Clematis

Clematis is from the Greek word klema, meaning “climbing”. Clematis are part of the same family as anemones, buttercups and peonies. They are naturally from the temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere, making them ideal for growing in cooler parts of the USA.

But what about hot climates? In Florida, there are seven Clematis species, including one native only to Florida, and one as an occasional non-native escapee. Two species can be found growing wild in Nassau County.

Clematis crispa, also known as swamp leatherflower, is frequently found in floodplain forests and wet hammocks from northern counties south to mid-Florida. This species also grows throughout the southeastern U.S., and north to Missouri. It blooms with small blue-tipped white bells from spring to summer and produces spectacular seed heads.

Clematis reticulata or Netleaf Leather Flower is extremely drought tolerant and easy to grow. It needs no pruning, irrigation, fertilization, or special care. It never becomes a nuisance because it is a perennial that dies down to the ground each winter. It can be found wild growing in dry woods throughout Florida.

Clematis viticella and Clematis texensis are two other varieties which are heat tolerant and are recommended for the Deep South.

Clematis viticella has pale blue flowers with violet shading and cream stamens. It requires plenty of sun but will grow well in mediocre soil. If given no support, it is suitable as a ground cover.

Clematis texensis is a woody vine of Texas having showy solitary nodding scarlet flowers. Although widely cultivated because it is the only species of Clematis with truly red flowers, Clematis texensis is native only to the southeastern part of the Edwards Plateau, Texas.

To grow your own clematis, proper plant placement is key. Clematis like to have their heads in the sun and their feet in the shade. Provide a support of less than one inch diameter for the stems to wind around. Plant deep, 3-5 inches below the surface of the soil. Mulch to a depth of 3 inches. Watch for snails and earwigs. Stem rot may turn stems and leaves brown. Cut away and dispose of any infected parts and your plant will recover.
Program Announcements

Master Gardener Plant Sale

Friday October 2nd & Saturday October 3rd 9AM-2PM
Our biannual plant sale has Master Gardener-propagated plants, select trees and shrubs and “goodies“ for your garden, including custom painted planters. Attend classes by horticulture experts including Rebecca Jordi - Horticulture Agent III and others. Don’t miss the best sale Nassau County has ever seen! All proceeds benefit the Nassau County Master Gardener program and their-volunteer community projects in Nassau County.

Landscape Matters

Wildflowers
Wednesday September 16th, 2009 10 - 11AM
Master Gardeners Maribel Peterson & Claudie Speed

Herbs
Wednesday October 21st, 2009 10 - 11AM
Master Gardeners Maribel Peterson & Claudie Speed

These programs are free to the public, so please call us at 904-548-1116 or e-mail rljordi@ufl.edu if you plan to attend. If response is too small, the program will be canceled.

Creature Feature - Cicadas

Cicadas are the most efficient and loudest sound-producing insects in the world. Only the males resound as a mating ritual to attract a female and many cicada species tend to gather when calling which increases the total volume of noise. Species have different mating songs to ensure they attract the appropriate mate.

Cicadas are unique in sound-producing insects because they have a musical drum in their abdomen. The organs that produce sound are ‘tymbals’ ~ paired membranes that are ribbed and located at the abdominal base. Contracting the internal tymbal muscles yield a pulse of sound as the tymbals buckle inwards. As these muscles relax, the tymbals return to their original position. The interior of the male abdomen is substantially hollow to amplify the resonance of the sound. The song intensity of the louder cicadas acts as an effective bird repellent. Males of many species tend to gather which net a greater sound intensity and engenders protection from avian predators.

Cicadas do not bite or sting, are benign to humans and are not considered a pest. Most cicadas go through a life cycle that lasts from two to five years. Some species have longer life cycles, of 13- or even 17-years. These long life cycles are an adaptation to predators such as the cicada killer wasp and praying mantis. Since 13 and 17 are prime numbers, a cicada with a 15-year life cycle could be preyed upon by a predator with a 3- or 5-year life cycle, but the 13- and 17-year cycles allow them to stop the predators falling into step.
“To Do” List for September

**Flowers:** For instant color plant marigolds and garden chrysanthemums.

**Bulbs:** Bulbs to plant now include amaryllis, Aztec lily, calla, elephant ears, grape hyacinth, iris, leopard lily, narcissus, snowflake, watsonia, and zephyr lily.

**Herbs:** Plant anise, basil, borage, chervil, marjoram, parsley, sesame, and thyme.

**Lawns:** Use a slow release fertilizer such as 15-0-15 or 16-0-8. Most Florida soils are high in phosphorous, the middle number, so this nutrient is rarely needed. Keep mower heights on highest level all year to promote deep roots.

**Perennials:** This is the time of year to prune. When pruning, make cuts back to the branch angle, or to the ground. If you want the plant to fill in from the base, make the cut about 1 foot above where you want the new branches to begin.

**Trees:** Fertilize palms with slow release palm fertilizer. For fall color plant deciduous trees such as bald cypress, Chickasaw plum, crape myrtle, redbud, red maple, river birch, sugarberry, sweet gum and winged elm. Trees to plant include black olive, dogwood, golden raintree, hollies, loquat, southern juniper, sugarberry, and wax myrtle.

**Vegetables:** Snap beans, pole beans, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, endive/escarole, lettuce, cucumber, bulbing onions, bunching onions radishes, summer squash, and turnips.

“To Do” List for October

**Flowers:** Buy spring flowering bulbs (narcissus, tulips, etc.) and store in the refrigerator for 60 days. Plant bulbs immediately upon removal. Keep them away from ripening fruit during storage. Plant cool season flowers like dianthus, pansy, petunia, shasta daisy, snapdragon, viola, million bells, status, thunbergia, flowering kale and cabbage. Bulbs to plant include agapanthus, gladiolus, kaffir lily, marica, moraea, society garlic, spider lily, anemone, hyacinth, pineapple lily and Star-of-Bethlehem.

**Herbs:** Plant parsley, sage, thyme, and rosemary.

**Lawns:** Do not fertilize the lawn this late in the year. For a green winter lawn that will have to be mowed, overseed with annual ryegrass. Watch for brown patch fungus disease, chinch bugs, sod webworms, army worms, and mole crickets.

**Trees:** You can remove diseased or dead limbs any time of year. If you plant a tree this month, remember that water is the most important part of early tree care. Be sure to dig the hole wider than deep. Do not fertilize now, wait until next spring. Let the tree put its effort into producing roots.

**Vegetables:** Plant strawberries in late October through November. Plant in rows 36” apart and 12” apart within the row. Elevate rows 6” above existing soil to insure good drainage. Use pine straw to reduce weed problems and slugs.

Selected from Florida Vegetable Guide by JM Stephens, RA Dunn, G Kidder, D Short, & GW Simone, University of Florida and Month-by-Month Gardening in Florida by Tom MacCubbin
Salt & Shade - Leatherleaf Mahonia

This slow-growing plant (Mahonia bealei) is an attention-getting specimen wherever it is used. With spikes of bright yellow, slightly fragrant flowers, glossy, grey green leaves, and attractive multiple stems, Leatherleaf Mahonia has potential for many uses in the shady landscape and is salt tolerant as well.

The stiff, hard, leathery leaflets have sharp marginal spines, giving the plant a holly-like appearance. Flowers appear in late winter or spring and have a delicate fragrance similar to citrus blossoms. The flowers are followed by large clusters of striking purplish-blue berries that remain throughout the summer, if not devoured by birds who seem to find them irresistible.

Plant in groups of at least three spaced two feet apart for the best garden effect. The flowers and fruit are striking when planted in mass and displayed against a background of green foliage provided by a taller, dense shrub.

Requiring little care except for an occasional watering, once established, Leatherleaf Mahonia performs best when given partial shade and well-drained soil. Pruning is not required due the very slow growth rate. Growth is slow and plants are thinner in total shade.

Propagation is by cuttings or seeds. No pests or diseases are of major concern.