

## Message from Flagler Horticulture Agent

The time is getting close again to begin the annual Master Gardening training in Flagler County. This year the efforts will be combined with Putnam County and co-taught by Prissy Fletcher, Putnam County Horticulture Agent. UF/IFAS State Specialists will also be presenting in areas of their expertise.

The 2018 Master Gardener Class will begin August 16 at the Flagler County UF/IFAS Extension office. All of the 15 slots have been filled. This year's applicants come from varied backgrounds and levels of gardening experience. It is our goal to provide advanced horticultural training and pair their interests and experience with the various projects we have serving the community. Some of the current projects that the Master Gardeners are involved in include; the Flagler County Community Garden, extension demonstration gardens, soil testing, public speaking, community outreach, and plant diagnostics. The new Master Gardener recruits will help to support

the various Horticulture Programs UF/IFAS has in Flagler County, as well as expand community impact.

The Florida Master Gardener Program is a volunteer based program that serves UF/IFAS Extension and the citizens of Florida. The program counts on devoted volunteers who have an interest in horticulture and in giving back to their communities.

The Master Gardener Program began in Florida in 1979 when a group of Florida Extension Agents decided to maximize resources by using a recently developed volunteer training model created in the state of Washington in 1973. The horticulture volunteer system has been so successful, that it has been used across the United States and in parts of Canada.

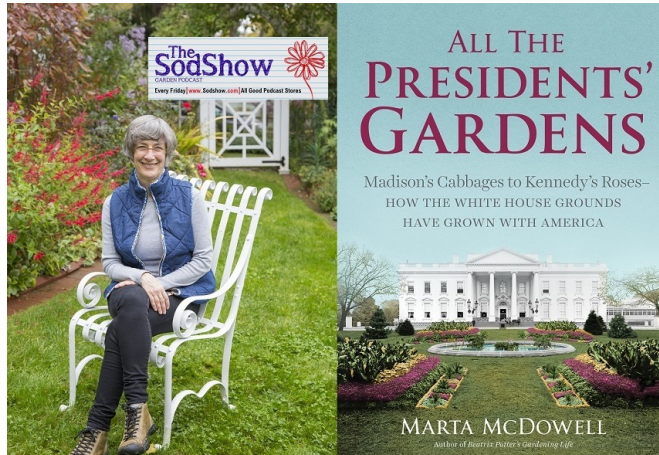
We look forward to welcoming this year's Master Gardener trainees and what they will bring to the program.

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## All the Presidents' Gardens: Madison's Cabbages to Kennedy's Roses- How the White House Grounds Have Grown with America



### **Book Review by Barbara Sharf**

Available on Amazon, Kindle \$3.03, Used HB \$1.51 – \$2.77

*Author Marta McDowell teaches landscape history and gardening at the New York Botanical Garden. She is particularly interested in authors who garden. Her past books include Emily Dickinson's Gardens and Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life.*

I recommend this book for gardeners interested in the history of landscaping around the White House. The gardens have changed over the years, reflecting changing trends of American landscaping, and changing interests of the Presidents and their Head Gardeners. At one time, the White House had extensive greenhouses, reflecting the Victorian interest in collecting exotic and tropical plants. Several Presidents had extensive kitchen gardens and orchards. Roses have always had a special place at the White House. Every President has added specimens to the extensive arboretum. The most recent introduction is a native plant pollinator garden and beehives. The lawns have seen changes in use over times: From the use as a public park, to the use as play areas for children of the sitting President. McDowell also tells the stories of the Head Gardeners, who served over several administrations, and the stories of the nurseries who supplied plant materials.

I learned a lot about the history of American gardening and landscaping. One very interesting "tidbit" was the history of the packaged seed market. We think of the Shakers as the religious group who live communally and make Shaker furniture. However, the Shakers had the earliest "seed company". Members of the Shaker community grew, harvested, dried and packaged seeds. The Head Gardener placed his catalog order by mail from the Shaker community.

This was an enjoyable read with many historical photographs, garden diagrams and letters included.



## ***THYME (Thymus vulgaris)* By Joy Hudson, Master Gardener**

There are more than 300 species of thymes, many of them grow only in the wild, and not usually used in cooking. Thyme is an ancient herb that was used symbolically as a symbol of courage. It was utilized in cooking, as an antiseptic, an insect repellent, and even as an ingredient in the embalming process by the Egyptians. Records show that thyme came to us from the Mediterranean region, and many of those uses remain with us today.

Here in Florida, most people are familiar with English, French, German, common, and garden thymes, all of which fall under the species *Thymus vulgaris*, the most prominent of culinary herbs. The above named plants all seem to have slight variations in regards to leaves and growth habits. Although there does not seem to be much consensus about the identification of this group of plants, they, however, all have one thing in common - the essential oil, Thymol, that gives this herb its pungent flavor and fragrance. Dr. Harriet Phillips said in 1984 "Confusion over botanical classification of this genus and disagreement among experts has been the status quo since Linnaeus described 8 species in 1753".

This herb is a woody perennial that does well in moderately cold weather, thrives in the heat and handles drought equally well. The only negative would be the fact it does not do well in very humid weather. For this reason it is important to give this plant plenty of space for ventilation, along with well drained soil. Another great feature is that this herb is deer resistant.

Propagation may be done by root division, cutting, or from seeds. However, since seeds are difficult to germinate, the other two options are highly recommended. Tender plants should be placed outdoors (either in the ground or in containers) in the spring, after the danger of frost. Plants may also be planted early in the fall, giving them enough time to become established before the cold weather sets in. It is recommended that thyme plants be replanted every three to four years for best results. They may also benefit from a light application of fertilizer, no more than twice a year. Frequent pruning not only helps to maintain a fuller, healthier looking plant, but gives you an opportunity to dry and store thyme for the slower growing periods. Best time for harvesting is just as the tiny flowers are in bloom and when they impart the best flavor. Remove the upper third of the sprigs, place on newspaper in a properly ventilated location until dry. Store dried sprigs in small bundles or strip leaves from stems, and store in tightly sealed jars.

Thyme is one of the most popular herbs used in modern day cuisines by different cultures. As in the past, it continues to be used medically as an antiseptic. For example, Thymol is an ingredient in the well known product, Listerine. It also acts as an insect repellent, and is very effective when paired with vegetables, such as eggplants, in your summer garden. There are, of course, newer hybrids on the market, and one such hybrid is lemon thyme (*Thymus x citriodorus*), which is both attractive and delicious, with its chartreuse green leaves, and its citrus flavor and scent.

Sources: Herbs in the Florida Garden, James M. Stephen, UF/IFAS.

"The Northwest Herb Lover's Handbook" (Dr. Harriet Phillips, Cornell Univ.)

Varieties of Culinary Thyme, Home Guides, SF Gate

The Growers Exchange

For additional information please visit UF/IFAS

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh020>, "Herbs in the Florida Garden" CIR570



## Florida Native Favorite

By Mary Hobbs, Master Gardener



Have you driven A1A or walked along the Flagler Beach dunes and noticed the beautiful Florida native flower know as Blanket Flower or by its scientific name *Gaillardia pulchella*? You have probably noticed this beautiful plant growing in the hot sun, sand, and salty spray. This plant is perfectly adapted for coastal landscapes, cut flower gardens, ground covers or planted in your wildflower garden. It actually will grow almost anywhere around our state except in moist, wet areas. *Gaillardia* is a perennial plant that blooms throughout the summer into the fall and reseeds itself, so you see it year after year. Despite the recent hurricanes and colder than normal winters, it continues to thrive in our county.

Blanket Flowers grow throughout the United States and there are many hybrid crosses that have been made that are available for sale. The best adapted plants for Florida's environment come from Florida seed sources that have not been crossed with other species of *Gaillardia* not native to the state.

Native flowers are very important to Florida. Native plants beautify our communities, roadsides, and natural habitats. They thrive with less water and fertilizer and provide food and shelter to native pollinators and beneficial insects. Did you know bees are responsible for every third bite of food we eat?

True Florida native plants and seeds are sometimes hard to find in our area but you can check these websites for suppliers.

Florida Wildflowers Growers Cooperative; [www.floridawildflowers.com/](http://www.floridawildflowers.com/) and the Florida Association of Native Nurseries; [www.floridanativenurseries.org](http://www.floridanativenurseries.org)  
For More information please visit UF/IFAS  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fp216>, "Gaillardia pulchella Blanket Flower, Gaillardia"



Photos Courtesy of UF/IFAS

## Meet another Board Member

### Barbara Sharf

Barbara Sharf is the Secretary for the UF/IFAS Flagler County Master Gardener Volunteers. She grew up in Delaware and graduated from the University of Delaware with a degree in Biology. After working in Biomedical Research at the University of Pennsylvania for several years, she retired to raise 2 sons. Eventually, the family moved to a farm in rural South Central Pennsylvania. When her boys entered their teen years, she became a science teacher in the local school district. She also worked part time at Lincoln Caverns, a commercial limestone cave. In 2004, she and her husband retired to "no more snow" Palm Coast. She joined that year's Master Gardener's class.

Barbara has continued to be interested in public education, volunteering each school year at the elementary level. She is the moderator of the *Amaryllis* and *Hippeastrum* Forum on the National Gardening Association website. For several years, she has done Soil Testing at the Extension Office.



## **Solarization: A greener way to clean your dirt.**

By Catherine R. Walsh, Master Gardener

Solarization is an environmentally friendly way to battle pests and diseases in your soil, above and below the ground, without using chemicals. Above the ground, solarization controls weed seeds and seedlings. Below the ground solarization helps homeowners destroy otherwise difficult gardening problems, like weeds, soil-borne disease and even destructive root knot nematodes (not to be confused with the beneficial nematodes). It also can help reduce soil inhabiting insects, mites and pathogens (fungi, bacteria) in the uppermost layers. This is also an excellent way of getting rid of turf where you want to create a flower bed.

If you decide solarization is something you would like to try, it is important to understand how the process works. The sheet of plastic is used to cover the soil surface for 6-8 weeks. Clear plastic is used so that the sunlight is able to pass through it. The soil warms and the plastic traps the heat allowing the soil to reach temperatures that are lethal to many pests and weeds. When done effectively, the soil solarization can reduce pest population for 3-4 months, and in some cases even longer.

Select the area to be solarized, (tilling is optional); To prepare your site for solarization, you'll want to clear the area of weeds and debris. This would also be the time to add any amendments to the soil. Remove any rocks or clumps of plant material, carefully level it out. Make sure the bed slightly "crowns" in the center so that rainwater won't collect on the plastic and cool the soil. Wet soil conducts heat better than dry soil and makes organisms more vulnerable to being killed by the heat and antagonistic microorganisms. Do not allow soil to dry and then try to irrigate again as this will lower the soil temperature and lengthen the time required for successful solarization. Stretch clear plastic tightly over top, making sure the sides are well anchored. You can bury the sides of the plastic in trenches dug next to the plot to insure a tight fit for the length of the project. Be sure there are no air pockets, to prevent "sailing" of the plastic.

In general, clear or transparent plastic is most effective for solarization but not always the thinnest plastic. A mere 1-mil thick heats the soil best but thin plastic also rips easily so a common recommendation is to meet in the middle of heat and strength with a 2-mil thick sheet. The sheet should be a little larger than the area you are treating. Stretch the plastic tightly over the prepared area and seal the edges by completely burying them in the soil. Make sure they stay buried or staked for at least 6 weeks. You will know your solarization is not working if weeds continue to grow under the plastic. If you develop any holes in the plastic, a small piece of duct tape can be used to seal the area. This fix will usually not block enough sunlight to hurt the solarization process. Solarization is both time and temperature dependent. The goal is to maintain the daily maximum temperature in the top 6 inches of the soil, at or above, 110 to 125 degrees Fahrenheit.

You can solarize any type of Florida soil anywhere, be it raised beds or flat ground. Generally, this process is most effective in areas that receive full sun light during the day; any shade will hinder the process. June, July and August are the best months to solarize, since this is when temperatures are highest.

Post solarization: The plastic may be removed, taking care the underlying soil is disturbed as little as possible to avoid bringing up, if any, viable weed seed. Remember, solarization is pasteurizing not sterilizing and even though solarization kills the beneficial organisms, as well, they are able to repopulate more quickly than the pests and pathogens we do not want in our gardens. Post-solarization conditions actually favor and select beneficial microorganisms by improving tilth. Tilth is the soil's physical condition in relation to it's sustainability for planting and growing crops. Soil with good tilth has large pore spaces for air filtration and water movement. Roots only grow where the soil tilth allows for adequate level of soil oxygen.

References: UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions

UC Davis Solarization

For more information please visit: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in856>,  
"Introduction to Soil Solarization"

## Upcoming Events



**SECOND SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH.....Washington Oaks Second Saturday Plant Sale Washington Oaks Gardens State Park, 6400 N. Oceanside Blvd., Palm Coast. 10-2. [www.washingtonoaks.org](http://www.washingtonoaks.org)**

**MASTER GARDENER volunteers will be there to answer your gardening questions.**

Quarterly Creature - the first Master Gardener to ID this creature will receive \$5 off a future course offered at the Flagler County Extension Office, email your answer to Sol Looker, [lookers@ufl.edu](mailto:lookers@ufl.edu)



Image Credit Sol Looker UF/IFAS

## UF/IFAS Flagler County Community Horticulture Education

Future Horticulture Education is listed on [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com)

Registration on <https://www.eventbrite.com>

150 Sawgrass Road Bunnell, FL 32110-4325

**“Speakers Bureau” 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 us for More Info: Sol Looker 386-437-7464 or [lookers@ufl.edu](mailto:lookers@ufl.edu)**

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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 with Flagler County Horticulture!**

Flagler County Extension.....<http://district3.extension.ifas.ufl.edu/flagler.shtml>

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

Florida Friendly Landscaping.....<http://http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/>

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

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

University Of Florida IFAS Extension.....<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>

If you are interested in joining the Flagler County Master Gardener Program, please contact Sol Looker at [lookers@ufl.edu](mailto: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.