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The Cutting Edge

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Bradford County Extension Service Master Gardener Newsletter



Date

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Is it Over?

My ‘rule of thumb’ date for planting a spring garden USED to be March 15th. That was the magical date when winters grip had finally loosened and we were heading into spring. Had I followed that formula this year, I would be RE planting everything about now! Our crazy weather keeps us gardeners on our toes these days! However, I believe winter really is over now, so it’s time to get planting!

Check out the planting guides on pages 2, 3 and 4 for ideas and suggestions. On page 5, Wendy has an article on the leaf footed bug, a common pest found in Florida gardens.

Have you ever wondered why your squash plants flowered but produced no, or few, squash? Read “Techniques for Hand Pollinating Squash” plants on Page 6. This year the Extension office is partnering with the Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District to track rainfall in Bradford County. Are you on-line and proficient with email? You may want to help us record rainfall data. See page 7 for more details. Now get out there and garden!

By: Laurie Compton

Southern Peas

Exactly what is a Southern pea? What you call a purple hull, a farmer might call a cowpea. The grocery store might label them black eyed peas and a restaurant might describe them as field peas. But they are all talking about the same thing—the Southern pea.



Some of the confusion over southern pea variety names is because gardeners can easily save their own southern pea seeds. Over the years, true varietal identity gets lost, so gardeners think up new, local names for the varieties they grow. Consequently, what started out as a single variety may become known by several names. Add to this the fact that there are so many recognizable southern pea varieties and it’s easy to see how confusion can result.

Today, eleven southern pea classifications are recognized. By looking for the characteristics associated with each grouping, gardeners usually can come fairly close to identifying unknown seed stock.

Continued on page 8

In the Garden: What to Plant in April

Annuals: New varieties of coleus do well in sun or shade and provide vivid colors and patterns for months. This is an ideal time to plant many **bulbs**. Consider planting blood lily, caladium, or canna. Louisiana iris makes a beautiful cut flower and thrives in most soil types although they prefer moist soils with a high organic matter content. Plant heat-loving **herbs**, including basil, oregano, sage, Mexican tarragon, and rosemary. Continue planting warm season **vegetables** like okra and cucumber. Mulch well to prevent weeds and provide irrigation if rainfall is lacking.



Louisiana Iris

In the Garden: What to Do in April



Carolina Silverbell

Pests: Monitor landscape plants weekly for aphids on tender new growth. **Divide** clumps of bulbs, ornamental grasses, or herbaceous perennials to expand or rejuvenate garden beds or to pass-along to friends. Many cultural **lawn problems** such as lack of water mimic insect damage. Confirm the damage is being caused by insects before applying a pesticide. Planting season is here and there are a wide variety of shrubs that can be added to the landscape now. Many beautiful trees are in bloom. Consider planting fringetree, Carolina Silverbell, or redbud. **Fertilize lawns.** Apply fertilizer

no sooner than mid-April after new growth has started. Choose one with no or very little phosphorus unless a soil test indicates a need for it. A fertilizer containing slow release nitrogen will give longer lasting results. *Source: http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/pdfs/April_North.pdf*

April Wildlife Calendar

- Bobwhite quail nest now through September.
- Watch for hummingbirds feeding on blooms of columbine, buckeye, and others.
- Pine barrens treefrogs begin calling.
- Alligators begin moving about, seeking new territories and mates.
- Plant extra parsley for black swallowtail butterfly larvae to eat.
- Blooming wildflowers and pitcher plants blanket the wet savannahs of the Apalachicola National Forest

Did You Know?

Hooded pitcher plant is listed as a Threatened Plant in the Preservation of Native Flora of Florida Act. This is defined as species of plants native to the state that are in rapid decline in the number of plants within the state, but which have not so decreased in such number as to cause them to be endangered.

Source: http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife_info/happenings/



Hooded Pitcher Plant

In the Garden: What to Plant in May

Annual plants that can take summer heat include salvia, angelonia, wax begonia, and ornamental pepper. Planting early-, mid-, and late-blooming varieties of day-lily **bulbs** ensures months of color from these low maintenance plants. Continue to plant heat loving **herbs**, including basil, oregano, sage, Mexican tarragon, and rosemary. Southern **vegetable** favorites to plant now are okra, southern pea, and sweet potato.



Southern Pea flower

In the Garden: What to Do in May

Harmful insect **pests** become more active as the weather warms. Watch for thrips, scale, and mites on ornamental plants. Chewed or ragged leaves on **oleanders** indicate oleander caterpillars at work. Watch for damage from **lawn insects** like chinch bugs in St. Augustine and begin scouting for newly hatched mole crickets in Bahia lawns. Watch for pests, disease, and nutritional disorders on **tomato** plants. If not done last month, apply a **lawn fertilizer** (not a weed & feed) without phosphorus unless soil test indicates the need for it. A fertilizer containing controlled-release nitrogen will give longer lasting results. Now is a good time to **propagate** plants by air layering, grafting, division, or cuttings. Prepare for hurricane season by checking trees for damaged or weak branches and prune if needed. Hire an ISA certified arborist. **Prevent lawn pests:** Discourage insects, weeds, and disease by mowing correctly.



Oleander

Source: http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/pdfs/May_North.pdf

May Wildlife Calendar

- Painted Buntings nest through summer in northeast Florida.
- Least terns and snowy plovers nest on Panhandle beaches.
- Bald eagles begin migrating north.
- Alligators begin to court and make loud resounding 'bellows'.
- Soft-shell and alligator snapping turtles complete egg laying.
- Pompano running in the surf in north Florida.
- White swamp lillies dot wet prairies of the Everglades.
- American lotus bloom at Paynes Prairies State Preserve.

Source: http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife_info/happenings/

Did You Know? Adult snapping turtles have no natural predators other than humans, who capture them for their meat and shells, and to sell in the exotic animal trade. A severe reduction in population due to unregulated harvesting and habitat loss has led states to protect them throughout most of their range, and they are listed as a threatened species.

Source: <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/reptiles/alligator-snapping-turtle/>



Alligator Snapping Turtle

In the Garden: What to Plant in June

Annuals that can take full sun during hot summer months include celosia, portulaca, vinca, and some coleus. Add bright color to the landscape with a variety of **perennials** like salvias including blue sage, 'Hot Lips' salvia, Mexican sage and rose leaf sage. Summer's warm, rainy weather is the perfect time to plant **palms**. Make sure to not cover the trunk with soil. Plant heat loving **herbs**, including basil, Mexican tarragon, and rosemary. Pinch back regularly to prevent flowering and enhance branching. Plant **Vegetables** like okra, southern pea, lima bean, and sweet potato. It's too late to plant tomatoes.



'Hot Lips' salvia

In the Garden: What to Do in June

Monitor the landscape weekly for harmful insects **pests**. Knowing which insects commonly attack a plant can aid in identification and treatment. **Irrigation:** June is normally the start of the rainy season, but if rainfall has been spotty, watch for drought stress and water as needed. Watch for nutrient deficiencies or environmental problems with palms and cycads and correct using an appropriate treatment. Keep **lawn fertilizers** away from the rootzone. **Azaleas** can still be pruned in June without harming next spring's buds. **Rejuvenate lawn areas:** For areas where grass doesn't grow well, try replacing it with versatile ground covers.



Frizzle Top (manganese deficiency) on Sago.

Source: http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/pdfs/June_North.pdf

June Wildlife Calendar

- Mockingbirds may attack pedestrians who wander too close to nesting sites.
- The Southern Flying Squirrel is starting its breeding season.
- Red bats and Seminole bats give birth.
- It's the height of the Gopher Tortoise breeding season.
- Cicadas emerge from their underground growth period to begin making their classic summer sound.
- Tarflowers bloom in flatwoods.



Mockingbird

Did You Know? University of Florida biologists are reporting that mockingbirds recognize and remember people whom the birds perceive as threatening their nests. If the white-and-grey songbirds common in cities and towns throughout the Southeast spot their unwelcome guests, they screech, dive bomb and even sometimes graze the visitors' heads — while ignoring other passers-by or nearby strangers.

Source: <http://news.ufl.edu/2009/05/18/mockingbird/>

What's Buggin' You

By Wendy Helmy-Hartman

The leaf-footed bug is a common resident of Florida where it can be a pest in yards, gardens, and farms. Although widespread, this insect is typically a minor pest that can feed on a variety of plants such as fruits, vegetables, and ornamentals. They can become a major pest on citrus under the right conditions and cause substantial crop loss. In Florida, this species is active year-round and adults can be observed during all months of the year. Although common throughout the southern United States, this species has also been found as far north as New York.

The leaf-footed bug gets its name from the leaf-like extensions from the sides of its hind legs. These structures are apparent in the adults and older juveniles (i.e., nymphs). These projections cause the hind legs to appear enormous in comparison to the other two pairs of legs on the insect. The adult leaf-footed bug is brown with a white or pale yellow crossbar in the middle of its back. When it flies, orange coloration on the abdomen may also be visible. Although the juveniles are similar to the adults in shape, they are more brightly colored and do not typically have the extensions on the hind legs. After mating, the adult females will lay single rows of cylindrical golden brown eggs.

In Florida, thistles are the natural host plants of the leaf-footed bug. However, the leaf-footed bug will feed on other edible plants such as pecan, apple, bean, blueberry, cucurbits, persimmon, tomato, and sunflower. They can also be found on ornamentals such as crape myrtle, hibiscus, ligustrum, and rose. As a member of the true bug group, the leaf-footed bug feeds on plants by using its mouthparts to pierce and suck juices from a plant. In citrus, this species can feed on ripening fruit and cause fruit drop

Control for this insect includes application of insecticide, hand-picking, and cultural practices. For most home gardens, hand-picking will likely be sufficient to control this species as the numbers encountered are usually low.



Leaf Footed Bug Nymph



Adult Leaf footed Bug

EDIS Publication #EENY-72, leaf-footed bug, *Leptoglossus phyllopus* (Linnaeus) (Insecta: Hemiptera: Coreidae) by F. W. Mead.

Techniques for Hand Pollinating Squashes

All squashes are members of the plant family Cucurbitaceae. Well known members of this plant family include pumpkins, squash, cucumbers, and melons. All squash have male flowers and female flowers (Fig. 2) on the same vine or bush. The ratio of males to females varies with the type of squash. The first step is to identify male and female flower structure because only the female flowers bear fruit (Fig. 3). Males have a plain stem beneath their flower. Peeling the petals back reveals the male anther. Bright orange-yellow pollen grains will rub off on contact. They do not transfer by wind. These grains of pollen need to be transferred to the female by direct touch. Gardeners



Figure 3. Flowers from Yellow Crookneck squash. Male flower on left with petals removed to expose male anther with pollen. Female flower on right with petals removed to show stigma. Credits: E. Thralls

frequently note that their squash blooms profusely, yet fruit does not develop as they expect. The plants may produce only male flowers or only female flowers. Flower sex is influenced by temperature, seasonal day length, plant maturity and hormones. The female flowers exhibit the form of a rudimentary

squash just below their petals. Peel these petals off, and you will see the “stigma,” a raised, yellow-orange structure in the center. Apply the pollen to the stigma by touching the male anther to the female stigma (Fig. 4) or by using a paint brush; pick up pollen on the brush from the anther and “paint” the stigma with pollen. You have just accomplished pollination! Both male and female flowers are open in the morning and ready for pollination to occur, and then they close up by evening. Pollination is best done in the morning, when high humidity helps to activate the pollen. One male flower can be used to pollinate several female flowers.



Figure 2. Flowers from Zucchini squash. Two female flowers are on the left; note rudimentary fruit below the flowers. Two male flowers are on the on right; note straight stems below flowers. Petals have been cut away from male flower to expose the anther with pollen. Credits: E. Thralls



Figure 4. One method of hand pollination, in which male anther is touched to the female stigma to transfer pollen. Credits: E. Thralls

BRADFORD WATER RECORDS

Help the Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District and
the University of Florida

accurately

track rainfall in Bradford County

Volunteers are needed to measure rainfall at home and record the data on a user friendly internet site

To participate? Email Laurie Compton (lcompton@ufl.edu) to schedule a short consultation and to receive your free rain gauge

Reporting online is simple:

- Write down daily rainfall amounts on days when it rains
- After the first of each month you will receive an email with a link to a form you can fill out online. Click the link
- Enter your name, 911 zip code and month of rainfall data
- Enter the rainfall amounts for each day you recorded rain in the rain gauge for the month.
Examples:
 - **One and a half inches of rain should be entered as "1.5"**
 - **Six tenths of an inch of rain should be entered as "0.6"**
- After all data is entered, be sure to scroll down to the end and check yes and then click on the "submit" button

Volunteers will get a free rain gauge!

Call 904-966-6299 to join the team now!

Techniques for Hand Pollinating Squashes

Male flowers can be cut, like a cut flower, and held in water over night (Fig. 5) to pollinate available female flowers the next morning. Male flowers may also be stored by laying them on moist paper towels in a storage container in a refrigerator for three to four days. When storing male flowers in a refrigerator, remove the petals by hand or with scissors.

Be sure to prevent the pollen from directly contacting the moist paper towel. Hand pollination ensures varietal consistency in the next generation of squash plants. Gardeners who save their seeds for the next crop need to be aware that pumpkins, squash and gourds will cross-pollinate. While the fruit is edible and delicious, the seed from such a cross, if saved and replanted, will not grow to look or taste true to the parent plant. Therefore, some separation in the garden to prevent cross pollination may be necessary for those gardeners who save their seeds for the next crop of straight necks, crooknecks, spaghetti squash, pumpkins and others. For more information, refer to *Wyman's Gardening Encyclopedia*,

Source: Home Vegetable Garden Techniques: Hand Pollination of Squash and Corn in Small Gardens / Ed Thralls and Danielle Treadwell



Figure 5. Male squash flowers in vase of water overnight to pollinate female squash flowers the following morning. Credits: E. Thralls

Southern Peas

With the exception of the purple hull group, southern pea classification is based mostly on the color of the seeds and seed eyes and the spacing of the seeds in the pods. Varieties are called crowders if the seeds are spaced so closely that the seed ends are pressed against each other. As some of the variety names suggest, seed color varies.

The color can be general over the entire seed coat or it may be concentrated around the seed eye. Colorless varieties are called creams. The purple hull group includes varieties with some purple coloring on their pods, even though they may fit into other groups due to seed characteristics. And to make matters even more confusing, southern peas also can be classified according to plant growth habit. Pea plants may be bush, vining or semi-vining types.

Southern pea varieties recommended for Florida gardens include the black-eye group, the brown crowder and the producer (from the brown crowder group), the bush conch, Texas creams and snap peas (from the cream group) and the zipper cream (from the cream crowder group).

Southern peas can be planted in North Florida March through mid August.

Source: http://okaloosa.ifas.ufl.edu/pdfs/horticulture/larry_column/2005/Confusion%20over%20southern%20peas.pdf

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