

# Know, Sow, Grow Flagler County



UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County  
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## What is the Deal with Master Gardeners?

Judy Jean, UF IFAS Urban Horticulture Extension Agent, Flagler County

As Horticulture Extension Agents, our sole purpose is to ensure the county residents we are serving are getting the research-based educational materials that they need to make the most informed decision. This causes us to wear so many different hats. Unfortunately, we cannot be in different places at the same time. Technology has taken us far but not that far! Thankfully, we have skilled volunteers known as Master Gardeners that lend assistance.

The Master Gardener Program has a long history starting in the State of Washington in 1972 by Dr. David Gibby. He developed a program in which volunteers were selected, trained, and certified to be able to respond to everyday homeowner questions. These well-trained volunteers, known as Master Gardeners, are still very active to this day. In fact, this program is now active in 45 states! Not only do Master Gardeners help with homeowners' questions, but they also educate, assist with research, and have a voice in their county.

In the state of Florida, the Master Gardener program is overseen by the University of Florida/IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences) Cooperative Extension Service. Cooperatives are the means through which extension services are funded. Federal, state and county governments provide funds for Florida's agricultural programs: the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the State via legislative appropriations, and the counties through county appropriations.

"Cooperative" also implies sharing of state and federal research-based

information. Extension is the organization's purpose, which is to offer information generated at the state and federal levels to people at the county level as a "service". Agriculture, human and natural resources, and life sciences are the main areas of information provided by the Cooperative Extension Service.

In every Extension Agent's heart, we want to be able to help everyone. However, that is not possible. Therefore, volunteers like Master Gardeners are so important. Master Gardener volunteers provide much of the first contact through Plant Clinics, Plant Lifelines, and other educational programming.

So, what does this mean for you? Well, I am excited to announce that the Flagler County Master Gardener Program will be accepting applications for the 2023 spring year! Applications will be available online at <http://btrr.im/g2mop> or stop by the office at 150 Sawgrass Road, Bunnell, Florida, 32110. This program not only serves the county but also allows you to be a lifetime learner with individuals that have the same passion for plants as you.

For more information, please stop by UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County office or send an email to [mgardener@flaglercounty.gov](mailto:mgardener@flaglercounty.gov). We look forward to having you on board!



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## Mistletoe

Mary Ellen Setting, Master Gardener Volunteer

As deciduous trees shed their leaves in autumn, stands of mistletoe (*Phoradendron serotinum*) in host trees become more evident. Mistletoe looks like a globe of dark green leafy growth two feet in diameter centered on a tree branch. It is found throughout the South and is common in Florida. Mistletoe only grows in deciduous trees like laurel oak, elms, hackberries, sycamores, and wild cherry. Although mistletoe has been used as a Yuletide decoration for centuries and was once believed to have magical and medicinal properties, it is not a plant you want to see in your landscape.



Mistletoe is toxic to humans, livestock and pets. It is injurious to its host tree because it is a hemiparasite. While it makes its own food through photosynthesis, it steals water and most of its nutrients from the host tree. Because of its parasitic nature, mistletoe can weaken or destroy the trees it infests, especially if the

Credit: UF/IFAS Extension

tree has been compromised by pests, storms, or old age. An infestation of many mistletoe plants may stress a tree to the point where branches die or are weakened, the tree becomes stunted or possibly dies since it can no longer cope with drought or disease.

Mistletoe plants are dioecious, meaning that the male and female flowers grow on separate plants. The male flower produces pollen, and the females produces small sticky, whitish berries from October to December. The seeds are also sticky and can be carried to branches by animals, birds, and rain. Once on a host tree, the seeds germinate and send out a peg like root to tap into the tree's vascular system. After several years, a female plant will produce more berries. Individual plants live about ten years and will produce more berries that can spread mistletoe to other trees.



Credit: UF/IFAS

Removal of mistletoe plants may help to revive the tree. There are two methods of removal, both difficult to carry out. First, mistletoe can be cut out of a tree. Remove the roots by pruning the infested branch at least six inches below the spot where the mistletoe is attached. Use a pruning pole and wear gloves, head and eye protection. If your skin touches the berries, thoroughly wash hands with hot, soapy water. Second, a licensed pest control operator (not homeowners) can apply a specialized plant growth regulator herbicide called Ethephon. Ethephon is applied to mistletoe when the tree is dormant, usually from December to February. If applied while the tree is actively growing, Ethephon will damage the tree.

For more information, visit: [Mistletoe - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences \(ufl.edu\)](http://Mistletoe - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (ufl.edu);); [About Mistletoe - UF/IFAS Extension Marion County \(ufl.edu\)](http://About Mistletoe - UF/IFAS Extension Marion County (ufl.edu);); [Mistletoe - Institute of Food; and Agricultural Sciences - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences - UF/IFAS \(ufl.edu\)](http://Mistletoe - Institute of Food; and Agricultural Sciences - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences - UF/IFAS (ufl.edu).).

## Ringless Honey Mushroom (*Armillaria tabescens*)

Sharon Smith, Master Gardener Volunteer

Safety first. Mushroom identification requires a detailed study of a specimen. In the words of my mother “never eat a strange mushroom.” After a few days of heavy rain in late October, I noticed these mushrooms in a park in Bunnell.

They were growing in a shadier section of the park. The cluster shaped mushrooms were located a few feet from the trunks of two older giant live oaks. They most likely emerged from the roots.



In order to identify them, I started looking at pictures. I used the book by James Kimbrough called *Common Florida Mushrooms* and a laminated trifold guide written by J. Duane Sept called *Mushrooms of Central Florida*. In order to correctly identify a mushroom, it is important to examine all the parts and pay attention to details.

Credit: Sharon Smith

Start with the overall shape. Then examine all the parts of the mushroom. The caps vary in size, shape, color, surface feel and texture. There are different smells to the mushroom. Stalk shape and color vary as well as presence of a ring. Gills need to be viewed, and spore prints differentiate varied species.

The mushroom I found is the Ringless Honey Mushroom *Armillaria tabescens*. It is common in North America and Europe. It is more common in warmer regions and seen from October to December. It is edible, but can cause an upset stomach, and needs to be cooked thoroughly. The cap is up to four inches wide. It is convex to flat with a central bump. Color is yellowish brown with tiny brown or black scales. The stem tapers at base. There is no ring. Gills are off white, and the spores print white. Location is in clusters on or near hardwood trees or stumps.



Credit: Sharon Smith



If you are interested in learning more, consider foraging with a qualified mushroom guide. Go to [www.mushroomthejournal.com](http://www.mushroomthejournal.com) for more information.

Credit: Sharon Smith





## Hanging Baskets for Winter in Zone 9A

Barbara Scharf, Master Gardener Volunteer



Credit: UF/IFAS

Hanging baskets are a great way to bring beauty and interest to your winter garden. They are perfect for people living in condos, apartments, and any place with limited gardening space. They can be moved around and easily replanted for seasonal interest.

The larger the basket, the more plants you can use. But remember, the larger the basket, the heavier it will be. A strong support is needed if it is attached to a wall.

Most commercially available liners are either coco-fiber or sphagnum moss. You can also cut out a circular disk from a potting soil bag or black garbage bag, poking holes in it for drainage.

Fill the lined basket about halfway with good potting soil and add a slow-release fertilizer. Mix together and water well. If you are not using a slow-release fertilizer, add a very dilute liquid fertilizer solution to your watering can each time you water.

You can add side plants by making a small hole in the liner and insert the plant roots through the hole. Add potting soil to about one inch from the top, leaving a depression in the center. Beginning at the center and working your way out to the rim, firm the plants in as you go. Add soil as needed but don't overfill. Water in the plants and add a little more soil if needed. Once the basket has settled, the liner or moss will have shrunk to fit your basket. Hang in a shady place for a few days to acclimate.

Suitable cool-season annuals include alyssum, dusty miller, pansies, petunias, snap dragons, calibrachoa, nemesia, and dianthus. Plants with interesting foliage include coleus, Persian shield, and many small ferns. Suitable cool season vining plants include spider plant, ivy, creeping fig, and sweet potato vine. Many types of herbs are also suitable for winter baskets.

Water when the top of the soil feels dry. Common pest problems include mealy bug and spider mites. They can be controlled with an insecticidal soap. Overwatering can cause fungal diseases. Deadheading and a light pruning can prolong the flowering throughout the cooler weather. As the display winds down, the basket can be replanted with warm season plants.

For more information go to: [Hanging Baskets Neighborhood Gardener May 2017 /Mastergardener/newsletter/2017/may.html](https://www.ifas.ufl.edu/newsletter/2017/may.html).

## How to Protect Your Plants During a Freeze

Lori Powell, Master Gardener Volunteer

We do not see freezing temperatures too often, but it does happen. January into February are the coldest months in which we can experience temperatures below 32 degrees F. Be prepared to protect your plants. Watch the weather

forecast. When freezing temperatures are in the forecast, get your supplies ready.



Credit: UF/IFAS

Plants that should be covered include citrus, hibiscus, Bougainvillea, succulents, jasmine, Robellini palms, and ixoras to name a few.

Nurseries, hardware stores and home improvement stores sell protective cloths such as frost blankets in various sizes that can be used to cover plants that can prevent them from freezing and suffering from frost damage. You can also use sheets, blankets, and cardboard. If you use plastic, do not let it have contact with the plant itself. Use stakes to create a tent. Remove it the next morning. Leaving plastic coverings on plants can kill the plant.

Be sure to completely cover your plants from top to bottom. Remove the covering promptly the next day so the plant does not "cook" under the covering when the sun comes up. Plants that are in containers can be moved into a shed or garage or even your lanai.

Other things you can do is water your plants the day before frost is expected. Put an extra layer of mulch on the soil around your plants. This will keep the soil warm.

If your plants do sustain damage from a freeze, resist the urge to prune off dead limbs. This could cause more damage especially if another frost occurs. Leave the plants alone until the weather warms up and the plant show new growth. You can scratch the bark surface with you finger nail. If there is green underneath, it is alive; if it is brown or black, it is dead. Do not assume the plant is dead. You may be surprised by a plant's resilience.

For more information go to: [Winter Plant Protection - UF/IFAS Extension \(ufl.edu\) and Treating Cold-damaged Plants - Gardening Solutions - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences \(ufl.edu\)](https://www.ifas.ufl.edu/newsletter/2017/may.html).

## Winter Planting Guide

**Vegetables:** Arugula, beets, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, collards, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard, onion, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard, and turnips.

**Herbs:** Parsley, thyme, sage, dill, fennel, and cilantro.

**Perennials/Annuals:** Alyssum, calendula, dianthus, dusty miller, geraniums, pansies, snapdragons, camellias, and violas.

For more information visit: [UF/IFAS Extension provides a printable garden calendar: Florida Gardening Calendar - UF/IFAS Extension \(ufl.edu\)](https://www.ifas.ufl.edu/newsletter/2017/may.html).



## Winter-Friendly Native Grasses

Claudia Lappin, Master Gardener Volunteer

Watching grasses undulate is a relaxing way to spend a moment in your garden on windy days. However, you might think that grasses are boring and don't bloom. Not true! Native grasses come in all sizes, shapes, and colors. Most grasses love sun and are drought resistant; in other words, they are low maintenance. The variety of native grasses available to meet your needs is extensive. As you choose grasses for your landscape, the University of Florida recommends that you select the characteristics that are appropriate for your yard.<sup>1</sup> Some characteristics of native grasses to consider:

- Annual or perennial
- Evergreen or deciduous
- Warm season or cool season interest
- Winter characteristics
- Growth form
- Clump-forming or creeping (spreading by stolons or rhizomes)
- Mature shape and height
- Foliage color
- Flowering season
- Cultural requirements
- Invasive potential

### Size

Certain grasses, for example Fakahatchee Grass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*), can become as large as a shrub. If you think it is too large for your smaller lot, you might like the dwarf variety, Dwarf Fakahatchee (*Tripsacum floridana*). Try several in a grouping around a shrub. Frond sizes vary too: from very thick fronds such as Lemon Grass to thin fronds, such as Cord Grass, commonly found along slow moving water bodies.

### Shape

Select grasses based on their shape: round or pyramidal grasses might be a suitable foreground to a hedge of taller shrubs such



Sea Oats

as Ligustrum or Podocarpus. Some grasses grow narrowly and are best in groupings, such as Sea Oats (*Unicollata paniculatus*), planted along our beach dunes, which anchor the sand in horizontal rows). Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) also looks fabulous massed together.

### Color and Bloom

Certain grasses are a lovely blue green color; others have variegation in their fronds (red and brown commonly), and a few types, such as Lemon Grass (*Cymbopogon citratus*) just stay a nice

spring green color. Lemon Grass is also used as a tea and an herb.



Fakahatchee Grass, Credit: C. Lappin



Cord Grass, Credit: C. Lappin

Native grasses bloom differently from what we usually think of a flower bloom. Most send up stalks that become a plume above the height of the grass clump. Elliott's Lovegrass (*Eragrostis elliottii*) plumes are a light oat color and remind one of an optic light show. Lopsided Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum secundum*) has a reddish plume that gets seeds just on one side of the plume. A crowd favorite, Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*), sends up a lovely pinkish bloom.



Lemon Grass, Credit: C. Lappin

Many grasses bloom in the fall, and the blooms will last through the winter. So even if grasses are looking a bit brown, do not trim them or cut them down.



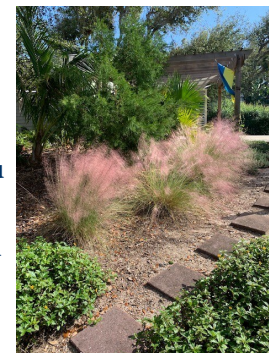
Lopsided Indian Grass, Credit: C. Lappin

Their seeds and leaves supply food and shelter for birds during the winter and their fronds can be used as nesting material for birds in the spring. Brown deciduous grasses should be trimmed in the early spring.

Finally, grasses can be clumping or creeping. Clumping grasses are very well suited for massing in your landscape. Creeping grasses are harder to control and may become invasive. Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*), insert photo 6, is a common example of a clumping grass. The grasses

mentioned in this article are mostly clumping.

Ask your landscaper, nursery professional or master gardener if you have a question about which native grass to plant given your garden conditions and the characteristics you choose as noted above. Or please feel free to send us an email at [mgardener@flaglercounty.org](mailto:mgardener@flaglercounty.org).



Muhly Grass, Credit: C. Lappin

### Additional resources:

Books: [Grasses of Florida, David W. Hall, University of Florida Press: 2019.](#)

Native Grasses: [Plant Real Florida | Bring Your Landscape to Life with Native Plants.](#)

Native Plants: [Native Plants - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences \(ufl.edu\)](#) and [ENH976/EP233: Considerations for Selection and Use of Ornamental Grasses \(ufl.edu\).](#)





## From the Herb Garden Quarterly Featured Herb: Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

Joy Hudson, Master Gardener Volunteer

Rosemary is a well-known, widely used herb here in Florida that originated in the Mediterranean. One of the great advantages of growing rosemary is that it is an evergreen perennial, unlike so many of the herbs that are delicate annuals. Overtime, a small rosemary plant will grow into a woody shrub that not only provides you with a versatile herb, but can also serve to enhance your landscape. Another bonus is that it is highly deer resistant because of its strong fragrance, similar to pine.



Credit: UF/IFAS

### HOW TO GROW ROSEMARY

Begin with a healthy plant. Avoid starting from seeds or cuttings as these methods are difficult to accomplish. Choose your planting location carefully since this is one herb you can truly plan on having for a very long time. It should be planted in well-drained soil and in a very sunny location. It can also thrive as a container plant, but it is crucial that this herb is not overwatered regardless of placement. Rosemary plants are also quite easy to grow and are quite resistant to pests.

### HOW TO HARVEST ROSEMARY

Because rosemary is an evergreen perennial, you will have the luxury of harvesting as needed, which is usually the best way to utilize most herbs. Harvest frequently to help maintain the size and shape of the plant, and to help promote newer, healthier foliage. With each harvest, tie sprigs into small bundles and allow to dry in a cool, dark place. When dry, remove needles from woody stems and store in jars for future use.

### HOW TO USE ROSEMARY

This is a very versatile herb that goes well with poultry, beef, pork and fish. It is, perhaps, one of the must have herbs found in one of the most famous herbal blends, Herbes de Provence. This is where your dried rosemary could be most useful. This herbal blend is surprisingly varied, and can have as many as 10 or as few as 5 herbs. Try two or three of the published recipes, then settle on one you like.

Some of the herbs used in Herbes de Provence are: rosemary, marjoram, thyme, basil, oregano, savory, bay leaf, and in some cases, lavender. If you are growing other herbs, such as those mentioned above, this is a wonderful opportunity to make a blend following one of the many recipes available for Herbes de Provence or, better yet, create your own – just in time for Holiday giving.

For more information go to: [UF/IFAS Publications – Gardening Solutions - Rosemary](#)

UF IFAS Extension  
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# POINSETTIA

## Pointers



### Did you know?

The poinsettia is native to Mexico. The ancient Aztecs used poinsettias in their fall celebrations.

Named for Joel Poinsett, the botanist and U.S. Ambassador to Mexico who introduced the plant to the U.S. in 1825.

The colorful and showy “flower” is actually a cluster of modified leaves called bracts. The true flowers are small and clustered in the center of the bracts.

As a result of intensive breeding, there are more than 150 varieties of poinsettias to choose from.

Research has shown that poinsettias are not poisonous to people or pets, although some are mildly allergic to their white, milky sap.

### Caring for Potted Poinsettias

- 1 They do best on a porch or in a window with indirect sunlight for at least 6 hours per day.
- 2 If indoors, room temperatures of 65° - 70°F are best; keep them away from cold drafts and excessive heat.
- 3 Water thoroughly only when the surface of the soil is dry to the touch; do not water too frequently.
- 4 Indoors, fertilize lightly only every 4-6 weeks.
- 5 In April, when the leaves and bracts begin to deteriorate and fall off, cut the plant back and give it sun, water and fertilizer regularly.
- 6 A real challenge is to reflower plants indoors the next year. In October, start keeping the plant in complete darkness for at least 13-14 hours each day and in bright light the rest of the day. After about 2 months, your plants will develop a colorful display of holiday blooms.

### Poinsettias in the Landscape

- 1 Varieties that naturally bloom in early to mid-November are the best for central and north Florida's landscapes.
- 2 It is best to keep these plants in brighter light during the winter, rather than indoors.
- 3 Plant in early spring as soon as the danger of frost is past. Choose a sunny spot (3-6 hours of sun) that will not receive artificial light at night.
- 4 Cut off fading bracts, leaving 4-6" of the stem on each branch.
- 5 Poinsettias prefer moist, well-drained soils with a pH between 5.5 and 6.5.
- 6 Keep mulched and well-watered until established; fertilize monthly with balanced amounts of nitrogen and potassium, and low phosphorus. Controlled release fertilizers are good.
- 7 Cut back once a month if needed, leaving 4 leaves on shoots; stop pruning in early September.
- 8 Poinsettias are nice in landscape containers, but proper watering is more critical.



References:  
Brown, S.P. 2013. *Poinsettias at a Glance*. UF/IFAS EDIS publication ENH1083. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep349>

For information about poinsettias, go to [solutionsforyourlife.com](http://solutionsforyourlife.com), or visit your local UF/IFAS Extension office.



## 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 available at the Flagler County Public Library the last Saturday of every month from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. to answer your gardening and landscape questions.

## Up Coming Events

City of Palm Coast Parks and Recreation Horticulture Workshop Series with the UF/IFAS Flagler County Extension Office.

Bromeliads: January 27

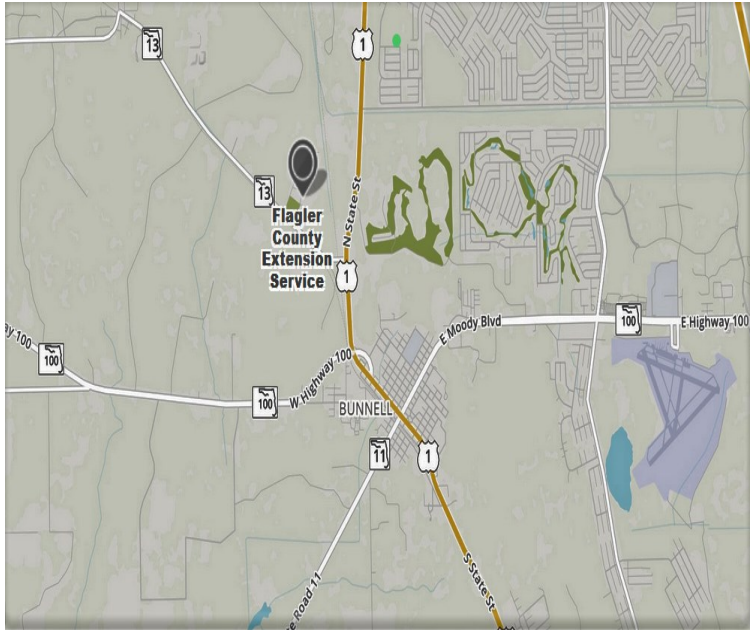
Florida Gardening for New Residents, February 26

Pollinators: March 24

Beekeeping: April 28

Color in the Garden: May 26

All workshops will be held at the Palm Coast Community Center located at 305 Palm Coast Parkway from 10-11 a.m. Go to: [Catalog - Palm Coast, FL \(recl.com\)](http://Catalog-Palm-Coast,FL(recl.com)) for more information and to register,



## 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>

Flagler County Horticulture Newsletters: <http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/flagler/lawn-and-garden/horticulture-newsletters/>

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