

Know, Sow, Grow *newsletter*

UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County

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SOWING THE SEEDS OF WINTER: FLORIDA-FRIENDLY GARDENING WITH COOL- SEASON VEGETABLES

By Judy Jean, Extension Agent, Urban Horticulture

In the sunshine state, where the sun's rays seem to kiss the earth year-round, the notion of winter gardening may seem like an oxymoron. However, Florida-friendly landscaping extends beyond the balmy temperatures of summer, welcoming a diverse array of cool-season vegetables that flourish in the subtropical climate. In this article, we explore the art of gardening in Florida during the cooler months, embracing the principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ while savoring the bounty of cool-season crops.

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ is more than just a buzzword—it is a sustainable approach to gardening that emphasizes water conservation, biodiversity, and environmentally conscious practices. Learn how to integrate these principles into your garden, creating a harmonious and resilient landscape that thrives in the unique climate of Florida.

While summer might be the star of the show in Florida, the cool season offers its own cast of characters that can transform your garden into a vibrant tapestry of colors and flavors. From the tender leaves of spinach and kale to the roots of carrots and radishes, discover the cool-season vegetables that are well-suited for Florida's milder winter conditions.

Timing is crucial in Florida, where the distinction between seasons can be subtle. Uncover the secrets to successful cool-season planting, from choosing the right varieties to understanding the ideal planting windows. Explore techniques to protect your crops from unexpected temperature drops and make the most of Florida's extended growing season.

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Our Mission

To assist Extension Agents in providing research-based horticultural education to Florida residents.

Our Vision

To be the most trusted resource for horticultural education in Florida.

Winter continued from page 1

Water conservation is at the heart of Florida-Friendly Landscaping. Learn how to optimize irrigation practices for your cool-season vegetables, ensuring they receive the hydration they need without unnecessary waste. Explore innovative watering solutions and techniques that align with Florida's commitment to sustainable gardening.

Enhance the health and vitality of your garden by incorporating companion planting strategies. Discover which plants thrive together, promoting natural pest control and nutrient-sharing. Embrace biodiversity to create a resilient ecosystem that can withstand the challenges of Florida's ever-changing weather patterns.

As your garden bursts with a kaleidoscope of winter vegetables, it is time to bring that bounty to your table. Delve into a collection of recipes that highlight the flavors of cool-season crops, with a Floridian twist. From citrus-infused salads to zesty herb blends, these recipes will inspire you to savor the unique tastes of your Florida-friendly harvest.

Florida-Friendly Landscaping opens the door to a world of gardening possibilities, even in the cooler months. By embracing the principles of sustainability and water conservation, and selecting the right cool-season vegetables, you can create a garden that thrives in Florida's subtropical climate. So, roll up your sleeves, grab your gardening tools, and let the sunshine state surprise you with the beauty and abundance of a well-tended cool-season garden. Happy gardening!

PHOTO: Flagler County Demonstration Garden, Kathi Wright

YAUPON HOLLY TEA

By Kathi Wright, MGV

It is cold outside, which is perfect timing for a nice, hot cup of tea.

Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) is a Florida native evergreen holly with stiff branches and small leaves. The cultivar 'Nana' makes tea with about the same amount of caffeine as traditional green tea and antioxidation potential as blueberries. The 'Pendula' cultivar has the highest caffeine levels.

There are many types of hollies and plants that look similar to yaupon hollies, so be sure you are using the correct plant.

To harvest leaves, simply strip the leaves from the plant. The foliage will return quickly if you don't break off the branch. Wash the leaves thoroughly and spread them out to dry. Roast the leaves for 8 minutes at 300° F or until they start to turn brown. Let them cool, then crumble to a consistency of loose tea. Steep one tablespoon into two cups of boiling water.

Yaupon holly contains no tannins, so it does not get bitter as it steeps. Enjoy!

PHOTO

Yaupon Holly, UF IFAS

RESOURCES

Yaupon, A Native Florida Tea: <https://tinyurl.com/27edp7e3>

Grow Your Own Yaupon Tea: <https://tinyurl.com/vhj9etu5>

Yaupon Holly Tea: <https://tinyurl.com/44zmb88a>



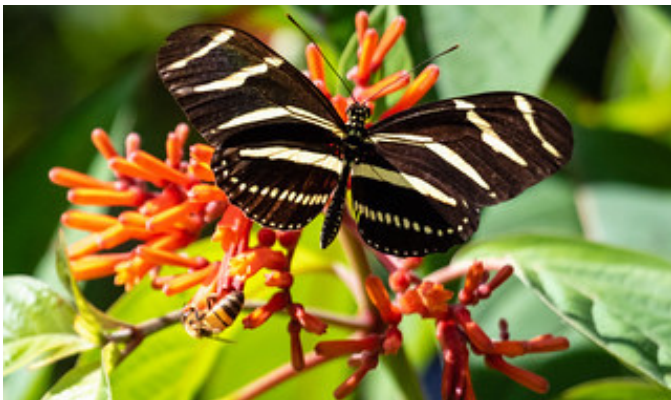
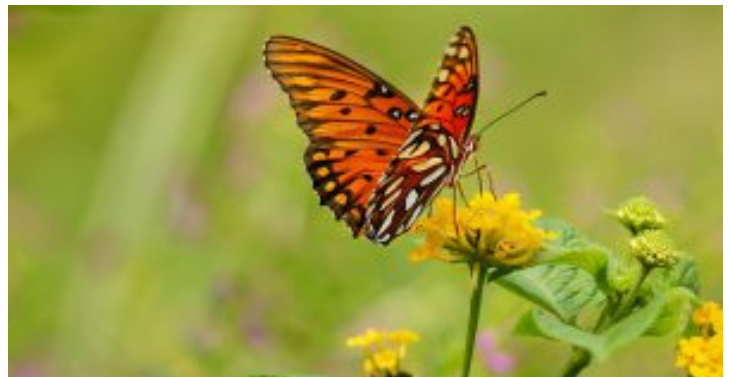
BUTTERFLIES AND THEIR HOST PLANTS

By Mary Ellen Setting, MGV

An adult butterfly has a straw-like mouthpart called a proboscis that sucks up nectar and other fluids. Butterflies will visit a wide variety of flowering plants to obtain their nectar. Their larval stage, the caterpillar, has chewing mouthparts and survives by eating plants. Butterflies will lay their eggs on or near plants that supply their caterpillars with critical chemicals needed for growth. Each species has a narrow range of plants, called host plants, that its caterpillar phase will be nourished by. Host plants also provide shelter, camouflage, chemicals used for protection, courtship, and reproduction.

The native purple passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*) shares this special relationship with two Florida butterfly species. It is a perennial vine that grows in sunny areas along the ground or climbs any supporting object by its tendrils. The large, showy flower ranges in color from purple, violet, light blue to near flesh color. It produces green fruit in mid-summer called a maypop that turns yellow as it matures. It is the exclusive host plant for the Gulf fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*) and one of several passionflower species hosts of the zebra longwing (*Heliconius charithonia*) butterfly.

The Gulf fritillary is one of Florida's most common butterflies and is found in all sixty-seven counties. They have an erratic flight and stay above human eye level until attracted to a flower down below to collect nectar and pollinate the plant. Adults lay eggs singly on or near the passionflower leaves, stems, and tendrils. The caterpillars hatch to feed voraciously on the plant leaves and develop into a bright orange body with black spines. Adult Gulf fritillaries have a chemical defense mechanism in which they release odorous chemicals in response to predator sightings such as birds. As a result, predators learn to avoid this species.



The unique looking zebra longwing is the official state butterfly of Florida. They have a slow, relaxed flight. Females lay a cluster of up to fifteen eggs on terminal leaves of several species of passionflowers. Caterpillars are white with black spots and spines. When populations of zebra longwings and Gulf fritillaries have breeding populations in the same area, they will compete and fight for their resources.

You can invite these butterflies and several more to your property by creating your own butterfly garden! Each butterfly garden becomes a safe haven for butterflies, beneficial insects, and hummingbirds to gather, seek shelter, acquire food, and water and reproduce and build populations.

PHOTOS

UPPER RIGHT: Gulf Fritillary, UF IFAS
LOWER LEFT: Zebra Longwing, UF IFAS

RESOURCES

Gardening for Butterflies: <https://tinyurl.com/yhuv2spa>
Butterfly Gardening in Florida: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/UW057>



SCRUBFEST 2023

By Sharon Smith, MGv

I recently attended the 2nd annual Scrubfest. This annual event is taught by successful homesteaders growing in Florida and the deep south. The most well-known is David the Good who has written ten gardening books and is the creator of The Survival Gardening Channel on YouTube.

The event is located at Scrubland Farmz in Fort McCoy, Florida, which is less than a 90-minute drive from Palm Coast. There is a \$50 fee to attend. The six speakers were well known to the audience. They attended the entire event and mingled with the attendees.

THREE GARDEN MEDICINALS YOU CAN GROW

By Kathi Wright, MGv

We are fortunate to live in an area where we can grow so many medicinal plants. Here are three for you to consider adding to your garden or growing in a container. Remember, the purported benefits of these plants are still being researched. Be sure to speak with a medical professional before consuming or using plants.

LEMON BALM (*Melissa officinalis*), a member of the mint family, is a bushy herbaceous perennial that will self-seed and spread by rhizomes. Grow this in a container if you do not want it to spread. It contains rosmarinic acid, which studies show may be used to reduce symptoms of anxiety and help treat cold sores.

Medicinals continued on page 5

PHOTO

Lemon Balm, UF IFAS

RESOURCE

Lemon Balm: <https://tinyurl.com/mujxkder>

Their talks were specific to how to be the most successful food growers in this climate. They encouraged questions from the audience.

The goals listed for the attendees were addressed:

- 1) How to have immediate gardening success in Florida and the deep south.
- 2) Meet other gardeners and homesteaders.
- 3) Ask questions in person and meet the gardening teachers.
- 4) Have access to a well-stocked nursery of edible plants, books, seeds, and clothing for sale.

The event had several hundred attendees. All the speakers had tips and knowledge to increase your yield of fruits and vegetables. There were planting, species, and variety suggestions. There were personal stories about what worked and what did not and why. Children were admitted for free, but no dogs or pruning shears were allowed. There is no internet access, so if you go next year, I recommend printing the itinerary and bringing it with you.

PHOTO

Scrubfest 2023 Video by Flomaton Famous

RESOURCE

The Survival Gardener:

<https://www.thesurvivalgardener.com/food-less-work/>



Medicinals continued from page 4

COMMON GINGER (*Zingiber officinale*) has been widely researched for use with types of nausea and vomiting during pregnancy and chemotherapy treatments. Plant ginger in March in well-drained soil that's been prepared with organic matter. A raised bed with a soil mixture at least 8" deep would be ideal in our sandy soils. Harvest in the fall when the tops have died back.



TURMERIC (*Curcuma longa*) is in the ginger family and is being researched for its anti-inflammatory properties to help with arthritis, digestive disorders, respiratory infections, allergies, liver disease, depression, and more. Planting soil and timing is much like that for ginger. Turmeric has tropical foliage and showy flowers and grows well in partial to full shade.

PHOTOS

TOP RIGHT: Common Ginger, UF/IFAS

BOTTOM LEFT: Turmeric, UF/IFAS

REFERENCES

Common Ginger: <https://tinyurl.com/5n7ex527>

Turmeric: <https://tinyurl.com/yu9867v3>

GARDENING FOR BIRDS

By Mary Ellen Setting, MGV

Florida is a bird lover's paradise. The mild climate, location and diverse habitat attracts more than 470 species. Some species occur here year-round, while others come to Florida to raise their young in spring and summer. Still other migratory species head south to Florida from September through November to stay for the winter or stop briefly to rest and feed before continuing to South American and the Caribbean. With a little planning, you can attract a wide range of native and migrating birds to your yard.

To encourage birds to visit your garden, provide them with these critical components: consistent, good quality food, fresh water for drinking and bathing, safe cover from the elements and predators, and nesting resources. Plants that are a natural source of food are easily incorporated into most landscapes. The most reliable menu you can offer migratory and native birds are native plants and the insects that feed on them. These food sources provide the right nutrients at the right time, supporting birds through all seasons and all phases of their lifecycle.

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PHOTO

Chickadee with caterpillar, UF IFAS





Birds continued from page 5

Diets differ between different bird species. Some birds eat fruit, berries, nuts, or seeds while others are insectivores (insect eaters). Plant a wide variety of native plants that bloom at different times so that food will be available year-round and in different forms (flowers, fruits, and seeds). The berries of Simpson's stopper, American beautyberry, and red mulberry are favorites of many birds. Native fruit-bearing plants like passion flower and seagrape are also excellent food sources. Hummingbirds collect nectar from tubular flowers like firebush, scarlet salvia, and shrimp plant. Plant native wildflowers that support caterpillars and other insects for a steady supply of food. A garden with a thriving insect population attracts lizards, snakes, and frogs – additional sources of bird nutrition. Native wildflowers bear seeds throughout the year. Leave the deadheads for the birds to feed on.

Water is an essential element to provide for the birds in your landscape. Place a shallow basin either at ground-level or on a pedestal in a shady spot near a tree close to a hose for an easy fill. Be sure to clean the basin with a mild bleach solution at least every ten days. Small fountains are a bonus as birds are attracted to the sound of moving water.

To create a habitat for birds, make your landscape more bird-friendly by planting trees and dense shrubs at varying heights to provide nesting areas and shelter. Leave dead or dying trees for cavity nesting birds like owls and woodpeckers. Native milkweed provides nectar for monarch butterflies, their caterpillars are great sources of protein for young chicks while the fluffy seeds are used to line nests.

By following these tips, you can make your landscape more bird-friendly and help conserve the environment.

PHOTOS

TOP: Firebush, UF IFAS

RIGHT TOP: Chickadee and Gold Finch on Bird Dripper, UF IFAS

RIGHT BOTTOM: Beautyberry, UF IFAS



REFERENCE

Bird-Friendly Plants: <https://tinyurl.com/mvatdf8f>

CAN YOU DONATE ITEMS FOR OUR DEMO GARDENS?

By Kathi Wright, MGV

The demonstration gardens at the Flagler County Extension Office provide examples of what you can grow in your own backyard! Your MGVs spend hundreds of hours designing, planting, weeding, and pruning the gardens. We could use help from individuals and businesses to make them look amazing. Items we are looking for include: a garden fountain (it does not need to work), cement benches and tables, patio umbrellas, new or lightly used landscaping tools, lawn ornaments, working solar lights, and large garden pots. Just email us at mgardener@flaglercounty.gov if you have an item to donate. Thanks so much for your support!



UPCOMING EVENTS

BLOOM & BENEFIT: Save the date! We will be holding a benefit event on February 24 from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. It is free to attend. We will have a silent auction, presentations, and lots of surprises for attendees. Watch our Facebook page for more information. It will be a *Must Attend* event!!

We will have a table at the **Flagler County Home & Lifestyle Show** to be held at the Flagler Palm Coast High School on January 20-21, 2024.

We will be continuing **horticultural presentations** at the Palm Coast Community Center this winter. Watch our Facebook page for topics, times, and dates.

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK!

Stay up to date with Master Gardener events and read educational information to help you have success with your landscape and garden. Follow UF IFAS Flagler County Master Gardeners on Facebook!

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8srfaw>

YOUR MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS

The Flagler County MGV Christmas tree is on display at the Palm Coast Library! Look for our lighted watering can on the tree top and handmade ornaments.

ONGOING EVENTS

Plant Clinic at the Flagler County Public Library in Palm Coast the last Saturday of every month from 9:30 - 11:30 am.



If you have any plant-related questions or need gardening advice, do not hesitate to reach out to us. Flagler County Master Gardener Volunteers are a great resource for home gardeners and can provide valuable info and guidance on topics such as soil health, pest management, plant selection, and more. We are trained volunteers who have a passion for gardening and can provide advice on a wide range of topics. If you need help, stop by or reach out to your local Master Gardeners (email: mgardener@flaglercounty.gov).

Helpful Links

Flagler County Extension: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/flagler/>

UF Solutions for Your Life: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/>

Florida-Friendly Landscaping: <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>

UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions: <https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/>

UF Master Gardener: <https://tinyurl.com/nhk2z2eh>

Know, Sow, Grow Past Issues: <https://tinyurl.com/yc67dfwk>