

The Baker Bulletin



The UF/IFAS Extension Office is available to help you with your farming, gardening, landscaping, and 4-H youth development needs by providing educational programming, free consultations and information. Contact us at:

UF/IFAS Extension Baker County

1025 W. Macclenny Ave. Macclenny, FL 32063

Phone: (904) 259-3520 Email: baker@ifas.ufl.edu

Hours: M–F 8:30 am to 5:00 pm (Closed Noon to 1:00 pm for Lunch)

County Agents

Alicia Lamborn, Horticulture Agent

Shaina Spann, 4-H Youth Development Agent

Alicia Halbritter, Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent



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February 2026



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Our 2026 Calendars are available!

Programs & Events

Feb 12 Soil Health and Cover Crop Field Day - This hands-on event focuses on practices for improving soil health and integrating cover crops into North Florida agricultural systems. Register today: <https://bit.ly/3Z4y6Xq>

Feb 17 Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop - Join us for hands-on learning about proper pruning techniques by fruit type, pruning safety, and tool sanitation. This course fills up fast - register today: <https://tinyurl.com/54aubnjw>

March 23 & 24 Starting a Successful Hydroponic Business Short Course - Get a hands-on introduction to the basics of hydroponic production and protected agriculture. This course fills up fast - register today: <https://bit.ly/44XEu6m>

HIGHLIGHTS IN HORTICULTURE

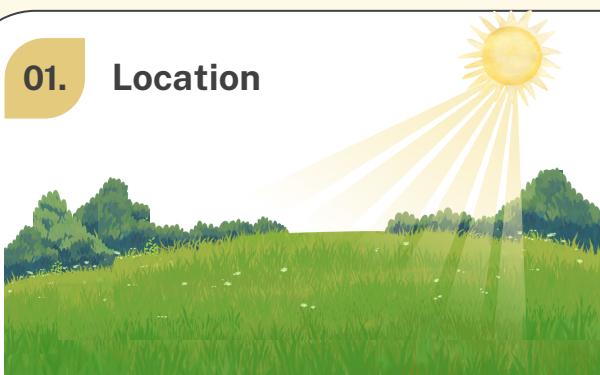
By Alicia Lamborn, Environmental Horticulture Agent

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PLANNING YOUR HOME FRUIT ORCHARD

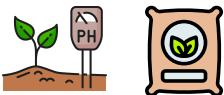
01. Location



Most orchard crops require at least 6 hours of full sunlight each day and need well-drained soil. Avoid low-lying areas to minimize flood injury during periods of excess rainfall and frost injury to flowers and developing fruit.

A nearby water source is required for plant establishment and supplemental irrigation. Irrigation is critical during the period of fruit ripening, which often coincides with dry conditions.

02.



Soil Testing & Amendments

Test the soil to determine pH and nutrient levels. Soil testing services are available through your local UF/IFAS Extension Office.

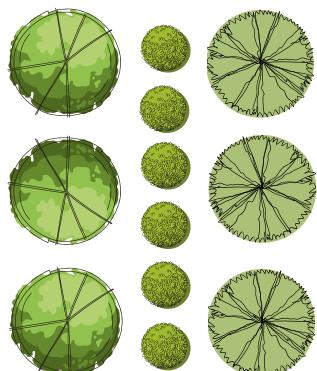
Most fruit crops prefer a slightly acidic soil pH (near 6.0) with the exception of blueberries (highly acidic 4.0-5.5) and citrus trees (near neutral 7.0).

Add soil amendments, as needed, just before planting. These should be blended well with the native soil in the entire planting area, not just the planting hole.

Most Florida soils benefit from the addition of organic compost (~50 lbs. per 100 square feet of planting bed) to improve water retention and add additional nutrients to the soil.

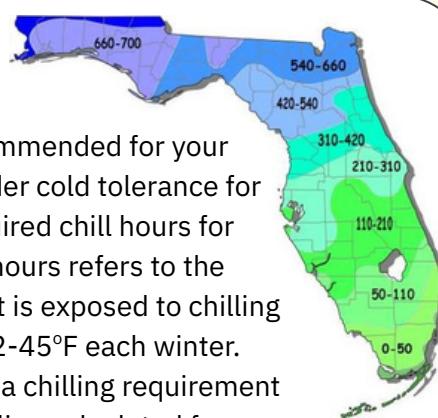
03. Orchard Design

Trees grown in north-south oriented rows generally have better light conditions than those grown in east-west rows. Consider the full-grown size of each variety. Provide adequate space so plants have room to grow and aren't competing for sunlight, water, and nutrients.



04. Plant Selection

Select fruit varieties recommended for your geographical area. Consider cold tolerance for tropical species, and required chill hours for temperate species. Chill hours refers to the number of hours the plant is exposed to chilling temperatures between 32-45°F each winter. Select cultivars that have a chilling requirement less than the average chilling calculated for a given area so that their chilling requirement is met in almost all winters.



BARNYARD BULLETIN

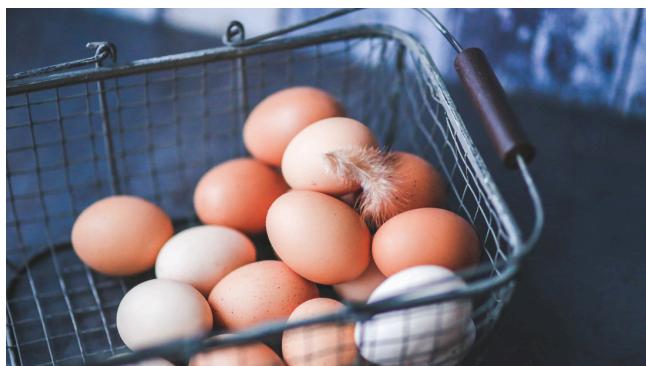
By Alicia Halbritter, Agriculture Agent



Raising Chickens for Eggs

Many individuals dive into farming by starting with something small, like raising chickens for eggs. Chickens are a great way to step into the farming sector with minimal investment and responsibility, and they repay us with farm fresh eggs every day of the year! Interested in getting your own chickens this year? Here's what you need to know:

- Prepare the housing for your adult chickens before you ever purchase any chickens, this ensures you are ready to care for your birds when they are old enough to be in a coop.
- Your chicken coop should have 1-2 square feet per chicken, and have an attached outdoor space (often called the run) that is around 10 sq ft per chicken. Proper spacing ensures your chickens stay happy and healthy while maintaining important flock social dynamics.
- If you plan to purchase chicks (younger than 8 weeks old), you should also have a brooder box to raise them in. Don't forget to purchase a heat lamp to keep them warm until they are fully feathered.
- There are hundreds of chicken breeds available in feed stores locally and from online hatcheries/breeders. Make sure to research the personality & characteristics of breeds you are interested in to ensure they fit your needs.
- I recommend feeding chicks a medicated chick feed, this helps prevent infections from coccidia. This is especially crucial if chicks have access to dirt as coccidia is often found in the soil.
- Adult laying hens should be fed a layer feed in order to maintain proper calcium levels in the diet. Technically, roosters should not consume layer feed as the excess calcium can cause health issues. Flocks with roosters, waterfowl (ducks & geese), or turkeys feeding together should be fed an all-flock diet. Loose calcium (often sourced from oyster shells) can be made available for hens to consume to meet their needs.
- Maintain a clean coop and especially clean nesting boxes to ensure happy & healthy chickens. Coops should be cleaned at minimum every 6 months, but may need to be cleaned more often depending on the bedding type and size. Clean coops help prevent infections from pests.
- Eggs should be collected daily to prevent breakage. Farm fresh eggs can be stored on the counter in a climate-controlled area for up to 3 weeks, however quality may decline as they moisture. For longer storage, wash your eggs with dish soap, rinse with clean water, and dip in a diluted bleach or peroxide solution to sanitize, then place in the refrigerator for up to 6 weeks. Eggs stored on the counter for a time and then refrigerated may not last the full 6 weeks. All eggs must be washed & sanitized before they are refrigerated to prevent bacteria from entering the shell.
- Overly dirty eggs can be washed/sanitized and refrigerated, or discarded. It is not recommended to keep dirty eggs on the counter.





LUCKY CLOVER CHRONICLE

By Shaina Spann, 4-H Youth Development Agent



Coop to Plate 2026

The 2026 class of Coop to Plate is open to both youth and adults.

Youth participants must be enrolled in 4-H online.

- Online course materials will walk you through how to properly raise your provided meat chickens all the way up until processing day.
- The in-person processing day will allow you & your youth the opportunity to harvest & prepare your meat birds for freezing. Processing is a required portion of this project and must be completed with the extension office.
- This year, youth will attend an interest/sign-up meeting in order to finalize registration for the project.

This meeting is REQUIRED for all participants!

Payment is due at the end of the meeting in cash or check.

Participant fee: \$40 each, includes 5 birds

Register for the meeting here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/16Dafynj8S>



IMPORTANT DATES:

Sign Up Meeting: March 17, 2026

Chick Pick Up: March 27th 1pm-5pm

Processing Day: May 16, 2026

2026 Livestock Commitment Form

4-H Club Meetings & Events

Feb 02- Cloverbuddies, 4-H Classroom, 4pm

Feb 07- Insectathon, Gainesville, 8am-3pm

Feb 19- STEAM Explorers, 4-H Classroom, 4:30pm

Feb 24- Baker's Acres, Auditorium, 10:30am

Feb 24- Livestock Club, Auditorium, 6pm

Mar 02- Cloverbuddies, 4-H Classroom, 4pm

Mar 17- Coop to Plate Interest Mtg, Auditorium, 6pm

Mar 19- STEAM Explorers, 4-H Classroom, 4:30pm

Mar 24- Baker's Acres, Auditorium, 10:30am

Mar 24- Livestock Club, Auditorium, 6pm

Mar 27- Coop to Plate Chick Pick-up, 3-6pm

Mar 31- 4-H Online Registration DUE for animals

Mar 31- Commitment Forms DUE

Register for a 4-H In
School program
here!

Happy
Valentine's
Day

REMIND APP

text @bakerco4h to 81010 to be added to
the 4-H Remind text group.