



“Solutions for Your Life”

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Lawn & Garden | Commercial Horticulture | Families & Consumers | Florida Yards & Neighborhoods | 4-H Youth Development | Urban Sustainability

Things To Do in the Landscape

October 2009



If you are new to gardening in Florida, October is a lot like April in the north, minus the spring rains. Sometimes our October rains are frog chokers. We do start to get some cooler breezes and that makes working outside in the garden more pleasant.

Vegetable Gardening should be going full steam ahead this month. Soil should be amended with compost or other organic matter. Remember that vegetables need six to eight hours of full sun to thrive. Since our fall can be somewhat dry, remember to provide adequate water as well. It is time to start planting cool season crops such as broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, carrots, cabbage, and collards. Wait a bit later to plant spinach which needs cool soil to germinate. A great book for Florida gardeners is *Vegetable Gardening in Florida* by James M. Stephens. You can also access the *Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide* on the Internet at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH021>.

If you are looking for more information on veggie gardening, the University of Florida/IFAS Solutions for Your Life web site has lots of information and educational videos at: http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/hot_topics/lawn_and_garden/veggie_gardening.html.

The fall and winter months are good for growing **herbs** in our area. Many herbs that succumb to our hot steamy summers will thrive in the cooler winter months. If you don't have a lot of space, herbs grow well in containers. More information on growing herbs in Florida is available on the Internet: *Herbs in the Florida Garden* <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH020>

Because October is like spring in other parts of the country, we can plant some of the same spring **annual flowers** now. Impatiens, geraniums, petunias, pansies and snapdragons can be planted as soon as the plants are available. Seeds of calendula and nasturtium can also be planted directly in the ground. Prepare the bed by spading in compost or other organic matter along with some slow release fertilizer just before planting. Mulch the bed well after planting to conserve moisture and keep down weeds. Remember to keep the mulch two to three inches away from the base of each plant.

Now is the time to add bulbs to your landscape. **Amaryllis bulbs** (*Hippeastrum spp.*) could be called the Florida tulip. They make a striking bloom show in the spring when planted in groups of 10 or more in

landscape beds. Remember, when planting amaryllis bulbs, the collar and the very top of the bulb should be above the soil line. Keep the mulch away from the top of the bulb.

Plant **Crinum** or **Swamp Lily bulbs** (*Crinum americanum*) now for spring and summer bloom. Well-suited to hot, dry locations, Crinum Lilies grow from what are among the largest true bulbs, some weighing over 40-pounds. Crinums will recover quickly from killing frosts in our area.

The tall spikes of blue or white flower heads of **Agapanthus** or **Lily of the Nile** (*Agapanthus orientalis*) are some of my favorite flowers. Agapanthus is not a true bulb. They prefer moist, organic soil but can endure drought once established.

Other bulbs to plant now are gladiolus, lycoris, daylilies and zephyr lilies. Prepare your planting bed with plenty of organic matter such as compost or peat moss. More information is available on the Internet: *Bulbs for Florida* <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG029>.

Fertilize **citrus trees** this month using a special formulation of 8-8-8. Apply fertilizer to the entire rooting area which usually extends well beyond the drip line of the tree. The amount of fertilizer varies according to the age of the tree. Fertilizer should be applied three times a year in February, June and October. For additional information see *Your Dooryard Citrus Guide* at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/HS120>.

Several varieties of **Avocado** mature during the fall and winter months. Booth, Monroe, Hall, Lula, Taylor and Choquette avocados are harvested from October through February. Avocado fruits **don't** ripen on the tree. Mature fruit ripens in three to eight days after it is picked. They ripen best at temperatures of sixty to seventy degrees Fahrenheit. Cold storage can delay ripening.

Many **banana** trees have large stalks of fruit now. It takes from two and a half to six months for the bananas to mature depending upon temperatures, cultivar, and cultural practices. The individual fruit should be plump with no distinct ridges. Mature fruit will turn pale green. Harvest and allow to fully ripen before eating. Bananas need fertile conditions with plenty of water for best growth and fruit production. They require plenty of potassium. A fertilizer with a ratio of 3-1-6 is best.

October is the last month to **fertilize lawns** with a complete fertilizer. Use a fertilizer with slow release Nitrogen at the rate of one pound of Nitrogen per 1000 square feet of grass. A great publication for understanding how to determine how much fertilizer to use is *Figuring out Fertilizer for the Home Lawn* on the Internet at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP221>. Now is also the time to control **winter weeds** in the lawn. A pre-emergent herbicide is applied for winter weeds when the night time temperatures are 55 – 60 degrees for several nights in a row. Be sure that the herbicide you choose is labeled for your type of grass. For more information consult *Weed Management in Home Lawns* on the Internet at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP141>.

Perfect circles around the edges of your rose leaves and other plant leaves are caused by **leaf-cutter bees**. These bees do not feed on the leaves. They roll pieces of leaves into a thimble-shape to line their nests. These are harmless insects, they don't do a lot of damage and chemical control is not practical.

Scale insects on camellias, holly, gardenia, magnolia, and other broad leaf evergreens can be controlled with sprays of light horticultural oil, fish oil (Organocide) or Neem oil. For heavy infestations, a product containing acephate or Malathion can be used. Always follow label directions carefully for application rates and treatment intervals.

[For Extension events information / registration](#)
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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.