

Highlights in

Horticulture

Baker County

August 2012

Dear Extension Friends,

August is typically the hottest month of the year, so if you're planning to spend much time outside be sure to prepare yourself and review the symptoms of heat stress on page 3. And while fall is still a few months away, now is the time to start preparing your plants to show at the fair (page 2) as well as preparing vegetable gardens for fall crops (page 4). As always, if you have plant-related questions, we are here to help!

Best Regards,

Alicia

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Upcoming Programs & Events

All programs will be held at the Baker County Extension Office (Agricultural Center).

August 17th & 20th — **Rain Barrel Workshops:** Friday, Aug. 17th @ 10am or Monday, Aug. 20th @ 6pm

Install a rain barrel that will save the rain for your plants and save you money! Learn how to build, install, and maintain a functional rain barrel for immediate use. We provide a barrel, two spigots, and mosquito screening plus the tools and assistance to help you build. Class portion lasts approximately 1/2 hour with the option to stay and build your rain barrel. \$40 (per barrel) is due by Wednesday, August 15th. Do-it-yourselfers may call 259-3520 to register and join the class for free!



September 11th — **Plant Propagation** 6:00pm to 7:00pm. Learn different techniques for multiplying your favorite plants plus get some hands-on experience. Supplies will be provided for participants to root cuttings of plants that we provide or you bring. \$3 registration fee is due by Friday, September 7th. Plan to bring your own pruning shears and cuttings of your favorite plants to root or share.

October 2nd-3rd — **Horticulture Fair Exhibit.** Plant entries will be accepted at the Fairgrounds on Tuesday, Oct. 2nd from 12pm—7pm and Wednesday, Oct. 3rd from 9am—2pm. See page 2 for more details.

Horticulture at the Fair



The horticulture exhibit at the Baker County Fair gives amateur gardeners a chance to show off their potted plants. It doesn't cost anything to participate, and in fact, you can earn some cash for each plant you show. All types of plants are accepted and all qualified entries receive a ribbon and cash prize. It's easy to qualify, but now is the time to start preparing those plants to show.

To qualify:

- All plants must have been grown by you, and in your possession for at least three months prior to the fair. (Unfortunately this means that it's too late to run out and purchase a plant now to show in October.)
- All plants must be free from disease and insects. Checking your plant each week will help you spot trouble and correct the problem early—before it's too late.



Other helpful tips:

- Remember to rotate your plant regularly. Unless plants are grown in full sun, they tend to turn toward the sun. Rotating the plant encourages it to fill out and look symmetrical, and will earn you a better ribbon!
- Grooming your plants is usually necessary before the show. This involves removing or trimming leaves with holes and dead tips. When trying to decide whether to trim or remove the entire leaf, consider the overall appearance and symmetry of the plant with and without the leaf in question. If the plant will look odd with the leaf removed, then trimming may be the way to go. Just remember to trim leaf tips to the same shape that they appear in nature.

- You may enter up to 25 plants, but not more than one of the same cultivar or variety of plant. Plan to enter at least one plant in each category: **Flowering/Fruiting** (must have flowers or fruit), **Bonsai, Cacti & Succulents**, **Foliage Plants** (plants grown for foliage; without flowers/fruit), **Hanging Plants** (hanging baskets or mounted plants that are meant to hang), **Special Display** (container garden, mounted, or topiary), and **Patio Plants** (containers 14" or larger).



We need youth entries!

Youth entries are judged separately from adults and there are many prizes to be won!

This is a great opportunity for the younger crowd to increase their interest in gardening while putting a little cash in their pocket!

A few words about the judging procedures:

Many people get intimidated about showing plants at the fair, so I'd like to explain the judging procedures in hopes of taming any fears you may have concerning the "intense scrutiny" of your plants—which I assure you is not the case! Instead, the entire process of showing at the fair is meant to be a fun, learning experience for all involved.

Round 1: The judges first look at each plant individually. They do not compare the plant to other plant species or even other plants of the same species sitting on the table. They only look at (judge) one plant at a time by comparing it to the standard for that plant species. The standard is how that particular plant is supposed to look. Your plant is then judged based on the shape of the plant, health of the plant, and general appearance, and awarded a 1st (blue), 2nd (red), or 3rd (white) place ribbon. If you are awarded a ribbon other than blue, the judge may decide to write comments on your entry tag that they believe might help you score higher next year.

Round 2: The judges then go back through, paying special attention to only those blue ribbon plants. This is where the competition begins to get tougher. In this round, individual plants may be compared to each other since the judges are looking for plants of exceptional quality and may consider growing difficulty when placing 'Award of Merit' ribbons.

Round 3: The judges select a 'Best in Show' plant which stands out from all the other 'Award of Merit' winners.



Premiums for Ribbons: Blue \$3 – Red \$2 – White \$1 – Award of Merit \$5 – Best of Show \$10



We hope you'll join us this year by showing off your plants at the fair!

If you have questions, please call us at (904) 259-3520.



Beat the Heat

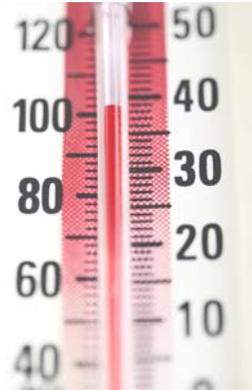
Take Care of Yourself in Hot Weather



Summer in Florida can be overwhelmingly hot, even for long-time residents. Heat stress, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke are illnesses that can overcome you when your body is unable to cool itself.

Tips for Staying Cool

- **Slow down.** Do strenuous activities at the coolest time of the day. At-risk individuals should stay in the coolest available place, which may not be indoors.
- **Dress for summer.** Lightweight, light-colored clothing reflects heat and sunlight and helps your body maintain normal temperatures.
- **Do not get too much sun.** Sunburn makes it harder for you to cool off.
- **Drink water.** Your body needs water to keep cool. Drink plenty of fluids even if you do not feel thirsty. (People who have epilepsy or heart, kidney, or liver disease; are on fluid-restrictive diets; or have a problem with fluid retention should consult a physician before increasing their consumption of fluids.)
- **Do not drink alcoholic beverages.** Alcohol dehydrates you.
- **Spend more time in air-conditioned places.** Spending some time each day in an air-conditioned environment can offer some protection.
- **Never leave children or pets in a parked car.** The temperature inside cars can rise to 135°F in less than ten minutes, which can kill children or pets. If you see a child or pet left unattended in a parked car, call 911.



Factors Leading to Heat Stress

Heat stress disorders develop when the body cannot shed excess heat. A variety of factors can come into play, but most heat-related illnesses share a common feature: a person has been overexposed to heat, or over-exercised, for his age and physical condition. The chance for heat-related illnesses is greater when the following occur:

- High temperature and humidity.
- Activity in direct sun.
- Limited air movement or cooling.
- Physical exertion.
- Poor physical condition.
- Some medications can also increase susceptibility to heat.

Symptoms of Heat-related Illnesses

Heat Cramps

- ◆ Painful muscle spasms, usually in legs or abdomen
- ◆ Heavy sweating

Heat Exhaustion

- ◆ Headaches, dizziness, or fainting.
- ◆ Heavy sweating; cold, clammy skin.
- ◆ Irritability or confusion.
- ◆ Weakness, vomiting.
- ◆ Weak pulse.
- ◆ Can have a normal body temperature.

Heat Stroke

- ◆ Dry, hot skin with no sweating.
- ◆ Confusion, possible loss of consciousness or seizures.
- ◆ Rapid, strong pulse.
- ◆ High body temperature (106°F or higher).

Treating Heat-related Illness

- ◆ **Get out of the sun.** Move the affected person to a cool, shaded area, preferably an air-conditioned room.
- ◆ **Slow down and cool down.** Lay the victim down and loosen or remove heavy clothing. Let him take **sips** of water **if he is able***.
- ◆ **Massage spasms.** Firm pressure on muscles or gentle massage will help relieve spasms.
- ◆ **Cool the skin.** Fan and mist or sponge the person with water.
- ◆ **Seek medical help.** Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Dial 911 or get the victim to a hospital as quickly as possible.

*Do not give a person fluids if he is nauseous and/or has continued vomiting. Seek medical help.

Fall Vegetable Gardening



Do you plan to have a fall vegetable garden? In our area, that means planting in August and September, so now is the time to prepare.

Soil testing is available through the Extension Office which checks the soil pH and nutrient levels, and gives personalized recommendations for liming and fertilizing your garden. In addition to soil testing, adding 25-100 pounds of organic compost per 100 square feet is also beneficial for vegetables since it provides some nutrients and helps retain soil moisture in sandy soils.

Next, plan the layout of your garden using the *Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide* at edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021 paying special attention to plant family (crops should be rotated so that plants within the same family aren't planted in the same spot year to year), row and plant spacing, seed depth, and days to harvest.

The guide also lists suggested varieties for each type of vegetable. Varieties that are good for our area are not always available in garden centers, but you can find seeds online or in catalogs. Planting seeds can save you money and offer a wider selection of vegetables. And while more expensive, purchasing transplants is a great way to get ahead by 4-6 weeks (or catch up if you get a late start planting your garden).

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 such as beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, collards, lettuce, onions, radish, and turnips.



The Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide is also available free from the Extension Office—stop by today and pick one up!

Winter Squash

Squash are classified into two groups depending on when they were traditionally eaten. Winter squash have hard rinds and when picked fully mature, can be stored for several weeks up to six months, while summer squash must be eaten right away.

Winter squash are typically vining plants that require considerable growing space. Rows should be spaced 5-7 feet apart, while plants need 3-4 foot spacing. For small gardens, use a trellis, or look for bush or semi-vining types. And even though the name says winter, they should be planted in spring or fall (March or August) since plants are tender and can be damaged by cold weather.

Popular types of winter squash include Acorn, Butternut, and Spaghetti, although there are others.

Acorn: This versatile squash can make a great side dish, casserole, or even a healthy dessert! 'Honey Bear' has excellent flavor and is more compact requiring a 2 x 6 foot space.



Butternut: Tan skin with bright orange flesh, having the sweetest taste of all the winter squash types. Again, this squash makes a great main dish, side dish or dessert!



Spaghetti: The interesting thing about spaghetti squash is its resemblance to a bowl of spaghetti when properly prepared. If the yellowish orange fruit is cooked whole for about 20 minutes and then cut open, the flesh is in loose shreds, resembling spaghetti. The taste is squash-like and rather bland, but tastes great when seasoned, stuffed or used in casseroles!



Baker County Extension Service

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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 ten (10) 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).