

# THE DIRT NEWSLETTER

UF | IFAS Extension  
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



UF/IFAS St. Lucie County Master Gardener Volunteer

September 2020

## Message from the President

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WORDS BY VIVIEN KOBE

I was browsing the IFAS Master Gardener Volunteer Program web site trying to get ideas about what I might write about in this message. It didn't take long to find something that caught my eye. It was titled "I'm a Master Gardener Volunteer Because .....". It made me pause and think. Why did I become a Master Gardener? I became a Master Gardener purely for selfish reasons. I personally wanted to educate myself to become a better gardener.

I have been gardening all my life. Starting at a very young age, my father, who planted a very successful vegetable garden each year, 'allocated' me a plot of ground and gave me packets of flower seeds to plant in my very own flower garden. This was in Pennsylvania. I tended to my Zinnias, Cosmos, 4-O'clocks, Hollyhocks and Marigolds. I was so proud of my flowers. Sometimes I would help my father in the vegetable garden where I found my love of growing vegetables. My passion today is still growing 'food' plants: vegetables and herbs; citrus trees and other fruit trees. Nothing is so satisfying than going to your garden, picking some vegetables and cooking them up for dinner.

However, my reason for being a Master Gardener Volunteer today is totally different than it was in 2014. Today I love being part of the community; educating and helping homeowners with their gardening problems. I have been volunteering in the County Extension Office for over 6 years and enjoy meeting homeowners and helping them solve their gardening problems. I especially enjoy talking to recent transplants from up north where their growing season is totally opposite ours.

I love working with the new classes telling them how much fun and educational the class is. I want new MGCV's to know that being a UF/IFAS Master Gardener Volunteer is satisfying and folks in the community recognize you as someone special.

Today I am unselfishly proud to be a UF/IFAS Florida Master Gardener Volunteer

# MGV SPOTLIGHT

## Our MGV Spotlight is the 2020 MGV Graduates

UF/IFAS Master Gardener Volunteers, the Spotlight is on you this month!! The reason for this selection is because the 2020 class started a month before the COVID-19 Pandemic hit, cutting the training class from their last 3 classes throwing everyone off the program schedule. Through it all they have truly stayed strong and had patience with us and our program and took the final exam allowing 17 new UF/IFAS Master Gardener Volunteers to join our program. Congratulations to



### 2020 St. Lucie County Master Gardener Volunteer Graduates



From Left to Right: Top Row: Cesar Castillo, Dale Johnson, Bernetta Richards, David Montague, Heather Tubito, Nancy Angermaier, Robert Voll  
Bottom Row Left to Right: Anna Simeon, Marie Seger, Merry Gasorek, Patti Dymtryk, Theresa Martin, Marisol Alers and Dana Schuett  
\* Not pictured Christi Sharp, Chris Rhode and Mary Ahearn

# Community Corner

Our Master Gardener Volunteers are a big part of our community. You may see them at some of the botanical gardens in our county or at the Farmer's Market. Here are some of our volunteers making an impact and working hard



MGV, Gene Sifers trimming a plant in the Shade House at the Extension Campus



MGV, Carol Rosati, weeding in the Extension Campus Nursery



MGV, Nancy Angermaier



Left to Right, Carol Rostati, Pat Kraus and Nancy Angermaier working in the Shade out at the St. Lucie County UF/IFAS Extension Campus.

# The Gardener's Bulletin



## What to Plant in September.

- **Bedding Plants:** For color in the fall, South Florida gardeners should plant scarlet sage, nasturtium, celosia, and wax begonia.
- **Bulbs:** While you can plant Elephant's Ear varieties, you can also plant Gladiolus every two weeks to stagger blooming—be sure to stake each plant.
- **Herbs:** Like north and central Florida, plant herbs, such as Mexican tarragon, rosemary, mint, and basil, that can all grow in early fall's warm temperatures.
- **Vegetables:** If you want your garden to get off to a quick start, then use transplants from your local garden center. If you want more variety, however, then grow cool-season crops, such as broccoli, cabbage, collards, and lettuce, from seeds

Resource:

[https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/archive/hot\\_topics/lawn\\_and\\_garden/planting\\_in\\_september.shtml](https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/archive/hot_topics/lawn_and_garden/planting_in_september.shtml)

## Berries For Birds

*Written by Master Gardener Volunteer Diane Goldberg*

Eastern Florida has a snowberry, *Chiococca alba*. It is important to provide the scientific name because the common name may be the same for two different plants or different common names may be used for the same plant. We don't want people getting the wrong plant and then being upset about their choice. We also have a saltbush, also called groundsel tree and sea myrtle, *Baccharis halimifolia*. It is very aggressive reseeder, so it is not recommended for home gardens.

Beautyberry is a good choice for Florida. Holly, *Ilex* spp. are great choices in the east. We have many varieties that provide berries for birds in the winter. Oaks, *Quercus* spp. not only provide nuts for birds, they also host a large variety of caterpillars.



## Getting the Best Plant for your Money

*Written by Master Gardener Volunteer Judy Mendelson*

Shopping for new plants is fun, but it can be costly. Luckily, there are a few simple guidelines that can help you buy wisely and make the most of your plant dollars.

First, find a reputable nursery. They will do a lot of work for you by demanding healthy plants from their suppliers and watching for signs of diseases and keeping plants watered.

Next, take a bottom-up approach to picking a healthy plant. "The root of the problem," isn't a just a figure of speech, it means looking past the colorful pot and bright blooms and tipping the plant over to have a look at the roots before you buy. Healthy roots are generally white or light brown. Dark brown, smelly or rotten-looking roots are a sure sign of potential problems. Roots that are circled or packed into a pot are not necessarily a problem if you can untangle and spread them out before planting. If the roots seem too thick to be straightened, or too packed into the drainage holes to pull out of the pot, move on. Check the soil of the new plant you are interested in, feel the soil to make sure it's not excessively dry. A plant stressed by lack of water can take longer to recover. Look for weeds growing in the soil to avoid bringing home hitchhikers.

Don't overlook obvious problems on leaves, such as yellowing, leaf spot or wilting. Examine the undersides of leaves and along stems for insects such as scale, whitefly larvae of leaf miners.



# KATE'S CORNER

## September is Vegetable Garden Time

While other places in the U.S. are at the peak of harvest time and thinking about wrapping up their vegetable growing seasons, we here in Florida are just getting started! September is a great month in Central/South Florida to start vegetable gardening. Whether grown in raised beds or containers, there are many vegetables and herbs that can be started now. Tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, collard greens, pole beans, southern peas, basil, fennel, dill and sage are just a few! Transplants may be available at stores or garden centers and can get your garden off to a fast start. Be sure to check the transplants carefully for any disease or pest insect presence. Choose the healthiest looking transplants for the best chance of success in your garden. I personally love starting my vegetables from seed. Although I am terrible clothes "shopper" and have very little patience when it comes to trying on clothes, etc., I sure do love to shop for seeds! A nice, new shiney seed catalog that arrives in my mailbox makes me very happy!

Starting with good seed starting potting mix and sanitize seedling trays helps to ensure clean and disease-free conditions for your seeds. Once seedlings start to sprout and grow, it is best to "harden them off" by placing them in filter sunlight gradually before fully transplanting them to the garden in full sun.

Starting my vegetables from seed allows me to have a wide variety to choose from, and when I plant too many I can share with friends and neighbors.

A few varieties that I have grown to love in my vegetable garden are:

- Yellow Pear Cherry Tomatoes
- Pink Tun Long Eggplant
- Drunken Woman Looseleaf Lettuce
- Cherry Belle Radish
- And if you like it hot- Datil Peppers- a Florida Classic.

There are many great seed companies to choose from and there is a helpful UF/IFAS document called "Seed Sources for Florida Homegrown Vegetables".

Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, Peaceful Valley Seeds, and Johnny's Seeds are just a few of the many reputable seed companies that I use for my seed selection.

Have fun in your vegetable garden no matter what or how you start to grow your veggies

Aloha

-Kate Rotindo

UF/IFAS St. Lucie County Urban Horticulture Agent

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# Events / Webinars

## Keep Port St. Lucie Beautiful Spread-The-Shade Tree Giveaway

Keep Port St. Lucie Beautiful (KPSLB) will be holding their semi-annual Drive-Thru Tree Giveaway. The City will give away an assorted variety of trees that are native to Florida. Due to COVID-19, the event details and processes have been changed.

Saturday, September 12th 9:00 am to 11:00 am at the  
PSL Botanical Gardens located at  
2410 SE Westmoreland Blvd.

450 trees have been reserved and will be ready for pick up. This year KPSLB, had residents watch an educational video which was done by our very own Urban Horticulture Agent, Kate Rotindo before registering online to secure their tree.

If you had a chance to register for a tree, please be sure to print your confirmation sheet or have it on your phone and your ID ready.

Trees must be picked up the day of the event, there will be no trees available afterwards.



It seems that our world has become almost completely virtual. Zoom and Facebook live have almost become part of our every day lives. A webinar here and a webinar there.

Due to COVID-19 our office has been closed to the public not allowing residents to bring a weed, insect or plant to be identified and giving us the chance to chat face to face about how to get rid of something, how to fix an issue in your garden or how to make your plant healthy.

Starting next month in October, our Urban Horticulture Agent, Kate Rotindo will be holding a plant clinic twice a month that will be held through Zoom. It will be open to the public for her to answer any questions you may have and give you the opportunity to submit pictures or questions prior to the scheduled plant clinic so she can answer your questions live. It will be held the first and last Wednesday of each month. All photos and inquiries must be submitted by the Tuesday before the plant clinic.

To join the Zoom meeting, please email, Master Gardener Volunteer Program Specialist Danielle Shalginewicz at [DShalginewicz@ufl.edu](mailto:DShalginewicz@ufl.edu) or call 772.462.1445 you can also join through our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/SLCMGV](https://www.facebook.com/SLCMGV) where each event will be listed. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

# Recognition's and Acknowledgments

## **Celebrating 10 Years**



**Christi Illona**



**Phyllis Brown**

## **Celebrating 15 Years**

*Gene Sifers*



**Judy Mendelson**



**Jeanne Reid**

# Resources

## Research Based Resources

- **EDIS**

EDIS stands for Electronic Data Information Source. It is a single source repository of all current UF/IFAS numbered peer reviewed publications and the main source we use for looking up subjects.

Visit

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> to get the most current information on topics

- **UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions**

Gardening solutions website brings Florida homeowners and gardeners the best information about Florida-Friendly plants, sustainable landscape practices and ways to beautify your yard and garden.

Visit:

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/>

## Contact Us

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