

Highlights in

*Horticulture*

Baker County

Dear Extension Friends,

February 2009

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I know many of us will start to think about the coming of spring this month. Although it is still too early to start planting most things, it is not too early to start planning. Just remember that you can depend on your horticulture agent, including the Baker County Master Gardeners to be available to help solve problems, give suggestions, and answer your gardening questions.

Best Regards,

*Alicia*

Alicia R. Lamborn  
Horticulture Extension Agent  
Baker County Extension Service

**Upcoming Programs: February**

February 10th — **Energy Wise Landscaping** 6:30pm to 7:30pm at the Baker County Extension Office (Agriculture Center). Learn about low energy landscape practices that reduce your home's energy dependence and allow you to use less water, fertilizer, and pesticides. Program is free; RSVP at 904-259-3520 or email [alamborn@ufl.edu](mailto:alamborn@ufl.edu) by Monday, February 9th at 5pm.



February 24th — **Growing Fruit in Baker County** 6 pm to 7:30 pm at the Baker County Extension Office (Agriculture Center). This class will teach participants about the different kinds of fruits that grow best in Baker County. The class emphasis will be on variety and cultivar selection and cultural requirements, but will also outline pruning techniques. \$3 registration fee for materials due by Monday, Feb 23rd at 5 pm. For more information call 259-3520 or email [alamborn@ufl.edu](mailto:alamborn@ufl.edu).



February 28th — **Home Vegetable Gardening Workshop** 9 am to 12 noon at the Baker County Extension Office (Agriculture Center). This workshop will be offered via videoconference sessions from UF specialists. There will be four 30-minute presentations on basic vegetable gardening, organic gardening tips, container gardening, and pest management, followed by hands-on demonstrations. \$8 registration fee includes refreshments and program materials. Deadline to register is Thursday, February 26th at 5pm. Seating is limited so register early. For more information call 259-3520 or email [alamborn@ufl.edu](mailto:alamborn@ufl.edu).



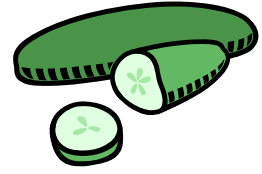


# The Edible Garden

Cucumbers, Peppers, and Tomatoes can be started while temperatures are cool. Start transplants indoors or provide protection outdoors.

## Cucumbers

Slicers: Poinsett, Ashley, Dasher, Sweet Success, Pot Luck, Slice Nice  
Picklers: Galaxy, SMR 18, Explorer



## Peppers

Sweet: Early Calwonder, Yolo Wonder, Big Bertha, Sweet Banana, Jupiter  
Hot: Hungarian Wax, Jalapeno, Habanero

Notes: Mulching is especially beneficial. Continue care of peppers well into summer.

## Tomatoes

Large Fruit: Floradel, Solar Set, Manalucie, Better Boy, Celebrity, Bragger, Walter, Sun Coast, Floramerica, Flora-Dade, Duke  
Small Fruit: Florida Basket, Micro Tom, Patio, Cherry, Sweet 100, Chelsea



Notes: Staking and mulching are beneficial. Flowers are self-pollinated. Fruit may drop if temperatures are too high or low, or if nitrogen fertilization is excessive. Florida varieties have best disease resistance. 'Better Boy' appears resistant to root-knot nematodes.

## Soil Testing

Consider having your soil tested before liming, fertilizing or installing new plants this spring.

Soil testing is available through the Baker County Extension Office and the University of Florida's Extension Soil Testing Laboratory.

A simple pH test will determine the pH of your soil and the amount of lime needed (if any) to adjust the soil's pH. A soil fertility test will determine the pH and lime requirement of the soil, but will also tell you the amount of nutrients currently available to your plants. Knowing what nutrients are present in high or low amounts will tell you how to fertilize to avoid nutrient deficiencies and/or toxicities.

Of course, all recommendations are specific to your lawn, garden, or crop. You will also have the option of discussing your results with your horticulture agent.

The pH and lime requirement test is \$3.00.  
The soil fertility test is \$7.00.

You may stop by the extension office to pick up your soil testing kit or call 259-3520 if you have additional questions.





# *The Edible Landscape*



## Growing Blueberries

If you want to grow blueberries this season, you'd better hurry because the best time to plant is from mid-December to mid-February.

Two types of blueberries are grown in Florida; rabbiteye and southern highbush. However, only low-chill cultivars of each are adapted to Florida. Most blueberry cultivars grown in Florida are self-unfruitful, requiring one or more other cultivars for good cross pollination. And choosing the right cultivars for our area is very important since some perform better than others. In general, rabbiteye cultivars are considered easier to grow in our area than southern highbush because they flower later, reducing the chance of flower drop from late freezes. They also require less organic matter, less mulching, and are more drought tolerant and vigorous than southern highbush cultivars. Rabbiteyes are best adapted to areas of Florida north of Ocala. Early season rabbiteyes include 'Beckyblue', 'Bonita', 'Climax', and 'Austin'. Most of the mid to late season rabbiteye cultivars are more productive, which include 'Brightwell', 'Powderblue', 'Tifblue', and 'Woodard', and others. However, the early season cultivars are useful in extending the rabbiteye harvest season.

Southern highbush blueberries are considered more difficult to grow because they flower early making them more susceptible to winter freezes. They are also less forgiving of soil requirements and are more prone to having root rot and stem blight problems. In general, southern highbush cultivars should be grown in central and south Florida, although some are adapted to areas as far north as Gainesville. Recommended highbush cultivars include 'Emerald', 'Gulf Coast', 'Jewel', 'Millennia', 'Sharpblue', 'Star', and 'Windsor', but cold protection may be required to grow these varieties in our area.

Both rabbiteye and highbush cultivars thrive on acidic soils (soil pH of 4.0 to 5.5 is required) containing 1-3% organic matter. Incorporating peat moss prior to planting and later mulching with pine bark will increase soil organic matter and help lower pH. Bushes should be pruned at planting. Prune any weak, twiggy growth at the base of the plant, but leave the tallest, strongest cane unpruned. During the first growing season, all flowers should be removed before fruit set occurs. Since plants use a lot of energy producing fruit, removing the flowers will help promote strong vegetative growth and good plant establishment. Plant in a sunny location, away from the roots of trees. Plants located too close to hardwood trees will produce less fruit, except when planted near pine trees. Since blueberries can be damaged or killed from over fertilization, it is best to provide frequent but light applications of a 12-4-8 analysis fertilizer with 2% magnesium (Mg). A special formulation called "blueberry special" is available in Florida or another possibility is an "azalea-camellia" fertilizer that meets these requirements.

For more details on growing blueberries, check out the "Blueberry Gardener's Guide" publication on UF's website [edis.ifas.ufl.edu](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu). This publication will provide more in depth information on each individual cultivar mentioned above, as well as more important information regarding cultural requirements not discussed in this article.

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## ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Extension programs are open to all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, handicap, or national origin. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person needing a special accommodation to participate in any activity, should contact the Baker County Cooperative Extension Service at 1025 West Macclenny Avenue, Macclenny, FL 32063 or telephone (904) 259-3520 no later than five (5) days prior to the event. Hearing impaired persons can access the foregoing telephone by contacting the Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8770 (voice) or 1-800-955-8771 (TDD).

### **Cut Flower & Foliage Production for Direct Market Sales**

Tuesday, March 10th — 8:30 am to 3:00 pm

North Florida Research and Education  
Center — Suwannee Valley  
8202 CR 417, Live Oak, Florida



#### Program Includes:

- ◆ What to Grow & What Not to Grow
- ◆ How to Grow
- ◆ Harvesting & Processing
- ◆ Storage, Packaging, Marketing, and Shipping

\$20 Registration Fee  
(includes lunch, refreshments, and program materials)

The registration deadline is March 6th at 5pm.  
Seating is limited so register early.

Visit <http://smallfarms.ifas.ufl.edu>, email Karen Hancock at [khancock@ufl.edu](mailto:khancock@ufl.edu) or call (386) 362-1725 for more information.

### **Starting a Successful Hydroponic Business**

Classroom & Greenhouse Sessions — \$295

March 16th — 9 am to 6 pm

March 17th — 8 am to 6 pm

Optional Growers Tour — \$50

March 18th — 7:30 am to Noon

North Florida Research and Education Center —  
Suwannee Valley, 8202 CR 417, Live Oak, Florida

#### What Attendees Will Receive:

This short course is designed to teach attendees the basic skills needed to start a hydroponic based business including: planning, marketing, and production techniques. Much of the two day program will be conducted in the greenhouses so attendees “learn by doing”. Meals and materials for the class will also be provided.

For a complete list of scheduled topics and guest speakers, or for more information contact:  
Wanda Laughlin at [solus@ufl.edu](mailto:solus@ufl.edu) or  
Bob Hochmuth at [bobhoch@ufl.edu](mailto:bobhoch@ufl.edu) or  
Call 386-362-1725