



April 2024

**What's Inside:
Caladiums for
Summer-long Color**

Page 1

**The World of Water
Page 2**

**Lily of the Valley
Bush
Page 3**

**Add some
Enchantment
to your Garden
with the
Moonflower Vine
Page 4**



Photo: unsplash
Flavil Schweiz,

Caladiums

for Summer– Long Color

Lois Scott, SRCMGV

Caladiums bring vibrant colors to a shady area. They are super easy to grow and are fast growing. One doesn't grow caladiums for their flower, it's the leaves that steal the show. The green leaves are eclipsed by white, red and/ or pink colors. They are showy all summer long. There are two types: fancy leaved which is heart shaped and lanced-leaf which has a narrower leaf.

You can buy potted caladiums fully leaved or you can buy a bare tuber. My personal opinion favors the bare tubers. They are much less expensive and require no extra work. For the price of one potted plant you can grow multiple caladium tubers into plants.

As mentioned, the "bulb" that you plant is actually a tuber which is a thickened underground stem with many buds. Caladium tubers look deceptively like rocks. The surprise of the showy plant growing out of such a humble tuber is amazing.

While you can grow caladiums in the full sun, their spectacular colors might fade. For the most intense color, grow in partial shade, filtered sun, or a spot that gets 2-4 hours of direct morning sun and light shade in the afternoon. Do not grow caladiums in full shade as the plants grow long and leggy.

The soil in which you plant your caladiums should be light and organic. Adding compost



Photo: Unsplash
Sarawak Kuching



to sandy soils is helpful. If you grow a caladium in sandy soil the results will not produce as robust a plant. A very light application of fertilizer once or twice a season will be beneficial unless you have very rich soil.

Plant caladiums when the weather warms up. Caladiums do not like the cold. Plant in April or when the soil temperature is 60 degrees.

If you are planting bare tubers, plant them about 2" deep. The tuber should be planted with the growing side up. Look carefully, the top will be indicated by a puckered knobby look. Potted caladium plants should be set in the ground at the level they are in the pot. Caladiums like a moist soil. Avoid a constantly wet waterlogged soil to prevent tuber rot.

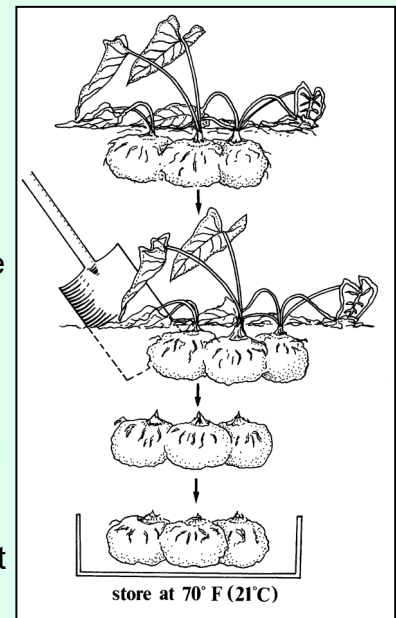
After they are up, enjoy your caladiums all summer. The caladiums will begin the seasons decline in the fall. The leaves will naturally wither and you have the choice of leaving them in the ground or digging them up for storage. Leaving them in the ground is an iffy situation. There is no guarantee that they will make it though the winter. If they don't make it, it is usually from rotting in cold damp soil.

If you wish to repeat your success next year simply dig them up and replant again in the spring for another "free show". Dig up the tubers while there are still some withered leaves otherwise it will be hard to find the buried tubers. Remove the leaves, rinse the tubers off and let them dry. Store them in vermiculite or another low-moisture material in a temperature below 90 and above 60 degrees for optimum tuber success.

Resource:

-Gardening Solutions: Caladiums

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/caladiums.html>



Shadadat Rahman,

Photo: unsplash



The World of Water

Jennifer Weber, SRCMGV

Wow! World of Water is a program that teaches people about water ecology. Water is an essential resource for humans as we rely on it for everything we eat and drink. From regular drinking water to the fruits and vegetables that require water to grow, it is a very precious resource. The World of Water program shows how water works through the land using a 3D model of a beach side watershed. The model shows many possible ways that the water quality is affected by things such as litter, excess fertilizers, industrial spillage and the like.

What we do on land has an effect on the quality of water in our rivers, bays and oceans. We like to show how a floating trash bag looks very similar to jellyfish. Sea turtles eat jellyfish and are mistakenly eating these bags. We can do so much better to protect this valuable natural resource!

We teach that proper use of pesticides and fertilizers is the law. They are not to be used in any way that is not compliant with the label. **The label is the law.** It is important to reduce some of the excess chemicals from leaching into the groundwater, where we get all of our drinking water from. It also saves the homeowners money. Too much fertilizer may kill the plant you wanted to feed and too much fertilizer will simply run off into the soil and groundwater, being a waste of money.

"Wow! World of Water" is brought to you by Butterflies in Motion Inc. An educational nonprofit. We developed this program as an emergency back up in case of inclement weather with our mobile butterfly display. We do a lot of visits with children and they do not understand that their special program got "rained out." We wanted to have an alternate program so they would still have something special to learn. When searching for the topic, we realized that children weren't being taught about water quality or watersheds. The program is based on training given to Master Gardeners and assistance from the UF Sea Grass Agent. We are very happy to lend the program for the Santa Rosa County Master Gardeners to use. We look forward to working with each other to educate as many people as we can about our natural environment and our precious resources. Look for this 3D display model at special events in the community.

Lily of the Valley Bush

Ellie Mascara, SRCMGV

Once again, Mother Nature has provided us with a spectacular botanical show. Spring has arrived, and with it comes its vibrant colors and unforgettable fragrances. The tiny crocus bulbs peek out from their winter retreat and daffodils wave their yellow blooms to signal that spring has arrived. Our shrubs have also proclaimed that spring is in the air. To the delight of our pollinators, many plants are producing much needed nectar and pollen.

Although all of these plants and shrubs are beautiful, there is one shrub that is outstanding. It is the Lily of the Valley Bush, (*Pieris japonica*). Its common name is very appropriate since its flowers look like the lily of the valley. This bush is native to eastern Asia, eastern North America and Cuba.

It will thrive in rich acidic soil, requires full or partial sun and should be placed in an area which is protected from wind. This broadleaf evergreen can be grown in zones 5-8 and can grow to a height of 4 -7 ft. During March and April it will be the highlight of your garden. The long-lasting cascades of tiny white flowers will literally cover the bush. As visitors approach, they will be greeted by its sweet aroma, and during the winter months, when our gardens are dormant, the Lily of the Valley Bush will continue to delight us with its deep glossy leaves that turn red as temperatures drop.

This bush can be used in your landscape in a variety of ways. It can be planted in a cluster or singularly as a specimen. It can also serve as an informal hedge or be placed with other broad-leaf evergreens such as rhododendrons or azaleas which have the same needs. Having such a beautiful plant in your garden will enhance your landscape throughout the year.

(Editors note: This shrub has been seen for sale at a big-box store in our area.)

Resource: Missouri Botanical Garden - Plant Finder

Photo credit: Ellie Mascara, SRCMGV





Add some Enchantment to your Garden with the Moonflower Vine

Debbie Clark, SRCMGV

The moniker *moonflower* has been attributed to several different plants. Both *Datura* and *Brugmansia* geneses have been referred to as “moonflowers”. However, the moonflower *vine* is a distinctly different plant, and the topic of this article. It is a tender perennial in south Florida, but typically grown as an annual in our area and north of here.

The moonflower vine is scientifically known as *Ipomoea alba*. It is a member of the morning glory family and is often referred to as the “Queen of the Night” due to the timing of its blooms. It can be a stunning and unique addition to your garden for several reasons :

- It blooms after sundown and into the night. It also blooms on very overcast days.
- The funnel-shaped flowers are gorgeous with large bright white blooms approaching 5—6 inches across.
- The blooms typically last just 24 hours, but they are prolific.
- The blooms are intoxicatingly fragrant, reminiscent of jasmine and vanilla.
- It is pollinated by night flying insects (or bats).
- The vines are fast growing with heart-shaped leaves and can grow 20 feet or more in a season.

Planting seeds is the best way to grow this vine. Due to the seed’s hard coated outer layer, it is important to nick it with a file, then soak the seed in warm water for 24 hours prior to planting. The seeds sprout rather quickly (around 2 weeks) using this method.

After sprouting, plant in partial sun in average well drained soil. It is important to provide the plant with some support such as a trellis or arbor after planting in the ground. It can easily cover a trellis in a season.

I encourage using this plant in your garden when you are looking for an easy to grow show-stopper, and who isn’t?

Resource - [Florida Native Plant Society \(FNPS\)](#)



Moonflower Vine

Photo: Debbie Clark

UPCOMING EVENT REMINDER

2024 Master Gardener Plant Sale

Saturday, April 13th, 2024, 9 AM to 3PM

Milton Extension Office

Where can I find more information?

The UF/IFAS Extension Solutions for Your Life website and Gardening Solutions website offer online material, including pre-recorded webinars and videos, that can be accessed at your convenience.

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

<https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/>

In addition, we have our Master Gardener webinar page and our Gardening in the Panhandle web archives full of educational content.

<https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/mastergardener/volunteers/education/webinars.html>

<http://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/>

For a listing of local offices visit

<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/find-your-local-office/>

Follow us on Facebook for updates

<https://www.facebook.com/SRCExtension/> Santa Rosa County Extension FB page:

<https://www.facebook.com/GardeningInThePanhandle/>

The Santa Rosa County residential horticulture agent, Josh Criss can be reached at 850-623-3868. joshua.criss@ufl.edu



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