Do you enjoy eating blueberries? If so, consider planting a few bushes in your own backyard. They are easy to grow if you select the right variety and the right site.

Blueberries are native to North America. They are one of the few crop plants which originated here. The woods and swamps of Florida are populated with at least eight wild blueberry species. No area of the state lacks wild blueberries, except locations where the soil pH is above 6.0.

Two types of blueberries grow in our area, highbush and rabbiteye. Highbush cultivars are more susceptible to some diseases and may be damaged by freezes. Rabbiteye cultivars are easier to grow, less susceptible to root rot, and more drought tolerant. Rabbiteye varieties that produce in late May and early June are Climax, Beckyblue, Bonita, Austin and Premier.

Mid-to-late-season varieties are more productive. Since they are late bloomers, freezes are usually not an issue. Brightwell, Chaucer, Powderblue, and Tifblue are the best performers. Interplant varieties for pollination. Another requirement for good fruit set is that bees are present and working the flowers during bloom.

The best time to plant is mid-December to mid-February. Select your planting site carefully. Full sun is required for best fruit production. Soils must be well drained to at least 18 inches to prevent root rot. Soil should be acidic with a pH range of 3.5 to 5.5. If pH is too high, mix in Canadian peat or granulated sulfur at the time of planting. Pine bark is also a good additive. Do not put fertilizer in the planting hole. After planting, add a 3 inch layer of organic matter (peat or compost).

To fertilize, use a camellia/azalea type fertilizer. Blueberries respond best to frequent light fertilization. They can be killed by over fertilization.

Water plants regularly during dry periods, but do not overwater to prevent root rot. Keep a 3 inch layer of mulch around the plant to retain soil moisture and prevent weeds.

Prune mature blueberry plants just after harvest during the early summer. Pruning stimulates the development of new canes which are more productive than older canes. A general rule is to remove about one to three of the oldest canes each year. This will result in continuous cane renewal so that no cane is more than three or four years old.

With good pollination, a plant will yield 2 to 5 pounds of blueberries by the third or fourth year. Be prepared to share. Blueberries are extremely attractive to birds such as cedar waxwings, robins, and crows. Unless you cover your berry plants with nets, you may not have many berries to harvest!
Program Announcements

Troubleshooting & Neighborhood Stormwater/Landscape Program
Solve landscape problems and 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. Fifteen participants are required.

Landscape Matters

Violets
Wednesday May 19th, 2010 10-11AM
Master Gardener Bev Stormoen

Cut Flower Arrangements
Wednesday June 16th, 2010 10-11AM
Master Gardener Claudie Speed

Plant Clinics

Monday May 3, 2010 10AM-2PM
Monday May 17, 2010 10AM-2PM
Monday June 14, 2010 10AM-2PM

Bring us your tired, diseased, insect infested plants yearning to be free of problems. When possible place your plant in a plastic bag to prevent chances of spreading issues to other plants. You will receive current researched based information on proper plant care, disease management and insect control. These sessions are free to the public. No registration required. Come anytime between 10AM and 2PM for expert advice.

Spotlight on Nassau Gardens

March Winner - Shirley & Tom Leggio
The March selection for “Spotlight on Nassau Gardens” is this lovely Mexican fan palm belonging to Shirley and Tom Leggio of Fernandina Beach. The tree is approximately 25-30 years old and is surrounded by a canopy of beautiful live oaks.

Master Gardener Program

Do you love plants, trees, and gardening? Would you enjoy volunteering your time to help teach youth and newcomers in your community? Then perhaps you should become a University of Florida/IFAS Master Gardener Volunteer! It requires 75 hours of volunteer time to be given to Nassau County Extension the first year and 35 hours every year thereafter. Ten training sessions held on Wednesdays will begin in the middle of August and end in November. Student CDs will cost $55. If you are interested and would like an application packet please call 879-1019 or 548-1116 or e-mail rljordi@ufl.edu. Interviews for the Master Gardener Program will be made in mid-July and training will begin the first week of August.
May Checklist

**Flowers:** Annuals to plant this month are celosia, coleus, coreopsis, crossandras, gaillardias, gazanias, hollyhocks, impatiens, kalanchoe, marigolds, nicotianas, ornamental peppers, pentas, portulacas, salvias, thunbergia alata, torenias, verbenas, periwinkles, and zinnias.


**Lawns:** Check St. Augustine for chinch bugs. It is the beginning of mole cricket season for bahia, Bermuda, and zoysia lawns. The mole crickets have been busy laying eggs that can start hatching this month. Fertilize with 15-0-15 or 16-0-8 this month. New water restrictions (city water or wells) odd numbered houses Wed. & Saturday; even numbered houses – Thurs. & Sunday. Non-residential properties water on Tues. & Friday.

**Trees:** Some magnolias may drop their leaves during the spring months. This is normal, as they replenish foliage. Some magnolias may drop most of their leaves before putting on new growth.

**Vegetables:** Scout for insects and hand remove if possible. Check the underside of leaves for eggs and aphids. Remember some insects are predators. These predators are important part of keeping the pests from totally taking over vegetables. Vegetables to plant this month are lima beans, eggplant, okra, Southern peas, and sweet potatoes.

June Checklist

**Flowers:** If growth appears too slow and the foliage turns yellow, they may need an extra feeding. Too much growth and a lack of flowers indicates the plants have all the nutrients they need and you can skip a feeding. Globe amaranth, melampodium, pentas, portulaca, purslane, salvias, zinnias, lantana, buddleia, daylily, verbena, purple coneflower, plumbago, and sun coleus can be planted in full sun. Plant agapanthus, blackberry lily, clivia, gloriosa lily, achimenes, crinum, and iris.

**Roses:** Repeat May procedures. Water, water, water.

**Lawns:** Keep mower blades sharp (once a month is a good rule). This is a good month to apply iron sulfate in liquid or granular form to St. Augustine lawns.

**Perennials:** Some pests to check for are grasshoppers and katydids. Both may be chewing holes in plant leaves. Try to handpick them from the plants, or if needed, use a synthetic insecticide as instructed on the label for chewing insects.

**Trees:** Pests may be noticed in many trees. Their damage is minimal and sprays are seldom needed. Look for aphids, borers, mites, etc.

**Vegetables:** June is not the best month to be starting a garden or planting new crops. Wait until August before putting in new plants. You may still plant tomatoes in containers if you want something to harvest. This is a good month to solarize your garden to fight against nematodes.

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
Master Gardener Speakers

Friday
9:00 - Ask The Expert - Your Gardening Answered
10:00 - Lawns
11:00 - Propagation Techniques
1:00 - Container Gardening

Saturday
9:00 - Ask The Expert
10:00 - Roses
11:00 - Propagation Techniques
1:00 - Florida Friendly Plants
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 III

Super Shrubs - Florida Privet

If you live near the coast and need a well behaved, carefree evergreen hedge or screen for an undesirable view, you cannot go wrong with Florida Privet, *Festuca segregata*.

Highly drought and salt tolerant, this super shrub prefers a little shade but adapts readily to full sun. With great flexibility this cold hardy plant also tolerates moist or dry soils, highly alkaline soils, and concrete intensive developments. Once established, it thrives without irrigation.

Also known as wild olive, Florida privet’s best feature may be its attractiveness to wildlife. In early spring, tiny yellow flowers attract small nectar-feeding insects that in turn feed painted buntings, bluebirds, warblers, and vireos. The black fruits which appear on female plants in early summer are attractive to a variety of birds, and the plant’s stiff branches and leafy habit are important features for nesting.

Florida privet may grow up to 15 feet tall and 12 feet wide, but is easily trimmed to maintain a desired height and density. It’s density also helps it withstand strong winds from hurricanes. If blown over, this plant will recover quickly on its own. No pests or diseases are of major concern.