



Know, Sow, Grow Flagler County

UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County
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Thank You Master Gardener Volunteers!

Melanie Thomas
Flagler County Extension Office
Director

I would like to take this opportunity to say THANK YOU to all our Flagler County Master Gardener Volunteers. Thank you for everything you do to make the UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County Office flourish.

As you are aware, we currently have a vacancy in our Environmental Horticulture Extension Agent and Master Gardener Coordinator position. We anticipate having a new agent in place before spring 2022. As the County Extension Director, I am honored to serve as your Interim Master Gardener Coordinator while the search to fill the position continues. I look forward to working with you all more closely during this time.

The mission of the Florida Master Gardener Program is: *To assist Extension agents in providing research-based horticultural education to Florida residents.* The vision is: *To be the most trusted resource for horticulture education in Florida.* Our volunteers here in Flagler County do just that from answering phone calls and assisting walk-ins to guest speaking about horticulture related topics at community events. The success of our volunteer program is due to the dedication and heart of our volunteers.

I'm proud of the resilience our volunteers have had during the most difficult time many of us have ever experienced. The COVID pandemic caused restrictions that none of us ever wanted to see happen. As the director, one of the most difficult tasks I had was to lock the doors to the public and to our volunteers. Yet at the same time it was the easiest decision for the health and safety of everyone. We pivoted to online programming and trainings via zoom quickly with stay-at-home orders. Many of our volunteers used this opportunity to study and expand their horticulture expertise. They came back bigger and stronger than ever.

During the writing of this article the holidays are among us. Thanksgiving has just passed and everywhere you turn holiday lights are flashing and festive music is being played. My wish for you is that you take a moment to take care of yourself, slow down, and show gratitude. Take the time to reflect, relax, and recharge. I'm hopeful that 2022 will be filled with wonderful things for us all.

THANK YOU for everything you do!



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For current and past issues of this newsletter visit:

<http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/flagler/la-wn-and-garden/horticulture-newsletters/>





Bats: Friend Or Foe?

Jeanne E. Florio, Master Gardener Volunteer

Hollywood portrays the bat as a vampire: a human that transforms into a bat and sucks blood from humans! FALSE: Bats are not humans. However, they are mammals and not rodents as many people believe. There are approximately 1,200 species of bats in the world; of those, only three are considered vampire bats. They live in Central and South America and do not suck blood but obtain the blood from cuts on livestock they make with their teeth. The livestock are not even aware this is happening.

Some people believe that most bats carry rabies! ALMOST TOTALLY FALSE: Less than one-half of one percent of bats carry rabies. Rabies is transmitted through saliva when a person is bitten or through direct contact with an open wound. Bats are NOT aggressive like other animals with rabies. They will not attack you. Bats with rabies are generally found on the ground and should be left alone.

Another belief: "Bat droppings" (guano) are harmful to humans! FALSE: Insect eating bats produce guano which is considered an organic fertilizer that is rich in nitrogen. However, if bats get into a home attic and leave their droppings, an unpleasant odor can occur. Care has to be taken when removing bats from the attic. It is best to get the assistance of an expert. Care has to be taken to assure no bats are left in the attic; babies have to be old enough to leave the attic on their own. There are special apparatus needed that permit exit but hinder reentry that can be placed at their point(s) of entry.

Bats are a friend and are helpful to humans. TRUE: One out of every four mammals is a bat, and three out of four bats eat insects. A single insect eating bat can eat thousands of insects in a night. Many farmers provide "homes" for bats to help protect their crops from "pest" damage. Bats aid in the reduction of the use of chemical pesticides.

In some cultures, bats are considered sacred! TRUE: In some of the African and Pacific Island nations, bats are considered sacred. In Chinese culture, the bat is considered a symbol of happiness and longevity. In a picture known as "The Blessing," each of six bats signifies what is considered one of the greatest virtues of life - longevity, wealth, health, love of virtue, and natural death.

Bats are the only mammal that can fly! TRUE: Bat wings are different than birds. Their wings are much thinner so they are able to move and maneuver more quickly. Bats in Florida are pollinators! PARTIALLY TRUE: Those that reside in Florida full time are all insect eating; those that are "visitors" eat fruit, nectar, and pollen and therefore serve as pollinators!

Bat limbs are similar to those of other mammals! TRUE: Bat limbs are the same basic pattern as those of other mammals. The wing is composed of an upper arm, forearm, wrist and hand with thumb and four fingers. The hand and fingers are elongated to enable the spread and control of the wing. The

hind limbs are modified for landing and hanging upside down (head down) by the toes without expending energy. We have more than one bat species in Florida! TRUE: We have 13 bat species in Florida that are considered year-round residents. Another 5 have been found that are considered "visitors". There are 47 species that have been identified in the United States and 1,200 species worldwide. Bats have been found on every continent but Antarctica.

The bat population is declining in Florida! TRUE: The decline is a result of two primary factors: the loss of their natural habitat as a result of increased development, and the over-application of pesticides that kills the pests that serve as bat food. We can help stop the population decline by not removing all trees from our landscape and using pesticides only when necessary.

A few more "Florida Bat Facts": They sleep during the day and fly at night. Most bats have one offspring per year. Like other mammals, babies are fed milk by their mother until they are able to hunt on their own. They shelter in caves, buildings, bridges, rock crevices, under tree bark, and in human made "bat houses" on occasion. Baby bats have no fur when born; they need heat and humidity to survive. Therefore, bats live in colonies. And finally, BATS IN FLORIDA ARE A PROTECTED SPECIES! We all need to do our part to protect our friend, the bat.

For more information visit: [Bats of Florida; edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/UW20300](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/UW20300), [Conservation of Bats in Florida edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/UW291](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/UW291), and [UF/IFAS Webinar Nature Series: Bats in Florida, Who, What, Why, Where & How.](#)

Plants That Can Poison Your Pets

Mary Ellen Setting, Master Gardener Volunteer

Several landscape plants contain toxic compounds that serve as a defense against insects and other plant eating animals. When ingested by dogs or cats, these toxins can cause adverse symptoms ranging from mild nausea, vomiting and diarrhea to excessive salivation, rapid heart rate, coma and rarely, death. To avoid a trip to your veterinarian, be aware of which plants could result in poisoning.

Common houseplants that are toxic to pets include alocasia, Chinese evergreen, corn plant, cyclamen, desert rose, dieffenbachia (dumb cane), dracaena, English Ivy, peace lily, philodendron, pothos, schefflera and Ti plant.

Landscape plants that may cause a problem are angel trumpet, azalea, bird of paradise, caladium, cape jasmine, Carolina jasmine, kalanchoe, and lantana. Highly toxic plants are oleander, sago palm and castor bean. True lilies (Lilium) such as Asiatic, Trumpet and Oriental lilies, and Day lilies (Hemerocallis) are toxic to cats but not dogs. Amaryllis, calla lilies and narcissus are toxic to both dogs and cats.

If you suspect your pet has been poisoned, consult your veterinarian, or call the Pet Poison Hotline at 800-213-6680. Collect a sample of the plant for accurate identification and specific treatment. (continued on next page)



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For a more complete list of toxic plants, refer to the ASPCA's website: <https://www.aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants>, or consult the free web App from the Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program: *Toxic Plants - Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences - UF/IFAS (ufl.edu)*.

For more information, visit: [Poisonous Plants in Your Landscape - UF/IFAS Extension Leon County \(ufl.edu\)](https://www.ufl.edu/extension/leoncounty/); and [Plants Poisonous to Pets - UF/IFAS Extension Santa Rosa County \(ufl.edu\)](https://www.ufl.edu/extension/santarosacounty/).

Creating a Sustainable Landscape Using Florida-Friendly Techniques

Claudia Lappin, Master Gardener Volunteer

We hear this word often - sustainable. What is "sustainability"? It is defined as the ability to meet current needs by taking into account practices and techniques that do not compromise the ability of future generations to also fulfill their needs (*University of Florida, Office of Sustainability: <https://sustainable.ufl.edu/about/what-is-sustainability/>*).

Sustainability is based on a simple principle: Everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends either directly or indirectly on our natural environment. To pursue sustainability is to create and maintain the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future generations.

What are we trying to sustain?

We want to sustain water, plants, trees and wildlife and ourselves in our own residential landscapes so that we can help our local ecosystem survive and thrive. This means we take stock of our own yards and implement practices that improve sustainability. In this article, we will focus on some tasks you can perform this fall and winter to reduce your carbon footprint.



Choose plants that attract wildlife, credit: C. Lappin

Florida Friendly Principles

Sustainability goes hand in hand with Florida-Friendly landscaping™. Florida Friendly Landscaping is based on nine principles: 1) Right Plant, Right Place; 2) Water Efficiently; 3) Fertilize Appropriately; 4) Mulch; 5) Attract Wildlife; 6) Manage Yard Pests Responsibly; 7) Recycle; 8) Reduce Storm Water Runoff; and 9) Protect the Waterfront.

Water sustainability in the landscape

Saving water is one of the most important sustainable practices that you can implement. As we move into the cooler season, adjust your irrigation system to one day a week. If you are not sure how to adjust your irrigation system, check your users manual. Many manufacturers of irrigation systems also have instructional videos that can be found on YouTube. Plants and grass stop growing in the

cooler weather, so reducing your watering just makes sense.

Planning for sustainability

Take stock of your landscape and determine which plants do the best job at attracting and creating habitats for butterflies, birds and bees. Consider planning your next year's butterfly garden using native wild flowers or adding a tree or two to create a canopy that provides shade and shelter over time.

This is a great time of year to plant trees. For suggestions on selecting and planting trees in your landscape, visit <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/>.



Grow your own vegetables: credit C. Lappin

Sustaining what you already have

Don't remove brown or deteriorated plants just yet. Some wild flowers are self-seeding and provide food for overwintering birds. Continue to fill your water fountain or bird bath with water.

If you have pine needle or leaf drop, collect it and use it in your planting beds as mulch. Mulch benefits plants by protecting the roots in cooler weather and from a sustainable perspective, this practice keeps the debris out of landfills.

Don't bother trimming at this time. This may sound counter-intuitive because it seems good to do these labor-intensive chores now that the weather is cooler. In reality, if we have a cold night, this might damage the plant and it might not survive winter. Again, it is a sustainable practice to keep this extra trimming debris out of the landfill. You can do this again in the early or later spring, depending on whether your plants are flowering on new wood or not.

Sustain yourself and your family

Finally, sustain yourself and your family by growing a few simple vegetables. Stop by your favorite nursery and pick up some vegetable plants. This year I've found pre-potted cherry tomato plants that were reasonably priced. Planting lettuce in a container is a great way to try your vegetable gardening skills. Enjoy the healthy benefits of a fresh salad for lunch or dinner. One Florida-Friendly technique is to try your hand at "food-scaping" or "yard farming". Once you have that lettuce plant in a pot, try placing it in your garden. You can appreciate the sight of the pot as well as munch on the lettuce! Over time, you can slowly expand plantings to create an attractive as well as edible garden in your landscape. You can take pleasure and satisfaction in knowing that you are helping sustain our community.

Consider adding this book to your reading list: *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts In Your Yard* by famed entomologist and ecologist Douglas W. Tallamy. This book addresses sustaining our future, one yard at a time.



Keep bird baths filled with fresh water: credit: C. Lappin



Phase II Carver Community Garden

Connie Balliet, Master Gardener Volunteer

As part of the UF/IFAS community outreach program, Flagler County Master Gardener Volunteers provide ongoing horticulture consultation and educational workshops to the garden stewards at the Carver Community Gardens located at 201 E. Drain Street, just outside the Versie Lee Mitchell Community Center in Bunnell, Florida.



Raised garden beds construction, photo: C. Balliet

We are happy to report that Phase II has begun in collaboration with the Flagler County Housing Authority, Flagler County Habitat for Humanity's Executive Director, Lindsay Elliott and Construction Manager, John Know, P. J. Conniff of the Hammock Dunes Cares, and Lowes Home Improvement. Through the

Lowe's Heroes Grant, Lowes is once again covering the costs of soil, tools, irrigation, and lumber for benches and raised beds. Lowes also provided expert volunteers to help build out Phase II by prepping the site (sod cutting, trenching, irrigation and carpentry).

On Tuesday, October 19, 2021, our merry band of volunteers were joined by members of the community from the surrounding neighborhoods to celebrate "Our



Photo: C. Balliet

Garden is Growing!" Day by building six new raised beds and filling them with soil, irrigation hook ups and fresh seedlings. We also built a potting bench and a picnic table. We are excited to show off our progress and invite you to visit. The garden is always open, anytime.



Irrigation and Seedlings, photo: C. Balliet

The Carver Community Garden is a quarter acre sustainable community garden that allows open access to fresh fruits and vegetables and is a space where our community has come together to build, to grow and to share.

Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide

If you would like to learn more about growing your own vegetables year-round in Florida, UF/IFAS has an abundance of information on-line including the Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide located at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021>, Gardening in Raised Beds <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep472> and <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/EP/EP47200.pdf>.



Potting bench and picnic table construction, photo: C. Balliet

In addition, planting dates and other vegetable gardening information are also available as a free mobile app called 'Florida Fresh.' Access an app provider from your mobile phone or download it from <http://m.ifas.ufl.edu>. Locally you can contact the UF/IFAS Flagler County Extension Office at flagler@ifas.ufl.edu or call (386) 437-7464 to schedule an appointment.



Raised beds, photo: C. Balliet

Growing Amaryllis for Christmas Blooms

Barbara Scharf, Master Gardener Volunteer



H. Belladonna, photo: Barbara Sharf

One of the exotic bulbs which thrive in Florida are hybrid *Hippeastrum*, commonly called Amaryllis. Bare root bulbs can be purchased in big box stores, garden shops and even grocery stores in November and December. These bulbs have been specially forced at the growers to bloom in 3 to 6 weeks after potting up. The bulbs come from the Netherlands, Israel, Central and South America, and South Africa. After Christmas, unsold bulbs often go on sale.

When purchasing, look for firm dry bulbs. There may be surface blemishes due to damage in harvesting or shipping. Amaryllis can be grown in water, setting the roots into rocks or marbles. Most people grow them in potting soil. The pots need to be no more than 1 inch in diameter larger than the bulb. The neck of the bulb needs to be well above the soil, so that water doesn't enter the bulb from the top; at least 1/4 or 1/3 of the bulb above the soil is a good rule of thumb. Water once and put in a warm spot (75 to 80 degrees). Once there is top growth, move it to a sunny location and water again when the soil becomes dry. Overwatering causes rotting and can result in an outbreak of fungus gnats. Fertilizer is unnecessary at this point, since all the nutrition needed is stored inside the bulb. Once the flowers open, the pot can be moved to an interior position, which helps to prolong flowering. Flowers open in succession and last about two weeks from first to last bloom.

After blooming, the plant can be treated as a houseplant until the threat of frost is finished. The pots can be moved outside for the summer, or the bulbs can be planted into a well-drained, half day sun, location. When outdoors, the bulbs will revert to their normal blooming cycle, blooming in March and April in Zone 9A.

In a future article, I will discuss using the bulbs in outdoor landscaping. For more information visit: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/EP/EP060/EP060-Donak82c9L.pdf>.



WINTER LANDSCAPING AT A GLANCE

Jeanne E. Florio, Master Gardener Volunteer

As I have said in previous issues, for many of us gardening is fun, relaxing and stress reducing. However, for those of us that migrated to Florida, regardless of our level of gardening expertise, we find ourselves like “a duck out of water”, confused and sometimes irritated. The weather, the soil composition and content, the need for moisture, and the temperature are generally different here in Florida. Therefore, times of the year for planting, and in some instances, what we plant, is different. To alleviate that stress and frustration, listed below are some general highlights for success. The month is approximate because the tasks listed are dependent upon the weather, which is consistently inconsistent! Master Gardeners can help you with your garden decisions. Don't hesitate to contact a Master Gardener Volunteer with questions or concerns or for recommendations. If we don't have the answer for you immediately, we will have it within a few days. Stop by our office or visit our monthly Plant Clinic. Plant Clinics are held at the Flagler County Public Library in Palm Coast on the last Saturday of every month between 9 am and 11 am. Note: there will not be a Plant Clinic at the library in December.

DECEMBER

- Collect soil samples from your landscape. Our office performs soil pH tests free of charge.
- Have the snow/frost blankets/sheets ready to cover cold sensitive plants when the temperature is going to drop below 50 degrees. Make sure the plants are completely covered. Remove coverings when temperatures rise.
- Adjust irrigation system schedule to one day per week of watering.
- Check your lawn for disease: fungal diseases can become active when soil temperatures drop. These diseases cause areas of the grass to turn brown. Treatment can be difficult; the fungal diseases will go dormant when the weather warms, generally in May.

JANUARY

- Prune non-spring flowering shrubs and trees. Remove seed pods, crossing branches and twig growth from Crape myrtle trees.
- Plant deciduous fruit trees.

FEBRUARY

- Add fresh mulch to planting beds, around trees and palms.
- Prune rose bushes.
- Start seeds in seed trays indoors for spring vegetable gardening.

WINTER PLANTING GUIDE

Vegetables

Beets	Mustard
Broccoli	Peas
Cabbage	Potatoes
Carrots	Radishes
Cauliflower	Spinach
Kale	Swiss Chard
Lettuce	Turnips

Annuals/Perennials

Alyssum
Dianthus
Geraniums
Pansy
Petunia
Snap Dragon
Violas

Herbs

Chives
Oregano
Parsley
Rosemary
Sage
Thyme

UF/IFAS Extension provides a printable garden calendar: [Florida Gardening Calendar - UF/IFAS Extension \(ufl.edu\)](http://m.ifas.ufl.edu). Planting dates and other vegetable gardening information are also available as a free mobile app called 'Florida Fresh.' Access an app provider for your mobile phone or download it from <http://m.ifas.ufl.edu>.



UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County Master Gardener Volunteers

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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.

On Going Events

Master Gardeners are at the Flagler County Public Library the last Saturday of every month from 9 am to 11 am to answer your gardening and landscape questions. **No scheduled Plant Clinic for December.**

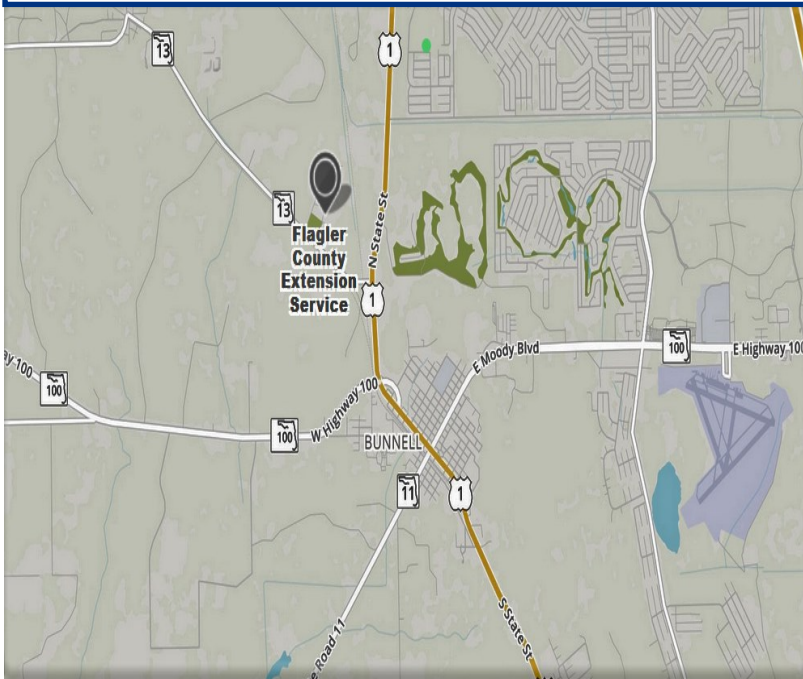
Up Coming Events

City of Palm Coast Parks and Recreation
Horticulture Workshop Series with UF/IFAS Agricultural Extension Office

Jan 28: Creating Terrariums
Time: 10 am– 11 am
Place: Palm Coast Community Center
Fee: \$10

Feb 18: Plant Propagation Made Simple
Time: 10 am-11am
Place: Palm Coast Community Center
Fee: \$10

Register at parksandrec.fun/seniors or call **386.986.2323** for more information.



Florida Friendly Homeowner Recognition Program

If you have implemented the nine principles of the Florida Friendly Landscaping program in your yard, it could be formally recognized as a Florida Friendly yard.

A Florida Friendly Landscape (FLL) is a landscape that is designed, installed and maintained according to the nine Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles.

Contact our office and a site visit will be scheduled for your home. We will evaluate how you have incorporated the nine Florida Friendly principles in your landscape.

If you want to learn more about the FFL program, or need assistance in how to implement the principles into your landscape, contact our office or visit:

<https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/about-ffl/landscape-recognition/> for more information.

Stay Connected!

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

University of Florida Solutions for Your Life: <http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu>

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

UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions: <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/>

University of Florida Master Gardener: <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/mastergardener>

The Flagler County Master Gardener and Horticulture program is open to all regardless of gender, race, color, nationality, creed, or disability.