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Lake County MGCV 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.

Garden Scoop

Two Edible Summer Annuals

BY K.S. Kennen

Soon, hot summer days will be here and as gardeners we need to think about our edibles and what, if anything, we can plant during the rainy, very warm days of this season. There is the option to solarize your vegetable plot by removing any growth and placing plastic over the soil to allow the heat of the sun to help get rid of some of the harmful microorganisms living there. But, if you want to grow something, there are two annual crops that will do well in the Florida heat.

First, there are cowpeas (*Vigna unguiculata*) consisting of a large group of legumes which includes southern peas, field peas, and black-eyed peas that originated from Africa and came to the U.S. during colonial times. These heat loving peas are actually beans and can be planted after the danger of frost is past and can produce as long as the pods are harvested often to allow the plants to continue to produce well into August. Plant your seeds in tilled, compost enriched soil ideally with a 5.5 to 6.5 pH, one inch deep and about 4-6 inches apart. Once the plants are two inches tall, thin them to 12 inches apart. You can also plant seeds two weeks apart to insure ripening in succession. The plants can survive drought but mulching will help not only to retain moisture, but to keep weeds under control. If there is at least one inch of rain a week, the plants will not have to be irrigated. The pods can be picked when the peas have formed in the pods to be shelled and readied for cooking. They can also be harvested when the pods begin to yellow and the peas are dried to be saved for cooking later. One bonus is that legume crops produce nitrogen and help to make your garden soil healthier.

Second, there is okra (*Hibiscus osculents*) which is another heat loving annual that loves to grow when daytime temperatures are above 85 degrees which assures full growth of the plant with abundant flowering and pod development. Okra originated in northeast Africa and was brought to the Americas in the late 1660s. Okra can be planted any time after danger of frost is past and placed ½ to 1 inch deep in compost enriched soil with 6.5 to 7.5 pH. Seeds can be planted six inches apart but should be thinned to 12 to 18 inches apart to allow for air circulation between plants. Mulch and keep plants evenly moist until they are established when they can be kept on the dry side. The plants grow four to seven feet tall with green and sometimes red pods. The stems are prickly and some gardeners have an allergic reaction the prickly stems. The yellow blooms with red centers resemble hibiscus flowers. While wearing gloves and using hand pruners, harvest pods when they are two to four inches long. Three kinds to grow in Central Florida are Clemson Spineless (55 days), Emerald (56 days), and Annie Oakley (57 days).

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/southern-peas.html>

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

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

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Hibiscus

BY K.S. Kennen, MGV

Hibiscus is not only native to Florida but there is also a Florida friendly tropical hibiscus growing in our landscapes. *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* is believed to come from Asia and is planted in many gardens throughout Florida. This plant comes in several colors and has a single or double bloom which usually lasts only a day but does attract hummingbirds and butterflies like the Cloudless Sulfurs, Gulf Fritillaries, and blues. The plant can be a small shrub or come in a tree form that can grow to 20 feet. Hibiscus should be green year round but can have lower leaves turn yellow if the temperatures are too cool. Hibiscus grows best in slightly acidic soil that has a pH between 6.5 and 6.8. All hibiscus plants grow well in full sun. Tropical hibiscus needs moist but well-drained soil.

The native hibiscus, *Hibiscus coccineus*, commonly known as scarlet rosemallow or marsh hibiscus has large scarlet flowers and is a butterfly attractor. In Florida, it is occasionally found growing in swamps. Even though found in wetlands, it is tolerant of drier soil and could be used in the landscape.



It is important to keep an eye out for pests on your hibiscus plant to be sure they do not cause irreversible damage. Examine the top and bottom of the leaves along with the buds for any pests such as aphids, white flies, or mealy bugs. I noticed aphids only on the blooms of my hibiscus. Sometimes I would remove the bloom along with the pest or if it was available, used insecticidal soap. You could also use horticulture oil.

Older varieties of hibiscus can live for 50 years or longer when cared for properly. New hybrids of hibiscus have lifespans of five to 10 years. Be sure your plant is getting plenty of sun, scout for any insect problem, keep moisture even and you should be able to enjoy the color of this stunning bloom for many months of the year.

https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/images/plants/flowers/hibiscus_sanfrancisco.jpg

Plant Clinic Clatter



Dear Master Gardener,

I know that sometime ago the county passed an ordinance about when not to fertilize your lawn. I want to be sure I am doing the right thing by the law and by my lawn. I have St. Augustine and love when it is a deep green. How can I keep it green if I can't fertilize it? Can you give me some information about this?

Hello homeowner,

So glad you asked about this since it is a very timely inquiry. Ordinance #2017-55 requires the following:

1. Seasonal blackout of applying fertilizer containing nitrogen and phosphorus to turf is between June 1 and September 30.
2. There is a prohibition of application of fertilizer within 15 feet of water bodies and it recommends a voluntarily 15 foot low maintenance zone from any water body.
3. Restriction of application of fertilizer containing nitrogen to turf or landscaping plants is during the period of October 1 through May 31 should contain no less than 50 percent slow release nitrogen content.

When you purchase fertilizer look for the phrase "slow release," water insoluble,' 'slowly available," or "organically available" when looking for the 50 per cent of nitrogen that will be gradually release a small, steady, amount over time.

If you do notice some yellowing of the grass blade overtime, it might not be from a lack of nitrogen but rather from a lack of iron or manganese. Application of iron and manganese with other micronutrients can provide a green-up in these cases. Note that iron is not a substitute for nitrogen, which is necessary for turf health. While both iron and nitrogen deficiencies result in turf grass yellowing, they are distinctly different deficiencies in plants. Applying iron does not cure yellowing due to nitrogen deficiency, and iron fertilizer is not a substitute for nitrogen fertilizer. Foliar iron fertilizers, such as iron sulfate or chelated iron solutions, help cure iron deficiencies, and nitrogen fertilizers applied according to best management practices cure nitrogen deficiencies.

For detailed information two excellent resources On EDIS are papers numbered ENH5 "St. Augustine grass for Florida Lawns" and SL21 " General Recommendations for Fertilization of Florida Turf grasses on Florida Soils."

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh010>

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh014>

Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Clinic

Bring your plant, insects, and soil problems to our Plant Clinic for expert 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

Did you know: Tomatoes are high in Vitamin A and C and a good source of potassium. Vitamin A helps with vision and immune function. Vitamin C aids in wound healing and immune function. Potassium helps to regulate our blood pressure and heart function. With summer approaching mix up your traditional BBQ sides with this cool and refreshing salad.

Tomato, Watermelon and Peach Salad

Recipe adapted from Cooking Light

Ingredients:

- Juice of 1 fresh lime
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon honey
- ¼ teaspoon each of salt and pepper
- 1 pint halved grape tomatoes
- 3 cups seedless watermelon
- 1 ½ cups sliced peaches
- ½ cup vertically sliced red onion
- 2 oz crumbled feta cheese
- ¼ cup torn fresh mint leaves
- 2 tablespoons torn fresh basil



Directions:

1. Combine lime juice, olive oil, honey, salt, and pepper in a large bowl with a whisk.
2. Add tomatoes, watermelon, peaches, onion, mint, and basil. Toss gently with a spoon.
3. Cover and refrigerate for two hours.
4. Sprinkle with feta cheese just before serving.

Arbor Day Planting By Reggie Doherty

On Thursday, April 22nd, Master Gardener Volunteers, Leslie Lightbourne & Nancy LaPointe, gave an educational speech at the Lakes & Hills Garden Club Arbor Day Tree Planting. The [Acer rubrum](#), Florida Red Maples were planted at [Frank Brown Sports Park](#), 1245 E Pine Ave, in Mount Dora, on a beautiful but nippy morning. There were 27 people present for the dedication including Lakes & Hills, President, Carolyn Sonnentag; Florida Federation of Garden Clubs ([FFGC](#)) District VII Directors, Gwen Carter and Charlotte White; and Vice Mayor, Harmon Massey.

The trees were planted next to the playground where parents and their children can hang-out in the shade these Florida Red Maples will provide in the future. Though small now, they are very visible from the road, so all passing by in the Spring and Fall can enjoy its vibrant colors of this Florida Native. Several members of Friends of the Environment will use their own watering truck on Friday, Saturday, Sunday to make sure trees get the water support they need.



Nancy LaPointe & Leslie Lightbourne, MGVs

Treemendous: Laurel Wilt

Jamie Daugherty, RHA

Have you noticed your avocado tree looking wilted? Are the leaves turning brown but not falling off? Have you noticed pencil shavings at the base of the tree? If so, you may be asking yourself 'What is wrong with my tree?' It is likely the fungal disease laurel wilt is to blame.

Laurel wilt was first recorded in Florida in 2005, three years after contaminated packing material brought the redbay ambrosia beetle from Asia into Georgia. The redbay ambrosia beetle transmits the laurel wilt fungus to 13 different tree species in Florida. These include avocado, swamp bay, redbay, camphor, and other members of the Lauraceae plant family.



Avocado tree showing signs of laurel wilt.



Close up of redbay ambrosia beetle



Redbay ambrosia beetle on a penny

All photos are from UF/IFAS

While Florida has at least 30 species of ambrosia beetles, only the redbay ambrosia beetle attacks healthy trees. They carry the fungal spores on their bodies. The spores grow within the beetle burrow, feeding the beetle. After being deposited within the burrow, the spores travel through the tree, causing the visible symptoms mentioned above.

What should you do if your tree has laurel wilt? Do not move the wood. Moving the wood can bring the pest beetle to new locations. Since there is no cure, the plant will have to be destroyed. The good news is that prevention is possible! Propiconazole can be injected into susceptible trees as prevention. Contact an arborist for help with the inoculations. Visit treesaregood.org to look for an arborist near you that offers the service.

Additional information can be found at:

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs1360>

https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/archive/hot_topics/environment/laurel_wilt.shtml

<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/miami-dade/agriculture/laurel-wilt---a-disease-impacting-avocados/>

Events

Due to COVID 19 activities and educational offerings are virtual. Please refer to our website for future offerings. The site for is at <http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu.lake/> or <https://lakegardeningprograms.eventbrite.com> Extension programs are open to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, age, disability, religion, or national origin.

Upcoming statewide trainings via Zoom:

Homeowner Citrus Webinar- May 20th 9am-noon. Update on Citrus Greening, HLB Tolerant Citrus and the importance of citrus maintenance practices Zoom link coming soon check here. Citrus Specialist from our IFAS CREC will be the presenters.

To take a brief survey from the UF/IFAS Citrus Research and Education Center at Lake Alfred on Citrus. Go to this survey https://ufl.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_022gJtvsNelLpGu it will provide IFAS researchers valuable information on what is important to homeowners when they are considering buying citrus trees.

Preparing for Wildfires with Firescaping: A certificate training series will be held on Wednesdays in June 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th 9 am- 11 am. This 4-week online training includes a blend of presentations, "hands on" activities and discussions. Registration information will be up next week.

In Loving Memory of Barney O. Rae –

January 9, 1934 – January 20, 2021

Barney Rae was a faithful greenhouse volunteer for approximately three years. He walked from the Cove at Tavares Village and back home again every Tuesday and Thursday when a team of MGV's was working and propagating for a plant sale.

His wife, Jan, spent 18 years at the AG Center as a Master Gardener; seven of those years as lead of the Southwest Garden.

