

Alternative Cut Foliage Crops for Florida's Unique Climate

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Florida's unique climate opens opportunities for growing many plants which cannot be grown economically in latitudes to our north. Most of the plants listed in this fact sheet grow well in warm, humid conditions and do not tolerate freezing temperatures, giving Florida growers a competitive edge when growing these plants. Some of these plants are grown in colder climates but require the protection of expensive greenhouses and extensive heating during the winter. In Florida, they can either be grown without freeze protection or protected within shade-houses with irrigation systems designed for watering as well as for freeze protection.

The more sensitive plants in the "Fern Capital" around the Pierson area can be protected from occasional freezes by a system that sprays water over the top of the saran covering the structure until a thin sheet of ice is formed. After the solid sheet of ice is formed the overhead water is turned off but water continues to run within the "house". Much of the warmth produced by the running water is retained within the "igloo" of ice around the plants keeping temperatures at a safe level.

Diversification and value added products are keys to continued profitability among Florida's cut foliage growers. Growing desirable alternative crops that are not widely available will help ensure continued profitability for Florida growers.

The following plants are worthy of consideration for growing in Florida's unique climate. It should be noted that about 80% of the cut foliage grown in the United States is grown within Volusia, Putnam and Lake Counties. This area of Florida is within zone 9 of the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map.

Acacia podalyriifolia	Pearl acacia
Acca sellowiana	Feijoa or Pineapple guava
Adiantum, sp.	Maidenhair fern (use of silver nitrate will double vase life)
Ageratum	Floss Flower (has fluffy looking flowers - use taller cultivars for cut flowers)
Alpinia	Shell ginger – Blue ginger (tips root easily)
Angelonia	Summer Snapdragon (very heat tolerant)
Anise, star	Green, glossy and fragrant foliage
Antirrhinum	Snapdragon (likes cool weather)
Asparagus 'Meyeri' (best vase life of Asparagus,spp.)	Foxtail fern (a strikingly beautiful Asparagus)
Aspidistra	Cast Iron Plant
Bambusa, spp.	Bamboo
Caladium	Large, beautifully colored leaves
Callicarpa americana	Beauty berry (zones 7-10) (all about its purple or white berries - take off the leaves)
Camellia sp.	Beautiful and long lasting

Capsicum	Ornamental Pepper (has brightly colored fruits of various shapes)
Celosia	(one of the most versatile cut flowers – may be used fresh or dried)
Clematis, sp.	(very long flower stems make it a superb cut flower – vase life is about 7-10 days – may be floated in bowls - ‘Inspiration’ stems last up to three weeks)
Cortaderia selloana	Pampas grass (Dramatically large white or pinkish silken plumes – if uniformity is desired, propagation should be from dividing the clump and not from seed – long lasting fresh/dried plumes.)
Cycad, spp.	Emperor/Prince
Cyperus, spp.	Variegated or green umbrella plant (can be grown in containers without drainage)
Delphinium ‘Blue Shadow and ‘Dwarf Blue Mirror’	(Makes a great cut flower- if kept from seeding, it will bloom steadily all season.)
Dianella tasmanica “variegata”	Blue flax lily or Blueberry flax lily (nice color in shade- white Magnolia scale a problem – drench with a neonicotinoid)
Dianthus	‘Rose Queen’ (zones 3-10) (Has beautiful pure pink color that won’t fade. Holds up well in bouquets.)
Dietes iridioides	African iris (zones 8b – 10)
Eleagnus angustifolia/pungens	Silver thorn or Russian olive (zones 9-10) (when tall cut foliage is needed - root from hardwood cuttings in fall or winter)
Equisetum	Scouring rush or Horsetail (zones 5-9)
Eriobotrya japonica	Loquat or Japanese Plum (zones 8-10) (boldly textured foliage)
Eucalyptus alba	White leaved mallee ‘Moon Lagoon’
Fatsyhedera	Large, glossy, strikingly lobed leaves
Gardenia	Dark green, glossy foliage (has white, fragrant flowers)
Gladiolus	Perennial favorites
Gloriosa lily	Zones 8b – 11 (Most unusual and exotic of flowers but all parts of the plant are poisonous if ingested – wear gloves to protect hands when handling seeds.)
Grevillea robusta “Robyn Gordon”	Silk Oak (zones 9-10) (Lavender flowers don’t hold up well.)
Hedera helix	English ivy (a glossy vine)
Helianthus annuus	Sunflower ‘Premier Light Yellow’ (long lasting and easy to dye)
Heliconia caribaea	Lobster Claw, Parrot beak (remarkably beautiful flowers)
Hydrangea macrophylla/quercifolia/arborescens	Hydrangea, Oak Leaf Hydrangea and White Hydrangea
Illicium floridanum	Chinese Anise or Star Anise (zones 8 & 9)
Kunzea ericifolia	Yellow/green gold Kunzea – Tick Bush (zones

	9-10)
<i>Leptospermum scoparium</i>	Tea Tree (zones 8 & 9) (a filler without flowers) (hard freeze will kill back)
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i> (basket grass)	<i>Pseudomonas</i> a problem – no overhead watering
<i>Loropetalum Chinensis</i> “Burgundy”	Chinese fringe bush (zones 7-10a)
Leyland cypress	Winter cut foliage – use phosphite drenches to prevent root diseases
<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	Southern magnolia ‘D.D. Blanchard’, ‘Little Gem’, ‘Lee’
Maidenhair fern	Silver nitrate will double vase life
Montbretia	<i>Crocsmia</i>
<i>Murraya paniculata</i>	Orange jessamine or “coffee”
Musa ‘Zebrina’	Red Banana (grown for beautiful blossoms - likes higher pH)
<i>Myrtus communis</i>	Common myrtle (likes higher pH)
<i>Nandina domestica</i>	Heavenly bamboo (zones 6-9) (long vase life – keep contained as this is a category 2 invasive)
<i>Nandina domestica</i>	Heavenly bamboo (beautiful foliage and berries-seed is poisonous if ingested)
Orchid	Dendrobian
Philodendron	‘Zanadu’
<i>Phormium, spp.</i>	New Zealand flax
<i>Pittosporum</i> (nematodes a problem)	<i>tobira/nigra/tenuifolium</i> (zones 9-11)
<i>Platycterium, sp.</i>	Staghorn Fern (striking antler-like fronds)
<i>Podocarpus gracilior</i> (Nagei)	Weeping Podocarpus (more cold sensitive than <i>P. macrophyllus</i>)
<i>Polypodium</i> “green wave”	Poor shipper but has long shelf life
<i>Prunus persica</i>	Peach (zones 5-9) (Force peach trees to bloom in January and February using temperature and sucrose solutions.)
<i>Pteris ensiformis</i>	Brake or Bracken Fern (used for arsenic hyper-accumulation in remediation projects – grown in water with a flotation system)
<i>Rhamnus alaternus</i> ‘Argenteo variegatas’	Italian Buckthorn (one to three weeks vase life)
<i>Rosa, spp.</i>	David Austin Rose, English Rose
<i>Ruscus hypophyllum</i> (not enough chilling hours for Italian Ruscus)	(Florida/Holland/Israeli) zones 8 & 9) (extremely durable – use Serenade and Rhapsody for <i>Pseudomonas</i> disease – extra calcium very beneficial))
<i>Salix babylonica</i> ‘Tortuosa’	Dragon-claw willow (also Pussy Willow)
<i>Sansevieria, spp.</i> (variegated)	Mother-in-Law Tongue or Snake Plant
Smilax	A Florida native
<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>	Sorghum (very drought, resistant – pH must be adjusted upward if soil is acidic – good until first frost in the winter – must be dried in a drier) Broomcorn “Texas Black Amber”
<i>Ulmus alata</i>	Winged Elm (zones 4-9) (a native Florida plant)
<i>Viburnum obovatum</i>	Walter’s Viburnum (a native Florida plant)

Zamia floridana	Coontie or Seminole Bread (a native Florida plant)
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Note: many of the most widely grown cut greens, such as leatherleaf fern and various *Asparagus* sp., are not included in this fact sheet and should be considered when selecting a cut foliage crop..