



Vol. 54 FEB/MAR 2025

Inside This Issue

Orchids 2

Types Of Fertilizers 3

Spring Veggies 4

Events 5



The Lake County Mission Statement

The Mission of the UF/IFAS Mater Gardener Volunteers is to assist extension agents by providing horticultural education programs and current research-based information to the public through plant clinics, community outreach, and through Discovery Gardens.

Garden Scoop

Native Orchids

BY K.S.Kennen, MGV

Orchids have long been of interest to gardeners because of their unique shapes and colors. Orchids have a history of over 100 million years. They can be found in tropical forests, near seashores, semi-desert regions, and in tundra. It might be surprising for you to know that of the 200 species of orchids in the continental United States, Florida has 106 native orchid species of which 58 unfortunately are endangered and 18 are threatened. Sixty species can be found in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Collier counties.

Most of Florida orchids are terrestrial, growing in the ground with roots anchoring the plant, as opposed to epiphytic, growing without soil or potting media and often in trees. Terrestrial orchids grow in loose leaf litter or humus on the ground and form a symbiotic relationship with mycorrhizal fungi which gathers nutrients for the orchids. The epiphytic orchids have no need of soil or other media and can be found in tropical and subtropical regions. They make up about 70 percent of all orchid species.

A species of terrestrial orchids found in Central Florida are the Lady Tresses (genus *Spiranthes*). They can be found in open, wet meadows. There are about 50 species in this group and most members are endangered or threatened. Spring Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes vernalis*) have basal leaves and small white blooms that grow in a spiral. They start to flower in late June to mid July in white, cream or yellowish flowers with dense, short hairs. Florida Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes floridana*) have small white flowers with smooth pubescence.



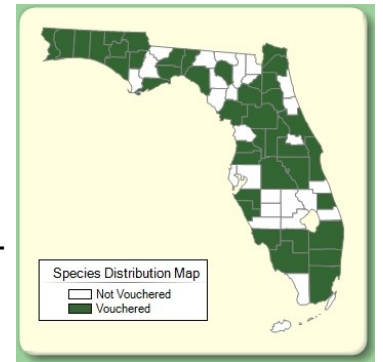
For more information contact: UF/IFAS Extension, Lake County Office lakemg.ifas@ufl.edu ▪

(352) 343-4101 ▪ FAX (352) 343-2767

The Foundation for The Gator Nation

An Equal Opportunity Institution

Two other Ladies' Tresses that can be found in Central Florida are Fragrant Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes odorata*) and Scarlet Ladies' Tresses (*Sacoila lanceolata*). *Spiranthes odorata* is found in wet areas of prairies, river banks, pond edges, and roadside ditches. This orchid blooms in the fall and has a small, white bloom with a vanilla-like scent. This orchid has a spiral bloom arrangement and is one of the few orchids considered to be aquatic. It is found throughout Florida and grows from 6 to 10 inches tall. It likes full sun to partial shade and propagates from seed.



The map on the right shows distribution of Fragrant Ladies' Tresses and can be found on the Florida Wildflower Foundation website. (<https://www.flawildflowers.org/>)

Another orchid found in Central Florida is the butterfly orchid (*Encyclia tampensis*). This orchid blooms in the summer with several flowers that have green to brown sepals and petals that surround a white lip with a purple dot. The flowers are only 2.5 centimeters in diameter but are very fragrant.



In addition to Ladies' Tresses and the butterfly orchids in Central Florida, there are four species of Grass Pinks. These terrestrial, native orchids grow throughout the state of Florida. Most grow in meadows, flatwoods, and prairies. They are so common that they are mown down in the highway medians. The four species are Tuberous Grass Pink, Many-flowered Grass Pink, Pale Grass Pink, and Bearded Grass Pink. The common names are helpful since they describe a characteristic that distinguish the species from each other. The beard in the Bearded Grass Pink and other "pinks" comes from the hair-like structures on the flower. An interesting fact about the Many-flowered Grass Pink is that it is fire dependent and blooming typically occurs several weeks after a controlled burn.

Resources:

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/floridas-native-orchids/>

<https://fairchildgarden.org/orchids/florida-orchids/>

Discovery Gardens

Please plan a visit to over twenty different gardens located at 1951 Woodlea Road in Tavares. The hours are Monday through Friday. Just like your yard, Discovery Garden changes with the seasons and will reveal something new with each visit. Come see the changes in the garden.

Fertilizers

K.S.Kennen, MGV

Fertilizers are additives for gardeners to use that can assist in growing healthy plants. The basic nutrients that a fertilizer should contain are nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium (NPK). Nitrogen is the major part of chlorophyll and is evident when plants are green and healthy. Unfortunately, too much nitrogen when fertilizing can cause yellow leaves and low or no fruit production. Phosphorous helps promote healthy plant roots, flowering, and seed production. If there is too much it can leach into water bodies and cause algae. Potassium assists in plant growth by helping with distribution of sugars that help regulate water uptake with healthy stems and disease resistance. Negatively, too much can result in magnesium deficiency and lower plant nutritional value. This is a very simplistic explanation of the purpose of the three nutrients needed for plant life. When applying fertilizer you can usually use it safely if the three nutrients are balanced. For example, 10-10-10 or 5-5-5 are balanced fertilizers and have equal percentages of those nutrients.

There are four forms of fertilizers. They are liquid, slow release, organic, and inorganic. Liquid fertilizer is simply as the name describes administered in liquid form. It usually involves dissolving a crystal form in water or diluting a concentrated form. When administered, nutrients provide a quick response in the plants and might allow the plants to overcome stress, pest damage, etc. Slow release fertilizer is in granular form and is released into the soil overtime and nutrients are gradually available to plants. Organic fertilizer can come from numerous natural sources that can include cow manure, leaf mold, bone meal, fish blood, wood ash, etc. and can improve soil quality as their nutrients are gradually released into the soil. They are safe to use and can help build microorganisms in the soil. Inorganic fertilizers can be liquid or granular and are manufactured from non-living materials. These fertilizers are easy to handle and store. If you follow the label instructions, they can supply specified nutrients in a controlled manner.

RESOURCES:

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/fertilizer/types-of-fertilizer/>

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/fertilizer/>

An Equal Opportunity Institution. UF/IFAS Extension, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Andra Johnson, Dean. Single copies of UF/IFAS Extension publications (excluding 4-H and youth publications) are available free to Florida residents from county UF/IFAS Extension offices.

SPRING VEGGIES

K.S.Kennen. MGV

Now is the time to consider what warm season crops you want to grow. Yes, it is still cool, but you should plant your vegetables based upon when they would be ready to harvest. As you may know warm weather is starting in April and will soon develop into hot weather in June. It will help with production to plant a vegetable that will tolerate the heat in June since harvest times can range from 60 to 125 days. Some things to remember are to be sure to enrich your soil with an organic fertilizer so the seeds can have a healthy start. Also, select a spot in the garden that gets ideally 8 hours of sunlight. When planting, sow succession crops 2 weeks apart to enable you to have a continuous harvest.

There are some veggies that should be easy for you to grow successfully. Cow peas are a southern favorite and grow well in the Florida heat. They can take about 80 days or more until harvest. Be sure to water frequently but be do not get water on the leaves. You can tell they are ready when the pods are filled out. You can also start your cucumbers now. Harvest should be within 45 to 55 days. Your soil should be slightly acidic (5.8—6.5) and be kept damp for the best growth. There are slicer and pickling type varieties. Slicer types include 'Sweet Success', Poinsett', 'Ashley'. Pickling types include 'Calypso', 'Jackson', and 'Sassy'. Don't forget another favorite you can start now: okra. This vegetable used in Southern cooking can thicken soups or gumbos and even be eaten fried. The prime time for growing is from March through November. Be sure to soak your seeds for six hours before planting to ensure germination. Okra is ready to harvest in 50 to 70 days when pods are two to three inches long. Finally round out your veggie garden by having some cherry tomato plants. One favorite is 'Super Sweet 100' that is an indeterminate plant that produces sweet tomatoes well through the summer. This improved variety boasts resistance to verticillium wilt, fusarium wilt, and nematodes.



RESOURCES:

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/cherry-tomatoes/>

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/okra/>

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/cucumbers/>

LIBRARY CLASSES

March presentation focuses on creating a habitat that will attract hummingbirds.



March 2, 2025, 1-2 pm

Attracting Hummingbirds

Mt. Dora Public Library

March 17, 2025, 2-3 pm

Attracting Hummingbirds

Umatilla Public Library

March 18, 2025, 12-1 pm

Attracting Hummingbirds

Eustis Public Library

March 18, 2025, 2-3 pm

Attracting Hummingbirds

Howie Public Library

March 18, 202, 4-5 pm

Attracting Hummingbirds

Leesburg Public Library

March 19, 2025, 2-3 pm

Attracting Hummingbirds

Tavares Public Library

March 19, 2025, 6-7 pm

Attracting Hummingbirds

Groveland Public Library

April presentation focuses on learning how to grow orchids.



April 15, 2025, 12-1 pm

Growing Orchids

Eustis Public Library

April 15, 2025, 4-5 pm

Growing Orchids

Leesburg Public Library

April 16, 2025, 2-3 pm

Growing Orchids

Howie Public Library

April 16, 2025, 2-3 pm

Growing Orchids

Tavares Public Library

April 16, 202, 6-7 pm

Growing Orchids

Groveland Public Library

April 21, 2025, 2-3 pm

Growing Orchids

Umatilla Public Library

May 3, 2025, 11-12 pm *

Butterfly Gardening

Mt. Dora Public Library