

# Horticulture News

## Salad Greens

**W**hy grow greens? They are packed with fiber, nutrients, and antioxidants, and are make colorful and decorative additions to gardens and salads.

Greens come in many varieties, but almost all of them prefer the same growing conditions: cool weather, fertile soil, and consistent moisture.

For tender, baby greens, harvest when two inches tall. Cut leaves off with scissors ½ inch above the soil. Most plants will regrow in two weeks for a second harvest.

**Lettuce** (*Lactuca sativa*) comes in four principal types: crisphead, butterhead, leaf, and romaine. All four grow well in Florida in the cooler months.

**Arugula** (*Eruca sativa*) is known as roquette and “rocket salad”. This annual produces zesty leaves which may be cooked or used in salad.

**Swiss chard** (*Beta vulgaris* subsp. *cicla*) is a close relative of the beet, (*Beta vulgaris* subsp. *crassa*) mainly used as a cooking green.

Both chards and beet greens are good sources of iron, calcium, and potassium, as well as vitamins A, C, E, K, several B vitamins and dietary fiber. Chard is highly susceptible to root-knot nematodes in Florida gardens.

**Chicory** (*Cichorium intybus*) is a root vegetable whose leaves may be cooked or used in salads. Roots of some varieties are used as a coffee stretcher or substitute, while other roots are “forced” to grow the salad vegetable known as endive. The broad leaf type of endive is known as escarole.

**Radicchio** (*Cichorium intybus*) is a red-headed form of chicory has a bitter, but not unpleasant, taste. It

has become a gourmet favorite in recent years and is often used in salads and Italian cooking.

**Kale** (*Brassica oleracea* var. *sabellica*) is a hardy plant that resembles curly leaf collards. Kale grows in conditions similar to cabbage and tastes much like it, but it does not form a head. Start from seeds or transplants in fall or winter months. Harvest tender young leaves for a surprise addition to salads.

**Mustard** (*Brassica juncea*) is one of the best cooking greens for fall through spring production. Pair young leaves with a mix of baby lettuces and chards for a zippy salad, or braise older leaves with garlic.

UF/IFAS  
Nassau County  
Extension  
November/December  
2006

### *Inside this issue:*

Announcements	2
Red Maple	2
Christmas Cactus	2
Checklist	3
Fennel	4



# Program Announcements

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 lawngrass 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

January 17th, 2007  
Wednesday 10 - 11AM  
Citrus

Rebecca Jordi  
Horticulture Agent II

February 14th, 2007  
Wednesday 10 - 11AM  
Roses

Master Gardener  
Paul Gosnell

New Location!  
Yulee County Building  
86026 Pages Dairy Rd.

## Crash Course in Florida Gardening

Monday/Tuesday January 29th/30th, 2007 9AM-12PM

Cost is \$25 for notebook. Checks should be made out to Nassau County Extension.

Registration deadline is Friday, January 19th.

Phone 904 321-5715 or e-mail [rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu) to enroll.

## Christmas Cactus

Next to the Poinsettia "Christmas Cactus" are the second most popular house plant for the holiday season. A native of Brazil, most plants we see today are man made hybrids. "Christmas Cactus" are easy to keep. While it is flowering, keep your plant indoors

in a well-lit location away from heat vents and fireplaces. Check for water every couple of weeks... but don't let your plant get too dry. Feed bi-monthly with a balanced liquid plant food. You may put it outdoors in the spring



in a shaded location. To make it flower again, deprive it of artificial light at night in late September. If night temperatures are below 65° flower buds will form. Once buds develop, bring indoors.

## Red Maple (Acer rubrum)

Want great fall color in your landscape during November and December? Plant a red maple. It is native to North America and grows rapidly to attain a height of 120 feet, although 35 to 40 feet is

more typical in Florida. In the fall the color of its leaves turns to a deep red or orange or yellow. Papery red seeds appear in January or February. Because it likes lots of moisture, it is excellent for poorly drained

sites. Container grown plants may be planted year round, but November through February is actually best. Be sure to water several times a week the first year after planting.



# November Checklist

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**Flowers:** Sow seeds of larkspur, bachelor's buttons, sweet peas, and California poppies in full sun for a colorful spring show. Set out hardy plants such as sweet alyssum, petunia, dianthus, and snapdragon.

**Lawns:** Allow grass to go dormant from October through February. Check your mower. Resharpen blades, change the oil, and clean debris.

**Perennials:** Plant now for fall color. Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*) has spikes of purple-and-white flowers that will wave in the wind. Pineapple sage (*S. elegans*) has brilliant red blooms and leaves that smell of pineapple. Firespike (*Odontonema strictum*) with its red bloom spikes is great for partial shade. Philippine violet (*Barleria cristata*) brightens fall days with its lavender flowers. The brilliant yellow of swamp sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*) will stop traffic a block away. Cigar flower (*Cuphea micropetala*) has an abundant display of small orange-and-yellow, tubular blooms.

**Trees:** If you are planting a new tree, staking may not be necessary. New trees become stronger if some movement is allowed. Planting too deeply causes future problems for the tree. Plant your tree so the top root is just at soil level.

**Vegetables:** Keep crops picked to encourage new production. Irrigate during morning hours (6-10am) with drip irrigation to discourage disease.



# December Checklist

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**Flowers:** Plant carnations, digitalis, pansies, petunias, shasta daisies, and snapdragons this month.

**Poinsettias:** After the holidays, poinsettias can be planted outdoors. In North Florida, replant in larger pots, and bring them indoors during freezing weather. If poinsettias have dropped lower leaves and become leggy, cut them back to 4 to 6 inches to induce new growth. Water as needed, and fertilize. Keep tips of new growth pinched until Labor Day so plants stay bushy and compact. Colorful bracts should develop by the following Thanksgiving.

**Bulbs:** Check for declining plant portions and pests. Work at this time of year should be minimal. Check bulbs in storage and remove adhering soil or damaged portions.

**Lawns:** Do not apply fertilizer or any nitrogen this time of year, wait until March. Keep mowing height the same year round. Change your watering habits from once every 7-10 days to once every two weeks.

**Trees and Shrubs:** Begin transplanting plants if the weather has turned cool, otherwise wait until plants are dormant. Prune roots two to three months before digging by severing roots with a spade just inside the intended root ball to generate new root hairs and reduce transplant shock.

**Vegetables:** Choices for this month include beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, Chinese cabbage, English peas, onions, and radishes.







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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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## Herb of the Month - Fennel

The term “fennel” is confusing since there are two kinds. Common fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), a perennial, is grown for its shoots, leaves, and seeds, is known as wild fennel and used as flavoring agents in foods. Florence fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare dulce*), also known as sweet fennel, and finocchio, is an annual and grown mainly for the thickened , bulbous

leaf base which is eaten as a cooked vegetable. Except for the swollen, above-ground base of the leaves on Florence fennel, the two are very similar in appearance and in their licorice-like flavoring. The plant resembles dill, with narrow, finely feathered leaves, bright yellowish green hollow stems, and umbrella-like seed structure. Sow seed one-half inch deep in the fall or early winter,

space plants 12 inches apart in rows three feet apart. Harvest, thresh,

and dry seeds which mature in the second year.

