

# THE GARDEN BENCH



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THE MANATEE COUNTY MASTER GARDENER E-NEWSLETTER

JULY/AUGUST 2022 - VOLUME 21 - ISSUE 7

## A Summer Vegetable Garden

By Maureen Hirthler, Master Gardener Volunteer



Photo: UF/IFAS

Okra



Photo: UF/IFAS

Black-eyed peas

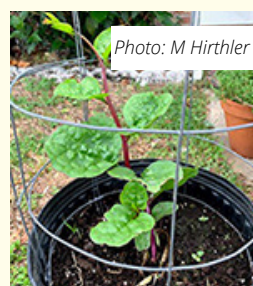


Photo: M Hirthler

Spinach



Photo: UF/IFAS

Seminole pumpkin



Photo: UF/IFAS

Chayote



Photo: M Hirthler

Eggplant

Tomatoes as large as a fist. More zucchini than the neighborhood can eat. Peppers, broccoli, spinach. What a beautiful summer vegetable garden! Unfortunately for us, it is in Pennsylvania.

Vegetable gardening can be frustrating any time of year. Most of what we consider summer vegetables don't tolerate the blazing sun, high temperatures, inches of rain, and the high humidity of Manatee County. However, we have some plants you may enjoy growing during the summer months.

Okra, *Abelmoschus esculentus*, loves our weather. It can be fried, roasted, grilled, or frozen for use in soups and stews. Or try making some authentic gumbo!

Black-eyed peas do well, too, and are a versatile addition to the popular dip Cowboy Caviar. You can also store them for soups and stews later in the year.

Malabar spinach, *Basella alba*, is not a true spinach, but its leafy greens are a tasty substitute, raw or cooked. *Basella rubra*, with its lovely red stems, may become one of your favorite ingredients in a summer salad.

Take another look at some tropical vegetables you may not have tried. Seminole pumpkins, *Cucurbita moschata*, were traditionally grown in Florida by the Miccosukee, Seminole, and Calusa peoples and are related to butternut squash. They are one of the tastiest and most reliable pumpkins to grow.

Chayote, *Sechium edule*, is another easy-to-grow vegetable you can use like any other winter squash. Roast or grill, then mash for a tasty side dish.

The Everglades tomato, *Solanum pimpinellifolium*, is a wild relative of our cultivated tomatoes and produces dozens of tiny fruits that can satisfy your taste buds.

Summer is the perfect time to try heirloom eggplants; you'll find several beautiful heat-resistant types. Generally, the best performing eggplants are those that grow in hot climates, like Middle Eastern and Asian varieties. Ping Tung Long is a slender light-purple vegetable with compact growth ideal for containers. Aswad is a substantial round Iraqi type with sweet flesh and a more traditional dark purple color. A market variety grown in Florida since the early 1900s, Florida High Bush eggplant is a typical pear-shaped variety with fruits held high off the ground. The Millionaire eggplant is a long, thin, almost black type that matures early. Make some baba ghanoush and freeze it for year-round enjoyment.

Several herbs, especially basil, tarragon, and rosemary, do well in the summer. I continuously seed basil and harvest it for pesto, which freezes well and is versatile.

Finally, I like to plant varieties of zinnia in the garden to give bursts of color and provide lovely cut flowers.

Your plants will require regular, deep waterings and continuous vigilance for pests and diseases. Some afternoon shade or shade cloth can protect young plants until they mature. Please remember to wear a hat and sunscreen, drink plenty of fluids, and work in the early morning hours this time of year.

You can find more information on summer tolerant vegetables at:

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/heat-tolerant-vegetables.html>

<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn-and-garden/florida-gardening-calendar/>

<https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/charlotteco/2019/06/25/tiny-but-tough-the-everglades-tomato/>

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

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/seminole-pumpkin.html>



## Panama Rose

By Nancy Hammer, Master Gardener Volunteer

Panama rose...even the name sounds appealing! It is not a rose, nor is it originally from Panama. The Panama Rose shrub (*Rondeletia leucophylla*), also called Bush Penta, sports lovely deep pink tubular flowers with yellow centers that resemble pentas blooms. It is particularly appreciated by snowbirds as it blooms winter through spring when many other flowering shrubs are taking a break. Its intoxicating evening scent is a pleasant addition to areas where it can be enjoyed such as near a patio or lanai. During the day, when the scent is more subtle, it will be visited by butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees for its nectar.

Panama Rose grows easily in zone 10 but will thrive in 9B if protected from frost. It is a fast grower topping out at ten feet. However, with pruning after its spring show of flowers, it is easy to maintain at three feet. It prefers full to partial sun for best flowering and requires well drained soil to avoid root rot. This beauty will catch your eye in a container, in hedges, and in groupings of three to five with other butterfly attracting plants. Happily, Panama Rose is easy to propagate from stem cuttings for additional plants. It is not typically sold in the big box store garden centers, but it can be found at many independent nurseries.

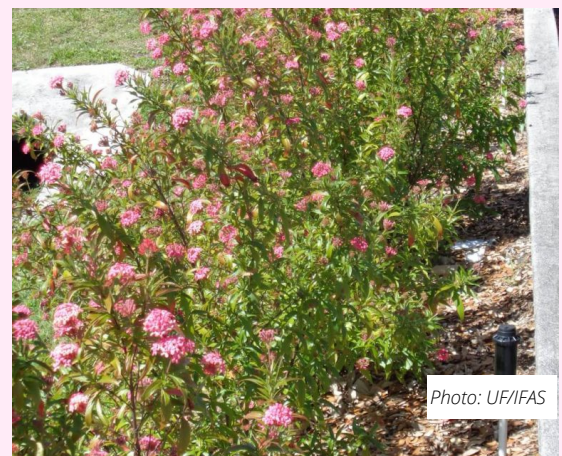
Under appropriate conditions, we have been recommending this Florida-Friendly shrub to homeowners during Landscape Assistance Program meetings, as some of us have it and love it. Intrigued by a scented, winter and spring flowering butterfly magnet? Give Panama rose a try!

Resource:

Panama rose at a glance, by Ralph E. Mitchell  
UF/IFAS Blogs



Panama Rose



Panama Rose Shrub

# Ask a Master Gardener

By Karen Holleran, Master Gardener Volunteer



Dear MGV,

I've attached photos that depict the little round shells on the Drake Elm tree in our front yard. Could insects be coming from them? I believe we discussed that this could be "Sooty Mold", or, could be causing sooty mold.

Dear D.S.,

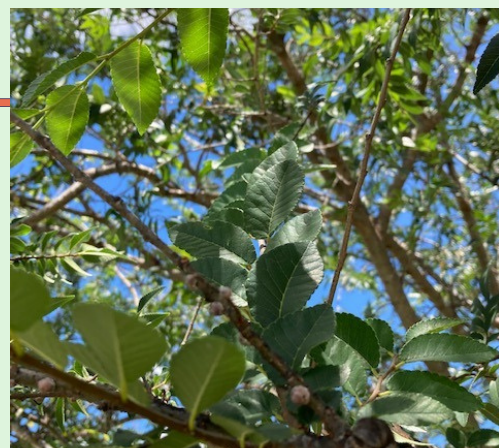
Regarding the picture of the 'bumps' from your elm tree, you are correct that insects come from them. Your picture shows the adult form of Florida Wax Scale, and you have quite an infestation! Each one of these females hatches her eggs under a wax shield. The young insects, called crawlers, are very small. They crawl to another part of the plant, build their waxy shield, and feed on the plant from under the shield. Excretion of honeydew from the scale promotes the growth of sooty mold.

Because the shield protects the insects, it's advisable to use a systematic insecticide with the active ingredient Imidacloprid for treatment. Some of these products are labeled for use as a soil drench. You'll mix the product with water, then pour it around the tree. The drench is absorbed by the roots, then moves through the tree's vascular system. As the insects feed, they ingest the insecticide and die. If you can reach small branches (like you did for your picture) that have many of these insects on them, you can prune that branch off and discard it in the trash. That will eliminate some insects before the insecticide has a chance to work.

Because the shield is glued to the tree, it remains on the branches after the insect is dead. When the shield can be easily scrapped off the branch with your nail, you'll know the scale is dead. As with the sooty mold, the dead scale will eventually wear off from the weather.

I'm including a link to information about Florida Wax Scale for your reference:

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/IN/IN91300.pdf>



Drake Elm Tree



Florida Wax Scale



Master Gardener Volunteer Karen Holleran answers your email questions. Send questions and/or photos for identification or for diagnosis of residential gardening problems to [ManteeMG@gmail.com](mailto:ManteeMG@gmail.com). Or call us at 941-722-4524 weekdays from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. and press 1 to speak to the Master Gardener Diagnostic Plant Clinic.

# STUCK ON YOU: CREEPING BEGGARWEED

By Jennifer Tonge-Martin, Master Gardener Volunteer

Have you ever walked through your yard, innocently enjoying the garden, and found with dismay that you are covered with annoying, sticky “hitchhikers”? What are they and what can be done about them?

Many plants have evolved with seeds that attach themselves to passersby as a means of dispersion. With needle shapes, hooks, and Velcro®-like coverings, the seeds grasp onto fur, clothing, or even bare skin, defying efforts to brush them off. They ruin clothing, mat your pets’ fur, and cause irritating scratches and rashes. They may even worsen allergy symptoms or cause infections. Defending against these persistent cling-ons may need to be part of your gardening plans.



Creeping Beggarweed

One native perennial hitchhiker is creeping beggarweed (*Desmodium incanum*.) You may have encountered some of its spring crop of seeds already.

A chameleon in growth habit, it can creep low in lawns, defying the mower, or grow up into bushes and disguise itself as part of a hedge. It has a deep taproot plus roots at every node of its many long, branched runners. This makes it well-adapted for both dry and wet areas, loose or compacted soil, plus sun or shade. The stems are tough, even woody, with leaves appearing in threes (like clover but thicker and tougher in texture). It has small, pink to rose-colored pea-like flowers before it puts out its flat segmented seed pods. The pods hook together in lines or break apart when adhering to clothing, hair, or fur. They can be painful to comb out of our pets’ fur or our own hair. Clothing may become snagged when detaching beggarweed seeds.

Beggarweed is difficult to eradicate once established. It requires vigilance in scouting, identifying and removing. Desultory hand pulling is not enough. A good weed tool that gets down to the roots is indispensable. I use a long-handled “dandelion puller” that grabs the plant below the surface of the soil.

Pre-emergence herbicides, which prevent seed germination, are ineffective against the plant due to the large seed size. Glyphosate herbicides can be used to control newly emerging beggarweed around ornamentals; older plants are much more resistant. University of Florida/IFAS recommends herbicides that contain sulfentrazone, thiencazuron-methyl, or dimethylamine salts that will work in most warm-season grasses however these herbicides may be more expensive or difficult to find. Triclopyr will kill beggarweed also, but it will damage St. Augustine grass. Remember to follow label instructions and wear protective gear when using any of these herbicides.

Other gardening practices that help in prevention and control of beggarweed include using weed barrier fabric and a thick layer (2-4 inches) of mulch.



Creeping Beggarweed

References: Murphy, Tim R. et al, Weeds of Southern Turfgrasses, UF/IFAS Extension, University of Florida, November 2013

Ricketts, Grantly “Creeping Beggarweed in the Landscape” (*Desmodium incanum*)” [blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/osceola](https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/osceola)

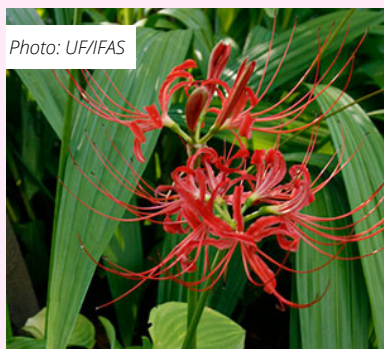


# Passalong Plants: An Old Southern Tradition

By Jim Haupt, Master Gardener Volunteer

Long before the emergence of garden centers and box stores, the practice of passing along plants has been a Southern tradition for many generations. During the Civil War, Southerners had to make do with the plants they had on hand or obtain them from someone else. You may have a special plant in your landscape passed on to you. Sometimes the stories or history about the plant are more valuable than the plant itself.

Passalong plants adapt well to Florida's intense summer heat. They have staying power, surviving periods of drought and fierce tropical storms. Passalong plants are easy to propagate by cuttings, offshoots, leaves, and seeds. Many have a clumping habit, making them easy to divide.



Hurricane Lilies



Swamp Sunflower



Four-o'clocks



Eggplant

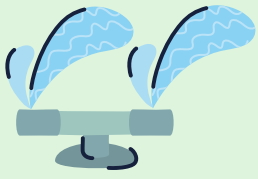
Many of these plants are difficult to find. Unlike plants sold commercially, heritage plants are not necessarily disease and pest resistant but known for their color, taste, fragrance, and personal attachment and appeal. Heirlooms are open-pollinated plants that have been in use for more than 50 years. Eggplant (*Solanum melongena*), a Florida favorite originally grown in China 4,000 years ago, was introduced to the U.S. by Thomas Jefferson in 1806. (See <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publications/hs1242>)

Other passalong plants, like swamp sunflowers (*Helianthus augustifolius*), a Florida native growing in low wet regions in the state, are not usually affected by insects or disease. Roots are easy to divide in spring or autumn. Hurricane lilies (*Lycoris radiata*), or red spider lilies, make suitable passalongs, especially in old homesteads. Four-o'clocks (*Mirabilis jalapa*), old Florida favorites, possess striking pink, white, and yellow blooms from late spring to fall. But because of their vigorous spreading habit, it is advisable to alert the receiver!

Before propagating, be sure the plant is non-invasive and free of pests and diseases. Even the most generous gardener may not realize that some plants are not the best to pass along. Plants with clumping habits can be divided opposite their blooming season. Plants that bloom in the fall should be divided and planted in the spring. Use seeds as they mature and cuttings from growth tips of stems. Leaf cuttings may consist of only the leaf or the leaf and stem. Place cuttings in a warm, humid environment to hasten root development.

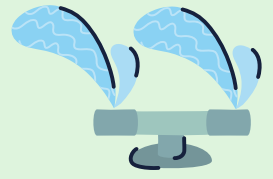
Be sure to inform the receiver of a plant's spreading habit, light and soil requirements, and other useful information that will help them succeed. In keeping with Southern traditions, when someone gives you a passalong plant, never say thank you, otherwise the plant will wither away and die. Always be gracious and give assurance that you will do your best to give it a great new home.

For additional information, go to [edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ornamentals/passalong-plants.html](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ornamentals/passalong-plants.html)



# Calibrating Your Irrigation System

By John Dawson, Master Gardener Volunteer



Is your irrigation system calibrated properly? Calibrating your sprinkler system means figuring out how long you need to run your irrigation system to apply the amount of water needed to keep your lawn and landscape healthy.

Most of the soils in our area are sandy and require as much as  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch of water per cycle. This rate varies depending on your location. Heavier clay soils may only need  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch. If you are unsure, start with a goal of  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch minimum and increase as your plants needs dictate. The goal is to use only enough water as needed; saving you money, conserving water, and keeping your plants safe from the hazards of overwatering. [Garden Bench Newsletter Index "Overwatering" – Apr 2021]

How to calibrate: Save 5 to 10 cans, or other straight-sided containers to catch the water from your sprinkler, either in ground or at the end of a hose. Containers need to be the same size and should be from 3 to 6 inches in diameter. Turn on one zone and identify the area that is being irrigated. Scatter the cans at random within that zone. Repeat the procedure for every zone, because there may be differences in how uniformly water is applied. If you use a hose-end sprinkler to water your lawn, place the cans in a straight line from the sprinkler to the edge of the watering pattern. Space the containers evenly. Operate the zone or your hose, for fifteen minutes. Gather the cans and use a ruler (at least one that measures in 1/16-inch increments) to precisely measure the depth of water in each can. Find the average depth of water collected in the cans (total amount of water divided by the number of cans) and multiply by four to give you the irrigation rate in inches per hour.

Example: After gathering the cans and measuring the total amount and dividing by the number of cans used and multiplying by four, you get 1.5" inch/60 minutes. To determine how many minutes to run that zone to get 0.75 inch, intuitively you would say 30 minutes. But to do the math, multiply 60 X 0.75 and divide by 1.5 to get 30 minutes. You can then test your zone by placing the empty cans back in the zone and run it for 30 minutes; hopefully, you will get an average of  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch.

Once you have the zone times corrected, you need to evaluate whether your sprinklers are providing adequate coverage and only watering your landscape, not the street or driveway or even parts of your neighbor's yard. There should only be a slight overlap in coverage between zones.

To make corrections, adjust each sprinkler head individually. You will need a small thin headed flat head screwdriver and a pair of pump-handle pliers. There are normally two screw adjustments, one for spray length and the other for pattern adjustment. There is a pattern start and end point. Turn on the zone (do this when the wind is not blowing) and watch where the pattern starts and stops for each spray head. If the start point is not where you want after the screw adjustment, use the pliers to twist the base so that the start point is where you want it. Fortunately, most manufacturers provide internet tutorials showing you how to do this.



Irrigation Sprinkler

I encourage a monthly maintenance check on one of your designated watering days. These are mechanical systems, and they do break down and shift patterns over time. Also, make sure your rain sensor is working properly [Garden Bench Newsletter Index – “Rain Sensors” – Jan 2020]. For an overall look at maintaining your irrigation system go to [Garden Bench Newsletter Index- “Irrigation Systems Maintenance” – Jul/Aug 2021].



Irrigation Sprinkler

For further information on calibrating your irrigation system go to <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/media/sfylifasufledu/broward/docs/pdfs/urban-hort/How-to-calibrate-your-Sprinkler-systemLH02600.pdf>.

The Garden Bench newsletter: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/manatee-lawn--garden/garden-bench-newsletter/>

### Manatee County Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Clinics

Location	Address	Day(s)	Time
Crowder Bros. Ace Hardware	5409 Manatee Ave W., Bradenton	Third Saturdays	9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
Central Library	1301 1st St. W., Bradenton	Third Saturdays	11:30 A.M. – 2:30 P.M.
Lakewood Ranch Farmers Market	Waterside Place, 7500 Island Cove Terrace, Sarasota	First Sundays	10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.
Robinson Preserve	840 99th St. N.W., Bradenton (South entrance, near pavilions)	Fourth Sundays	9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
Rocky Bluff Library	6750 US Hwy 301 N., Ellenton	Second and Fourth Saturdays	10:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.
St. George’s Episcopal Church	912 63rd Ave. W., Bradenton	First and Third Thursdays	9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County Tel. 941-722-4524 <a href="mailto:manateemg@gmail.com">manateemg@gmail.com</a>	1303 17th St. W., Palmetto	Every weekday except Wednesdays	9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.



## JULY/AUGUST CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Time	Event
Saturday 7/9/22	10:00AM	<b>Bug-Out Habitats</b> This class introduces children to the world of bugs. The children will examine a variety of real bugs, and learn about bug anatomy, life cycles, habitats, the important role bugs play in nature and many cool facts about bugs. <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/bug-out-habitats-tickets-355173602807">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/bug-out-habitats-tickets-355173602807</a>
Wednesday 7/13/22	11:00AM	<b>What's That?: Plant ID for Beginners</b> Not sure what that plant is in your backyard? New to Florida and unfamiliar with the new species? If you ever wondered how to figure out what plant is which, join this beginner plant ID webinar. <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/whats-that-plant-id-for-beginners-tickets-367055883027">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/whats-that-plant-id-for-beginners-tickets-367055883027</a>
Friday 7/29/22	8:30AM	<b>Mushroom Hike</b> Join UF/IFAS for an engaging walk into the fantastic world of fungi on a tour through one of our local natural areas. These walks will focus on practicing skills needed for identification of local mushroom species as well as on the broader ecology associated. <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mushroom-hike-tickets-375260924527">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mushroom-hike-tickets-375260924527</a>
Saturday 8/6/22	9:30AM	<b>DIY Gardening Projects</b> Learn fun and useful do-it-yourself projects for home and garden using recycled materials. <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/diy-gardening-projects-tickets-297989282967">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/diy-gardening-projects-tickets-297989282967</a>
Thursday 8/11/22	11:30AM	<b>Talk Plants with Me: Ask a Horticulture Agent</b> Submit your questions to our Horticulture Agent for live Q&A. We will talk about hot topics in the plant world and may have a few guests join us along the way. <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/talk-plants-with-me-tickets-391234883067">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/talk-plants-with-me-tickets-391234883067</a>
Saturday 8/27/22	11:00AM	<b>Happy Houseplants</b> Join us for a fun, in-person, hands-on class to learn the art and science of caring for houseplants. \$25 entry fee allows you to take home your very own specially-selected, easy-care houseplant in a sub-irrigated container. \$5 for the class only. <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/happy-houseplants-tickets-368565277667">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/happy-houseplants-tickets-368565277667</a>

### University of Florida IFAS Extension - Manatee County

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