



The Cutting Edge

Master Gardener Vision “to be the most trusted resource for horticultural education in Florida”

2266 N. Temple Ave., Starke, 904.966.6299 Email: lcompton@ufl.edu

Time to Get Busy!

If you haven't already cleaned up the garden and transitioned to warm weather veggies after our overcast, rainy winter, now is the time to do it! In case you missed it, our Master Gardeners had our Spring Fling plant sale in March, and one of the most popular plants sold was the Cherry Sage. A great hummingbird and butterfly plant, read more about it below and try some in your garden. Lots to do and see in the landscape and garden this month; read the planting and wildlife calendars on pages 2, 3 and 4 for ideas. In this issue of the Cutting Edge, Wendy has written about black scale, a pest of citrus, avocado, olive, tropical fruit and landscape plants. Black scale is of particular concern for citrus and olive producers in Florida.

If you would like to know more about growing your own herbs in the garden, check out pages 6 and 7. Many herbs are easy to grow and use. Don't forget the catmint for the kitties!

On page 8, I have listed some of our upcoming programs. Come and see us at the Strawberry Festival on April 11th and 12th to taste some locally grown berries, and don't forget to sign up early for the cooking and canning classes coming up.

Happy Gardening!

Laurie

Cherry Sage

One of the plants that was sold at our Master Gardener Spring Fling plant sale this year was Cherry Sage (*Salvia greggii*). Like many other salvias, this charming perennial is native to south and west Texas and grows into New Mexico and Mexico. Cherry sage usually grows 6 to 18 inches tall and blooms from spring to frost. It is upright in habit and has dark green, fine-textured leaves. The tubular flowers come in colors of pink, red, white, salmon and coral. These blooms are very attractive to hummingbirds. The small, red flowers are borne above the foliage but blend in with the leaves due to the open habit of the species.



Grow cherry sage in full sun to partial shade. Some shade is preferred in the warmest climates. It prefers well-drained soils and cannot tolerate excessive moisture. However, drought tolerance is good and plants usually come back the following year if the ground has not been disturbed. Freezing temperatures in the warmer parts of hardiness zone 8 usually do not kill the plant to the ground. The cultivar 'Variegata' (desert blaze salvia) has creamy-white leaf margins. It is patented and trademarked.

Propagate cherry sage by cuttings.

Source: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/jp524>

What to Plant in April

Coleus are annuals that grow well in the sun or in the shade, and provide vivid color and patterns for months. Caladiums are bulbs that grow well in the shady parts of your garden, and also are attractive cut and put in a vase of water. Louisiana iris is another bulb that makes a great cut flower, and thrives in most types of soil, but prefers moist soils with high organic matter content. You may also want to try bulbs like cannas and blood lily. If you like herbs, start planting some that love the heat, like basil, oregano, sage, Mexican tarragon and rosemary. April is a busy time in the vegetable garden and a transition time between cool and warm season vegetables.

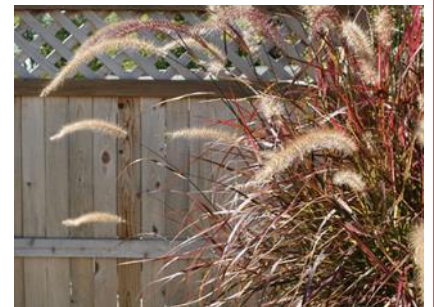
You can still plant collards, mustard and turnips, but also try beans, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, okra, southern peas, peppers, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, squash, tomatoes and watermelon.



Okra Flower

What to Do in April

If you have petunias, cut them back hard now and fertilize for spring color. April is a good time to divide ornamental grasses, perennials and bulbs and pass them along to friends and family. Deadhead flowering annuals regularly to encourage blooms and reduce disease problems. If you didn't get around to it in March, clean up dead leaves from cold damaged plants. Plants like gingers and firespike can be cut down to the ground. Other plants like salvia and hibiscus should be pruned back when new buds start to break along the stem. The best time to apply lawn fertilizer is after new growth has started. Choose a lawn fertilizer with little or no phosphorous, unless a soil test indicates a need for it. *Source: http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/*



Muhly grass

Wildlife Calendar April

- Bobwhite quail nest now through September.
- Hummingbirds feed on blooms of columbine, buckeye, and others.
- Long-tailed weasels, minks, and river otters born April through May.
- Endangered Gray Bats return to Florida caves to raise young.

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

Did You Know? Columbine is a beautiful wildflower that can be found growing in nearly every state, though exact species will vary.

Columbine produces delicate, nodding flowers each spring that look almost like a pointed crown. The flowers can be blue, purple, pink, white, or red. Our native red columbine grows naturally in just three counties in the panhandle, mainly in rocky woodland areas. If you live in North Florida, why not try growing this lovely plant in your own garden? It's easy to start the native red variety from seed, and it will reward you later by attracting hummingbirds.



Columbine

Laurie

What to Plant in May

Replace cool season plants with those that can take the heat: for annuals try blue daze, celosia, coleus, crossandra, gaillardia, impatiens, kalanchoe, milkweed, nicotiana, pentas, portulaca, salvia, vinca (periwinkle) and zinnia. If you like months of color in your garden, try planting low maintenance early, mid and late blooming bulbs of daylilies. Basil, Cuban oregano, Mexican tarragon, lemon grass, rosemary, and lemon verbena are heat loving herbs to try. Some southern vegetable favorites that can be planted in May include southern peas, sweet potatoes and okra. Come into the Extension office and get a copy of the Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide for more ideas.



Kalanchoe

What to Do in May

Make sure your flowering plants have good air circulation going into the hot, humid months. Be a good scout! Check plants as least once a week for scale, thrips and mites. Fertilize citrus with a citrus fertilizer and provide water during dry times to keep the fruit from splitting once the rains return. Time to fertilize palms with a palm fertilizer. Broadcast one pound of fertilizer per 100 square feet of canopy area. If you didn't do it in April, apply a lawn fertilizer (not a weed and feed) without phosphorous unless a soil test indicates the need for it. Now is the time to watch for nutritional disorders, pests and diseases on tomatoes.



Blossom end rot on tomato

Source: http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/

Wildlife Calendar May

- Painted Buntings nest through summer in northeast Florida.
- Bald eagles begin migrating north.
- Alligators begin to court and make loud resounding 'bellows'.
- Loggerhead sea turtles begin nesting on summer nights.
- Pompano running in the surf in north Florida.
- Source: http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife_info/happenings/



Florida Pompano

Did You Know? The Florida pompano (*Trachinotus carolinus*) is a member of the jack family. Recreational anglers seek pompano because of the species' fighting ability on light tackle and because of their excellent food quality. In Florida, at least 10,000 lbs of pompano per county are caught annually in all coastal counties. Currently, there is a 6-fish aggregate bag limit per person per day for pompano. The size of fish in the aggregate bag must be greater than 11 inches fork length, and only one fish may be larger than 20 inches.

Source: <http://myfwc.com/research/saltwater/fish/floridapompano/research/>

What to Plant in June

Plant perennials for easy color. Salvias, coneflowers, bulbine, stokesia, gaura, porterweed, plumbago, firecracker plant, firebush, firespike, verbenas, lantana and many others are all great at providing color and can be less maintenance than some annuals. Annuals that can take full sun during hot summer months include celosia, portulaca, vinca, and some coleus. Plant heat loving herbs, including basil, Mexican tarragon, and rosemary. Pinch back regularly to prevent flowering and enhance branching. Vegetables to plant include lima beans, eggplant, okra, peanuts, southern peas, and sweet potatoes. It's too late to plant tomatoes.



Sweet potatoes

What to Do in June

Side dress vegetables with a 6-6-6 or 10-10-10 to keep them productive by placing fertilizer in a band 1" deep and 6 to 8" away from plants.

To keep annuals blooming, fertilize monthly with a standard fertilizer with nitrogen and potassium, but low phosphorous (middle number) or use a slow release fertilizer that will last all summer into fall. Keep lawn fertilizers away from the rootzone of palms. Control lubber grasshoppers when they are young. They will congregate on a plant when young and can be handpicked and dropped into soapy water or rubbing alcohol. Scout vegetables for insects frequently, especially caterpillars. For large caterpillars, the best means of control is to handpick. Small caterpillars can be controlled with the environmentally friendly Bt (Dipel or Thuricide).



Young lubber grasshopper

Source: http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/

Wildlife Calendar June

- 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.
- Snook begin moving into inlets and passes.
- Tarflowers bloom in flatwoods

Did You Know?

The Seminole Bat inhabits both hardwood and pine forests. Basically a solitary species, it prefers to roost singly or in pairs in the interior of clumps of Spanish Moss from 5 - 20 ft above the ground. Moss clumps with a southwestern exposure are favored, for they permit the best pre-flight warming from the sun. This bat also roosts beneath loose bark or in clumps of leaves. It forages mostly at tree-top level near open water, over clearings in forests, along forest edges, and even around streetlights. The Seminole Bat is active at all seasons, including warm evenings in midwinter. It feeds in flight, eating flies, beetles, dragonflies, bees, and wasps.



Seminole bat

http://naturalhistory.uga.edu/~GMNH/gawildlife/index.php?page=speciespages/species_page&key=lseminolus

What's Buggin' You Black Scale

The black scale is a pest of citrus, olive trees, apricots, avocado, and other common landscape plants. Black scales tend to prefer trees with dense branching. This insect is originally from South Africa, but now it can be found throughout the world. Like other scale insects, this species can be difficult to control.

Black scale eggs are laid beginning in April with egg-laying continuing through September. Females protect their eggs by keeping them underneath their bodies until hatching occurs. Females are prolific reproducers with each female laying hundreds to thousands of eggs. Egg development generally requires two to six weeks with one to three generations being produced each year. The eggs typically develop without fertilization, although males may be present.

When the eggs hatch, the first immature stage emerges and is called the crawler due to its behavior in which it crawls on the plant in search of a suitable feeding spot. Once on a suitable leaf, fruit, or young woody part, the crawler sinks its mouthparts into the plant and begins to feed. The insects remain stationary after this point; they simply molt and develop in place. Once they become adults, they will move to older woody areas of the plant to feed and rarely move.

Black scales are greatly affected by temperature and humidity, with temperate conditions and high levels of humidity resulting in potential outbreaks of black scales. However, some stages can survive winter conditions.



Nymphs of the black scale crawling on adult females Photograph by [Lyle Buss](#), University of Florida.



Sooty mold on cultivated olive leaves and stems indicates the presence of adult black scales. Photograph by [Lyle Buss](#), University of Florida.

Black scales damage plants by sucking the sap from plant tissues. They also exude honeydew, which is thick and sugary and can foster the growth of sooty mold on leaves and fruit. Sooty mold can reduce the plant's ability to photosynthesize and can lower the market value of plants and fruit. Additionally, honeydew may attract ants; ants can be an indicator that scale insects are present.

Black scale populations can be managed in a variety of ways. The release of other insects (i.e., parasitoids) that attack different life stages of the black scale are most effective in controlling populations. However, pruning trees and/or planting trees far apart from one another can also be used to manage this pest. Finally, pesticides applied appropriately during the crawler stage can be used to control the black scale.

By Wendy Helme



Exit holes in adult black scales, indicates the presence of the parasites that aid in black scale control.

Herbs in the Garden

Many people enjoy cooking with herbs but not many are aware that both horticulture and the science of botany began with the study of herbs. The earliest gardens were herb gardens and the first botanical gardens began as teaching laboratories to educate medical students about drug plants. Did you know that herbs have changed the course of history? European mariners explored and colonized vast areas of the world in the quest for herbs and spices. Wars were fought over the sources of these once strategic substances. Many modern medicines, including aspirin, oral contraceptives, steroids, pain killers, and cancer fighting compounds such as vincristine and vinblastine are derived from or were first isolated from herbs. So what, exactly, qualifies a plant as an herb? Botanically, herbs are defined as small, seed bearing plants with fleshy rather than woody parts. Practically, the term herb applies to a wide range of plants that are valued for their flavor, fragrance, medicinal and healthful qualities, industrial uses, pesticidal properties, and coloring materials.



If you like to cook, you know that herbs can make all the difference in the flavor of food. All herbs have distinctive aromas and flavors that can subtly change according to the food or combination of foods they are paired with. It is true that we eat with our eyes, and herbs also add color as well as flavor. Soups are much more appetizing when sprinkled with chopped parsley or chives. Red and yellow from natural colorants, such as saffron, turmeric, and paprika provide visual stimulation along with exciting the taste buds when incorporated into food. There are some unseen benefits to adding herbs and spices to food: They can increase the vitamin and mineral content and aid in digestion. In warm regions, eating hot spices, such as chili, ginger and pepper, raises the metabolic rate, increasing perspiration and effectively cooling the body.

Herbs are very easy to grow in the garden. They are especially well suited to small areas and container gardening since most of the popular herbs take up little space and only a few plants will provide plenty for the average household. As with all plants, good soil conditions mean optimal production. The pH should range between 6.0 - 7.0 and soils should be well drained, loose and lightly amended with organic matter, such as manure or compost. Herbs do best under moderate levels of fertility; if the soil is too rich it will produce weak, poorly flavored herbs that are subject to disease problems. Most herbs thrive in full sun with some light shade from hot afternoon sun. Adequate irrigation is most important while establishing new plantings, but once established most herbs will perform best with light watering as needed. As with fertility, over watering will result in less flavorful herbs. Most of the annual and biennial herbs are grown from seed, but using transplants result in quicker production. Some herbs, such as marjoram, mint, rosemary, sage and thyme, are best propagated from cuttings.



Herbs are fairly pest resistant, but are occasionally attacked by aphids, white flies, mites, and other pests. These can be controlled by removing the infested portion or by using soap or oil sprays. Basil, catnip, chives, coriander, dill, ginger, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, summer savory and thyme are a few of the herbs that are easily produced in our area. For best results, prune herbs regularly throughout the season. Pruning or pinching will result in fuller, more compact plants. The pinched tips can be saved for use in the kitchen. Cut your herbs early in the morning after the dew has dried. Freshly cut herbs can be used directly in cooking or preserved for future use. You can store some fresh cut herbs for several days in the refrigerator by standing them up in a glass filled with water. To store herbs for more than a few days, they can either be dried or frozen. Freezing is a quick and easy way to preserve many herbs, however they tend to be limp and unattractive once they are thawed and are best used in cooking. Herbs may be dried by air drying (the time honored method) or oven dried. To oven dry herbs, set the oven at 90 - 110 degrees and spread the herbs out on cookie sheets to dry. Most will dry overnight. To air dry, hang herbs in loose bundles away from sunlight in a dry well ventilated room. Depending on the humidity they will take a few days to a few weeks to dry properly. Fresh herbs should be added towards the end of the cooking time, while dried herbs can be used at the beginning. Here are just a few examples of what can be grown in your garden:

Basil: Sweet basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) is a pleasant-smelling annual with a spicy taste. Plant size ranges from small to large, and the leaf colors range from green to purple to variegated. Basil grows well in Florida and is attractive as a potted plant. Its leaves may be used fresh at any time or dried.



Lemon Balm: Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*) is a perennial in the mint family, which grows easily in Florida. The plants have lemon-scented leaves and grow in clumps. The leaves and tender stems are used fresh or dried to add flavor and aroma to drinks, salads, or other dishes.

Mint: The mints (*Mentha*) are perennial herbs that grow easily in the Florida garden. Spearmint (*Mentha spicata*) and peppermint (*M. piperita*)—along with apple and orange mints—are the most popular. The leaves and flowering tops are used fresh and dried. Many of the mints grow profusely in shade or full sun



Rosemary: Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) is a hardy perennial evergreen shrub with a very spicy aroma. Small pink flowers form in the second or third year. The fresh or dried, mildly bitter-tasting leaves are used in cooking.

Laurie

Upcoming Programs You Won't Want to Miss!

Starke Strawberry Festival: Come and see us at the Starke Strawberry Festival on Saturday, April 11th and Sunday, April 12th. The Extension office will offer a Strawberry Taste Test Saturday and Sunday, and our FSC agent, Samara Deary, will offer strawberry recipes on both days.



Arbor Day Celebration: You are invited to celebrate Arbor Day in the City of Starke! Did you know that Starke is recognized by the Arbor day Foundation as being a TREE CITY USA? Join us on Friday, April 24th as we celebrate Arbor day! There will be a brief history of Arbor Day, tree planting instruction and tree planting, free bare root seedlings and a school poster contest. Also, Capital City Bank will be holding a FREE Identity theft education and FREE document shredding!

When: Friday, April 24th at 10:00 for the tree planting.

Where: Starke City Hall

When: Friday, April 24th from 11 am to 2 pm for the document shredding

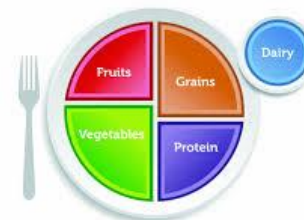
Where: Capital City Bank on 301 in Starke.

Cook Smart/ Eat Smart: Learn to cook simple, healthy, delicious meals within your food budget. The Cook Smart/ Eat Smart workshop will teach you how to cook simple, quick delicious meals for your family. Topics include The Art of Sautee, Cooking with Herbs and Bread in a Bag.

When: Saturday, May 16, from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Where: Bradford County Extension office, 2266 N temple Ave, Starke.

904.966.6299



Cost: \$10.00 in advance. Register by May 18th.



Spring Into Canning...Spring Vegetables : Get the latest updates on food preservation processes and safety. Tips on canning and freezing spring vegetables. Make and take items: Sizzlin' Mustard, Pickled Three Bean Salad.

When: Saturday, May 30th from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

Where: Bradford County Extension office, 2266 N. Temple Ave, Starke.

904.966.6299

Cost: \$10.00 in advance. Register by May 22nd