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# Horticulture

UF/Nassau County Extension July/August 2006

# News

## *Carrots of Color*

Carrots were first cultivated in Iran and Northern Arabia around 900 AD. The orange carrot we know and love came on the scene in Europe in the 1600's. Thanks to recent research the carrot rainbow has reappeared.

Colored carrots are good for your health. Red carrots contain lycopene, which helps to prevent prostate cancer. The body converts carotene in orange carrots to Vitamin A, which promotes healthy vision. Yellow carrots with lutein reduce macular degeneration, an eye disease. The anthocyanins in purple carrots help to prevent cancer, heart disease, and stroke. White carrots lack pigment and

look like parsnips, but do not taste like them. None of the colors contribute to carrot taste.

Like people, carrots also come in various sizes and shapes. Some are round like a radish, some are short and chubby, and others are long and skinny.

Carrots spend their lives underground and grow best in well-drained quality soil with lots of organic matter. Carrots develop best when days are warm 60-70°F and nights are cool (45°F).

Carrots seeds are tiny and difficult to sow, but may be mixed with sand to make the job easier.

Carrots like it moist, but not wet. Use an organic mulch to retain moisture and keep

them cool. If carrots dry out and you water all at once, they will split.

Carrots should be thinned when they are young. Spread them 3 inches apart, weed often, and fertilize sandy soil (or if the tops begin to yellow).

Take care of your carrots, and they will take care of you!



***"The only carrots that interest me are the number you get in a diamond."***

***-Mae West***

## Program Announcements

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**These programs are free to the public, so please call us at 904-879-1019 or e-mail [rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu) if you plan to attend. If response is too small, the program will be canceled.**

### Neighborhood Stormwater/Landscape Program

Provide your neighborhood with information about proper landscape and pond maintenance practices that will protect Florida's natural waterways. St. John's River Water Management/WAVE Representative Paula Staples and Rebecca L. Jordi, University of Florida/IFAS Horticulture Extension Agent will come for a free consultation.

*This program must have a minimum of ten (10) participants.*

### Troubleshooting Florida Landscapes

Do you and your neighbors need a personal consultation on how to solve landscape problems? Are you concerned about your trees, shrubs, or lawn-grass thriving? Rebecca L. Jordi, University of Florida/IFAS Horticulture Extension Agent and Nassau County Master Gardener Volunteers will come for a free group consultation.

*This program must have a minimum of ten (10) participants.*

### Landscape Matters

July 19th, 2006  
Wednesday 10 - 11AM  
Gingers  
Master Gardener  
Town Downen

August 16th, 2008  
Wednesday 10 - 11AM  
Hanging Baskets  
Master Gardeners

Yulee Satellite Office  
North Corridor  
Conference Room A  
96135 Nassau Place  
Nassau County Govt,  
Complex

## Coreopsis - Florida State Wildflower

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The 1991 Legislature named the coreopsis, a member of the daisy family commonly known as tickseed, as Florida's official wildflower. These colorful flowers which bloom from June to September are used extensively in Florida's roadside plantings and highway beautification programs

because they can tolerate poor soil and intense heat. They will also grow by the sea, in spite of salt spray and wind. The coreopsis is found in a variety of colors, ranging from golden to pink, and may be



propagated from seed and division of old clumps in spring. The flower is a food source for seed-eating birds. It does not usually live more than two to three years unless clumps are divided.

## Master Gardener Volunteer Program

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Do you love plants, trees, and gardening? Would you enjoy volunteering your time to help teach youth and newcomers in your community? Are you a team player? Then perhaps you should become a University of Florida/IFAS Master

Gardener Volunteer! It requires 50 hours of volunteer time to be given back to Nassau County Extension the first year and 25 hours every year thereafter. Ten sessions held on Wednesdays will begin in the middle of August and end in November. Textbooks will

cost \$75. If you are interested and would like an application packet please call 904 879-1019 or email [rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu). Interviews for the Master Gardener Program will begin near the end of July and selection will occur by the first week of August.



## July Checklist

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**Flowers:** Water annuals if we receive less than 1/4 inch of rain every few days. Water container gardens daily. Too much water can cause root rot. Separate bulbs and give away to friends. Bulbs planted too deeply need to be removed. Transplant bulbs if the area is receiving too much water.

**Lawns:** Mower blade may need sharpening by now, add iron to green up lawn but avoid nitrogen fertilization this month. "Take-all-root-rot" will be in full force during the summer - be sure to avoid over watering and over fertilizing.

**Perennials:** Cut off old flower heads, prune off dead or insect infested areas, and pinch off tips of stems to encourage denser growth.

**Trees:** Remove seed head of crape myrtles to encourage blooming through September. Remove old flower and seed stalks. Prune now for trees that flower in the winter. Fertilize palms and fruit trees.

**Vegetables:** It's too hot to be planting anything now. However, this is a good month to solarize your potential fall garden. Till your plot, moisten the soil, cover the ground with clear plastic. Place heavy objects around the edges to keep the plastic from blowing away. Let the sun bake your soil. It will help control fungi and nematodes. After 30 days till soil, replace the plastic and bake another few weeks. Plant your August or September garden.



"This is a good month to solarize your fall garden."

## August Checklist

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**Flowers:** Plant asters, balsam, begonias, black-eyed Susan, blue daze, cats whiskers, coleus, cosmos, cockscombs, dianthus, forget-me-not, gaillardia, golden globe impatiens, marigolds, melampodium, moon vine, pentas, periwinkles, petunias, phlox, porterweed, portulaca, purslane, salvia, scabiosa, strawflowers, sunflowers, tithonias, torenia, verbena, and zinnias.

**Bulbs:** Plant African Iris, agapanthus, amaryllis, cannas, crinums, daylilies, gladioli, gloriosa lilies, society garlic, and rain lilies (*Zephyranthes*).

**Lawns:** Now is a good time to install a bahiagrass lawn, probably the most carefree of the home lawngrasses. Mole crickets are the only major problem, and good controls are available. It is the only practical grass for a lawn without irrigation. The turf turns brown in a drought, but grows back when it rains.

**Perennials:** Many perennials can be started from saved seeds, such as salvia, violets, ruellia, lion's ear, gerbera daisy, butterfly weed, and gaillardia. Let seeds dry on the plants. When pods open, bring seeds inside and dry on screen or cheesecloth. Put into a plastic bag or a jar and label. Keep the seeds in the vegetable section of the refrigerator. Use within one year. Do not store in the freezer!

**Trees:** Cut back unwanted limbs to a branch angle or the trunk. Remove old fronds and seed stalks from palms. Do not apply paints or coverings to wounds. Remove old seedheads from crape myrtle trees to encourage additional blooms.

**Vegetables:** August plantings are especially important for corn, eggplant, pumpkins, peppers, tomatoes, and watermelons. Beware of cutworms.



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in color via e-mail, contact  
Rebecca Jordi at the above  
e-mail address.

Visit us online at  
**<http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/>**

Nassau County is proud to provide you with this information. Horticulture News is a joint project with contributions by county agents and Master Gardener Volunteers.



Rebecca L. Jordi,  
Horticulture Agent II

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## *Mint - Mentha*



The mints are some of the most easy to grow perennial herbs for Florida gardens. Several species of *Mentha* are represented in this group. Spearmint (*Mentha spicata*) and peppermint (*mentha piperita*), which is a hybrid propagated from cuttings and does not reproduce by seed, are two of the more popular along

with apple and orange mints. Chocolate mint, a cultivar of peppermint (*Mentha piperita* cv.) neither smells nor tastes like chocolate, but is reminiscent of an Andes after-dinner chocolate mint. The suggestion of chocolate is there and is strong enough to make people love it. Leaves of the mint family of plants are dark green, flowers are white, blue, or violet. Mint should be started in moist soil from cuttings. In Florida, many of the mints grow profusely in

shade, yet mints develop their best colors and flavors when grown in the sun. There are two growth phases for mints, at first, in early spring, the stems head up to make flowers. After flower production, the horizontal runners take off and cover a lot of distance in a short time. Bees and butterflies love mint flowers. Mints will spread to make a wonderful ground cover and can be used fresh or dried in cooking.