

Know, Sow, Grow *newsletter*

UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County

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CULTIVATING CULTURE: FLAGLER COUNTY'S MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF SERVICE

By Judy Jean, Extension Agent, Urban Horticulture

In the lush landscapes of Flagler County, Florida, a dedicated group of individuals has been sowing seeds of knowledge, nurturing gardens, and blossoming a sense of community for four decades. The Master Gardener Volunteer Program, a cornerstone of horticultural education and outreach, is marking its remarkable 40-year journey in Flagler County, a testament to the enduring commitment to fostering sustainable gardening practices and environmental stewardship.

Established in 1984, the Master Gardener Volunteer Program in Flagler County has been a beacon of green expertise, offering invaluable resources and guidance to gardening enthusiasts, homeowners, and the wider community. From conducting workshops and seminars to providing hands-on assistance, the Master Gardener Volunteers have been instrumental in cultivating a greener, healthier, and more vibrant community.

March holds special significance for Flagler County as it has been proclaimed as Master Gardener Month, a time to honor and celebrate the dedication and contributions of these passionate volunteers. Throughout the season, a series of events, workshops, and garden tours will be organized to showcase the achievements of the Master Gardener Program and inspire others to join in the gardening movement.

The Master Gardener Volunteer Program is more than just a gardening initiative; it's a community-driven effort that promotes environmental sustainability, enhances green spaces, and fosters a deeper connection to nature. Through their extensive training and ongoing education, Master Gardeners are equipped with the knowledge and skills to address a wide range of gardening challenges, from plant diseases to soil management, and from water conservation to integrated pest management.

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Master Gardener Volunteers**

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Our Mission

To assist Extension Agents in providing research-based horticultural education to Florida residents.

Our Vision

To be the most trusted resource for horticultural education in Florida.

Cultivating Culture continued from page 1

One of the hallmarks of the Master Gardener Program is its emphasis on sharing knowledge and empowering others to become confident and responsible gardeners. Whether it's through community gardens, school programs, or outreach events, Master Gardeners actively engage with people of all ages, backgrounds, and skill levels, igniting a passion for gardening and fostering a sense of environmental stewardship.

As Flagler County celebrates the 40th anniversary of its Master Gardener Volunteer Program, it's a time to reflect on the countless gardens nurtured, the minds enlightened, and the bonds forged within the community. It's a testament to the dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment of Master Gardeners who have dedicated their time and expertise to make Flagler County a greener and more sustainable place to live.

Looking ahead, the Master Gardener Volunteer Program remains committed to its mission of promoting sustainable gardening practices, preserving natural resources, and empowering individuals to become guardians of the environment. With each seed planted, each garden tended, and each lesson shared, the Master Gardeners of Flagler County continue to cultivate a legacy of green excellence that will inspire future generations to bloom and thrive.

As we celebrate 40 years of the Master Gardener Volunteer Program in Flagler County, let us sow the seeds of gratitude and appreciation for all those who have contributed to this remarkable journey. Together, let's nurture our gardens, cultivate our community, and embrace the beauty and bounty of nature that surrounds us. Happy Master Gardener Month to all, and may our gardens continue to flourish for generations to come.

PHOTO: Flagler County Board of Commissioners presenting proclamation, Carlos Hernandez

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Here are some of the places you can find us this spring:

Palm Coast Library

In the Lobby to answer your questions
Typically the 4th Saturday of each month
from 9:30-11:30 am
March 23, April 27, May 25, June 22

Palm Coast Garden Club Spring Fest & Plant Sale

Master Gardener Outreach Table
Saturday, April 6
9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Flagler County Master Gardener Plant Sale

Flagler County Extension Office
Saturday, May 18, 2024
9:00 am - 2:00 pm



Horticultural Workshop Series

at the *Palm Coast Community Center*
Register at parksandrec.fun

Warm-Season Vegetables

Tuesday, March 26 6:30-7:30 pm
Friday, March 29 10:00-11:00 am

Caring for your Flowering Plants

Tuesday, April 23 6:30-7:30 pm
Friday, April 26 10:00-11:00 am

Plants that can Take the Heat!

Tuesday, May 28 6:30-7:00 pm
Friday, May 31 10:00-11:00 am

PHOTOS

TOP RIGHT: Christine Paris, MGV, presenting at Bloom & Benefit: Kathi Wright
BOTTOM LEFT: MGV 2023 Plant Sale, George Carfagno

GARDEN MYTH-CONCEPTIONS

By Mary Ellen Setting, MGV

As gardeners, we have all heard of surefire gardening solutions passed on from generations of gardeners and now perpetuated by the internet. Unfortunately, many of these garden “facts” believed to be true by many are rooted in fiction and not based on science. Here are a few common myths Master Gardeners typically encounter while providing gardening advice.

Myth: Moles can be eliminated from lawns by sonic vibrations, chewing gum or mothballs

Some gardeners, as well as internet searches will swear by ultrasonic devices as a non-toxic way to repel moles. The devices emit sound waves that create vibrations that make the area inhospitable for moles. Research by UF/IFAS scientists has determined that these devices are not effective. Another practice promotes using fresh Juicy Fruit gum cut into small squares and placed in tunnels. Moles cannot digest gum so they will die. Studies show this is also ineffective. Mothballs are often promoted to repulse moles, so they abandon their tunnels and leave the area. While they may avoid the tunnel with mothballs, they will simply dig another tunnel nearby. Besides, using mothballs in this manner is illegal and puts pets, lizards, toads, and other wildlife in danger of being poisoned.

The University of Florida supports that moles are beneficial because they will eat lawn damaging insects like beetle larvae and mole crickets and that mole damage is cosmetic.

Myth: Use grits or club soda to control fire ants

The idea is to feed fire ants some dry grits, they get thirsty and drink water, the grits swell in their stomach and then they explode. Gruesome but false. Another solution is to pour club soda in the nest to kill ants in their tunnels. The carbon dioxide from the bubbles is supposed to suffocate the ants; this is also ineffective. Instead, try boiling water or use baits specifically designed for fire ants.



Myth: Spanish moss kills trees

It is common to see large streams of Spanish moss hanging from dead or dying trees. As trees decline, they lose their leaves, and more sunlight is available to the Spanish moss that has attached itself to tree branches, so the moss thrives. However, since Spanish moss is not a parasite, it does not take nutrients from other plants. It is a harmless air plant, or epiphyte, which receives its water and nutrients from the air and is not capable of killing the plant to which it has attached.

RESOURCES

Moles: <https://tinyurl.com/mujxkder>

Fire Ants: <https://tinyurl.com/5dzfkyvb>

Spanish Moss: <https://tinyurl.com/mvaw23pz>



PHOTOS

UPPER RIGHT: Mole, UF IFAS

LOWER RIGHT: Fire ant mound, Rudolf Scheffrahn UF

LOWER LEFT: Spanish moss, Mary Ellen Setting



TURKEY TAIL MUSHROOM

By Sharon Smith, MGV

Trametes versicolor is a common polypore mushroom. The common name is turkey tail. Polypores are wood decomposers whose spores are set up within tubes to create a surface of many pores. This pore layer is not easily removed. Turkey tail grows layered in groups or rows on fallen hardwoods, such as beech and oak. The coloration ranges from buff to shades of brown with contrasting ring-shaped coloring. Some are flat while others resemble flowers. The underside is composed of white or cream colored spores.

SCOUTING YOUR GARDEN

By Doreen Westcott, MGV

Early spring is the time to clean up winter damage in your garden, replace plants, add new plants, or start a garden. Planting the right plant in the right place is important for a Florida-friendly garden. Refer to the Florida-Friendly Plant Guide for information on your planting zone, proper spacing, type of soil, pH balance of soil, sun or shade, watering requirements, drought tolerance, and more for healthy plants. You can find a link to the Guide below the article on page 5 entitled, Know Your Plant Hardiness Zones.

Scouting your garden is a precautionary way to find chewing and piercing/sucking plant pests before they can do extensive damage. A scouting tool you need is a handheld microscope or magnifying glass for identification of insects on your plants and the underside of their leaves. It's important to identify both harmful pests and beneficial predator insects. UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions/plant pests lists the pests found in a garden or yard, pictures of, and how to treat them. Also have in your scouting kit gloves, hand trowel, tweezers, container with lid for insects, alcohol to preserve them, and insecticide soap for low-toxicity treatment.

RESOURCES

Making a Scouting Kit: <https://tinyurl.com/3ftxhuvj>

Scouting For Pests: <https://tinyurl.com/5n8pr5pn>

Plant Pests: <https://tinyurl.com/4yfd6j3>

Extracted potions are being used as part of cancer treatments in Japan. Labeled as PSK, it has been sold as a dietary supplement in other countries. It is also used in Chinese herbal medicine. In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration issued warning letters to two manufacturers who advertised PSK supplements as anti-cancer or immunotherapy drugs.

Turkey tail is common in North America and worldwide. It is not edible for humans and can cause stomach upset and diarrhea. It is food for several insects. Turkey tail can be seen year-round but are best in the fall and winter when they release their spores.



PHOTOS

Turkey Tail Mushrooms taken at Princess Place, January 2024, Sharon Smith



PHOTO: Stock

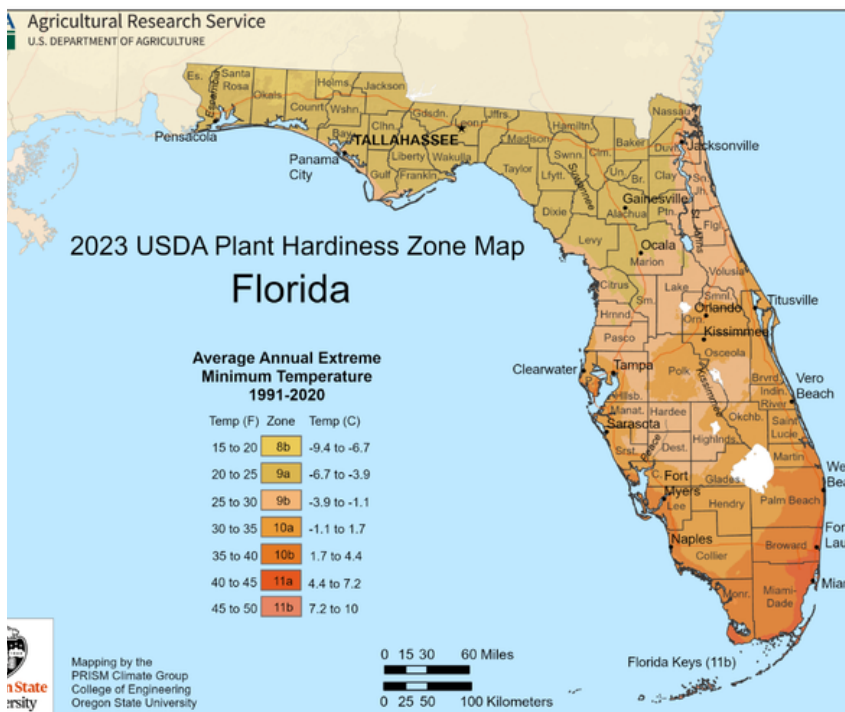
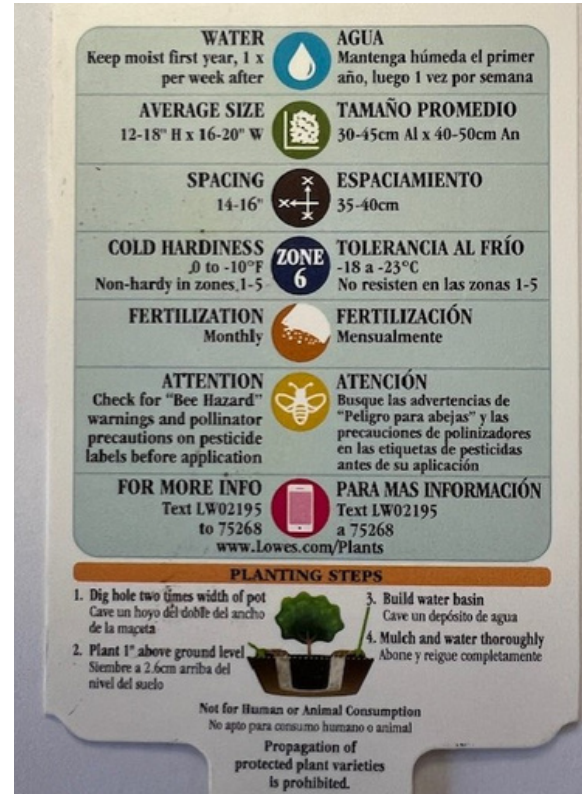
KNOW YOUR PLANT HARDINESS ZONES

By Mary Ellen Setting, MGV

One of the most important steps to successful gardening is accurate plant selection and placement. By applying the Right Plant, Right Place guidelines of the Florida-Friendly Landscaping (FFL) Program, you can enjoy healthier plants and reduce your workload. Matching plants to your landscape conditions of climate, light, moisture, and soil helps them thrive with minimal maintenance and inputs. Start by determining the plant's climate or hardiness zone.

Plant hardiness refers to the plant's ability to survive winter temperatures. If a plant is cold hardy to your area, you can plant it in the ground outside and expect it to come back year after year as a perennial. If a plant is not hardy in your area, you can still grow it as an annual since it will die once the temperatures drop. To help you determine which plants will survive in your area, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) developed the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map.

USDA defined 13 hardiness zones for the United States and created a map in 1960 that outlines those zones. The map was updated in 1965, 1990, 2012 and most recently in November 2023. A hardiness zone is based on the average lowest temperature. Each zone includes a ten-degree range of average minimum temperatures. Within each zone are two subzones, a and b, in 5-degree increments. Each zone corresponds to specific temperature ranges and environmental conditions that influence plant growth and survival.



The state of Florida contains four distinct growing zones – 8, 9, 10, and 11. Flagler County resides entirely in Zone 9b. This is a change from the 2012 Hardiness Zone Map that previously included Flagler County in both Zones 9a and 9b.

Hardiness zones, also called growing or gardening zones, are listed on the back of a plant tag along with the care guide. If your area is the same or higher than the plant's listed zone, the plant is hardy for your landscape. If your zone is lower than what is listed on a plant, it will not survive winter in your garden. Florida's long summers, high humidity and warm nights might affect a plant's ability to survive even in the appropriate zone. The zones refer only to plants in the ground and not container plants since soil in the ground stays warmer than soil in containers in the winter. Use the zones as a guide when selecting plants to increase your chances of gardening success.

PHOTOS

TOP RIGHT: Plant tag, Mary Ellen Setting

LOWER LEFT: Zones, UF/IFAS

REFERENCES

Plant Hardiness Zones: <https://tinyurl.com/bdzz68f6>

FFL Plant Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/2s4ecy9x>

START SUMMER BULBS NOW

By Kathi Wright, MGV

We're fortunate to be able to grow beautiful bulbs that flower in the summer. You can start bulbs like caladiums, cannas, and blood-lilies in pots now, so you make the most of their season.

Start with 6-8" pots and fill them with potting soil. Don't use garden soil because you need them to drain well. Place a bulb or tuber in each pot, making sure to follow instructions for planting at the correct height and orientation. Caladiums will be fuller if you use a sharp knife to remove the central eye on each tuber.

Put the plants where they'll get a lot of light and be sure to water them when you pot them and when the soil feels dry to the touch. Don't overwater.

Once our temperatures are consistently warm, relocate your pots to your garden for a couple of weeks so they can get acclimated to their site before you plant them.



PHOTOS

TOP RIGHT: Blood Lily, UF/IFAS Marion County

BOTTOM RIGHT: Crocosmia, UF/IFAS

TOP LEFT: Canna, UF/IFAS

BOTTOM LEFT: Caladium, UF/IFAS



Some examples of summer bulbs are:

Blood-Lily (*Scadoxus multiflorus*) produces large globe-shaped flower heads that can be up to 10" on stalks that grow up to 2' tall. To form a mass planting, space them about 12" apart in large groups. They are also a terrific container plant.

Crocosmia genus contains about 11 species of perennials. They begin blooming in May or June and work as cut flowers for bouquets. They sometimes flop over, so you may need to provide some support.

Cannas are tropical bulbs that thrive in areas that have full sun, rich organic soil, but grow in most moist soils if they are well watered and fertilized.

Caladiums are grown for their vibrant foliage. They are fast growing and thrive in shady areas. Use them in your garden, hanging baskets or containers. Over 75 cultivars are sold commercially.

RESOURCES

Blood-Lily: <https://tinyurl.com/2xydkbnz>

Crocosmia: <https://tinyurl.com/2vyym7th>

Canna: <https://tinyurl.com/4x2k7x2n>

Caladiums: <https://tinyurl.com/3zfx4df8>

Hurricane Lily: <https://tinyurl.com/yeyk6s8w>

YOUR MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS



MASTER GARDENER MONTH

As mentioned in the article on page 1 entitled, Cultivating Culture, March is Master Gardener Month in Flagler County! We were very excited to be presented with the Proclamation by the Flagler County Board of County Commissioners.

BLOOM & BENEFIT THANK YOU

We are so grateful to all of the local businesses and individuals who donated to our raffle and silent auction. All of the items were amazing, and attendees were excited to win them. Also a big thank you to our food vendors!

We truly appreciate everyone who came out to enjoy our Bloom & Benefit held in February. Our presentations were well attended, and there was a lot of bidding on our silent auction items! Thanks to everyone who bought raffle tickets to try for different items.



PHOTOS

TOP: MGVs Bloom & Benefit, George Carfagno
 TOP RIGHT: Proclamation, Kathi Wright
 BOTTOM RIGHT: Mary Ellen Setting at Bloom & Benefit , Kathi Wright
 BOTTOM LEFT: Bloom & Benefit raffle, George Carfagno



FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK!

Stay up to date with Master Gardener events and read educational information to help you have success with your landscape and garden. Follow UF IFAS Flagler County Master Gardeners on Facebook!

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8srfaw>

If you have any plant-related questions or need gardening advice, do not hesitate to reach out to us. Flagler County Master Gardener Volunteers are a great resource for home gardeners and can provide valuable info and guidance on topics such as soil health, pest management, plant selection, and more. We are trained volunteers who have a passion for gardening and can provide advice on a wide range of topics. If you need help, stop by or reach out to your local Master Gardeners (email: mgardener@flaglercounty.gov).

Helpful Links

Flagler County Extension: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/flagler/>
 UF Solutions for Your Life: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/>
 Florida-Friendly Landscaping: <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>

UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions: <https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/>
 UF Master Gardener: <https://tinyurl.com/nhk2z2eh>
 Know, Sow, Grow Past Issues: <https://tinyurl.com/yc67dfwk>