



Highlights in

Horticulture

Baker County

August 2011

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Dear Extension Friends,

Now that the rains have finally returned, our rain barrels are full and ready for use on those hot, dry days when plants have trouble battling the heat. Don't have a rain barrel? Visit our website for detailed instructions on how to build, install and maintain a rain barrel for plant water use.

Best Regards,

Alicia

Alicia R. Lamborn
Horticulture Extension Agent
Baker County Extension Service

Master Gardeners...at your service!

Baker County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers that help us serve you!

Master Gardeners educate the community by sharing unbiased, researched based gardening information, answering questions, and solving plant problems.

Starting in August, the Master Gardeners will begin to hold office hours on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays! If you would like their assistance, just give them a call or schedule an appointment. And if they don't know the answer, they will research it for you!

Want to learn how you can become a Master Gardener volunteer? Visit our website at...

http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu/Horticulture/master_gardener.html



Species Spotlight: The Pumpkin!



Pumpkins come in many shapes, sizes, and colors (due to their ability to cross-pollinate readily among themselves) and are mostly grown for making jack o' lanterns and pies in the fall. While the best yields come from pumpkins planted in late March and early April (making them ready for harvest in late June and early July), these pumpkins must be stored until used in October and November, which can be problematic. Pumpkins seeded by July 4th should be ready by Halloween, although could be more affected by virus and fungal diseases, impaired by fruit-set problems, and produce small size pumpkins. Early August seeding provides the best fall crop for Thanksgiving, but is usually too late for Halloween unless you can grow a variety that is ready for harvest 90 days from seeding or 80 days when grown from transplants.

Most pumpkins, except the bush types, need at least 6 feet in each direction to spread and grow. Plant three to four seeds in a hill, and then remove all but the strongest plant when they reach 2-4 inches tall. Pumpkins respond well to liberal amounts of organic compost. A good growing tip is to place one bag of compost (chicken or cow manure), under each hill before seeding. Mix a handful of 6-6-6 fertilizer into each hill when preparing, then side-dress with a handful of 6-6-6 every 3 weeks or as needed. All pumpkins have both male and female flowers on each plant, and bees are needed to transfer the pollen. When the plant has two small pumpkins about the size of baseballs, remove all others as they form. This allows the two that remain to reach fairly large size.

Once harvested, pumpkins keep well for a few weeks, but long time storage of 1-4 months is very difficult to accomplish in Florida. Decay is the main source of loss. Where possible, store them in a dry (70% relative humidity) and cool (50-60°F) place. Spread the pumpkins out rather than stacking them up. Some good results have been obtained by curing pumpkins before storing. This was done by keeping them for 10 days at 80-85°F and a high relative humidity (80-85%).

Recommended varieties:

For Jack O' Lanterns

- 'Connecticut Field' — the standard general purpose or large Halloween pumpkin that is used more than any other variety for carving into jack o' lanterns. Fruits have a hard orange, smooth, and slightly ribbed skin. It is also used for making pies, canning, and stock feed.
- 'Big Max' — big pumpkin well-suited for Florida gardens.
- 'Big Moon' — also grown for show (some may reach 200 pounds under ideal growing conditions)
- 'Howden' and 'Jackpot' — best for Florida.
- 'Jack O' Lantern' — good, small jack o' lantern (grows about the size of a man's head).
- 'Funny Face' — suited to small gardens with its semi-bush plants.
- 'Spirit' — good for both small jack o' lanterns and pies.
- 'Atlantic Giant' — perhaps the top show pumpkin variety; it has been weighed in at over 200 pounds in Florida, and over 800 pounds elsewhere.



For Pie Pumpkins

- 'Small Sugar' — the most popular and widely grown pie pumpkin. These round, flattened pumpkins are small, averaging only 6-7 pounds.
- Other common varieties of pie pumpkins are Cinderella, Triple Treat, Spookie, Winter Luxury, Cheese, Kentucky Field, and Cushaws. The Cushaws produce medium-sized elongated fruits, with necks and bulbous ends.



Ornamental Pumpkins

- These miniature fruits are 3-4 inches in diameter. Varieties are: Munchkin, Sweetie Pie, Bushkin, Minijack and Jack-Be-Little.



Fruit Tree Calendar: August



The following fruit trees require attention this month. All fertilizer recommendations are for optimum growth of fruit trees. It is important to remember that you always have the option of applying less fertilizer, but the amount of fertilizer should not exceed these recommendations.

Blueberries: Fertilize plants with a 12-4-8 fertilizer containing 2% magnesium (Mg). *Newly Planted:* Apply 1 ounce (2 TB) per plant; if plants are mulched heavily, use 1.5 ounces (3 TB) per plant. Spread fertilizer evenly over a circle 2 feet in diameter with the plant in the center. *Year 2:* Apply 2 ounces (4 TB) per plant. Spread fertilizer evenly over a circle 3 feet in diameter with the plant in the center. *Year 3+:* Apply 3 ounces (6 TB) per plant. Spread fertilizer evenly over a 4 foot diameter circle, or broadcast in a continuous band 3 to 4 feet wide, centered on the plant row. *Note: These are general guidelines and should be adjusted based on plant performance. Slightly more fertilizer may be required if plants are heavily mulched. However, more often than not, cultivated blueberries suffer more from over-fertilization than from lack of fertilization. Use ammoniacal nitrogen or nitrogen from urea or organic sources, rather than from nitrate sources. Chlorine levels should be low, preferably below 2%. Special formulations such as "blueberry special" and "camellia-azalea" fertilizers are available in Florida and meet these requirements.*

Muscadine Grapes (Year 1): Fertilize this month using 1/4 pound (1/2 cup) of 8-8-8 or 10-10-10; apply the fertilizer in bands about 1 foot to either side of the vine. *Note: It is sometimes beneficial to apply fertilizer that has micronutrients added.*

Persimmons: Early season cultivars are ready for harvest this month. In general, crops can remain on the tree a month after marketable color develops, becoming softer with greater colors and sugar.

To access our Fruit & Nut Calendar, visit our website and look under 'Gardening Information'

August Gardening Tips

Vegetable Gardens:

Many vegetables can be planted during August and harvested in October and November frost. Vegetables to plant in August include beans (bush and pole), corn, cucumbers, southern peas, peppers, pumpkins, squash, and tomatoes. As the weather cools in September and October, you can continue to plant in your garden with cool-season vegetables.



Landscapes:

Roses: Most gardeners prune roses for a second time in August, but this is a lighter pruning, removing only 1/4 to 1/3 of the growth. *Note: After pruning, dispose of pruned plant material, rake the area beneath the bush to remove dead and diseased leaves, and reapply mulch immediately to prevent fungal diseases.*

Hickory Horned Devil Caterpillar: One interesting creature seen this time of year is the larvae of one of our largest and most spectacular moths, the regal moth. Like most other moths, it is nocturnal but is sometimes observed flying around outdoor lights. The larva (shown right), known as the hickory horned devil, can be found eating the leaves of hickories, walnuts, pecans, sweet gums, and persimmons. However, they are most often observed once full grown (about the size of a large hot dog) when they come down from the trees to wander in search of a site to pupate (turning from a caterpillar to a moth). Although this caterpillar has a fierce appearance and a scary name, it is harmless.



Baker County Extension Service

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Made in the Shade

Eye-Catching Plants Can Take a Shade Garden From Boring to Beautiful

Chaste Tree (*Vitex agnes-castus*)

Plant in partial shade; purple flowers in summer; attracts butterflies and hummingbirds



Peacock Ginger (*Kaempferia* spp.)

A striking groundcover for full shade with green & purple patterned foliage; spreads slowly



Walking Iris (*Neomarica gracilis*)

Plant in partial shade; white/blue flowers in spring to fall; "walks" slowly



Jacobinia (*Justicia carnea*)

Prefers full shade; large showy flowers in white, pink, red, orange, purple and yellow appear in summer to fall



Mahonia (*Mahonia fortunei*)

Plant in full or partial shade; yellow, fragrant flowers are followed by blue berries that attract birds



Red Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*)

Plant in full or partial shade; red flowers in spring; tolerates occasionally wet soil; attracts butterflies and hummingbirds



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

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).