Volusia County FLORIDA

Backyard Gardener

UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

UF/IFAS EXTENSION, VOLUSIA COUNTY JULY 2015

IN THIS ISSUE

Summer in the Vegetable Garden

Joe Sewards
UF/IFAS Extension, Volusia County
Urban Horticulture Agent and Master Gardener Coordinator

About 75% of Florida's 19 million people were born somewhere else. A lot of those folks were born in the northeast and Midwest (I was born in Ohio). The rules for growing fruits and vegetables in Florida are quite different than what I learned about growing them in the Midwest. If you have been trying to grow vegetables in Florida in June, July and August, your options are limited by the oppressive heat and humidity we have here (especially right now). I don't think the daytime high temperature has been below 95° for the last two weeks!

What to Do

The short answer is; not much. Certainly, it is too hot for things like lettuce, cabbage, beets, carrots and potatoes. Every summer, I get questions, in June and July about "what's wrong with my tomatoes?" My answer is; June and July! It's just too hot to grow tomatoes successfully in the summer. We have too many disease and insect problems and, tomatoes won't set fruit when nighttime temperatures hover around 80°. So, what I tell folks is to pull your tomato plants up and solarize the spot. Tomatoes (in particular), as well as other vegetables can host various soil-borne pathogens that can reek havoc with other crops.

Solarization is simply covering the garden with clear plastic and heating the soil to at least 140°F. This kills soil-borne pathogens such as fusarium and fusarium wilts as well as soil nematodes etc. This will allow you to plant tomatoes in the same spot if you want. If you don't solarize, it is best to plant tomatoes and their relatives (peppers, potatoes and eggplant) in a different spot to reduce the possibility of transmitting those diseases.

Solarization is a good thing to do for the entire garden for the aforementioned reasons. It sterilizes the soil and will help promote a healthier garden in the fall. The University of Florida has a fact sheet about Solarization at: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in856. In addition, solarization will kill many weed seeds which will also make gardening easier.

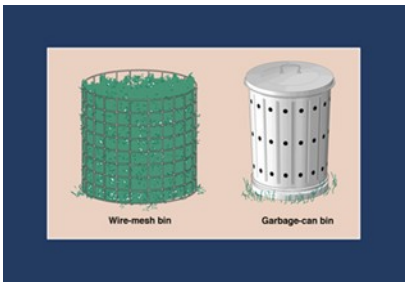
Continued on Page 2

UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

FLORIDA MASTER GARDENER

Summer in the Vegetable Garden -- Continued from Page 1

Composting



What to do with all the plant material that you pulled up? If you haven't started a compost bin yet, that is something else you can do now. Pile all the plant material from the garden in it and it will be mostly composted and ready to reincorporate back into the garden as organic matter. Composting is a great thing to do in the summer as well since there is a lot of rain (usually) as well as the summer heat. This accelerates the decomposition process. Composting kills plant disease organisms and weed seeds as well so, get busy!

As with the fact sheet on solarization, UF has fact sheets about composting at: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep323. Composting is a great way to reduce the amount of yard waste that is sent to the landfill and also a way to make your entire landscape more sustainable and energy efficient. Adding organic matter (compost) to your garden reduces the amount of water and fertilizers that are needed and makes for a healthier environment for plant roots and beneficial soil organisms.

As for what you can plant in the summer vegetable garden try, black-eyed peas, okra, corn, eggplant, sweet potatoes and some peppers. Remember; don't plant the peppers and eggplant where tomatoes were growing before. Practice crop rotation.

It's Different, Not Strange

So, you see, things are quite a bit different for those of you who moved here from the north, like me. In the north, right now is the peak of the tomato season. It's backwards here! The best time to grow tomatoes in central Florida is in the early fall and in the spring.

To me, I see vegetable gardening in Florida as an advantage if you know how to work with the seasons. Up north, the down season is in the winter and here, it is in the summer. Growing fruits and vegetables in the fall, winter and spring is much more comfortable too! Being able to harvest tomatoes in October and November is a joy. Harvesting cabbage and other cole crops in December is quite a treat! Planting potatoes in late January or February is delightful!

So, take it easy in the garden this summer. Clean it up; solarize it! Add organic matter! Send a soil sample to UF to have it tested and, start ordering your seeds for the fall garden right now! By the time we get to the end of August, it will be time to start planting your fall garden with cole crops, tomatoes, peppers, beets, carrots, lettuce spinach, and so on.

For those who are interested, on Saturday, August 15th, our "Saturday Growins'-on class series will continue and the topic will be, "Preparing the Fall Vegetable Garden." The class is $5.00 and includes light refreshments, handouts and more. We will also be having a raffle for a home composter and a 50ft. "Garden Soxx."

The Flaming Sword, Gold Fish, and Painted Feather

Marty Borkosky, Master Gardener
UF/IFAS Extension, Volusia County

This is an odd title for an article about plants. They represent three of the most popular bromeliads in the *Vriesea* bromeliad family that frequently appear in the garden centers for sale about this time of year.

Vriesea bromeliads were named for a Dutch professor of botany and physician, Willem Hendrik de Vriese, in 1824. Remember around this time it was legal for plant enthusiasts to hunt and take plants from Mexico and South America, back to Europe and propagate them. Later the Mexican and South American governments placed heavy fines for removing them.

These plants were found mostly in eastern Brazil growing from sea level to over 10,000 feet elevation. (Some were also found in Mexico and other parts of South America. None have been found native to Florida.)

Vrieseas are thornless and fall generally in two groups. One group has beautiful foliage, thicker leaves and not pretty blooms. These are collected for their beautiful leaf patterns. Many of these flower at night, are smelly, and gone by morning and are pollinated by bats. The other group has green grass-like leaves and is hard to tell apart until the blooms appear. They have brightly colored inflorescences (the entire structure that carries the flowers) of reds, yellows, oranges and purples, that stay colorful for many months. There are large ones and small ones of each kind.

The Europeans started hybridizing them to make plants that combined the beautiful leaves with the brightly colored inflorescences. By 1840 the beautiful *V. splendens* group was developed. (The Flaming Sword) People are often amazed that the colorful floral bracts will often last for months. (The actual flowers are yellow or white tubular in form and tucked between the colorful bracts.) Also the Painted Feather and the Goldfish were developed and are sold in garden centers. They are smaller plants. They can be planted outside or will make a nice houseplant.

As with other bromeliads, nurseries develop and produce the easiest plants and the prettiest plants for sale.

They thrive in shade at a high humidity level. Some will require a lot of light or even a sunny place. Water and nutrients are absorbed preferably through their leaves and stale air will obstruct their growth. I got my plant last year and put it in a larger container and left it outside and you can see the result. I did not fertilize it or anything particular. Their cultivation is easy when they are kept in a light place or semi shade and their tanks are filled with water. Find right place.

While they are flowering the mother will develop off shoots

Continued on Page 4

The Flaming Sword, Gold Fish, and Painted Feather—Continued from Page 3

which should flower the next year. They are very sensitive to fertilizer. Do not add it to the tanks because it will rot the plants. If needed, sprinkle it around. (Never use any fertilizers with copper)

If you are growing your *Vrieseas* indoors, be aware that spider mites love *Vrieseas*. Every house has thousands of them and they will suck the chlorophyll out in a matter of weeks.

Two pictures are shown of the same sword *Vriesea* from our yard; one with early inflorescence and one with the blooms appearing in the inflorescence. This will stay in color for several months. The small white blooms will disappear as they progress up the inflorescence.

Master Gardener Program Mission Statement

To assist extension agents in providing research based horticultural education to Florida residents.

Master Gardener Vision Statement

To be the most trusted resource for horticultural education in Florida

Calendar of Public Events July/August

Topic	Date/Time	Location
Ormond Beach Library Plant Clinic	July 6, 10 am —12 Noon	Ormond Beach Library
Plant Propagation—Seeds (1.5 CEUs)	July 9, 1-2:30 pm	DeBary Hall—Howard Jeffries
History of Gardening (1.5 CEUs)	July 11, 10-11:30 am	DeBary Hall—Howard Jeffries
Port Orange Library Plant Clinic	July 14, 2-4 pm	Port Orange Library
Sugar Mill Garden Workday /Q&A	July 15, 9—11 am	Sugar Mill Garden ,Port Orange
Deltona Library Plant Clinic	July 18, 10 am—12 Noon	Deltona Regional Library
Native Plants (1.5 CEUs)	July 18, 1-2:30 pm	Deltona Library—Howard Jeffries
Plant Propagation–Vegetative Means (1.5 CEUs)	July 23, 1-2:30 pm	DeBary Hall—Howard Jeffries
Caladium Festival	July 24, 6:00 a—5:00 pm	Lake Placid, FL
Ormond Beach Library Plant Clinic	August 3, 10 am —12 Noon	Ormond Beach Library
Soils, Fertilzers & Other Chemicals (1.5 CEUs)	August 6, 1-2:30 pm	DeBary Hall—Howard Jeffries
Port Orange Library Plant Clinic	August 11, 2-4 pm	Port Orange Library
Basic Pest Control	August 15, 10-11:30 am	DeBary Hall—Howard Jeffries

For more details Master Gardeners should check the VMS calendar.
The general public may contact the Volusia County Agricultural Center.

Volusia County Agricultural Center
3100 E. New York Ave. (S.R. 44),
Deland, FL 32724
At the Volusia County Fair Grounds

West Volusia… 386-822-5778 Daytona Beach… 386-257-6012 New Smyrna Beach… 386-423-3368

Ollas: Clay Pots For Easy Garden Irrigation And Water Conservation

Excerpt from Article Written by Mary Kathryn Dunston | Submitted by Nancy Plyler , Master Gardener UF/IFAS Extension, Volusia County

Let's look at a way to conserve water in your garden — clay pot irrigation, an ancient practice which is hailed as "the most efficient irrigation system known to man," according to Geoff Lawton, head of the The Permaculture Research Institute.

Clay pot irrigation can be traced back thousands of years, to several countries, but China has a written history of using clay pots — also called *ollas* — in their gardens.

The concept is ridiculously simple: bury an unglazed olla in the ground, neck deep, put water in it, and put plants around it. What is referred to as s*oil moisture tension* will occur. As the soil outside the olla dries out, water from inside the olla is pulled through the porous wall to replenish the dry soil. Your plants are watered automatically using only the water they need. If it rains, and the soil has enough moisture, no more water will be pulled through the walls. This supply-and-demand system saves up to 70% in water use in gardens, raised beds, and containers. Because of the design of the olla, there is no water runoff and no measurable evaporation (be sure to cover over the top of the olla with a rock, plate or get an olla with a lid).

Because soil moisture tension creates an environment where roots get slow, even watering around the clock, the root base grows larger, producing a healthier plant.

Ollas come in a variety of sizes. The larger the olla, the less often you have to fill it up, and the larger the circle of water around the olla. For example, a 2 gallon olla will water a 3-foot diameter circle for 3 to 5 days. That works well with a 4 x 4 garden or raised bed. Smaller ollas will water less, but may be better suited for tight spots and average sized containers.

To meet another environmental mark, ollas are organic, being made from clay. They leave no plastic residue in the earth for the next generation to worry about. Even if forgotten and left in the ground for years (which we know is possible from archeological digs), ollas are great neighbors to the environment and earthworms alike.

An olla is a gift to the earth that keeps on giving. How? Consider that ollas are off the grid, so the only energy used is you, pulling the hose to the olla, and what little is needed to get the water from its source. However, if you use rain barrels, we can narrow the energy use down to just you, putting the hose in the neck of the olla!

Continued on Page 6

Ollas: Clay Pots For Easy Garden Irrigation And Water Conservation (Continued from Page 5)

Ollas have great attributes, but in my humble opinion, the best is *where* they are used, and my favorite is teaching gardens. It's one thing to personally learn about water conservation, which naturally leads to growing healthy food. It's another to actually teach it. So to all those volunteer gardeners out there who think up ideas, frame up gardens, and rev up our children in schools and community gardens, thank you. The ripple effect you have on our youth will shape their health, which in turn will shape the health of our Earth. I call that ultimate recycling, What a wonderful gift to give on Earth Day, our Day, or any day!

Necessity is the Mother

Rich Cherry, *Master Gardener*
UF/IFAS Extension, Volusia County

Some time ago I became less and less enchanted with the cost of certain systemic products on the market. One company, for example, makes a fantastic "3-in1" rose insecticide, fungicide, and fertilizer. The cost is just a little fantastic as well! Also, many of the roses I grow are in pots and the product clearly states not to use this effective product on roses growing in pots.

A little research revealed that the warning resulted from the fertilizer and the possibility that the strong fertilizer solution would burn the rose roots. What to do?

As it turned out, the solution was as simple as looking through the list of chemicals, finding the "raw" chemical on line, and ordering the insecticide and fungicide...saving a considerable amount of money over time, and allowing me to use these without harm to the potted roses.

Now I usually purchase a product to see how well it works, and if it does, I look up the ingredients and try to find the single ingredients on line. Sometimes it won't work out either because some are available only in large quantities not practical for the home gardener or the chemical on line is too strong and I'm not sure about diluting. But, it often can be found.

Like us on Facebook…

www.facebook.com/UniversityOfFloridaIfasVolusiaCountyExtension