



Know, Grow, Sow Flagler County

UF/IFAS Flagler County Extension

6 Easy Steps to a Successful Vegetable Garden

Sol Looker, Horticulture Agent I

Do your homework. It is important to do some research on what will grow well in this area. The University of Florida has conducted trials of different varieties of vegetables to determine which selections have the right genetics to withstand common pests and diseases found in our state. It is great to experiment, but the majority of the plants grown should be tried and tested for our challenging growing area.

Don't guess, get a soil test. Get a baseline on your soil's pH level. UF/IFAS Extension, Flagler County provides free soil testing for Flagler County residents. The pH is the measure of acidity or alkalinity in the soil. A pH of 7 is considered neutral. Flowers and vegetables thrive in soils that are between 5.8 and 6.3, or slightly acidic. Soils that are between 5.5 and 7.0 do not require adjustment.

Choose the right location. Vegetables and flowers need a lot of sunlight to grow, so choose a site that receives light most of the day. Consider choosing a location with a water source conveniently located nearby. Most plants need good drainage to support healthy roots. Sites that have standing water after rains may be better suited for a rain garden.

Draw up a plan. Make a full list of needed supplies and draw up a plan including desired plants and spacing. Allow enough space in the plan for harvesting from all sides and movement between rows.

Follow suggested planting dates. Check UF/IFAS suggested planting dates to get an early start for spring. Most warm season vegetables can be placed outside when they are 6-8 weeks old and after the danger of the last frost has passed (usually the last week of March).

Mix it up. Try to practice crop rotation by avoiding planting plants in the same family in the same location year after year. This is important because pests rely on the same type of plants for food and their populations can grow over time due to continued supply. For more information visit, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021> "Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide"



Image Credit: S. Looker, UF/IFAS

Spring 2019

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Pinxter Azalea,
Image Credit: S. Looker,
UF/IFAS

SOL LOOKER—UF/IFAS Flagler County Extension

Horticulture Extension Agent I, Master Gardener Coordinator



Pink Jatropha—(*Jatropha integerrima*)

Mal Fraser, Master Gardener Volunteer

Jatropha is an evergreen shrub or small tree with stunning flowers that attract butterflies. It is native to Cuba and the West Indies. The individual flowers are star shaped and usually red in color. There is also a pink variety which has been planted in the Flagler Extension demonstration gardens.



Image Credit: Mal Fraser

I first became aware of this plant when I started maintaining the perennial peanut demonstration area.

I was later informed that the plant was part of a trial program with UF and the plants had been donated for evaluation on how they performed in

our area by Monrovia Nursery based in California. Monrovia sells the plant under the trade name 'Petite Pinkie Spicy Jatropha'. According to the Monrovia website, the plant can tolerate temperatures in USDA hardiness zones 9-11. Temperatures in zone 9 can reach as low as 20 - 25 degrees F while zone 11 is tropical. The Extension office is located in zone 9B which has an average low of 25 to 30 degrees F. Frosts and freezes will damage the plant, but they usually recover quickly. From our experience the plant needs to be protected, but will come back as a tropical perennial if the roots survive.

During the first two years the plant was not fertilized or on regular irrigation. Last year fertilizer was applied and the automated irrigation was added. The resulting growth and profuse blooms were spectacular.



Image Credit: Tau'olunga, Wikipedia Commons

The plant flowers all summer with full sun and proper care. *Jatropha integerrima*, like many *Jatropha* species, is toxic so the plant should be kept out of reach of children and pets. Jatropha is not salt tolerant, so it is not recommended for coastal areas or areas with marginal water sources. Jatropha tolerate pruning well which gives you options for shape. Propagation is by seeds or cuttings. Jatropha are usually readily available at local nurseries, but the pink variety may be harder to find.

References: UF/IFAS Extension *Jatropha integerrima*: *Pregrina*, <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/ST/ST31900.pdf> and Monrovia website

Anise hyssop - (*Agastache foeniculum*)

Donna Frangipane, Master Gardener Volunteer

Every year since 1995 the International Herb Association has chosen a “Herb of the Year”. Anise hyssop is their selection for 2019. It is one of the most versatile herbs in the garden. UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions included it on the information page entitled “Perfect Plants for Pollinators” that describes selections of Florida-Friendly plants that bees and butterflies love.

Anise hyssop is an upright and long flowering, heat loving and drought tolerant perennial. It prefers full sun but will tolerate partial shade. Most importantly it requires a well-drained site. It will adapt to either acid or alkaline environments. It is a tough plant that is typically disease and pest free. This ornamental herb is described as deer-resistant, however it is not particularly salt tolerant.

The plants are 2-4 feet tall with a 2-3 feet spread. Anise hyssop makes a wonderful accent plant or can also be utilized in raised beds and containers. Drifts of the plant in a perennial bed or herb garden would be eye-catching and a paradise for bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.

The flowers are spikes of florets that bloom from summer to fall. The 3-5-inch spikes have been characterized as purple, lavender, blue and violet blue. They have a wonderful fragrance and taste like licorice. Harvest the leaves and flowers early in the day after the morning dew has subsided. Leaves can be kept in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 4-5 days. They can be frozen, but are best used fresh. The flowers make a beautiful garnish or can be air dried and used in arrangements. The fresh leaves and flowers are a great addition to salads and make delicious teas, alone or in combination with other herbs.

Anise hyssop is native to North America and is a member of the mint family. The mint like leaves have toothed edges. It has been my experience that the plants will die back in the cold but rebound quickly. I have started the plant from seeds; it takes 10-14 days for germination. The plants can be divided best in the spring or fall.

According to Stephen Orr, author of *The New American Herbal*, these plants were important sources of both nutrition and medicine to many Native American tribes.



Image Credit: Butterfly Gardens to Go By Michigan Native Butterfly Farm

References: Herbs & Spices by Jill Norman and Your Backyard Herb Garden by Miranda Smith.

Ferns - Friend or Foe?

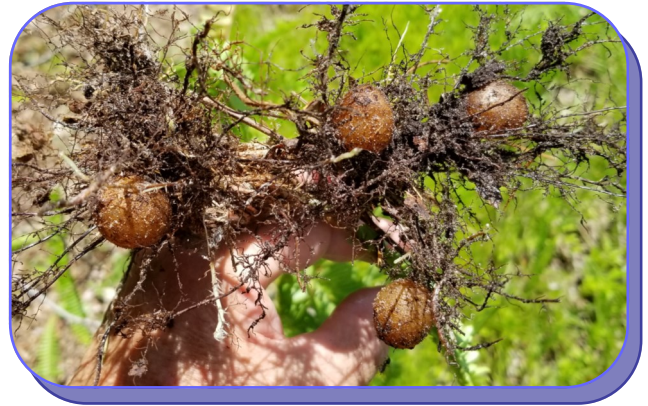
Joy Hudson, Master Gardener Volunteer

Ferns have been around for millions of years and are considered one of the oldest plant species on earth. They have survived for a reason – they are tough, prolific and enduring, and are some of the easiest plants to grow because of their resistance to diseases. With that being said, it is true that many varieties of ferns are invasive, and caution should be taken when choosing and placing ferns in your landscape.

One of the most invasive ferns is the tuberous sword fern (*Nephrolepis cordifolia*), a native of Australia, parts of Asia, and is also indigenous to Hawaii. It multiplies very rapidly via its underground stems, otherwise known as rhizomes, and also spreads through airborne dispersion of its massive number of spores found on the underside of its fronds. This rapid growth naturally leads to disruption of our natural habitats, thereby displacing native plants.

Unfortunately, this noxious fern is quite often sold under the same names (Sword, Boston) as the native, non-tuberous sword fern (*Nephrolepis exaltata*), making it difficult to determine which is which. Fortunately, however, if you have what you suspect is the invasive form growing in your landscape, you can easily make that determination by uprooting a few of the plants to reveal the bulb-like tubers found on the underground rhizomes.

Our native sword fern is an ideal choice for that very shaded area where you may have been unsuccessful in growing other plants. There is also the macho fern (*Nephrolepis biserrata*), another native. The macho fern is in the same family as the Boston fern, only substantially larger, hence its name. If you have the need and you have the space, these are great options. They are still vigorous plants, but, as our mantra goes – right plant, right place.



Tuberous Sword Fern tubers, Image Credit: S. Looker, UF/IFAS

All ferns prefer part shade to full shade. The soil should be kept moist, but avoid allowing plants to sit in water. If grown in the ground, they normally need little to no fertilizer. Simply give them a good start with good soil that's naturally rich in organic material.

Another great option for growing ferns is to place them in large containers. The Boston fern, for example, has been a favorite indoor plant since the Victorian period. Both the standard Boston fern and macho ferns have fronds that will cascade when placed on pedestals or hung, and are very graceful additions to any room.

There is one more reason we, in Florida, should embrace the growing of ferns – The little Town of Pierson, Florida, located just slightly west of Deland, is considered the “fern capital of the world”, bringing in somewhere in the neighborhood of \$68 million a year. The primary fern commercially grown is Leatherleaf, *Rumohra adiantiformis* which is used in cut flower arrangements. With careful selection, ferns can create beautiful greenery and enhance our lives.

References:

University of Florida, *The Botany Major- Nephrolepis cordifolia, Sword Fern*
SunsSentinel 1/27/2019–Jonathan Probbler – Town of Pierson

Master Gardener Volunteers had an educational booth at the Florida Agricultural Museum's Hot N' Spicy Event February 10th.



Master Gardener Volunteers, Left to Right: B. Kipnis, C. Zhang, C. Balliet, L. Powell, I. Elmorsi, J. Florio

Image Credit: S. Looker, UF/IFAS

Name That Creature. First correct answer earns \$5 credit towards admission to Horticulture classes held at the Flagler UF/IFAS Extension. Contact Sol Looker by email at lookers@ufl.edu with your answer.



Image Credit: S. Looker, UF/IFAS

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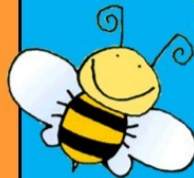


Demo Garden Tours and Garden

- **Florida-Friendly Landscaping™**
(talk auditorium) 9:15 am--9:45 am
- **Maia's Homemade Reusable Bee's Wax Wrappers**
(classroom) 9:55 am-10:05 am
- **Raised Gardens, Self Watering Planters, and Vertical Towers**
(talk auditorium) 10:15 am-10:45 am
(tour) 10:45 am-11:00 am
- **Maia's Homemade Reusable Bee's Wax Wrappers**
(classroom) 11:10 am-11:20 am
- **Palm Basics**
(talk auditorium) 11:30 am-Noon

On Going Events 9am—Noon

- **Plant Clinic:** Bring pictures, and samples of your sick plants—Master Gardeners will be available to assist with lawn and garden issues.
- Gently used garden **Tool Sale**
- Bring the kids and learn about **4-H, Florida Sea Grant and Agriculture** programs.



Spring Open House and Plant Sale

March 23
9am-Noon

Fun for all!



UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County—150 Sawgrass Rd. Bunnell, FL 32110

For more information call: 386-437-7464 or flagler@ifas.ufl.edu

Open to the Public and Free Parking.



UF/IFAS Flagler County Extension Master Gardener Volunteers

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FlaglerCoExtension/>

Upcoming Events

Flagler County Public Library, Palm Coast

Master Gardener Volunteers will be available to respond to lawn, landscape and pest management questions with research-based solutions from the University of Florida from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. on the last Saturday of every month beginning March 30th.

Washington Oaks State Park

Master Gardener Volunteers are at the Washington Oaks State Park Plant Sale on the second Saturday of every month from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. to answer questions and provide advice.

Speaker's Bureau

We are available to non-profits, homeowners associations, clubs, etc. Contact us if you would like an Agent or Master Gardener to present information to your group on horticultural topics. Contact: Sol Looker 386-437-7464 or lookers@ufl.edu

University of Florida Master Gardener Volunteers

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.

Stay Connected!

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

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

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

University of Florida Gardening Solutions: <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/>

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

If you are interested in joining the Flagler County Master Gardener Program, please contact Sol Looker at lookers@ufl.edu or 386-437-7464.

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