

Highlights in

Horticulture

Baker County

October 2008

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Dear Extension Friends,

Now that the weather is beginning to cool off, hopefully you will be more motivated to get outside and do some digging, planting, and other gardening chores. If you haven't started already, begin planting your cool-season vegetable garden. You can start sowing cool-season annual seeds as well. October is also a good month to plant strawberries (article on page 3) and daffodils. If you haven't turned in your daffodil order form or registered for the program on October 11th, there is still a little time (see page 4). Don't wait!

If you would like to decide what goes into the next issue of Highlights in Horticulture, you may call 259-3520 or email me at alamborn@ufl.edu to recommend future topics or submit questions for a Q&A section.

Best Regards,

Alicia

Alicia R. Lamborn
Horticulture Extension Agent



Seeding The Garden

When planting a vegetable garden, or any garden, you must decide whether to start it from seed or transplants. There are advantages and disadvantages to both and therefore you should take into consideration the size of your garden, the type of vegetables you want to plant, and the amount of time and money you are willing to spend.

The main advantage in starting directly from seeds is that you have a wider selection of varieties and sources to choose from. Always start with good seed by purchasing from a reliable dealer, and choose varieties that have been tested and proven to grow well in your area. It is also helpful to grow seed varieties that are tolerant of adverse weather conditions and resistant to pests and/or pathogens.

It is important to plant seeds at the correct depth. In general, small seeds should be sowed 1/4 inch deep or less. Tiny seeds can be lightly covered with vermiculite to avoid planting them too deep, and lettuce seeds actually require light to germinate. Medium-sized seeds (cucumber) can be planted about 3/4 inch deep, and larger seeds (beans and corn) can be planted 1 to 2 inches deep. Other reasons why seeds may fail to grow include growing conditions. Seeds need aeration, moisture, and the right temperature to sprout. Fulfilling dormancy requirements should not be a problem for purchased seeds.

Left-over seeds can be stored in their original packets in a cool, dry place. You may also place seeds in the refrigerator at 50°F if they are placed in a tightly sealed jar. Storing seeds in the freezer can also work, but seeds must be very dry or they will be killed.

CHILDREN IN THE GARDEN – CREATING ARTWORK WITH PRESSED FLOWERS



Pressing:

Lay a sheet of cardboard on the ground. Add two sheets of newspaper.

Lay flowers separately and cover with two more sheets of newspaper. Keep adding layers and top off with another sheet of cardboard. Place under something heavy - big, thick books work well. Try to store pressed flowers in a cool, dry place. Wait 10 to 14 days then take apart carefully. You can also use ferns, colored leaves that fall to the ground, and some seed heads such as the flat seed heads of the weed Crowfoot grass.

Artwork Projects:

Project #1: Wall Artwork

You can lightly glue them to some colorful paper or, using construction paper as a background, place them in a picture frame to hang on the wall.

Project #2: Stationary

You can make stationary by using glue and clear contact paper. Just mix one part craft glue and one part water in a disposable container. Then use a small paintbrush to paint a thin coat of the solution over the surface of your card. Place the pressed flowers on the card and allow the glue solution to dry. Cut out a piece of clear contact paper slightly larger than the card, and cover the entire decorated side. Trim off the excess contact paper, write a note inside, and send to a friend or family member.

Project #3: Sun Catchers

Cut two pieces of clear contact paper to the desired size. Lay one of the cut-outs on a table (sticky side up). Carefully place your pressed flowers on the contact paper in the desired arrangement. Curling ribbon may be cut and placed around the design as a border. Place the other contact paper cut-out on top of the arrangement (sticky side down) and trim the edges into the desired shape. With a hole puncher, punch a hole at the top of the sun catcher to thread a ribbon through, and hang in your window.

Lawns and Gardens

- If you are replacing plants in your landscape this fall, know why the old plants failed and make sure to replace them with plants suited to the site conditions.
- If you have dead or damaged patches of turf that need repairing, use plugs to fill the empty areas. It is too late to put down seed since it will not have enough time to get established before the frosts and freezes arrive.
- Make sure landscape plants have a good layer of mulch. Three to four inches is adequate to help retain moisture and reduce weeds. Applying too much mulch however, can actually repel moisture, keeping water from reaching the roots.
- Check new plantings regularly for needed moisture. Remember that newly planted shrubs and trees require additional moisture to become established and the larger the plant, the longer the establishment period.
- If you forgot to fertilize, you will need to hurry to apply fertilizer early this month (only if needed). If applied too late in the season, plants will not complete fall growth before winter arrives, making them more susceptible to injury.



Plant Spotlight: Autumn-Blooming Azaleas

People who love azaleas look forward to the beautiful displays of color created by these plants each spring. But for those that can't get enough, consider planting an autumn-blooming azalea for color in both spring and fall.

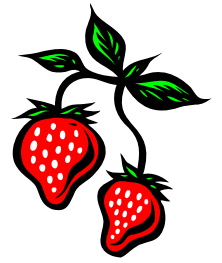
Autumn-Blooming Azaleas: (these are only a few)

- Rhododendron* x 'Fashion' - Fashion Azalea (salmon)
- Rhododendron* x 'Conleb' - Autumn Embers (orange-red)
- Rhododendron* x 'Roblem' - Autumn Starlight (white with pink flecks and occasionally pink stripes)
- Rhododendron* x 'Conlep' - Autumn Twist (white with purple stripes)

*The use of trade names in this newsletter is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee of warranty of the products names and does not signify they are approved to the exclusion of others of suitable comparison.



The Edible Garden – Strawberries



Strawberries are a very popular crop here in Florida, and can be grown in gardens throughout all areas of the state. Planting dates for north Florida are between October 1st and November 15th, although the earlier they are planted the better. During fall, the plants will grow vegetatively followed by flower formation and later fruit production in response to the shorter days and cooler nights of winter. The leaves will withstand the cold weather, but if plants lose their flowers and early fruit due to a frost or freeze, a later crop will develop. The fruit is ready for harvest about a month after flowers are formed, and protecting early blossoms will provide early fruit.

Strawberries prefer well-drained, moist, sandy soils with lots of organic matter, but accept most all soil types. Before making the beds, broadcast fertilizer over the plot and work it into the soil. Use 2 pounds of a 6-8-8 fertilizer per 100 square feet. Prepare beds using the hill system, spacing rows 36 to 40 inches apart. Apply more of the same fertilizer (2 lbs. of 6-8-8 per 100 sq. feet) in a single, narrow band between rows, four to eight inches deep. Applying fertilizer directly under plants will cause foliar wilting due to salt burn.

Mulching is not necessary, but is recommended. While straw and other natural organic materials may be used, black polyethylene plastic mulch has proven to work best. If plastic is used, apply a one to one and a half millimeter thick sheet to cover the top and sides of the bed. This should be done just before planting. Soil can be placed on the edges to hold it in place and holes can be cut at the proper intervals for plants to be inserted (plants should be spaced ten to fourteen inches apart).

Overhead irrigation will fill in the soil around the roots and keep the tops from drying out until the roots can get established. Once established, a drip irrigation line can be used as long as it is not placed over the band of fertilizer, which would cause the leaching of nutrients and therefore nutrient deficiencies.

Planting Tips:

- 1 — Buy certified, disease-free plants.
- 2 — Keep plants moist before planting.
- 3 — Set plants in moist soil.
- 4 — Spread roots out in a fan-shape; do not double or crumple up.
- 5 — Set plants at the correct depth. Do not cover the crown, and do not leave tops or roots exposed.
- 6 — Pack the soil around the roots firmly, then sprinkle with water from overhead.

Suggested Varieties for the Florida Garden:

‘Camarosa’ - most productive variety in North Florida

‘Festival’

‘Sweet Charlie’

Many other varieties of strawberries are available. However, it is important to select a variety adapted to Florida conditions (the “everbearing” varieties of strawberries are not well suited for Florida).

Would you like to grow strawberries but are limited on space?
Try growing them in planter boxes, strawberry pots, or barrels.



For more information visit:

<http://strawberry.ifas.ufl.edu> and
http://alachua.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/fact_sheets/strawberries_barrel.shtml



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Upcoming Programs & Events:

October 3rd-11th — **Baker County Fair** at the Baker County Fairgrounds in Macclenny. For information, please call 904-259-7314 or visit www.bakercountyfair.org.

October 9th — **Alternative Livestock Production** presented by the Northeast Florida Small Farms Working Group. This program will take place at Sheppard's Hill Farm in Lake City, FL at 5:30pm. For more information contact Derek Barber at 386-752-5384 or Elena Toro at 386-362-2771.

October 11th — **2nd Annual Daffodil Program and Sale** 9:30am to 11:30am at the Baker County Extension Office, 1025 W. Macclenny Ave., Macclenny. Please register by Thursday, October 9th at 5pm by calling 904-259-3520.

October 18th — **GardenFest 2008** 9am to 3pm at the Duval County Agricultural Center, 1010 North McDuff Avenue, Jacksonville. Topics include: What's New for the Garden; Attracting Birds, Bees, and Butterflies; Turn Trash to Treasure; Eco-Friendly Landscaping; Designing Veggie and Fruit Centerpieces. The cost is \$10 (\$15 includes bag lunch). To register please call Rachel at 904-272-4252.



**This festival, held at the
Museum of Natural History on the
University of Florida campus, will have fun
activities for butterfly admirers and butterfly
gardeners of all ages!**

For Extension Programs offered around the state, see the IFAS Extension Web Calendar at <http://calendar.ifas.ufl.edu/calendar/>.