



**“Solutions for Your Life”**

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[www.pinellascountyextension.org](http://www.pinellascountyextension.org)



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## *Things To Do in the Landscape* August 2008



August is a good time to prepare for a **fall vegetable garden**. Successful vegetable gardens are not accidental. Vegetable gardens are the results of planning, constant care, and the will to make things grow. With the current emphasis on the environment and the increased cost of groceries, you may want to consider growing some of your own vegetables and even trying the organic way. The information in this article should be beneficial to all gardeners regardless of methods of culture used. However, it is primarily intended to help the organic gardener with sustainable gardening methods that are also compatible with the philosophy of “organic gardening”. You may also want to consider attending the free “Vegetable Gardening Workshop” on August 9<sup>th</sup> at the Pinellas County Extension office. Call 727 582-2673 for more information and to register.

Organic gardening differs from “conventional” gardening mainly in the types of fertilization and pest control. The organic gardener uses natural and organic materials and methods, whereas the conventional gardener uses a combination of all materials and methods shown to be safe, effective, and non-detrimental to the gardener or Florida’s environment.

**Start planning now.** Consider the size of your family and the amount of produce you can use or may want to share. If you have not had a vegetable garden in the past, you may want to start small and not underestimate the work involved.

**Choose the Location:** Select a location with good, well-drained soil near a water supply that is not shaded by tall buildings or trees. Most vegetables need six to eight hours of full sun each day. Enclosing the garden with a fence can help keep out small critters that may want to eat your tender plants or developing veggies.

**The Garden Design:** Many gardeners find it helpful to draw out on paper the location of each row and the crop or succession of crops to be planted. Since we garden in the fall, winter and early spring here, remember that the sun is lower in the south sky. For this reason you will want to plant your tallest plants to the north and successively shorter plants as you move to the south in your garden to avoid tall plants shading short plants.

**Soil Preparation:** It is beneficial to have the soil pH checked to determine if any amendments are needed. Some local garden centers will do pH tests for a fee or soil pH testing is also done at your local UF/IFAS county Extension office where the fees vary. “Consumer Reports” tested six home pH testing kits and found that they gave inconsistent and inaccurate results (<http://blogs.consumerreports.org/home/2008/06/soil-testing.html?resultPageIndex=1&resultIndex=4&searchTerm=pH%20test%20kits>).

When collecting soil for a pH test, take several small samples at a 5 to 6 inch depth and mix together. Take about one cup of this mixture and bring it to our office. Results and recommendations will be mailed to your home.

**Amending the Soil:** Most Florida soils benefit from applications of various forms of organic material such as manure, rotted leaves, compost, and cover crops. Now is the best time to thoroughly mix liberal amounts of organics in the soil well in advance of September planting. Spread 25 to 100 pounds of compost or manure per 100 square feet if you do not plan to use a commercial organic fertilizer. Compost can be applied at planting time. Due to inconsistent levels of nutrients in compost, applying a balanced organic fertilizer can also be beneficial. Due to the increasing popularity of the “Green” movement, organic fertilizers are now available from many local sources.

You can find more information on vegetable gardening the organic way on the internet at [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/TOPI\\_C\\_Organic\\_Gardening](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/TOPI_C_Organic_Gardening), or send a self-addressed, stamped (\$.42) envelope to “**Organic Vegetable Gardening**”, 12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo, FL 33774-3602.

This year you may feel adventurous and consider trying a few **minor vegetables** in your garden plot. Florida’s mild climate presents the home gardener with an opportunity to grow a wide assortment of vegetables, including some not-so-well-known varieties.

**Swiss chard** is commonly found in gardens throughout Florida both as a winter vegetable, since it is a cool season crop, and as a summer cooking green, since it also tolerates heat very well. Most gardeners find chard easy to grow. One variety called “Bright lights” has midribs that are shades of yellow, orange, pink and red that can be a colorful addition to flower beds.

The succulent, glossy, dark green leaves, which are usually slightly crinkled, are eaten as cooked greens. Sometimes, the fleshy leaf midribs are separated from the leaf blade and prepared much like celery or asparagus. Chard is ready to eat 50-60 days from seeding.

**Kohlrabi** is grown for the globe-like swollen stem just above ground level. Cabbage-like leaves on long stems arise from the top and sides of the round, root-like stem. The globe is tender and succulent, if rapidly grown and harvested, but becomes tough and fibrous with age. Remove the peel before eating kohlrabi raw, sliced and boiled or roasted. The leaves may also be cooked and eaten and are similar to cabbage or kale. Planting time is similar to cabbage, but plant spacing is about four inches. Kohlrabi matures in about 60 days when started from seeds, and 40 days started from transplants. While green varieties are most common, but red varieties are also popular with many gardeners.

The **leek** is a biennial that is grown as an annual for its long blanched stems. It looks like a large green onion plant without a bulb. It is attractive in appearance with a silvery base and long strap-like leaves. The leaves of some varieties are blue-green, while others are yellow-green. The leaves are flat, in contrast to the round ones of the onion, and are arranged in a fan-like manner. The thick pale leaf bases are eaten cooked or raw. The green leaves may be eaten if you like the pungent odor and acrid taste. A favorite dish for many gardeners is leek soup.

More information on Minor Vegetables can be accessed on the Internet at:  
[http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/TOPIC\\_HS\\_MINOR\\_VEGETABLES](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/TOPIC_HS_MINOR_VEGETABLES).

**Herbs** are a great addition to the fall garden because the growth habits and cultural requirements are similar to vegetables. Special consideration should be given to the location and care of a few of the herbs that are sensitive to soil-moisture conditions. Sage, rosemary, and thyme require a well drained, slightly moist soil, whereas parsley, chervil, and mint give best results on soils retaining considerable moisture.

Mint spreads rapidly by means of surface or underground runners that may grow several feet from the parent plant. You may want to consider planting mints in pots that do not allow rooting into the ground to keep it contained.

The annuals and biennials ordinarily are grown from seed sown directly in place. Perennials generally are best started in plant beds or boxes using seed or cuttings, and then are transplanted into the garden or growing containers.

A few herbs, such as sage, lemon balm, and rosemary, can be propagated best by rooting cuttings. Stems from new growth are best for easiest rooting. Cut the stems into 3 to 4 inch sections, each containing a set of leaves or leaf buds near the upper end, place in pots with sterile potting soil. Keep the cuttings moist until roots form.

**White flies** are usually around this month. Check your citrus trees and shrubs for heavy populations of flying adults. When you see them, wait 10 days then spray with horticultural oil or Malathion. By waiting to spray, the flies will have laid their eggs and the new larvae, which do the damage, can also be killed. Follow label directions carefully for application rates. Remember, scouting your landscape weekly will allow you to find pest infestations early when they are easiest to control.

## **Upcoming Events at County Extension / Florida Botanical Gardens**

(UF-IFAS / Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo 33774)

### **Vegetable Gardening Workshop**

**August 9, 2008**

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

**Location: Pinellas County Extension**

12520 Ulmerton Rd.

Largo, FL 33774

Cost: FREE

Pre-registration: (727) 582-2673

With the price of food rising, are you considering growing some vegetables yourself? The vegetable growing season in Pinellas County is from mid September through mid May. Now is the time to choose your garden spot or containers, prepare the soil, and decide what you will plant. Join Pam Brown and Master Gardener John Kingsbury for this Vegetable Gardening workshop where we will provide you with a wealth of information about all of these topics and more. Gardening in Florida is different. Get a head start and be ready to plant in September.

## **Butterfly Gardening Class**

**August 13, 2008**

2:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

**Location: Crystal Beach Community Hall**

517 Crystal Beach Av.

Crystal Beach, FL

Cost: FREE

Pre-register: (727) 582-2673

Master Gardener Adrienne Andrews will talk about butterflies, caterpillars, and what needs to be done to entice them into the yard. Participants may attend either session. Parking is available in front of the Community Hall and also across the street. This is being done while Palm Harbor Library undergoes renovation.

## **Florida Style Gardening-Florida Friendly Landscape Series**

**August 19, 2008**

6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

**Location: Pinellas County Extension**

12520 Ulmerton Rd.

Largo, FL 33774

Cost: \$15 per class or \$60 for the series.

Registration: (727) 582-2673

This series of classes will be offered on five Tuesday evenings July 22, July 29, August 19, September 9, and September 23.

August 19 Topic: Concepts of Landscape Design.

Experienced landscape designers will show how to design a landscape that is friendly to Florida's environment as well as aesthetically pleasing. A Garden Tour will illustrate concepts. Materials needed to get started with designing a special garden will be included.

## **For more events information:**

[www.pinellascounty.org/events](http://www.pinellascounty.org/events) or call (727) 582-2100

*Pinellas County Extension is part of a nationwide network of land grant universities providing unbiased, research-based information to America's citizens. In our state, Extension's land grant link is the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS). Pinellas County Extension serves as a bridge between the research labs of the university and the local community by providing educational opportunities for adults and youth.*