The idea of using stored rainwater to supplement home irrigation systems has gained greater acceptance in recent years.

As our population grows and the demand for clean drinking water increases, the use of non-traditional methods to water gardens, shrubs, or flower beds becomes more important.

Using stored water from rain barrels reduces the demand on public water systems for plant irrigation, leaving more potable water for human consumption and sanitation in the home. Water bills are reduced, and we feel good about conserving Florida’s precious fresh water resource.

As we all know, we live in an area prone to periods of drought. Water restrictions are now the norm. So, storing and using free rainwater is a worthwhile endeavor.

Rain barrels are a part of water conservation just like other ways of reducing water consumption, such as low-flow toilets and water flow controls on shower heads.

The components of a rain barrel are simple. There is an opening at the top or side of the barrel for incoming water via a downspout. Depending on the model, a filter or screen may be used to keep out mosquitoes or falling debris.

An overflow spout is near the top to direct excess water away from the house and a faucet with a spigot near the bottom to deliver the water. Some rain barrels also have a top which opens for direct access to the water.

There are but a few considerations when installing a barrel.

First, gravity is the force responsible for getting water to your plants if a standard hose or soaker hose is attached to the spigot. Therefore, the barrel needs to be set on higher ground or set upon a base of concrete blocks or treated wood.

Second, if a hose is not used, make sure that the spigot height accommodates your watering can or bucket of choice.

Finally, it is usually necessary to adjust the downspout length to fit into the top of the rain barrel. A hacksaw or tin snips can be used to cut plastic or metal downspouts. There are also flexible plastic extensions available to customize the linkage between the downspout and the rain barrel opening.

The UF/IFAS Nassau County demonstration garden has a rain barrel on the west corner of the garden, near the Plumbago. Another rain barrel is installed at the extension office in Yulee. Two different installation methods were used, so they provide illustration of different configurations.

It is estimated that an inch of rain falling on the average 2,000 square foot roof produces around 1,200 gallons of runoff - a staggering amount if only a portion could be stored for later use.

Remember, there are no water restrictions on using water from a rain barrel, and rainwater does not have the chemical additives used by public water systems.

The use of rain barrels can also reduce erosion around the house and the amount of pollutants carried into our water supply during heavy downpours. For more information on rain barrels, go to http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/barrels.htm.

Let’s take care of our Earth and its unique life-supporting resource - water.
Program Announcements

Landscape Matters 10AM-11AM

Turfgrass
Wednesday March 28
Master Gardener Nelson Peterson

Container Gardening
Wednesday April 4
Master Gardener Carol Ann Atwood

Plant Clinics 10AM-2PM

Monday March 5
Monday March 19
Monday April 2
Monday April 16
Monday April 30

Location
Demonstration Garden
Nassau County
Government Complex
96135 Nassau Place
Yulee, FL

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 - 2PM for expert advice.

Trouble-shooting Landscapes: Efficient Irrigation

County Extension Director/Horticulture Agent, Rebecca Jordi and Master Gardener volunteers Paul Gosnell and Nelson Peterson will assist homeowners in reducing insect and disease issues on lawns and landscapes. These problems often result from too much water, shallow irrigation, or uneven coverage. They will demonstrate how to properly measure irrigation at one zone and then provide solutions for correcting discrepancies. Other cultural practices such as fertilization, proper mulching, planting depth of trees and shrubs, etc. will also be provided. In addition, Jordi and the Master Gardeners will diagnosis disease or insect issues on ornamentals at the site. The goal is to reduce frustrations and the cost of managing North Florida landscapes. Jordi requires at least 6 homeowners and will come to your subdivision for these free sessions. To schedule a "Trouble-shooting Landscapes" session for you and your neighbors, please call the Extension office at 904-879-1019, or email Ms. Jordi at rl-jordi@ufl.edu.

Spotlight on Nassau Gardens

January Winner - Peggy & Raymond Futch

Peggy and Raymond Futch have lived on their property in Bryceville for 39 years and had extensive gardens in the ground until 2004. Because of back problems and their desire to continue gardening, they have established an entire raised bed using EarthBox with excellent soil, fertilizing and watering as part of the plan.(www.earthbox.com) They grow amazing vegetable year round, including winter lettuce, broccoli, spinach, and onions and spring and summer corn, squash, peppers, beans, cucumbers and many more.

View more photos online at http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture/spotlight/spotlight.html. To be considered for Spotlight on Nassau Gardens, send a digital photo, with a description of your garden, along with your name, address and phone number to ncmg@nassaucountyfl.com For more information contact Rebecca Jordi at 491-7340. or 879-1019.
A also referred to as “sheet composting,” “sheet mulching,” or “lasagna gardening,” no-dig gardens require a layering system of compost materials to smother grass and suppress weeds. This makes an in-place garden bed once the materials have decomposed.

**Benefits**

Grass and weeds are buried under thick layers, making sheet composting a great tool for non-chemical weed control. As long as you don’t turn or till the surface, weeds are too deep to germinate. Improving the soil structure, as explained below, also helps to limit the advantage of weeds that often thrive in compacted, nutrient poor soils.

Since the bed preparation is essentially thick mulching, it improves moisture retention and nutrient content of the soil, all through adding organic material. This is a big bonus for Florida’s sandy soils. Building and maintaining no-dig beds is one method of no-till gardening. No-till systems are a part of conservation tillage, an important method for preserving soil integrity through minimizing erosion and increasing and maintaining soil organic matter.

The uncomplicated and easy method of sheet composting means that it’s appropriate for everyone (including those who may be physically limited or unable to dig traditional garden beds) and a good way to convert grassy areas to gardens. This leaves the sod in place where it gets converted into soil organic matter. You can also use this method to enlarge perennials borders. The process can be done at anytime and at any scale, even piecemeal as materials are available.

**Building a Bed**

Plan your bed. Sheet composting is best done a few months before you want to plant so that the materials have time to decompose. Beds can be contained in a raised bed if desired (be sure to use untreated lumber).

Mow or chop down grass and weeds in the place where you want your finished bed (or within your raised bed structure). Leave the trimmings in place.

Cover the ground and trimmings with four to six layers of newspaper or cardboard (a light-blocking carbon source). Wet thoroughly.

Add compost, worm castings, or manure two to three inches thick.

Cover with a layer of carbon material such as leaves, sawdust, or straw.

Top with another nitrogen layer of grass clippings, green weeds (no seeds), kitchen scraps, manure, or a combination of any of these.

Continue this layering until you’ve reached the desired bed thickness (eighteen inches to three feet).

Cover with a burlap layer or a top-dressing of bark, newspaper, or leaves.

Water well.

Sheet composting is considered a “cold” process. It will take time to break down, the amount varying with the type and quantity of organic materials. If you want to plant before the bed is decomposed, you can add a two to three inch layer of finished compost or garden soil to the top of the bed and plant directly.

Since this method will not produce any or very much heat, it means that any weed seeds in the composting layers (above the cardboard) will not cook and will sprout in your bed. Make sure your materials are weed seed free in order to enjoy the weed control benefits of this method.

Maintaining your beds is as simple as adding new layers (a nitrogen layer, such as grass clippings, followed by a carbon like leaves) to keep the bed’s height.

Adapted and excerpted from:

**Composting Methods: Sheet composting**

Published by: Florida’s Online Composting Center.

**Sheet Mulch: Reduce weeds naturally.** Published by: Washington State University Extension, Gray Harbor County.

**Sheet Mulch-Lasagna Composting (LC 731).** Published by: Oregon State University Extension Lane County Extension (04/2009).
Hello everybody!

Welcome back to Harvest Gold. It is hard to believe that spring is almost here. Where did the winter go? And did we even have a winter this year? This has been one of the mildest winters that I can remember. We have only had about four or five days of “real winter” weather up until now, and I hope this keeps up. It is no wonder so many of us love living here in Northeast Florida!

As we approach spring, I am sure most of us are preparing the ground and getting ready to plant our spring crops. But many of us also still have some of our winter vegetables left in the garden. With this beautiful weather we have been having (and plenty of water), I am sure these plants are still doing just fine. As the weather warms up though, these winter crops, the mustards, cabbage, turnips, and other green leafy crops, will quickly be coming to maturity, and with the longer days of spring, will soon be going to seed. It is about time for us to use these winter vegetables before they go to waste.

I know that many people still think greens can be boring and tasteless, and that can be true at times, but it depends on how they are prepared. You could open a can of turnip greens, warm them up with little or no seasoning, and I guarantee you at best they will taste like dark green, wet cardboard. (It’s no wonder many people, especially young people, hate greens.) But when prepared well, and with good seasoning, fresh greens can become a family favorite. I have nieces and nephews in age ranging from fifth grade up through college, and cooked greens are one of their favorite dishes. My fifth grade niece Carly, one of the sweetest little red heads you ever did see (when she wants to be), loves what she calls a “Greens Sandwich.” That is a creation that she and my mother came up with, and consists of a pita pocket stuffed with cooked greens, with a few bacon bits mixed in, and a touch of pepper vinegar added for good measure. My mother likes greens sandwiches because she considers them a “diet” food, low in calories, fat, and cholesterol, high in fiber, and rich in vitamins and minerals. My niece Carly loves them because she says “they taste good.” So, try it out, whether you go for the healthy aspect of the sandwich or the...
taste, with the “Greens Sandwich” you can’t go wrong.

And speaking of sandwiches, you can spice up an ordinary sandwich by substituting other types of greens that you are growing for the lettuce on the sandwich. In cool weather, I do not even buy lettuce from the store. I will use whatever greens I have growing as a “sandwich topper.” I have used mustard leaves, radish leaves, Swiss chard leaves, as well as a little spinach on my sandwiches, and they turn out great. Small, young, and tender leaves work best and are the most flavorful, but if you like a little more spice in your sandwich, use mustard leaves that have matured a little. My personal favorites for sandwiches are Florida Broadleaf Mustard, (a mild Japanese type of mustard), and radish leaves. Swiss chard is also good on a sandwich, and if you plant Bright Lights Chard, which comes in shades of red, yellow, and pink, as well as light and dark green, you will also be adding a little visual appeal to your sandwich. But whatever you do, don’t limit yourself. Be creative. Use several different kinds of greens on your sandwich. Experiment using the young and tender leaves from almost any green leafy crop you are growing. All will turn out well, and I think you and your family will be pleasantly surprised at the difference.

One more thing I would like to talk about is salads. Most people love salads. Tossed salads, Caesar salads, spinach salads… all are quite good, and good for you. But nothing can compare with the delicious tastes, mouth-watering textures, and pretty colors of tender baby salad greens harvested and enjoyed straight from your own garden. A salad of this type is usually called mesclun, from the Provencal French term mescla, meaning “to mix.” This term originally referred to a salad that was composed of a mixture of various types of lettuces and other greens harvested from the wild while still young and tender, and was intended as an aid in the renewal of the blood each spring.

The traditional mesclun mix consisted of equal amounts of chervil, arugula, leafy lettuces, and endive, but more modern versions include a mix of various fresh red and green lettuces, spinach, arugula (roquette), Swiss chard, mustard greens, mizuna, endive, dandelion, radicchio, chicory, sorrel, and/or other available leafy vegetables. Mesclun mixes can be bought as seeds, but I find that they tend to be a little expensive, so I will plant a variety of lettuces, as well as several other of the various types of greens listed above, and when they are large enough, I will go out into the garden and pick whatever I find appealing on that particular day for use in a salad. I have even used young and tender beet and radish leaves in some of my salads. If you grow it as a green leafy vegetable, chances are it would be a delicious addition to a mesclun salad. If you are not sure whether you would like something in a salad or not, go easy on it, use just a little the first time you try it out, and then if you like it, add more the next time you prepare a salad. Additionally, if you would like to dress up your salad a bit and make it a little more interesting, sprinkle a few toasted pecans, walnuts, or pine nuts on top, as well as a few red seedless grapes. A little sprinkling of fresh chopped salad herbs, such as chives or parsley added just before serving, also makes for a more appealing salad.

Although it is getting a little late to begin planting a full crop of greens, there
still might be a little time left to plant a few more for use in mesclun salads. The secret this time of year is to provide plenty of water and adequate fertilizer to keep them growing fast. With adequate water and fertilizer, these “baby greens” should be ready for harvest and use in your salads in about a month or so. When harvesting, use the “cut and come again” method. To do this, simply take a pair of sharp scissors and cut the plants off about one to two inches above the soil line. Harvest only what you will be using right away. After cutting, water the beds well and fertilize lightly, and the plants will continue to grow and produce for several more cuttings. Harvest the rest of your various greens as needed, but before they get too large, and that way you will prolong the harvest and have greens regrowing in various stages. Since mesclun greens are a cool season crop, if we have a mild spring, the greens should do well for a while, but if the weather heats up rather fast, these tender, succulent plants would benefit from a little afternoon shade as the days get warmer.

Once you have harvested your young spring greens, take them inside and gently wash and dry them. What you do not use immediately, chill in the refrigerator until ready for use. Since young and tender greens like mesclun do not have the longer storage qualities of fully mature heads of lettuce, it is best to harvest only what you are going to use right away, or at least use within a day or so.

One final note, as we get into spring and the days continue to lengthen and the weather becomes increasingly warmer, before long all of our cool season crops will begin to diminish and go to seed. If you want to preserve, greens freeze extremely well. Simply wash, remove the stems, and cut up the greens. Put the greens in a pot with enough water to blanch them. Blanch by bringing the greens to a boil on high, and then cut the heat down to low, partially cooking them for about 15 to 20 minutes. Let cool, pack in freezer bags (along with the water they were cooked in), and freeze for future use.

Well, I guess that just about does it. It was good seeing you all again. I have enjoyed this time we have spent together. Until next time, take care, God Bless, and Happy Harvesting!

Peace and Goodness,

Joseph

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**Miss Alice’s Sautéed Spring Greens**

1 or 2 bunches of greens (mustards, collards, kale, spinach, or whatever variety of greens your family prefers—use only one variety of greens, or mix them up if you like)
3 or 4 cloves of garlic, minced
5 or 6 tablespoons good quality olive oil
Salt to taste

Wash and cut stems from greens. Chop up greens, and put them in a pot with salt and enough water to cook. Cook until tender. Sauté the garlic with the olive oil. Remove greens from water, and stir greens in garlic and olive oil. Sauté greens for about 5 minutes, stirring while you are doing so. If the bunches of greens are rather large, more salt or a little more olive oil may be added as needed. Serve as part of a “Greens Sandwich”, or as a delicious side dish to compliment your meal.

Recipe courtesy of Alice Marie Smith.

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**Florida Broadleaf Mustard**
Mesclun Salad with Walnuts and Grapes

1 quart mixed mesclun greens, washed and dried
1 cup red Flame or other seedless red grapes, halved
1/3 cup chopped toasted walnuts
Croutons (optional)

Vinaigrette Dressing
1/2 tablespoon finely minced shallot (garlic can be used instead of, or in addition to, the shallot)
1/2 tablespoon Dijon-type mustard
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 1/2 tablespoon Balsamic vinegar (or more lemon juice, or red wine/white vinegar)
1/3 to 1/2 cup excellent olive oil, or other fine, fresh oil
Freshly ground pepper (to taste)

First, grab a large coffee cup, or similar sized bowl with straight sides, at least four inches high. Stir the shallots and/or garlic together with the mustard and salt. Using a hand blender, add in the lemon juice and vinegar, and when well blended drizzle in the oil slowly to form a smooth emulsion. Beat in freshly ground pepper. Taste and adjust with salt, pepper, and possibly more oil if necessary. For something a little different, fresh chopped basil, tarragon, or other herbs can be added to this dressing.

Place the mesclun in a salad bowl and toss with dressing. Sprinkle grapes, nuts, and croutons over the salad just before serving.

Dressing recipe courtesy of
Kathy Warner, 
Master Gardener
Herbs are grown for their special flavors and aromas, which season, enrich, or otherwise improve the taste and smell of food. In Florida, a number of common herbs can be planted in the spring.

**Growing Herbs at Home**

Most of the common herbs can be grown seasonally in Florida for home use. In south Florida, many herbs may be grown in the home garden throughout the year.

Because the plants are generally small and only a small portion is needed at any one time, herbs are perfect for container gardening. Containers can be attractively arranged outdoors along borders of driveways, sidewalks, and patios, or on porches and balconies. Hanging baskets are especially suitable. With special care and plenty of sunlight, a few herbs can be grown indoors.

The culture of herbs in containers—including soil preparation and fertilizing—is similar to that for vegetables.

Alternatively, herbs’ attractiveness as ornamental plants allows them to be easily incorporated into the home landscape as either a border planting or part of a flower garden.

**Suggested Herbs for Spring Planting**

Throughout most of the state, the following herbs are perfect for spring planting. Some of them may even be planted during the winter months in south Florida.

Seeds and planting stock of common herbs are generally available at local stores or seed retailers. Some herbs may be harder to find, but can generally be obtained from herb specialty businesses.

**Anise**

Anise (*Pimpinella anisum*) is a small annual grown for its seeds. Because of its many white flowers, the plant is attractive in a flower garden or as a border plant. Leaves may be used fresh. In south Florida, anise will also grow in the winter.

Harvest the seeds when they turn brown, separating the seeds from the fruiting structures (umbels). You may need to dry the umbels before the seeds can be separated, cleaned, and stored.

**Borage**

Borage (*Borago officinalis*) is also known as "burrage" and "common bugloss." It has a large, spreading habit, whitish hairy bristles, and blue star-like flowers. The plant has an odor and flavor similar to cucumber. The flowers may be used fresh as a garnish for beverages and salads.

**Basil**

Sweet basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) is a pleasant-smelling annual with a spicy taste. Plant size ranges from small to large, and the leaf colors range from green to purple to variegated. Basil grows well in Florida and is attractive as a potted plant. Its leaves may be used fresh at any time or dried.

**Cardamom**

Cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*) is a tropical perennial whose top regrows each year from an under-
ground rhizome. It reaches five to ten feet tall with two-foot-long pointed leaves. Small yellowish flowers form oblong ribbed capsules that contain seeds.

The seeds are used to give flavor and aroma to coffee, candies, cookies, and other pastries. Dry the capsules in the sun for three days then thresh and store the seeds.

Chervil

Chervil (Anthriscus cerefolium) is an annual grown for its aromatic, decorative leaves. It tastes and smells like tarragon. Some forms of chervil have thick roots that can be eaten like carrots. Leaves should be picked as needed to garnish salads, soups, and other foods.

Coriander/Cilantro

Coriander (Coriandrum sativum) is a small-leaved flowering annual grown mainly for its aromatic seeds. Its flowers make it attractive in the flower garden or landscape. The fresh foliage, also known as “cilantro,” is also used in cooking.

When the tiny fruits turn brown—about three months after seeding—remove them from the plant and dry them on a screen. Once dried, thresh the seeds and store them in a dry, airtight container.

Cumin

Cumin (Cuminum cyminum) is a small annual in the parsley family grown for its aromatic seeds. Although it is seldom grown in Florida, it may be adapted because it requires a long warm season. In most of Florida, cumin can be planted in the spring. In south Florida, you can start planting it in the fall.

Seeding structures should be harvested upon turning brown. After drying, thresh and store the seeds.

Horehound

Horehound (Marrubium vulgare) is a perennial, one to three feet tall, with hairy leaves. It is a weed in many parts of the United States and grows quite well in Florida gardens. Leaves and stems are harvested as needed.

This herb is used in making horehound candy, which is thought to help relieve throat tickling and coughing.

Lemon Balm

Lemon balm (Melissa officinalis) is a perennial in the mint family, which grows easily in Florida. The plants have lemon-scented leaves and grow in clumps. The leaves and tender stems are used fresh or dried.
to add flavor and aroma to drinks, salads, or other dishes.

**Lovage**

Lovage (Levisticum officinale) is a tall perennial that smells, tastes, and looks like celery leaves. The leaves and stems are used fresh as needed. Other useful parts are the seeds and oil extracted from the roots.

**Marjoram**

There are three kinds of marjoram commonly used as herbs: sweet marjoram (Origanum majorana), pot marjoram (O. onites), and wild marjoram (O. vulgare). Only sweet and pot marjoram are usually grown in herb gardens. These perennial plants are very similar to each other, but sweet marjoram tends to grow upright, while pot marjoram runs along the ground. Marjoram makes an excellent border planting for a flower garden.

The leaves are used fresh or dried.

**Mint**

The mints (Mentha) are perennial herbs that grow easily in the Florida garden. Spearmint (Mentha spicata) and peppermint (M. piperita)—along with apple and orange mints—are the most popular. The leaves and flowering tops are used fresh and dried. In Florida, many of the mints grow profusely in shade or full sun.

**Oregano**

There are two main types of oregano: Mexican (Lippia graveolens) and European (Origanum vulgare, also ‘wild marjoram’). The taste of the European type is much milder, but their use is the same.

**Rosemary**

Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis) is a hardy perennial evergreen shrub with a very spicy aroma. Small pink flowers form in the second or third year. The fresh or dried, mildly bitter-tasting leaves are used in cooking.

**Sage**

Sage (Salvia officinalis) is a medium-sized hardy perennial with grayish-green, oblong leaves. Purple flowers bloom in the second year. The leaves can be used fresh or dried. In the landscape, sage is an attractive border plant.

**Summer Savory**

This annual has upright, branching stems and gray-green, pointed leaves. It grows well in Florida but is slow to germinate. Savory’s small, pinkish white flowers make it suitable for a flower garden. The zesty,
peppery tasting leaves may be picked and used as needed, either fresh or dried.

**Thyme**

Thyme (Thymus vulgaris), a shrubby perennial, is found in a fairly wide variety of shapes and sizes. Usually, it is a small-growing plant with purplish flowers at the ends of the stems. You may need patience to grow thyme; in Florida seeds are slow to germinate, and seedlings make slow initial growth.

To use thyme, remove the top third of the plant when in full bloom and spread it on newspaper in a well-ventilated room. When the plant is dry, strip the leaves and flowering tops from the stem and store them in tightly closed containers.

**Location**

Only a small amount of space is required for an herb garden because you will only need a few plants of each type of herb. No matter what size, an organized garden can make the plants easier to care for.

Perennial herbs live from year to year, so group these plants together where they will not interfere with the preparation of the rest of the garden. Annual herbs should also be grouped together so that you can easily replant each year. When you plant herbs in a vegetable garden, space them so that you can care for the vegetables without affecting the herbs.

**Soil Preparation**

Most herbs will grow under the same sunlight and soil conditions—and with similar care—as vegetables. Check our vegetable gardening guide for more specific information about soil preparation, liming, fertilizing, and watering.

Some herbs are sensitive to soil moisture conditions and need special care. Sage, rosemary, and thyme require a well-drained, slightly moist soil, whereas parsley, chervil, and mint grow best in damp soil. Because herbs are shallow-rooting, adding organic matter to sandy soils is particularly beneficial.

**Propagation**

Most annual and biennial herbs are grown from seed sown in the spot where the plants will grow. Perennials grow best when started in plant beds or boxes using seed or cuttings, and then transplanted into the garden or growing containers.

A few herbs can also be propagated by cutting, simple layering, or subdivision. Mint spreads by means of long roots called "runners," which can be transplanted.

Keep in mind that some herbs tend to proliferate and become weeds if allowed to grow.

**Harvesting & Curing**

The seeds, leaves, flowering tops, and roots of herbs are used for flavoring purposes. Their flavor is generally due to oil in these parts. The flavor is retained longer if the herbs are harvested at the right time and properly cured and stored.

**Leaves**

Young, tender leaves can be gathered and used fresh at any time during the season. To save the leaves for later use, harvest them when the plants begin to flower and dry them rapidly in a well-ventilated, darkened room. If the leaves are dusty or gritty, wash them in cold water and drain them thoroughly before drying.

The tender-leaf herbs—such as basil and mint—must be dried rapidly away from the light in order to retain their green color and prevent them from molding. The less succulent leaf herbs—such as sage, rosemary, thyme, and summer savory—contain less moisture and can be partially dried in the sun without affecting their color.

**Seeds**

Harvest seeds when they are mature or when their color changes from green to brown or gray. Dry the seeds thoroughly before storing them to prevent molding, loss of quality, or loss of viability for planting. Cure the seeds for several days in an airy room, then a day or two in the sun.

**Storage**

When the leaves or seeds are dry, remove stems and other foreign matter. Pack the leaves and seeds in suitable containers to prevent the loss of the oils that give herbs their flavor. Glass, metal, or cardboard containers that can be closed tightly will preserve the aroma and flavor. Glass jars should be painted or stored in a dark room to prevent the green leaves from being bleached by light.

For more information about herbs or gardening in general, contact your county Extension office.

*Adapted from: J. Stephens, Herbs in the Florida Garden (CIR570), Horticultural Sciences Department (rev. 5/2003).*
March Checklist

**Citrus:** Remove graft freeze protection if threat of freeze is over. Fertilize program begins for lemon, orange, kumquat using citrus fertilizer. Follow fertilizer label for frequency (slow release is used less often). Fertilize Tea Olive using acid loving fertilizer. Fertilize loquat 2-3 times per year with citrus fertilizer. Check for citrus insects and disease, apply fungicide just at new leaf flush or after bloom drop.

**Fruit:** Apply general garden fertilizer to plum trees. Weed as needed.

**Flowers:** Water as needed. Over-watering causes root and stem rot. Opt for drought tolerant plants such as purslane or periwinkle. Group your plants together according to their watering and light requirements. Bulbs will be in full bloom. To conserve plant energy, cut off the old seedpods after flowering. Fertilize perennials this month if you missed last month. Plant poinsettias in landscape during late March. Cut back plants to within 12 to 18 inches of ground level. Pinch back new growth every four weeks until September 10. Fertilize monthly from May to September. Ageratum, alyssum, amaranthus, asters, baby’s breath, balsam, begonias, browallia, calendulas, calliopsis, celosia, coleus, cosmos, crossandras, dahlias, dusty miller, excums, gaillardias, gazania, geraniums, hollyhocks, impatiens, kalanchoe, lobelias, Marguerite daisies, marigolds, nicotine, ornamental peppers, pentas, phlox, rudbeckias, salvia, strawflowers, streptocarpus, sweet William, thunbergia alata, torenia, verbenas, periwinkles, and zinnias can be planted.

**Herbs:** Anise, basil, bay laurel, borage, caraway, cardamom, chervil, chives, coriander, culantro, cumin, dill, fennel, ginger, horehound, lemon balm, lavender, lovage, marjoram, Mexican tarragon, mint, parsley, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, sesame, thyme and watercress can be planted now.

**Roses:** Continue spray program (every 7-10 days). Water as needed. March 15, apply liquid fertilizer. Check your micro irrigation system (leaks, dirt in system, timers)

**Lawns:** Select a fertilizer with the configuration of 15-0-15 or 16-0-8 which represents nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K) respectively. Follow the directions on the label.

**Shrubs:** Prune and fertilize azaleas with acid fertilizer as soon as they finish blooming. Azaleas may be transplanted now as well. Overgrown shrubs can be cut back using selective pruning, avoid shearing these shrubs. Dr. Ed Gilman’s UF/IFAS publication on pruning shrubs and trees is an excellent source of information: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg087

**Trees:** Make sure younger trees maintain a straight trunk as new growth begins. Remove or prune all limbs competing with the central leader. Palms should have a “palm special” fertilizer applied over the root system under the spread of the fronds. The configuration should be 8-2-12-4 (N-P-K-Mg). Ideally this would also include manganese, boron, sulfur, etc. with appropriate formulations. Use a slow release fertilizer during the spring, summer and fall. Nutrient deficiencies may take months to recover so please use an appropriate palm fertilizer. Anything within 30-50 feet of the palm should just be getting palm fertilizer.

**Vegetables:** Have soil tested prior to planting. The pH and the nutrient content of the soil is an important factor in production of vegetables. This month’s choices for planting include snap beans, pole beans, lima beans, beets, cantaloupes, carrots, celery, collards, corn, cucumber, eggplant, endive/escarole, kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard, okra, bunching onions, parsley, English peas, Southern peas, peppers, potatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, radishes, summer squash, winter squash, tomatoes, turnips, and watermelon. Be sure to use the Florida Vegetable Guide when selecting the best cultivars for our area: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021.
April Checklist

**Citrus:** Depending on citrus fertilizer label, apply fertilizer every six weeks or as directed. Check for citrus insects; apply horticulture oil if insects are detected. Check for diseases; apply fungicide just at new leaf flush or after bloom drop. Maintain 2-3’ unmulched area just outside the root ball (which would be 12-18 inches away from the trunk).

**Fruit:** Weed as needed. Apply Azalea fertilizer to blueberry shrubs, at 1/2 pound per 3’ of shrub. Granular fertilizer may require about 1/4 inch of water to allow the root to absorb the nutrients.

**Flowers:** Annuals to plant now include celosia, coleus, coreopsis, dusty miller, geraniums, hollyhocks, impatiens, kalanchoe, lobelias, marigolds, portulacas, rudbeckias, salvia, verbenas, zinnias. Groom to reshape perennials. Prune hard to correct growth problems. Divide overcrowded fall flowering perennials and bulbs. Bulbs to be planted now include achimenes, agapanthus, amaryllis, Asiatic lilies, begonias, blood lily, caladiums, cannas, crinum, dahlia, gladiolus, gloriosa lily and zephyranthes.

**Herbs:** Anise, basil, bay laurel, borage, caraway, cardamom, chervil, chives, coriander, culantro, cumin, dill, garlic, ginger, horehound, lemon balm, lavender, marjoram, Mexican tarragon, mint, nasturtium, parsley, oregano, rosemary, sage, sesame, and thyme can be planted now.

**Roses:** Begin watching roses for black spot fungus disease, small black spots on the leaves can quickly worsen. Continue spray program. Water as needed. April 15, apply granular rose fertilizer. Cut and remove spent blooms. Check for spider mites (wash underside of leaves with strong water pressure). Add mulch, 2-3 inches deep (oak leaves, cedar pine straw).

**Lawns:** Water during early morning when the leaves curl and turn gray-green. Reduce fertilizers and pesticides during seasons of drought. Keep mower height at the highest setting for grass type. Apply no more than 1 inch of sand to uneven areas for leveling. Allow grass clippings to stay on the lawn as long as grass is healthy.

**Trees:** Most older trees and palms are fine and can exist with the seasonal rains. Look for aphid, borer, and scale infestations. Caterpillars may be extra heavy this month. Continue fertilizing palms as needed.

**Vegetables:** This month you can plant snap beans, pole beans, lima beans, cantaloupe, collards, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, kohlrabi, okra, Southern peas, pumpkin, peppers, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, watermelon, and yams.

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.
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.

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Whirling Butterflies by Rebecca Jordi

Q: I noticed these wildflowers growing along a wooded area near my home and they look similar to the “Whirling Butterfly” plant also called Gaura which I have purchased at a local garden center. Do you know what they might be called?

A: Believe it or not, scientists often develop ornamental plants found in retail stores from the native, wild specimens growing in our natural areas. The ornamental plant called Whirling Butterflies, Gaura lindheimeri, most often has white flowers which are produced on long, thin stalks making the flower appear to be a butterfly flitting on the breeze. There are other common cultivars of such as ‘Corrie’s Gold’, ‘Pink Cloud’ and ‘Crimson Butterflies’ which may be found at your local plant nursery. The cultivated ornamental gaura plants listed above range in heights from 2 – 4 feet. It would be important to know the potential mature height as the shorter ones should be planted in front of the taller ones.

The wildflower photo you sent me might be Slender Gaura or Slender Stalk Beeblossom, Gaura filipes. It is difficult to be certain but most of these plants are commonly known as beeblossom. The photo (right) I took from a cluster found locally at Egans Greenway. As you can see, the plant in the photo is similar to yours. Gaura or beeblossom plants, as their name suggests, attract bees which makes them a fun addition to any home garden. They fit well in any informal garden area that receives full sun and requires very little water or tending.