

A quarterly online magazine published for Master Gardeners in support of the educational mission of UF/IFAS Extension Service.

## Ideas to Create an Edible Landscape

By Debi Ford, Master Gardener

There are many beautiful plants of every color, leaf shape, and size available for your Florida landscape, but what if you are looking for something different? Try landscaping with edibles! Including edibles in your landscape doesn't mean you're creating a "production garden", just incorporating some different plants to enhance the areas.

Your edible landscape will be more successful if you follow some practical maintenance and health tips for both you and the plants.

- The right plant in the right place is paramount to any gardening success. Group plants of like needs together to make sure you give them the best chance to thrive.
- Carefully separate the treatment of the ornamental and edible plant material. Use no pesticides or select safer pesticides to use on all plant material.
- Research the suitability of other chemicals for non-edibles vs. edibles; what works for your turf grass could be a disaster for your edibles.
- You may want to avoid locating edible plants along the sidewalk where people and dogs are more likely to travel.
- If you live in a regulated neighborhood, check with your homeowners' association before you plan to use edibles in the front yard. You may also wish to check with your city's codes department for any restrictions, as these vary by municipality.
- If you want a Florida-Friendly yard that includes edibles, keep in mind that edibles often need more water than many ornamentals. You might want to use the concept of hydro-zoning, grouping like-needed plants together. Consider installing a drip-irrigation system as well.

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Although basic design principles still apply, most edibles have a short life span, so the challenge is maintaining a healthy-looking garden year-round. Mix evergreen ornamentals, traditional flowers, and short- and long-season edibles. Include nontraditional edibles, such as berry shrubs, fruiting trees, and ground-covering herbs. The result will be a garden with continuous growing activity. We're lucky in our region as we have two growing seasons, so we can have edibles most of the year.

Using a variety of textures and sizes (including vertical elements) adds interest to a garden. Repeating plants provides unity as does choosing harmonious colors.

You can create your edible gardening in pots, raised beds, and on supports such as trellises and arbors. In addition, remember to use edging and pathways to keep your landscape neat as well as providing entry for maintenance and harvesting.

Enjoy the harvest from your landscape!

*This article is based on **Landscaping with Edibles** by Dr. Gail Hansen <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep475>*



An edible landscape. Photo: Creative Commons.

## Olives in Florida

By Sherry Dodson, Master Gardener

Olive trees are not new to Florida—they have been producing fruit here since the 1700's. With the decline of the citrus industry, growers are looking for viable, new crops and interest in them is high. Today, there are approximately 300 acres of commercial olives. Commercial grower's focus is on olive oil as opposed to processed fruit or olive leaves (used for tea).

Fragrant and beautiful, the olive (*Olea europaea*) tree can also be a wonderful addition to the homeowner's landscape. Not only are these trees ornamental but they also provide food. Olives require some type of processing, usually brining, before eating. This removes the bitterness in raw olives freshly picked from the tree.

Considered relatively pest and disease resistant, olive trees do have challenges in Florida. The biggest challenge is our humid Florida climate.

Although olives have been cultivated in Florida for many years, little research means much is still unknown about successfully producing olives here. Not all olive varieties are suitable for our state. Arbequina—a mild, buttery-flavored olive—is the most widely planted and reliable variety for Florida. Varieties such as Mission, Ascolano, Frantoio, Koroneiki, and Pendolino also do well. Growers are testing other varieties.

The trees produce fragrant flowers in April and May. They prefer approximately 200-300 chill hours (hours below 47° F) for flower bud development. Although trees can take lower temperatures, fruit damage occurs at 30°F. Most varieties need a pollinator. However, at this time, there is “best guess” information about this topic. Apparently, Florida's climate affects pollination differently than other climates.



Flowering olive tree. Photo Credit: UF/IFAS.



Excessive water and fertilizer are the two major management concerns with olive trees. Olive trees prefer poor soils and tolerate a 5-8 pH range. Our sandy soils are perfect as olive trees are intolerant of moist soils and high water tables. Excessive irrigation before flowering will result in reduced olive production because flowers will drop before they form fruit. Once flowering commences, it is appropriate to increase irrigation. Spring and early summer irrigation encourages shoot growth that increases fruit production for the next season and moderates the tree's tendency for alternate bearing. The current season's irrigation influences the current fruit size and stone-to-flesh ratio. Boron, nitrogen, and potassium are important nutrients for olive trees. Leaf analysis will determine the need for these.

Pruning helps regulate flowering. Pruning should be complete by late summer as only new growth supports drupe production. The goal is to attain 8" to 20" of new growth yearly. Trees will be four to five years old before producing olives.

Pests include leaffooted bugs, glassy-wing sharpshooters, grasshoppers, katydids, hornworms, olive shootworms, leafrollers, ants, and scale. Another concern is olive anthracnose, a fungi that causes fruit damage. Olive Quick Decline (OQD) is a disease not currently in Florida. However, the pathogen, *Xylella fastidiosa*, is in Florida and is responsible for Pierce's disease. A subspecies of *Xylella fastidiosa* causes OQD. Insects and contaminated tools can cause it to spread. If *Xylella fastidiosa* is suspected, please contact: Department of Entomology and Nematology, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville FL.

Consider adding olive trees to your garden!

#### References

Olives for Your Florida Landscape <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep515>

"Pests and Fungal Organisms Identified on Olives (*Olea europaea*) in Florida." <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in1046>

"*Xylella fastidiosa* and Olive Quick Decline: Symptoms and Identification of an Insect Vectored



Ripening olives. Photo Credit: Jennifer L. Gillett-Kaufman.UF/IFAS.

## Irma Destroys a Pollinators' Paradise

By Ellen Mahaney, Master Gardener

Two years ago, for five dollars, I bought a sweet almond plant (*Aloysia virgata*), a small fragrant bush with white blossoms, at the University of South Florida's nursery shop. When I planted it in the northeast corner of my backyard, I did not realize it would soon grow into a fragrant fifteen-foot tree with beautiful white blossoms.

Scenting the surrounding garden, it became a pollinator's paradise, a magnet for honeybees as well as for a menagerie of other bees, wasps, and miscellaneous insects, most noticeably, the white-tipped black daytime moth ( *Melanchroia chephise*), so fond of its nectar.



Above Left: The sweet almond bush crowds out the surrounding fire bushes, crepe myrtle, and Indian hawthorn plants near the back fence. Above Right: Black white-tipped winged moths sip nectar from the irresistible sweet almond bush. Photo Credits: Ellen Mahaney.

Alas, hurricane Irma easily downed my treasure, which proved to have a narrow root system and low wind tolerance. Several other plants in my garden attract pollinators, but not with the startling effect of the sweet almond tree. It was my favorite. Granted, it was crowding out other plants, especially the fire bushes. It grew so fast it seemed always in need of trimming. Two weeks before Irma's arrival, I had arranged for an arborist to groom this bush but he was unable to fit me in before the storm arrived.

I miss my sweet almond bush. However, I will not replace it. I will do my research and invest in native plants appropriate for the sad bare area, now so difficult to look at. Slower growing native plants tend to have deeper root structures and greater wind resistance.

Hmm, I could plant a sweet almond in a large pot and (try to) keep it under control. Pollinators would be happy. I have to promise not to put it in the ground. I have to promise....



Sweet Almond (*Aloysia vitata*). Photo Credit: UF/IFAS.



## Is it Time to Rethink Your Lawn?

By Melinda Moreschi, Master Gardener

Water...mow...spray pesticide...fertilize....  
Water...mow...spray pesticide ...fertilize...repeat.

Have you ever considered replacing your lawn with something that is lower maintenance, less costly and above all, less damaging to the environment? It may be easier than you think.



Photo Credit: M. L. Elliott UF/IFAS.

Although ubiquitous, lawns do not exist in nature. Dating back to the 16th century, lawns were cultivated to surround English castles in order to provide a clear view to protect against enemies and foes. By the 17th century, grass lawns became a symbol of wealth. Large lawns required much labor. To keep them closely mowed, hand sheering or scything was necessary. Some landowners managed lawns as pasture by using sheep or cows to keep the grass “mowed.” As a benefit, sheep and cows provided their own fertilizer.

Several factors made lawns more popular. The development of the lawn mower by Edwin Budding in 1830 helped to make mowing less costly. In addition, Frederick Law Olmstead, the designer of Central Park, also designed suburbs where each home had its own lawn. The popularity of golf and other sports also contributed to the desire for lawns. Lastly, Abraham Levitt, the man who founded Levittown, the ideal suburb of the 1940’s and 50’s, made sure a lawn was in place on each home he sold.

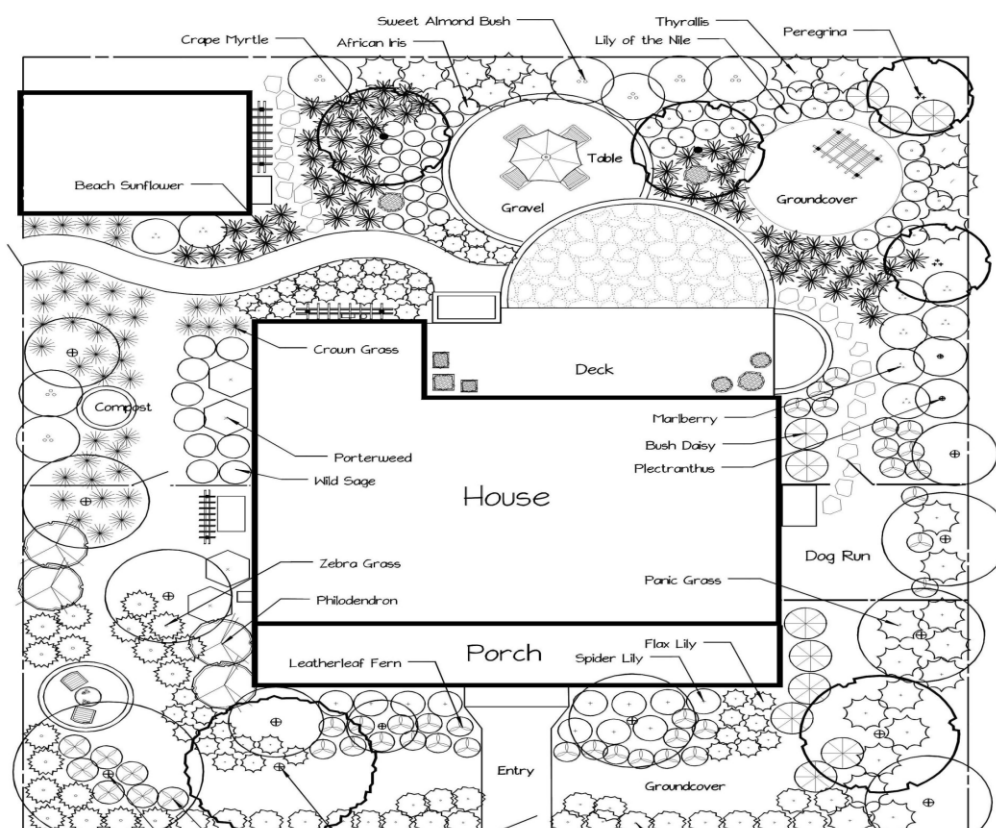
Lawns may have had their time and place in the past. However, considering the high financial and environmental costs of lawn care, the decision to choose lawn alternatives makes a lot of sense.



Large, arching plants reduce the need for ground cover. Photo Credit UF/IFAS.

According to the EPA, 80% of all homes in the United States have grass lawns. As a result:

- 30% of household water is devoted to outdoor use (Polycarpou, 2010).
- Fertilizers run off into gutters, streams and water sources, harming animals and the environment (Brown, 2007).
- Pesticides are harmful. Homeowners are required to put up signs on their lawns after a pesticide application to warn of its danger to small dogs and children. Imagine the harm done to pollinators and the soil itself (Brown, 2007).
- Mowers and blowers account for 5% of the nation's air pollution (Jabr, 2013).
- Refilling lawn and garden equipment results in more than 17 million gallons of fuel spilled every year (Polycarpou, 2010).
- Lawns are a monoculture—a single plant—in a given area. They provide no biodiversity to benefit wildlife (Jabr, 2013).
- Clover, a legume, was once interspersed in our lawns. Legumes can extract nitrogen from the air and "fix" it in nodules on its roots where it is then available to grass, reducing the need for nitrogen fertilizer. However, a pesticide that kills dandelions also kills clover.



From Twenty-Two Ideas for a Low-Care, Low-Cost Landscape <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep442>



If you are ready to incorporate some alternative ideas in your landscape, visit the web pages below for some ideas:

Lawns: Considerations for New or Renewed Lawns

<http://brevard.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture/PDF/7108hort.pdf>

Twenty-Two Ideas for a Low-Care, Low-Cost Landscape <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep442>

Ground Covers for Central Florida

[http://hillsborough.ifas.ufl.edu/documents/pdf/ffl/FLL101\\_2013/GroundCovers.pdf](http://hillsborough.ifas.ufl.edu/documents/pdf/ffl/FLL101_2013/GroundCovers.pdf)

Florida-friendly Interactive Yard <http://www.floridayards.org/interactive/index.php>

Timely Topics: Alternatives to Lawn Grass <http://pcetimelytopics.blogspot.com/2007/12/alternatives-to-lawn-grass.html>

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Brown, P. (2007, December 27). Alternatives to Lawn Grass. Retrieved April 09, 2017, from <http://pcetimelytopics.blogspot.com/2007/12/alternatives-to-lawn-grass.html>

Jabr, F. (2013, July 29). Outgrowing the Traditional Grass Lawn. Scientific American ... Retrieved April 9, 2017, from <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/brainwaves/outgrowing-the-traditional-grass-lawn/>

Polycarpou, L. (2010, June 4). The Problem of Lawns. Retrieved April 09, 2017, from <http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2010/06/04/the-problem-of-lawns/>

## Safety During Hurricane Cleanup

By Jane Morse, UF/IFAS Extension Agent, Pinellas County

Remember that safety is your first priority. Most injuries and death in a natural disaster occur during cleanup.

Assume all power lines are energized and do not touch. Improper use of generators may energize lines without warning. Beware! Electrocutation may occur if any part of your body touches a conductor (water, tool, tree branch, metal fence, etc.) in contact with an energized power line. Call the power company to report tree limbs that have fallen on a power line.

Make sure you work with someone, not alone, and have a first-aid kit nearby. It is important to have an Epi-pen in case you have an allergic reaction to an insect sting. Avoid overexertion—this is the most common cause for injury. Avoid lifting more than 50 pounds and remember to lift with your legs and not your back. Hot weather is dangerous. To avoid heat exhaustion or stroke be sure to take frequent breaks in the shade or somewhere cool. Drink small amounts of water frequently. Remember that drinking water is your best defense against heat related illness. Protect your skin from the sun and insects. If using loud equipment be sure to protect your hearing. Wear protective eyewear.



Photo Credit: UF/IFAS

Chainsaws are the most dangerous hand tool available. Use these guidelines to avoid injuries:

1. Follow manual instructions carefully to ensure safe operation and proper equipment maintenance.

2. Wear personal protective equipment, which includes protective glasses and face shield, protective headgear, hearing protection, gloves, leg chaps and heavy work boots. Make sure hair is tied up and that any clothing cannot be caught in the chainsaw.
3. Keep both hands on the handles. Many injuries happen when using the saw with just one hand.
4. Cut at waist level or below. Many head injuries happen when making overhead cuts.
5. Take extra care when cutting limbs that are bent, twisted, or caught under another object as they may snap back and hit you.
6. Take your time. Most injuries to the legs and feet happen because of aggressive or careless cutting. Take breaks when you start getting tired because most injuries happen when you are tired.
7. Shut off the saw when you are fueling it or carrying it more than 100 feet, or through slippery areas or heavy brush.
8. Make sure a chainsaw operator is aware of your presence before approaching them. They may not see or hear you approaching, especially if their back is to you. Stay clear of them and toss a glove or something soft at them to get their attention.
9. Do not cut with the upper tip of the chain saw. Cut with the part of the bar closest to the engine. Watch where the tip is at all times—do not let it contact the ground or other branches.

Kick back occurs when the upper tip of the guide bar contacts an object and causes the saw to come straight back at the operator. Kickback happens so fast that there is no time for reaction.

Hire a professional tree company when taking trees down, or removing dead or hazardous limbs. Hire an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) arborist for removing a leaning tree or broken limb that is near a house or other potential target; for removing limbs that require climbing; for restoring a damaged tree that could be saved; or for pruning to promote good structure. Always make sure anyone you hire has current insurance for property damage, personal liability and worker's compensation.

Remember that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure! Always think safety, take your time, and protect yourself. Storm damage cleanup is extremely dangerous, even for professionals!



## Deciding What to Do with Trees After a Storm

By Jane Morse, UF/IFAS Extension Agent, Pinellas County

Now that hurricane Irma has left the state, it is time to assess the damage done to our landscapes. Trees may be leaning, broken or defoliated (lost their leaves), so how do you know what should stay and what should go? Look for any of these signs to know when to remove a tree:

- The lower trunk is cracked or broken
- A large stem has split from the tree
- The major roots are severed or broken
- Tree is leaning towards a target (house, car, etc.)
- Remaining tree structure is highly susceptible to breakage (has multiple trunks, has equally sized trunks that come together with a sharp V-shape between them and bark inclusions)
- Large limbs (greater than 8 inches) are broken

If your area received storm surge, tree dieback due to salt damage can occur. Flush these trees with fresh water to remove the accumulated salts.

Keep an eye on pine trees as they may die slowly over a period of six months to two years after windstorms. Some may remain green for a year or more, and then suddenly turn yellow and quickly die. Pines with all brown needles are dead. Remove them.



Oak tree split. Photo Credit: UF/IFAS.

If a palm has dead or broken fronds, remove them. Keep bent ones. Remove fronds that could hinder new growth. If the palm has yellowing leaves, do not remove them. This yellowing is the result of a nutrient deficiency. Proper fertilization will correct it. Have patience with your palms and allow six months or longer for them to put out new growth. It may take one, two, or more years before palms return to a full canopy. Palm fronds above the 9 and 3 o'clock position should not be removed. If there is no rainfall, water three times a week for six weeks.

Most trees can be restored if:

- The canopy is defoliated (many trees lose their leaves during a storm, so wait for new foliage)
- Some major limbs are broken in decay resistant species such as live oak, buttonwood, mahogany, and winged elm
- Leaning or fallen trees are small (only recently planted trees or those with a trunk diameter smaller than 4 inches should be re-adjusted back up as straight as possible or replanted)
- Small branches (less than 4 inch diameter) are broken or dead
- Most of the canopy is damaged in decay resistant species (even with  $\frac{3}{4}$  of their small branches broken, less than 4 inch diameter, they can be restored)

To re-establish small trees follow these steps:

1. Keep roots moist.
2. Dig the hole wide enough to accommodate the roots.
3. Cut jagged or torn roots.
4. Pull the tree up as straight as possible, taking care to not damage the trunk or roots.
5. Back fill with site soil.
6. Water it with 3 gallons per inch of trunk diameter 3 times a week until reestablished. If the soil is already saturated or wet, do not water. Do not fertilize for one year.
7. Stake the tree. Remove or adjust stakes after six months to one year.

When hiring tree work beware of scammers and unqualified people wanting to make a quick dollar. Check with the Pinellas County Consumer Protection, Chamber of Commerce and the Better Business Bureau. Most importantly make sure they have insurance! Ask to see their property damage, personal liability and worker's compensation insurance and make sure they

are current. If you hire an uninsured company or person, you can be held responsible for medical bills and lost wages for injured workers.

Be sure to hire a professional with adequate equipment and insurance when taking trees down in open areas or removing dead or hazardous limbs. Hire a certified arborist for removing a leaning tree or broken limb that is near a house or other potential target; for reaching limbs that require climbing; for restoring a damaged tree that could be saved; or for pruning to promote good structure. To find certified arborists in your area go to the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) website ([www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com)).

Ask anyone wanting to do tree work about the ANSI Z133.1 and ANSI A300 guidelines. The first represents safety standards for tree care operations and the second represents the best management practices in the industry for pruning and other tree care operations.

Get at least three estimates. These should include the procedures involved, equipment used, price and time frame. Keep in mind that insured, qualified companies cost more, but are well worth the price. Incorrect pruning and tree care by unqualified companies can cost you much more in the long run.

For more in-depth information, see this website: <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/treesandhurricanes/>  
If you need to replant, call your local University of Florida/IFAS Extension in Pinellas at 727-582-2110 on Monday, Tuesday or Thursday from 9 AM to Noon and 1 PM to 4 PM (it is free) to get recommendations on trees that will do well in your site conditions and that have high wind resistance.





### Send your Articles and Photos

**The next Issue of *The Dirt* is January 2018. The Deadline for articles is December 29th.** Share your passion for gardening with your fellow Master Gardeners by writing an article for *The Dirt*. Include images where possible. However, if you include images they must fall under one of the following guidelines:

- your own
- UF/IFAS image
- open access image, as in wiki-commons, where all rights are open and the photographer is credited
- used with the express permission of the photographer

When you do send images, please do not embed them within the article. Include them separately. Please send all files as Word files. I cannot edit .pdf files.

Do you like to photograph plants or trees but don't like to write? Send me your photos with a description, even without an accompanying article, and I'll publish them with the description as well as a credit to you, the photographer.

Send your articles, images, and your photos to Dianne Fecteau at [dianne@kendiacorp.com](mailto:dianne@kendiacorp.com). My phone number is 727.366.1392.

All articles are subject to editing. In addition, Theresa Badurek, Urban Horticulture Extension Agent and Master Gardener Coordinator, reviews and approves all articles prior to publication.

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