

Garden Scoop

Florida-Friendly?

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UF | IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



Volume 23 August 2021

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Lake County MGV Mission Statement

The mission of UF/IFAS Lake County 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 Discovery Gardens.

Just what does it mean when a plant is labeled as Florida-Friendly? This term is used in conjunction with the first principle of planning and planting a Florida-Friendly landscape which is "Right Plant, Right Place." When you have chosen the proper plant, it will grow well with little or no care in the place you selected and can be described as Florida-Friendly.

Sounds easy?! It really can be as long as you consider the elements of the location when selecting your plant. First, what zone are you in since there are plants that are Florida-Friendly that will not survive in our zone 9a/9b of Lake County. Keep in mind that it has been a long time since we have had what is called a hard freeze and many tropicals are now surviving in our gardens. One example is *Codiaeum variegatum* or crotons. The periodic freezes of the 80's in Florida not only affected our citrus industry but destroyed many landscapes that had tropicals. I

remember having all the colorful crotons destroyed. I did not replant them. Second, where is the sun in your yard and how long does the selected planting area have sun. Keep in mind that many plants will grow without the recommended amount of sun but they can be leggy and have few or no blooms. Full sun is at least eight hours; part sun is at least four hours; part shade is filtered light and no more than two hours of only morning sun. Third, what is your soils pH, which is the measure of alkalinity or acidity? *Azalea* is a shrub that it is important to know the soil pH of since it does not tolerate alkaline soil but rather prefers acidic soil. Finally, be sure to know the mature size of the plant before selecting a location since many homeowners put a shrub or tree too close to a home. When mature, it blocks windows, gates, or overhangs roofs. Keep in mind any shrub should be at least two and a half feet from your home's foundation. I made that mistake and have had to remove shrubs since they blocked walkways.

An excellent source to use when looking for something to help determine the right plant is an app you can download to your phone or computer. You can put in your zip code and a list of Florida-Friendly plants for your area is generated. The site is <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/apps/plant-guide>.



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

(352) 343-4101 • FAX (352) 343-2767

Ixora

BY Maria Phillips, MGV

The Ixora (pronounced “icks-SORE-ah”), a broad, evergreen shrub in Rubiaceae family and native to Southeast Asia, is considered Florida-Friendly. The name means “gift of god”. Ixora thrives in acidic, well-drained soil, full sunlight and is moderately drought tolerant. It may be grown in partial shade, however, the blooms will not be as prolific. It is not meant to be a foundation or sidewalk planting because of the alkaline properties of the concrete. As the soil becomes more alkaline, the new growth will appear chlorotic because of iron and manganese deficiencies. In addition, older leaves will acquire purplish-red spots which is a sign of a combined potassium/phosphorus deficiency.

Photo: Maria Phillips



This plant grows as tall as 10-15 feet and 4-10 feet wide. A smaller cultivar may grow 4-6 feet tall and 3-5 feet wide. Each 4-6 inch bloom cluster contains up to 60 individual flowers. A cluster can last 6-8 weeks. The leaves are bronze-colored when young and become a leathery, glistening, dark green as the plant matures. The Ixora also bears a berry that contains 1 or 2 seeds. Pruning should be done in early spring. New buds grow at the end of a branch so take care when pruning because you can reduce the number of blooms.

While the Ixora requires little care, it does have problems with nematodes, aphids and scale. While beneficial insects and predators may reduce the effect of aphids and scale, insecticidal soap may need to be applied.

This Florida Friendly landscape plant is an excellent choice for your yard since it is moderately drought tolerant and comes in a variety of long-lasting, colored blooms. It thrives in our heat and humidity and may need little to no fertilization. So if you want a Florida-Friendly hedge or specimen plant, try an Ixora.

Research from EDIS FPS 291/FP291 Edward F. Gilman and UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions

Plant Clinic Clatter

Dear Master Gardener,

Some of my outdoor peace lily leaves have suddenly browned and are drooping. Are they dead or can I save them?



Hello homeowner,

To answer your question, we went to UF/IFAS, EDIS, and Tom MacCubbin (AKA the “Plant Doctor”), who is a retired UF/IFAS extension agent.

Answer: Peace lilies are tropical plants, so they do well outdoors in Florida, but leaves can die-back if temperatures are below 55°F. Sudden browning of leaves is usually due to over-watering (from irrigation or nature) during our warmer months, especially if not located in a shady area.

From the Plant Doctor:

“Few gardeners realize that the peace lily, also called *Spathiphyllum wallisii*, makes a good ground cover for shady locations in the warmer portions of Central Florida. Most winters the plants do have some browning, but they are quick to recover if given a little care. A heavy pruning to remove most of the foliage is seldom the best idea, but it's probably the easiest and quickest way to produce attractive plants. After all, much of the foliage already is damaged by the cold. Go ahead and give them this once-a-year severe pruning by cutting the stems back to within 6 to 8 inches off the ground. March is a good time to divide plants and start new beds. Dig clumps with a sharp spade and use a knife to cut the plants into smaller sections. You can restart them in containers or add them to newly prepared planting sites.”



Photos: R.Doherty, MGv

This Peace lily has brown leaves but is also munched by lubers.

Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Clinic

Bring your plant, insects, and soil problems to our Plant Clinic for advice Monday through Friday 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. 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.

What's Cooking?

BY Lori Johnson
Family & Consumer Science Agent

DRAGON FRUIT

Did You Know: It is grown in tropical regions all over the world. They contain vitamin C and phosphorus. Vitamin C helps with our immune function and helps to heal cuts and wounds. They also contain phosphorus which helps our bodies in forming bones and providing us with energy. The taste is similar to a kiwi, pear, or watermelon. The texture is similar to kiwi fruit.

Selection: Choose dragon fruit that is bright pink in color, not bruised and spines that are not dry. It should not be mushy or soft in texture.

Dragon Fruit Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 dragon fruit, diced
- 4 large strawberries, diced
- 10 fresh mint leaves, torn
- Juice of 1 lime
- Pinch of salt

Directions:

Mix all ingredients together and chill for at least 30 minutes before serving. Serve with whole grain pita chips to serve like salsa.



Recipe Source: Food Network

Special Note:

As stated in <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/HS303>, pitayas, dragon fruit, grow well in tropical and subtropical climates mostly free of frosts and freezes. They tolerate cool or warm climates, provided temperatures do not exceed 100°F (38°C). They tolerate some shade and may be injured by extreme sunlight. They are considered a full-sunlight crop in their native countries. Initial estimates from native areas suggest that optimum temperatures for growth are 65°F–77°F (18°C–25°C).



Pitaya plants on pole-trellis in flower.
Credit: J. H. Crane, UF/IFAS



Treemendous: What Makes a Plant Invasive

Jamie Daugherty, RHA

You may have noticed that the term 'invasive' can be used in many ways. I frequently hear clients talk about plants being invasive if they feel there is too many of a native species growing. You may wonder, 'What is an invasive species?' The UF/IFAS Invasive Plant

Working Group and the US Forest Service define an invasive species as a non-native species in an ecosystem where it causes or is likely to cause harm to the local economy, ecological processes, or human health. Based on this definition native species cannot be invasive, but they can be nuisance species. They can also cause economic, ecological, or human health harm. Generally, there is a larger negative connotation to invasive species than nuisance species.

What features increase the chance that a plant is invasive or a nuisance? There are 5 major adaptations for invasive/nuisance species that give them the edge over natives and non-nuisance species.

1. They reproduce a lot and fast. Plants will produce a large number of seeds. Think of all the berries that you see on Brazilian pepper plants. Invasive animals also produce a large number of offspring and at very young ages. The native eastern lubber grasshopper is a great example of a nuisance species that produces a huge amount of offspring each year.
2. They are often the first to colonize disturbed areas. They thrive and out-compete natives before they are able to colonize. We create a lot of disturbed areas as humans, resulting in many opportunities for invasive plant colonization to occur. How can we avoid it? Plant natives as soon as possible in disturbed areas to reduce the spread of invasive plants. Unfortunately, animals are harder to manage and may need to be trapped or hunted.
3. For plants, seeds are easily dispersed by birds, or by attaching to animals/people. If you find seeds on yourself or a pet, be sure to remove them and dispose of them to reduce unwanted germination.
4. Root competition is another plant specific adaptation. Some invasive plants have extensive root systems that allow them to better collect nutrients. The root spread can even lead to the suffocation of other plant root systems.
5. Chemical competition is the final way that plants can get an edge and become invasive. Many plants release chemicals that limit the growth of select other plants. Invasive plants can have a more aggressive chemical that impacts a wider range of plants.

If you find invasive plants in your landscape, it is best to remove them as soon as possible, even if they are pretty. I know; I really like some of the flowers on invasives too. Remember to research new plants before adding them to your landscape. Together, we can reduce the spread of invasive plants.

Learn more:

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/ag376#:~:text=In%20the%20context%20of%20the,or%20harm%20to%20human%20health>

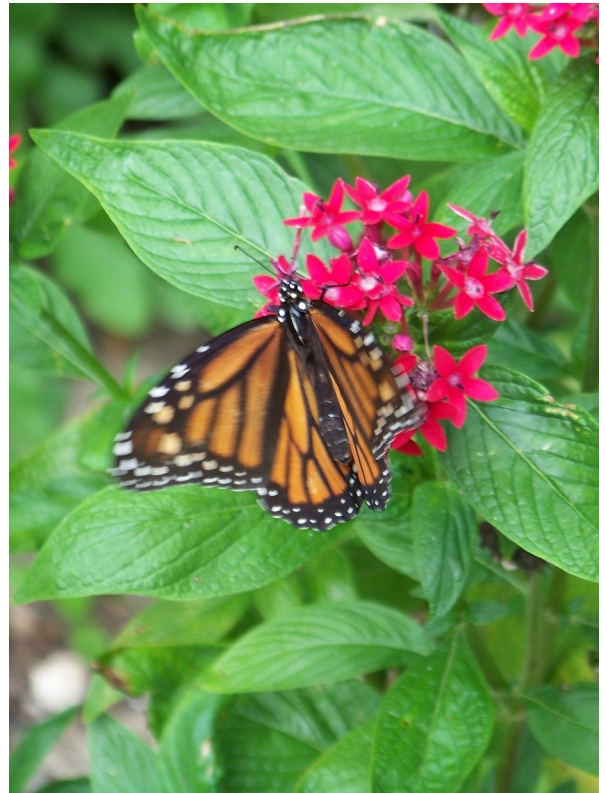
<https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/invasives/index.shtml>

Master Gardener Volunteers

Each garden in Discovery Gardens has a volunteer that serves as a lead for the garden that they have selected because of a special interest they in that area and a desire to learn more about it.

Lorraine Hubbard is the lead gardener for the Butterfly Garden and has a few things to share:

- As a master gardener in Santa Rosa County I volunteered in a butterfly house near Pensacola for 7 years and got quite an education. I also “grow” butterflies at home. The knowledge I received allows me to have a comfort level with the plants and the butterflies.
- The most challenging part of being the lead is you are pretty much on your own maintaining the garden and the heat is a major factor for me.
- I wouldn't change anything at this time in the garden but I would love to have one or two MGVs commit to help occasionally.
- I would like to purchase one or two obelisks or trellises for vines in the butterfly garden. I really don't like the makeshift bamboo trellises



Eileen Pumphrey is the lead for the Nectar Garden and has this to say about the garden she watches over:

- I have a lot of pollinator plants at home so am very comfortable working in this garden.
- My favorite part of the garden is the little stream in the middle of the garden.
- I really love pentas because so many birds, butterflies, and bees love them.
- Weeding is the most challenging thing when gardening.
- I would add more native plants to this garden and remove the little picket fence.





Presentation: Tomato Basics

Learn the ABC's of growing tomatoes in Central Florida
Day: August 24th Time: 10-11
Place: Lake County Extension Office Auditorium
Presenter: Karen Kennen, MGV
Register on line: Eventbrite



TV SHOW: FLIP MY FLORIDA YARD

For a chance to see the Florida-Friendly landscape principles put into practice go to the following website:
www.flipmyfloridayard.com



Here you will find information about a new tv show that takes place in Florida and transforms homeowners yards using the Florida-Friendly principles. You can view five of the past shows.

From Gardens to Greenhouse: Introduction to Hydroponics

Whether you are looking to try hydroponics in your garden or a greenhouse, this class is an introduction to growing plants hydroponically. We will cover all the basics and send you home with a kit to try hydroponics at home. Get ready for this IN-PERSON workshop!

Wednesday, September 29th from 1 to 3 p.m.

Extension Office Seminole County

Cost: \$35 with materials and \$10 without material

Register on Eventbrite



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 a.m. until 4 p.m. Just like your yard Discovery Garden changes with the seasons and will reveal something new with each visit. During the summer months the butterflies flourish in our butterfly garden.

