color phase.
Image by John Capinera, UF