

Fall 2021, Issue 19

In this Issue

| Title | Page |
|-------------------------------|------|
| Fundraiser..... | 1 |
| Bat House..... | 2 |
| Lawn Care..... | 3 |
| Herbs..... | 4-5 |
| Landscape Fabric..... | 6 |
| MGV Plant Clinic..... | 7 |
| All-American Selections™..... | 8 |



Veggie Garden

Bulbing onions, lettuce, arugula, spinach and more thrive this time of year. 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>

**UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County
Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Sale,
Rain Barrel Sale, and Plant Clinic
Saturday, October 2, 2021**



9 am to 2 pm

UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County

3125 Agricultural Center Dr.

St. Augustine, FL 32092

Cash or check only

**Please note: DATIL PEPPER FALL FESTIVAL
HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL 2022, BUT OUR
PLANT SALE IS STILL ON!!!**



**For more information contact: UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County
Terra Freeman ▪ terraf@ufl.edu ▪ (904)209-0430 ▪ FAX (904)209-0431**

UF/IFAS Extension SJC Bat House Project

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

Inspired by the notable bat houses at UF Gainesville (the world's largest occupied bat houses: <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/Bats/>), construction of a new bat house at St. Johns County Extension is underway thanks to funding from the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners.

Construction began in June and is expected to be completed this fall. While it typically takes bats a few years to colonize a new house, we hope it won't take quite as long, since the bat house has been strategically located in prime bat real estate. Situated between the 2 acre community garden and 4 acre pond on 54 acres rich with gardens and natural areas, the bat house is surrounded by food and water sources for bats and other wildlife.

Our bat house is an impressive 8 x 8 x 5 foot elevated on 10 to 12 foot posts, raising the peak of the roof 16 feet from the ground. Other elements considered during construction were selection of a light gray paint to help keep the interior to a preferable 80 degrees Fahrenheit; elevation to the recommended minimum of 10 to 12 feet from the ground and away from tall trees that could attract predators; and a solid floor to keep snakes and other potential predators out. A hinged door will be located on the floor to allow for easier guano removal while a 2 by 3 foot door is located on the side to allow entrance for routine maintenance.

While this bat house might look like a cute treehouse, it was built to serve a different purpose entirely. The intention is multifaceted: to provide an educational demonstration tool to teach about bats and their importance to agriculture and the environment, as well as to exemplify Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principle number 5, Attract Wildlife (<https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>). Guano produced by bats will serve as a soil amendment for demonstration and community gardens on the property. Additionally, the bat house will serve as an inspiring element for new program development to support Master Gardener Volunteer, Florida-Friendly Landscaping™, Food System, and 4-H Youth programs.



North Florida Winter Lawns

Gail Wheeler,
Master Gardener Volunteer
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

While the Southern part of Florida will continue to showcase their lush green lawns all year, it's northern counterparts will suffer through color loss and browning with the first frost. Bahia, Bermuda, Centipede, St. Augustine and Zoysia grass go dormant beginning in late fall and winter.

One common practice for golf courses and other high profile commercial landscapes is to overseed lawns to provide a green winter turf. This can also be accomplished in the home landscape.

Several grasses can be used for winter overseeding such as Ryegrass, Bluegrass, Bentgrass and tall Fescue. Ryegrass is a good choice for North Florida. It grows quickly, adapts well in either sun or shade and is reasonably priced. Wait until temperatures have dropped to the low 70's before overseeding; which could vary from October to November in North Florida.

Grass seed that contacts the soil will give the best outcome. To prepare the lawn bed thoroughly, rake all loose dead grass and debris. Mow the lawn closely and rake all clippings. If there is very heavy thatch, a power rake can be rented to assist in de-thatching. Follow the instructions on the seed bag for seeding rates and after seeding check to see that the seed has fallen through

and makes soil contact.

Water frequently and gently to germinate the seeds and once growth has established, continue with your regular lawn maintenance.

References: The Florida Lawn handbook/
Laurie Trenholm/Brian Unruth/ Univ. FL
2005



Photo credit- 2018459 ©Sun Jeng Tan/
Dreamstime.com

How well do you know your Florida garden herbs?

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

Herbs adorn Florida gardens for many different reasons—to improve the taste and smell of your cooking, to provide beautiful blooms and sweet smells in your garden, or to attract pollinators to your garden. Instead of just sharing traditional information on our favorite herbs, we decided to have some fun and encourage you to participate in our “How well do you know your herbs?” True or False format.

Question 1: True or False

Herbs can be annual, biennial or perennial plants.

Question 2: True or False

African Blue Basil is an annual herb and can only be grown from seeds.

Question 3: True or False

Using fresh herbs when you cook is a great way to minimize unhealthy food additives, especially salt.

Question 4: True or False

Cilantro, parsley, fennel, dill and garlic are some of the herbs that are best planted in the summer Florida garden.

Question 5: True or False

The best time to add fresh herbs during recipe preparation is always in the beginning.

Question 6: True or False

Cilantro and coriander are the same herb.

Tallied up your answers? Check them below to see if they match. Looking for more information on these topics or more on edible herbs and gardening? Please refer to UF/IFAS online, blogs or publications. Happy gardening!



African Blue Basil

Answers:

Question 1: True

Herbs can be annual (live just one season), biennial (grows 1st year & flowers 2nd year for seeds), and perennial (lives for several to many seasons).

Question 2: False

African blue basil (*Ocimum kilimandscharicum* × *Ocimum basilicum*) is a hybrid basil and one of the few cultivars of basil that is a perennial. This basil hybrid is sterile, so it doesn't produce seeds. If you want more African blue basil, you must purchase transplants or start your own from cuttings.

How well do you know your Florida garden herbs?

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

Question 3: True

There are several ways to use herbs as an alternative to salt. Here is one salt-free blend that makes about 1/3 cup.

Salt Free-Herbal blend recipe (*Cooking with Fresh Herbs*: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FY1209>)

- 1 tbsp mustard powder
- 2 tsp parsley
- 2 tsp onion powder
- 2 tsp thyme
- 1 tbsp garlic powder
- 2 tsp dill weed
- 2 tsp savory
- 2 tsp paprika
- 2 tsp lemon peel

Question 4: False

These herbs enjoy cooler weather and are often planted in the fall garden.

Question 5: True and False

Timing of the addition of fresh herbs during recipe preparation depends on the herb being used and if the dish being prepared is hot or cold. For hot dishes, fresh herbs are added near the end of the cooking time or just before serving to retain their flavor and aroma. Delicate herbs such as basil, cilantro, and dill should be added during the last one to two minutes of cooking or right before the dish is served. Less delicate herbs including rosemary and thyme can be added during the last 20 minutes of



Salt alternative

cooking. For some cooking processes, the herbs are added toward the beginning. Most recipes indicate the best time to add herbs.

Question 6: True

Technically, cilantro is the same herb as coriander, and is a biennial herb. Coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*) is grown mainly for its aromatic seeds. The fresh green leaves of cilantro are also used in cooking (*Coriandrum sativum*).

Sources:

UF/IFAS Cooking with Fresh Herbs:
<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FY1209>

UF/IFAS Five Fall Herbs for the Home Garden:
<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/herbs-for-fall.html>

Should I Use Landscape Fabric in My Flower Beds?

Patricia Plourde
Master Gardener Volunteer
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

What is Landscape Fabric?

Landscape fabric is a porous textile used to prevent the development of weeds in your garden beds. This textile material blocks sunlight while allowing water into the soil. Its purpose is to prevent weed growth and endless hours on your hands and knees weeding. Once landscape fabric has been placed on the soil surface, mulch is then added to top of the fabric for aesthetic purposes.

Textile fabric was initially used in commercial gardening, but in recent years it has become popular in residential flower gardens as a solution to spending grueling hours weeding home flower beds.

Before investing in landscape fabric, it is prudent to take a closer look at the advantages and disadvantages of landscape fabric as it relates to homeowners' garden health and beauty.

Advantages:

- Suppresses weeds for up to 2 years.
- Allows for a significant reduction in garden maintenance.
- Reduces the need for herbicides to control weeds.
- Provides some soil erosion protection in gardens planted on a slope.
- Water permeable—some rain will penetrate through the fabric and sink into the ground.

Disadvantages:

- Relatively expensive.
- While landscape fabric suppresses some weeds, it also increases the growth of other weeds, such as nutsedges.
- Promotes soil compacting which results in failure of water and nutrients to seep into the soil.
- Weeds will eventually root and grow through the

fabric.

- Pulling those stubborn weeds is nearly impossible without tearing the fabric, thus providing an opportunity for other weeds to escape through the tears.
- Plant roots can colonize in the fabric, resulting in damaged roots when fabric is removed/replaced.
- As mulch decomposes, weed seeds that have blown into the bed begin to grow on top of the landscape fabric (see photo below).
- Organisms under the landscape fabric are often choked by the fabric.
- Landscape fabric prevents mulch nutrients from reaching the soil.



Weed seeds easily embed in mulch and grow on top of fabric.

Photo by Beth Bolles, UF Extension Escambia County

Flower gardens are an asset to our homes. They aesthetically contribute to home beautification and curb appeal. While careful selection of plants is important, considering what is happening below the flower bed is of equal importance. Landscape fabric is a product to consider, but will it really contribute to a healthy flower bed?

Resources: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/HS/HS117000.pdf>
<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/403/2015/03/landscape-fabric.pdf>

<https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/good-growing/2021-06-25-disadvantages-landscape-fabric>

Gardening Facts or Folklore

Karen Doyle,
Master Gardener Volunteer
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

Have you ever stopped to talk to your neighbor to compliment them on their stunning roses or inquire about some unique plant they were growing? Perhaps the mailman took a moment to tell you how pretty your garden looked. These casual conversations often lead into another discussion such as, "What do you do to get those spectacular flowers?" Or, "I had one of those and it died; I can't grow anything." Then, of course, you have to offer assistance. That's where you enter, "The Twilight Zone."

You can't help yourself, you've got to share your secrets of success or cures for anything that crawls, flies or has the audacity to make black, yellow or white spots on otherwise beautiful green leaves. For many gardeners, it's in our nature... pun intended, to help make this world a better place.

You have to step back for a moment and ask yourself, where is this advice coming from? Was it Peggy next-door or Uncle MacDonald who had a farm or from a place of science? As Master Gardener Volunteers for St Johns County we, too, are avid gardeners and grapple with these questions every day.

My goodness we have heard so many garden tips that involve any manner of breakfast leftovers to household products. Makes me wonder if we're cooking or cleaning. From ingredients like dish soap, banana peels, oil and vinegar. The last two would make a good start to a salad dressing.

Okay, before you blast me as trying to disparage your amazing treatment for mealybugs, I'm NOT saying that "over the fence" gardening remedies are bad. I'm not dissing on Aunt Mable by implying she doesn't know what she's talking about. I'm simply saying, there is a reason why these home remedies may or may not work that is based in science for very specific reasons. Unfortunately, some people hear this advice and literally throw the kitchen sink at their problem or the petunias.

Recipes for home brew cures are an inexact science and in some cases can be hazardous to your garden.

Before you dump rubbing alcohol on your cherished Camellias, call Super Gardeners to the rescue. Okay, not "super" but knowledgeable people who truly care and want to help. No signal beacon shone over the city of St. Augustine required, just a simple call or e-mail to your local St. Johns County Agricultural office will do the trick.



We will do our best to give you the information, tools and resources, based on research and science, to help you address your gardening questions and concerns. Actually, that's a BIG reason why the Master Gardener Volunteer program exists... to be your garden super heroes. We certainly will try!

To contact the UF/IFAS Extension SJC Master Gardener Volunteer help desk, call (904)209-0439.



Grab Your Gloves and Get Back in the Garden...

**Shirley Barber,
Master Gardener Volunteer,
UF/IFAS Extension SJC**



'Celebrity Chiffon Morn' (AAS 1995) offers a soft pastel pink that works well with any color and has been a favorite for years. 'Tidal Wave® Silver' (AAS 2002) has beautiful silvery-white blooms with dark purple centers. This trailing type of petunia can be pruned for a shorter stature or allowed to form a large carpet. 'Evening Scentsation' (AAS 2017) is noted for its lovely fragrance and stunning blue color. The fragrance is more intense in the evening as indicated by its name.

Our garden landscapes are showing the stress of summer heat, humidity, and incessant rain. Fall is a great time to evaluate your design, plan new projects and revitalize the garden with colorful annuals. The temps outside are pleasant. So...grab your garden gloves and head outdoors.

'Wave® Carmine Velour' (AAS 2019) is the newest color in the popular Wave® petunia series. Large 2.5 inch carmine rose blooms cover the trailing plants with nonstop color. It excels in the landscape, containers and hanging baskets...stunning in the garden!

Many annuals tolerate cool temperatures and light frost with several months of continuous bloom. The red-hot colors of summer give way to the soft colors of winter and spring in shades of pink, purple, blue and white. The choices are endless: snapdragon, alyssum, dianthus, petunia, larkspur and calendula. Don't forget to add edible plants which provide both color and texture: kale, Swiss chard, beet, mustard, parsley and fennel.

Create beautiful vignettes of color in your garden and enjoy our awesome weather! Visit the AAS gardens in the Botanical Gardens at St. Johns County Extension where you will discover interesting plant and color combinations.

Throughout the years, All-America Selections (AAS) have announced many petunia varieties that performed with outstanding success in all areas of North America. The varieties continue to improve with larger blooms, intense colors and tolerance to weather conditions. Petunias do well in northeast Florida during cool weather.

