



“Solutions for Your Life”

12520 Ulmerton Road
Largo, FL 33774-3602
(727) 582-2100

www.pinellascountyextension.org



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Things To Do in the Landscape

August 2009



If you love the taste of vegetables right out of the garden, then you might want to try growing your own. August is the time to prepare for a **fall vegetable garden**. Successful vegetable gardens are the result of planning, constant care, and the will to make things grow. With the current emphasis on the environment you might even want to try growing organically. The information in this article should be beneficial to all gardeners regardless of methods of culture used. You may also want to consider watching the video “Vegetable Gardening Pinellas County Style” on the Internet at: <http://www.pinellascounty.org/tv/pinellasplanting.htm>.

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 or testing is also done at your local UF/IFAS county Extension office where the fees vary.

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 dates. 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 also be

applied at planting time. Due to inconsistent levels of nutrients in compost, applying a balanced fertilizer can also be beneficial. Since the increasing popularity of the “Green” movement, you can also find organic fertilizers at many local sources.

You can access a myriad of University of Florida information on vegetable gardening on the internet at: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_vegetable_gardening. Be sure to access the *Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide*. This publication provides crop planting and insect pest information for all areas of Florida.

Why not be adventurous and try 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 one that lasts into the warmer months as 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.

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 if left in the ground too long. Kohlrabi can be sliced and eaten raw, boiled or roasted. The leaves may also be cooked similar to cabbage or kale.

The **leek** is grown for its long blanched stems that have a mild onion flavor. It looks like a large green onion plant without a bulb. 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.

More information on Minor Vegetables can be accessed on the Internet at: 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 and most grow best in cooler temperatures. 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 should be contained in a pot where the roots do not have access to the ground. It spreads rapidly by means of surface or underground runners that may grow several feet from the parent plant and take over your whole garden while you are not watching. For more information on growing herbs go to: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_herbs.

White flies are usually around this month. Check landscape plants for heavy populations of the tiny white 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.

The **annual flowers** in your landscape could be looking a little sad and leggy this month. Rejuvenate them by removing the dead and dying blooms. Then cut the plants back by about half and apply a slow release fertilizer to extend the bloom season into the fall months.

Continue to watch for **chinch bugs** in St. Augustine lawns. They can do a lot of damage in a short amount of time. Neem Oil can be used to control them if the infestation is treated when still small. If you have large areas affected, you will need to use one of the chemical insecticides labeled for chinch bug control. Follow the directions on the

label carefully, paying close attention to the safety precautions regarding the protective clothing to wear. These chemicals can be absorbed through the skin, so use them cautiously.

For Extension events information / registration
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.