

Spring 2022, Issue 22

In this Issue

Title	Page
Master Gardener Volunteer Training.....	1
Vines.....	2
Lawn Care.....	3
Herbs.....	4-5
Pollinator Garden.....	6
Fairy Garden.....	7
Plant Sale.....	8



**Veggie Garden**

April is the time to plant many warm season crops including Swiss chard, beans, squash, and tomatoes.

For a complete list, download the North FL Gardening Calendar:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/EP/EP45100.pdf>

or The Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021>



St. Johns County Master Gardener  
Volunteer Program  
Applications

The Florida Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) program is a volunteer training program designed to help University of Florida Cooperative Extension faculty disseminate research-based information about horticulture to the public.

UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County is accepting applicants for the 2022 MGV Training Program. Our program provides participants with 50 hours of horticulture training and requires 75 hours of volunteer service within the first year and 35 hours each subsequent year to maintain MGV status.

The deadline to apply is Tuesday, May 31. Training will be part virtual and part in-person. In-person classes will be on Wednesdays from August 3 to Oct 12. Interested St. Johns County residents should contact Terra Freeman at [terraf@ufl.edu](mailto:terraf@ufl.edu) for an application. Applications will be sent out via e-mail in April.

**HAPPY GARDENING!**



# Prolific Pollinator Plants

Terra Freeman, Urban and  
Commercial Horticulture  
Agent, UF/IFAS Extension  
St. Johns County

**Coral Honeysuckle**, or *Lonicera sempervirens*, is a native gem adored by pollinators and other feathered friends. In the spring, their clusters of bright coral tubular flowers are visited by Ruby-throated hummingbirds, native bees, honey bees, and butterflies. The plant is a larval host for the Spring Azure and Snowberry Clearwing butterflies and the bright red fruits are feast upon by purple finch, quail, hermit thrush, American robin, and goldfinch in the fall.



Photo credit: Terra Freeman, UF/  
IFAS Extension SJC

Coral honeysuckle can be found growing naturally in open woodlands or along the woodland edge and is the sole honeysuckle native to Florida.

Low-maintenance, drought tolerant, evergreen coral honeysuckle is an excellent Florida-Friendly vine to adorn your trellis or fenceline. Performing best in full sun to light shade and in well-drained soils, it can grow to

15 feet or more, but often spans only about 8 feet or so since it grows in a beautiful, twinning mass. I have found this vine to be well-behaved, incredibly hardy, and a bountiful provider of beautiful pollinator attracting blooms, sending it to the top of my list for must-have native vines.

**Passionflower**, or *Passiflora incarnata*, is another must-have garden gem! Gorgeous 3- to 5- inch wide purplish flowers and unique 3-lobed leaves adorn this trailing, traveling vine. Passionflower spreads through stoloniferous rhizomes, enabling it to pop up in unexpected places in your garden. I find this to be positive attribute to this gorgeous vine, but if you prefer neat and tidy, this may not be the plant for you. It is, however, the plant for bees, which serve to pollinate this proliferous vine. It is the larval host plant for many butterfly species, including the Zebra Longwing, which is Florida's state butterfly, and the fruits are enjoyed by other wildlife.



This short-lived perennial produces abundant blooms spring through fall, followed by large, edible green showy fruits before it enters winter dormancy. While the fruits of this native vine are edible, they are not very tasty; for the fruit garden you may want to try growing a different species of edible *Passiflora* such as *Passiflora edulis*, more commonly known as Passionfruit.

## References:

<https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/passionflower.html>

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/lonicera-sempervirens>

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/passiflora-incarnata>

Photo credit: UF/IFAS

# Refuse Weed and Feed Please

Gail Wheeler,  
Master Gardener Volunteer  
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

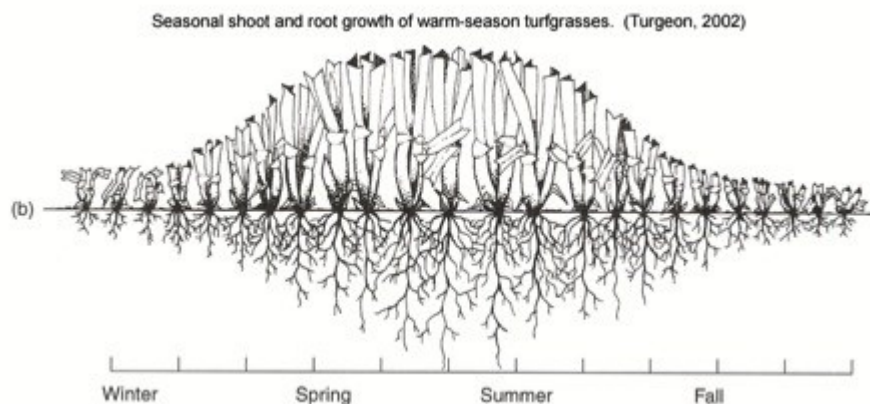
Warmer weather is on the horizon, and it may be time to give your lawn a little helping hand. The winter frequently takes a toll on turfgrass leaving it patchy, dull and prime for weeds and insect damage.

There are many options for fertilizing your lawn including organic versus inorganic, and the popular but often misunderstood weed and feed products. Weed and Feed products are ones that contain both pre-emergent herbicide and fertilizer. Weed and Feed products are not considered a “Florida-Friendly” product for several reasons:

1. Appropriate timing for fertilizer and pre-emergent herbicides are different, rendering one of the products less or ineffective. Pre-emergent herbicides should typically be applied much earlier in the season than fertilizers.
2. Nearby trees and shrubs can be injured from herbicide applied to lawn because their root systems extend beyond the tree canopy line.
3. Herbicides and pesticides should only be applied to affected areas, not to entire yard as is done with fertilizer.

When applying fertilizer to your lawn, please follow Best Management Practices, as recommended by UF/IFAS. For more information, please visit: *Homeowner Best Management Practices for the Home Lawn* at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/EP/EP23600.pdf>

Reference: <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/fertilizer/right-fertilizer-right-place.html>



When applied too early in the season, lawns are unable to use fertilizer because their roots are dormant; instead the nutrients will run-off or leach into the aquifer, leading to non-point source pollution. Wait until the weather is consistently warm and your lawn has completely greened up before applying fertilizer to your lawn.

# Growing Herbs to Attract Hummingbirds

Pat Ludwig, Jane Palmer, Linda Mundy, and Melissa Clark  
Master Gardener Volunteers  
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

Gardeners often enjoy birdwatching, and especially enjoy the beauty of hummingbirds. Attracting these delicate and beautiful birds to your garden is an easy task as many culinary and medicinal herbs are perfect fodder for hummingbirds.

Three species of hummingbirds live in Florida through much of the year, and another two can occasionally be seen in the winter. The most commonly seen in Northeast Florida is the ruby throated, though you may see the rufous and the black-chinned during the winter. This feathered jewel is only about three inches long and weighs as little as a penny. Not only can hummingbirds suspend their bodies in midair, but they can also fly backwards, upwards, and even upside-down.

To support their high-speed activity, hummingbirds need to consume large amounts of high-energy nectar. They feed in many smaller meals and consume up to 12 times their own body weight in nectar each day.

While red flowers are notorious for attracting hummingbirds, you are not limited to just this color. White, purple, pink, orange, and blue flowers that are rich in nectar can be incorporated into a hummingbird garden. When selecting herbs and plants for your yard or garden, it's important to diversify your choices and increase your landscape with a wide range of sizes, forms, and colors. Consider the ease of planting and maintenance, early or long blooming periods and attractiveness of foliage. It's important to remember that hummingbirds need nectar generally between March and September, or a little later, though all three hummingbird species may be spotted year-round.

Hummingbirds will sip nectar from various herbs that produce tubular flowers. This includes most members of the sage and mint families, as well as mallows and lavender. Five great herbs that will help attract hummingbirds to your garden include:

- Pineapple sage (*Salvia elegans*): Mint family perennial; also referred to as “hummingbird highway” with its profuse ruby red tubular blooms. Flowers summer to fall, loves partial to full sun; not a fan of winter or wet feet.



Pineapple Sage

- Red (*Monarda didyma*) and Lavender bee balm (*Monarda fistulosa*): Clump-forming perennials in the mint family; two-lipped scarlet-red or lavender flowers, but can also be white or pink. Blooms May through October.

# Growing Herbs to Attract Hummingbirds

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UF/IFAS Extension SJC

- Anise Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*): With blue-purple spike flowers, this “licorice-mint” perennial prefers part to full sun and well-drained soil. Growing 2-4 ft, this summer bloomer is a powerful attractor to many pollinators.
- Hummingbird sage (*Salvia guaranitica*): Anise-scented perennial that produces deep blue-purple flowers on ebony stems from mid-summer to fall. Growing up to 4 ft tall, this drought tolerant plant prefers full sun to light shade.



Anise Hyssop



Hummingbird Sage

- Rosemary (*Rosemarinus officinalis*): Long season culinary herb that requires full sun and very good drainage. Blooms are produced on previous year’s growth, so resist pruning until after the blooms fade.

With careful planning and patience, you will be rewarded with happy hummers in your garden.



Rosemary

# Partners in Pollinator Protection

Dianne Battle,  
Master Gardener Volunteer,  
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

The Freedom Butterfly Garden at Alpine Groves Park was revolutionary when the Garden Club of Switzerland opened it to the public fifteen years ago. Now it's an example of a horticultural trend that is increasing in popularity: gardening with native plants.

This year the Garden Club of Switzerland is partnering with St. Johns County Master Gardener Volunteers to reinvigorate the garden and demonstrate the value of using native plants as wildlife habitat. The progress we make will be chronicled in the garden club's website, [www.switzerlandgc.org](http://www.switzerlandgc.org), under the Resources menu.

We started by creating baseline documentation on the garden:

- Developed a schematic of the garden's layout, dimensions, orientation to the sun, and irrigated areas.
- Listed the many pollinators observed over the years and identified their host plants. Butterflies need host plants to feed the caterpillars that will emerge from their eggs.
- Reviewed the original list of plants that might have been installed, researched butterfly plants and noted which plants were in the garden, and which were important to acquire.
- Made note of priorities we'd need to address in addition to the usual spring weeding, pruning, and raking:



- Overgrown plants to cut back.
- Plants that had spread too vigorously would need to be removed and "rehomed".

Unfortunately, there were fire ant mounds near the walkways. We could not leave them in a public space, yet using a pesticide in a wildlife habitat ran against the grain. "Natural" home remedies were evaluated, but they have very limited effectiveness, and we needed those ant mounds to be gone. Hoping to locate the least harmful product, we listed the brands we

were familiar with and read their labels: precautions, application methods, first aid advice, toxicity to other species, and active ingredients. Organic pesticides require the same scrutiny as inorganic formulations. All the treatments we researched warned of toxicity to aquatic creatures. None listed toxicity to other animals. However, when I consulted the National Pesticide Information Center website I was in for a surprise; for instance, Bifenthrin, was described as highly toxic to bees. We did find a pesticide noted as having no toxicity to bees. Luckily, we only had two locations to treat and it was well before the "visiting season." By then our fire ants should have left for less "undesirable" areas.

For more information on fire ants, consult UF/IFAS publication: Managing Imported Fire Ants in Urban Areas: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/lh059>

# Getting Creative with Fairy Garden Plants

Patty Plourde and  
Melissa Clark  
Master Gardener Volunteers  
UF/IFAS Extension SJC



Fairy garden at St. Johns County Extension

When settled among miniature plants, fairy houses can present a magical world. With the right foliage, fairy gardens will draw adults and children into an enchanting natural environment.

However, choosing the right plants for a fairy garden can be a

challenging task. Plant features such as size, dimension, root system, need for shade or sunlight, and weather are all elements that need to be considered when selecting plants.

The first thing to take into consideration is the existing foliage, i.e., trees, shrubs, ferns, terrain etc. Existing plants often provide an excellent backdrop for fairy houses without any additional expense.

The next step is to select dwarf or miniature plants to put near the fairy houses and accessories. Again, it is important to consider sun and shade, root system, size and dimension when making selections. Options may include Impatiens, Coleus, Spider Plants, Rosemary, and Petunias to name a few.

If you find the ground to be difficult to penetrate due to entwining roots, planting in clay pots is

another option. Clay pots blend well with the environment and plant roots will have the needed space to expand.

The next step is to look at what may best serve as groundcover. There are numerous groundcover plants for sunny and shady areas, so it is important to select the appropriate one for your fairy garden. There are numerous varieties of small plants that will serve as lawns for fairy houses. Options may include Brocade Moss, Mondo Grass, Turkey Tangle Frogfruit, Blue Daisy, Basil, and Sedum, to name a few.

An important task when maintaining plants in the fairy garden is to closely monitor plant growth and prune as needed. If plants grow to a height that is not in keeping with the dimension and size of the fairy houses, the garden will lose its aesthetic pleasure. If a plant just does not work in your fairy garden, dig it up, and try again. The point is to allow yourself to be imaginative and have a good time creating a tiny little world.

References:  
Groundcovers:  
<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/groundcovers.html>



Fairy garden at St. Johns County Extension

**UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County  
Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Sale,  
Rain Barrel Sales, and Plant Clinic  
Friday April 8 & Saturday April 9, 2022**

**9 am to 2 pm**

**UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County**

**3125 Agricultural Center Dr.**

**St. Augustine, FL 32092**



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