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The Lake County Mission Statement

The Mission of the UF/IFAS Master 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

Rain Gardens

BY K. S. Kennen, MGv

Florida is ranked number four among the states in annual rainfall at 55 percent with June being the rainiest month. In Lake County with more than a 1000 lakes and rivers, rainfall is an important source to maintain levels in these bodies of water. As homeowners, one thing we can do to help keep water supplied cleanly to the lakes and rivers is to have a rain garden. This type of garden is at a lower level than surrounding areas and is designed to hold and absorb water from roofs, driveways, or streets. Rather than have this water run unfiltered into lakes and rivers, it can flow into a rain garden to be absorbed, filtered, and add to ground water supplies.

There are three levels in a rain garden. The lowest which is the wettest and where water will pool is called the bottom, wet, or hydric zone. The middle zone or mesic level will hold water just as the bottom does but will drain faster. The upper zone is the xeric area or transition from the rain garden to the surrounding area. An excellent resource or [Manual](#) can be downloaded and contains information on size and placement of the garden, construction and maintenance, in addition to a list of plants for the garden.

Note that a low, wet place in your yard is not necessarily meant for a rain garden. A rain garden must have the correct soil and be able to drain the water within 24 to 48 hours. Also, do not put a rain garden over a septic tank and it should be at least 10 to 15 feet from your house.

Beside site selection, plant selection is probably the most important for survival of your garden because not only do you need plants that can do well in standing water for a period of time, but that also can survive periods of drought. As we know, Florida can go weeks without rain or have rain daily for weeks. Select plants that look like they go together but that provide enough diversity to create interest. Some flowering plants you can use are blue flag iris, goldenrod, swamp sunflower, spider lily, and milkweed. Many of these are native and will attract butterflies and other wildlife. Some ornamental grasses include Florida gamma grass, muhly grass, and wiregrass. For shrubs, try Virginia willow, buttonbush, or wax myrtle.

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

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Rain Garden Plants

K.S. Kennen, MGV

Some suggested plants for the different levels are as follows:

Myric Zone

Swamp Azalea (*Rhododendron viscosum*) is a Florida native, perennial shrub that grows in wet flatlands and near lakes. Its fragrant, white blooms attract a variety of pollinators and hummingbirds. This shrub will grow from four to six feet tall and wide. It must be kept moist the first year until established.



Swamp Rose (*Rosa palustris*) a native, perennial shrub that can grow up to seven feet tall. In swamps, it can be found growing on cypress knees or downed trees. The rose hips have a mass of seeds that are eaten by many birds. This shrub does have thorn-like prickles and be aware that it does spread by underground runners and can form thickets.



Swamp Sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*) This native, herbaceous perennial has rough, narrow leaves with bright yellow blooms. It will form a mound from 4 to 6 feet high and wide. This perennial can do well in both the hydric and mesic zones of a rain garden.



Swamp Lily (*Crinum americanum*) This is the only crinum lily that is native to the southeast. This lily can grow two to three feet tall and has spidery, white blooms in the warm months of the year. It blooms best when growing in standing water, so the hydric zone would be the best location for it.



Sweet Pepper Bush (*Lethra alnifolia*) This shrub can grow from three to ten feet tall and two to five feet wide. It is deciduous and has aromatic, showy, white flowers in the spring. It can grow in all three areas of your rain garden since it can survive with wet feet and/or dry soil.



RESOURCE:

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/design/types-of-gardens/rain-gardens.html>

Plant Clinic Clatter



DEAR MASTER GARDENER: I would like to create a rain garden. How do I go about that and what plants should I consider?

DEAR HOMEOWNER: After following these instructions, select plants from the list below.

1. Decide on your site and size. It should be located near a run-off area to naturally collect storm-water. Test the soil type and pH. You want to have a porous area that has good percolation, so make sure the lowest level has “sugar sand” for drainage.
2. After calling to ensure there are no utility lines at your site (811), dig a hole! Use the excavated soil to build a berm around the garden so water doesn’t escape.
3. Fill the hole with rocks of varying sizes to help direct and hold the water.
4. Plant your plants from the center up to the edges.

Beautyberry (<i>Callicarpa Americana</i>)	Cardinal flower (<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>)	Chipola coreopsis (<i>Coreopsis integrifolia</i>)	Rain lily (<i>Zephyranthes spp.</i>)
River oats (<i>Chasmanthium latifolium</i>)	Swamp milkweed (<i>Asclepias perennis</i>)	Swamp sunflower (<i>Helianthus angustifolius</i>)	Wax myrtle (<i>Myrica cerifera</i>)
Blue-eyed grass (<i>Sisyrinchium atlanticum Bicknell</i>)	Muhley grass (<i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i>)	Path or soft rush (<i>Juncus spp.</i>)	Blue Flag Iris, Prairie Iris, African iris
Virginia willow (<i>Itea virginica</i>)	Goldenrod (<i>Solidago spp.</i>)	Milkweed (<i>Asclepias spp.</i>)	Canna (<i>Canna spp.</i>), Primrose (<i>Oenothera speciosa</i>)
Swamp sunflower (<i>Helianthus angustifolius</i>)	Carolina aster (<i>Aster carolinianus</i>)	Mallow, Buttonbush, Joe Pye weed	Astilbes, Daylilies, Anemone, Cardinal Flower
Butterfly weed (<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>)	Cinnamon fern (<i>Osmunda cinnamomea</i>)	Frog-fruit (<i>Phyla nodiflora</i>)	Spider Lily (<i>Hymenocallis latifolia</i>), Swamp Lily,

Resources: [Plants for Rain Garden](#) | [Plants for Wildlife](#) | [TAPP](#) | [Rain Gardens](#) | [Sunshine 811](#) | [Manual](#)

Discovery Gardens

Please plan a visit to over twenty different gardens located at 1951 Woodlea Road in Tavares. The hours are Monday through Friday and the third Saturday of the month from 9 am until 4 pm 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.

Green Lace Wings—Garden Friend or Foe

BY K. S. Kennen, MGV

Green lacewings, in the large family Chrysopidae, are not an insect that you need to fear. They do not bite or sting. The adults are less than 1 inch in length. As the name suggests, the wings of these insects are lace-like, with a dense network of veins and cross veins. Their two pair of wings are held over their body like a roof. If you see these soft-bodied insects in your garden, it may be a sign of infestation, not by the lace wing but other garden predators. The adult lacewings will eat pollen and honeydew which is a clear, sticky liquid secreted by sap sucking insects such as aphids.



The larvae of lacewings are voracious consumers of the aphids and the adult will most likely lay eggs close to the infestation of sucking insects such as aphids, white flies, and scale insects. It is important that you know what the eggs look like so you will allow them to turn into larvae. Be sure not to disturb the pale yellowish-green or white oblong eggs on the end of a silken stalk attached to plants. Also allow the larvae to feed for two weeks before they turn into adults which some say resemble tiny alligators with their elongated, oblong bodies. Their bodies are about 1/2 inch long or less and can be cream, tan, or yellowish with lengthwise lines or rows of spots that are blackish, dark or light brown, or reddish.



Paul Choate, IFAS/UF



James Castner, IFAS/UF

Also note that it might be important to realize that lacewing larvae also will eat butterfly eggs. You might want to control them if you have a butterfly garden. But ask yourself, why are they in your garden. Are there other sap sucking insects there that can destroy your plants?

For resource refer to following site:

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/florida-friendly-landscapes/beneficial-insects.html>

Tremendous: Button Bush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

Jamie Daugherty, RHA

Are you looking for a plant with a wide range to add interest to your landscape? Look no further! The button bush is a large shrub or small tree (10-20ft) found natively throughout much of the U.S. With an extensive range from USDA Hardiness Zones 5-10, this plant can grow in at least part of all but 2 of the lower 48 states. In Central Florida this native plant has distinct flower balls present from March-August. Naturally found in wetlands this is a wonderful option for a rain garden, lake shoreline, or other wet location with full sun to part shade.



Photo: Jim Davis, UF/IFAS

In addition to the visual interest this plant offers, there are also several environmental benefits. Wildlife love this plant! Pollinators are attracted to the flowers and birds to the seeds and shelter. While this is a great plant for wildlife, the leaves and other parts are toxic to us. Wear gloves when pruning.



If you want to keep the shrub small, you can prune it to your desired size. Keep up with the pruning for the long-term health of the shrub. With no major pests or diseases to worry about, this can be a great addition to your landscape.

Garden Of the Month—Senses Garden

Congratulations to Mary Lou Trevino, lead of the Five Senses Garden. She has worked hard to not only renew the individual planters with new plants, but also new soil. It is this garden that allows children and adults to awaken their senses through close-up examination of plants.



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.

LIBRARY CLASSES

February presentations will focus on preparing your garden for growing vegetables and how to plant and care for your plants. These presentations are free but it is recommended that you sign up at the library by phone or in person.

February 12, 2024, 2 – 3 pm

Starting a Vegetable Garden

Umatilla Public Library

February 20, 2024, 12—1 pm

Starting a Vegetable Garden

Eustis Memorial Public Library

February 20, 2024, 4—5 pm

Starting a Vegetable Garden

Leesburg Public Library

February 21, 2024, 2—3 pm

Starting a Vegetable Garden

Tavares Public Library

February 21, 2024, 6—7 pm

Starting a Vegetable Garden

Marion Baysinger Memorial Library

Mt. Dora Public Library Presentation

February 17, 2024, 2 –3 pm

Orchids—care, selection, and growing of orchids

Free and no registration

Saturday In the Gardens: Orchid Repotting Presentation

February 17, 2024, 10-12:00

Extension Office at 1951 Woodlea Rd. Tavares

Pre-Registration is required at <http://lakediscoverygardensprograms.eventbrite.com/>.

Orchids—Learn about how to care for your orchids

Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Clinic

Bring your plant, insect, and soil problems to our Plant Clinic for advice Monday and Wednesday 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. The plant clinic is staffed by volunteers. Please call ahead at 352-343-4101 to be sure that someone is in the clinic to assist you with your question.

You may also send photos of your local problems to Jamielyn Daugherty at jdaugherty@ufl.edu or to the plant clinic at lakemg@ifas.ufl.edu.