Winter temperatures in Florida can get low enough to damage tropical, subtropical, and even sometimes temperate plants, especially if they’re not acclimated to lower temperatures.

Plants become acclimated by gradual decreases in temperature over a period of time. Sudden freezes after a period of warm weather often do more damage to plants than a freeze during a period of cold weather. Most plant parts can adapt to cold, but fruits and roots do not develop good cold tolerance. Cold injury to plants in containers is common.

Acclimatization, protection, and proper post-freeze pruning can help your plants survive a freezing spell or harsh winter season.

What to Do before the Freeze

Planting Site Selection

While Florida has a general climate, your home landscape will also have its own microclimates—areas that are cooler or warmer, wetter or drier than surrounding areas. Consider microclimates when deciding where to put cold-sensitive plants.

Avoid planting tender plants in a low area where cold air settles. Arrange plantings, fences, or other barriers to protect tender plants from cold winds. Make sure the soil has good drainage since poorly drained soils result in weak, shallow roots that are susceptible to cold injury.

Proper Plant Nutrition

Healthy well-nourished plants will tolerate cold temperatures better and recover from injury faster than other plants. Be careful though: late fall fertilization can result in a late flush of growth that is more susceptible to cold injury.

Shading

Tree cover can reduce cold injury during some freezes. Areas under tree canopies can reach a higher temperature overnight because the canopy traps heat radiating from the ground. But if you grow a plant that needs full sun in the shade, it will be unhealthy, sparsely foliated, and less tolerant of cold temperatures.

Windbreaks

Fences, buildings, temporary coverings, and adjacent plantings can all serve as windbreaks and protect plants from cold winds. Windbreaks are especially helpful during advective freezes, but do not help during radiational freezes.

Irrigation

Watering landscape plants before a freeze can help protect plants. Wet soil will absorb more heat during the day and radiate it during the night. Keep in mind that prolonged saturated soil conditions damage the root systems of most plants.

Other Cultural Practices

Avoid late summer or early fall pruning, which can cause a flush of new growth that is more susceptible to cold injury.
Inspect plants regularly for pests and control as necessary since plants weakened by disease, insect damage, or nematode damage are susceptible to cold injury.

Protection Methods
Move plants in containers into protected areas where heat can be supplied or trapped. If you have to leave containers outdoors, push them together and protect with mulch to reduce heat loss from the container walls. (Note: Leaves of large canopy plants may be damaged if crowded together for extended periods.)

Heat radiates from soil surfaces during the night and is mainly lost to the atmosphere unless it is trapped. Reduce radiant heat loss and protect plant roots by placing mulch around the plants. For perennials, the root system is all that needs to be protected.

Coverings protect more from frost than from extreme cold. Covers that extend to the ground and do not touch plant foliage can lessen cold injury trapping heat. However, be careful when putting using plastic as a cover because foliage that touches plastic coverings is often injured since the cover actually takes heat away from the plant.

Examples of coverings include cloth sheets, quilts, plastic, or commercial frost cloths. Remove plastic covers during a sunny day or provide ventilation to keep the air under the cover from heating up too much. Putting a light bulb under a cover is a simple method of providing heat to ornamental plants in the landscape.

What to Do after the Freeze
Watering
After a freeze, especially on a sunny day, plants can lose water because the water in the soil or container medium is frozen. Watering the plants will give them available water and will also help thaw the soil.

Pruning
After a freeze, you can remove dead leaves once they turn brown. You should wait to do any severe pruning until new growth appears. This way you can be sure you are not removing any live wood and damaging the plant even more.

Sometimes cold injury isn’t as obvious. For instance, two symptoms of cold injury are a lack of spring bud break and/or an overall weak appearance. On woody plants, the cambium layer under the bark will be black or brown if a branch is damaged.

Luckily freezes don’t happen too often, which means Florida gardeners can still grow the tropical and subtropical plants that wouldn’t survive in other states. But that doesn’t mean freezes do not pose a threat to your landscape. Follow weather reports and protect and prepare vulnerable plants accordingly before freezes take them by surprise.

For more information on cold protection, cold-hardy plant varieties, and other winter landscaping questions, contact your local Extension office.

Adapted and excerpted from:
D. Ingram and T. Yeager, Cold Protection of Ornamental Plants (ENH1), Environmental Horticulture Department (rev. 2/2010).
Program Announcements

Landscape Matters 10AM-11AM
Florida Friendly Landscapes
Wednesday November 13
Master Gardener Ginny Grupe

No programs in December

Plant Clinics 10AM-2PM

Monday Nov 4
Monday Nov 18
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.

No plant clinics in December

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 rljordi@ufl.edu.

Spotlight on Nassau Gardens

Gail Lee is an enthusiastic gardener with many healthy ferns such as the Maiden Hair Fern, the Asparagus Fern, Bird's Nest Fern, Boston Fern and many more varieties. One of her favorite places in her yard is the “Secret Garden” tucked in beside her home with a bird house, a bench and lovely plants. Her Scarlet Rose Mallow in the Hibiscus family is quite spectacular, but each bloom only lasts for 1 day. An antique rocking chair, a children's wheelbarrow and other memorable objects add interest to the surroundings. All of her yard has a comfort feeling, including the wooden swing and many potted plants.
Introduction

Originally from China, Mimosa or Silk tree was introduced to the United States in 1745 and cultivated since the 18th century primarily for use as an ornamental. Mimosa remains a popular ornamental because of its fragrant and showy flowers. Due to its ability to grow and reproduce along roadways and disturbed areas, and its tendency to readily establish after escaping from cultivation, mimosa is considered a Category II invasive by Florida’s Exotic Pest Plant Council.

Description

Mimosa is a deciduous, small to medium-sized tree that can grow 20 to 40 feet tall. It is a member of the legume (Fabaceae) plant family and is capable of fixing nitrogen. The bark is light brown and smooth while young stems are lime green in color, turning light brown and covered with lenticels. Leaves are alternately arranged and bipinnately compound (6 to 20 inches long), having 20 to 60 leaflets per branch. The leaf arrangement gives mimosa a fern-like or feathery appearance. Mimosa flowering occurs from May through July. Pom-pom-like flowers are borne in terminal clusters at the base of the current year’s twigs. The flowers are fragrant and pink in color, about 1½ inches long. Fruits are flat and in pods, a characteristic of many legumes. Pods are straw-colored and 6 inches long containing 5 to 10 light brown oval-shaped seeds about ½ inch in length. Pods typically persist on the plant through the winter months.

Mimosa reproduces both vegetatively and by seed. Seeds require scarification in order to germinate. This characteristic allows the seed to remain dormant for many years. Normally seeds are dispersed in close proximity of the parent plant; however, seeds can also be dispersed by water. Wildlife may also contribute to the spread of mimosa through the ingestion and excretion of the seeds. Vegetative reproduction occurs when trees are cut back, causing quick resprouting and regrowth.

Impacts

Mimosa is a strong competitor in open areas or forest edges due to its ability to grow in various soil types, ability to produce large amounts of seed, and its ability to resprout when cut back or damaged. Mimosa reduces sunlight and nutrients available to desired species because of the denseness of the stand. An opportunist, mimosa will take advantage of disturbed areas, either spreading by seed or germinating in contaminated soil. Mimosa is often seen along roadsides and open vacant lots in urban/suburban areas and can become a problem along banks of waterways, where its seeds are easily transported in water.

Management

Preventative

The first step in preventative control of mimosa is to limit planting and removal of existing plants within the landscape. If possible, removal should occur before seeds are produced. Care must be exercised to prevent seed spread and dispersal during the removal process.
Cultural
There are many native or non-invasive plants that make excellent alternatives to mimosa. These include serviceberry (Amelanchier arborea), redbud (Cercis canadensis), flowering dogwood (Cornus florida), river birch (Betula nigra), fringe tree (Chionanthus virginicus), American holly (Ilex opaca), and sweetgum (Liquidambar styraciflua).

Mechanical
Mimosa can be controlled using a variety of mechanical controls. Power or manual saws can be used to cut trees at ground level. Control is best achieved at flowering before seed production. Cutting is an initial control measure and will require either an herbicidal control or repeated cutting for resprouts. Cutting is most effective when trees have begun to flower to prevent seed production, but may require repeated cuts or an herbicidal application to control sprouting. In the case where herbicide use is impractical, girdling can be effective on larger trees. Make a cut through the bark encircling the base of the tree, approximately six inches above the ground, ensuring the cut goes well below the bark. This will kill the top of the tree but the tree may resprout and require a follow-up treatment with an herbicide. Hand pulling will effectively control young seedlings. Plants should be pulled as soon as possible to prevent maturation. The entire root must be removed since broken fragments may resprout.

Biological
There are no known biological control agents for the control of mimosa.

Chemical
Mimosa seedlings and small trees can be controlled by applying a 2% solution of glyphosate or triclopyr plus a 0.25% non-ionic surfactant to thoroughly wet all leaves. Systemic herbicides such as glyphosate and triclopyr can kill entire plants because the chemicals travel through a plant from the leaves and stems to the actively growing roots. Triclopyr is a selective herbicide for many broad-leaved plant species and should be considered for sites where native or other desirable grasses are meant to be conserved.

The cut-stump and basal bark herbicidal methods should be considered when treating individual trees or where the presence of desirable species preclude foliar application. Stump treatments can be used as long as the ground is not frozen. Horizontally cut stems at or near ground level. Immediately apply a 25% solution of glyphosate or triclopyr and water to the cut stump making sure to cover the outer 20% of the stump. Basal bark applications are effective throughout the year as long as water is not standing at time of application. Apply a mixture of 25% triclopyr and 75% basal oil to the base of the tree trunk to a height of 12-15 inches from the ground. Thorough wetting is necessary for good control; spray until run-off is noticeable at the ground line. Applications should be made to cut stumps within one minute of cutting.

For larger trees stem injections of imazapyr or triclopyr can be used. For trees already chopped down apply these herbicides to the stem and stump to prevent resprouting. For saplings, apply triclopyr as a 20% solution in commercially available basal oil, diesel fuel, or kerosene (2.5 quarts per 3-gallon mix) with a penetrant (check with herbicide distributor) to young bark as a basal spray. For resprouts and seedlings thoroughly wet all leaves with a surfactant in water with and triclopyr or glyphosate herbicide as a 2% solution (8 ounces per 3-gallon mix between July to October) or clopyralid as a 0.2- to 0.4% solution (1 to 2 ounces per 3-gallon mix between July to September).
Composting

How to Choose or Make a Bin

Composting is a great way to create a natural fertilizer for your garden by recycling organic yard and household waste. To compost you need a place where waste materials can break down. These compost units can be bought or made relatively cheaply and easily.

Choosing a Unit

Regardless of whether the compost unit is purchased or built, you should consider the following items when you choose a unit.

Appearance

The unit’s appearance may be very important in some areas because of deed restrictions and other limitations. Otherwise, you can have the bin suit your personal taste. Compost bins can be painted or stained to blend into the landscape.

Size of Unit

Large bins can be hard to manage because you need to turn the organic materials to keep the compost process active.

Small bins, however, may not effectively hold the heat needed to kill weed seeds and pathogens during the composting process. (These bins will still produce compost, but the process will take more time and without the sterilization of diseases and weeds.)

Cost

Manufactured compost units can vary considerably in cost, but most are available for approximately $100.

Homeowners can build compost units for less cost. Some compost units are relatively easy to build, while others require carpentry or masonry skills to construct.

Wildlife

Rodents and other wild or domestic animals may be a problem in some areas. In those cases, the compost unit should be enclosed and secure with a sturdy cover.

Composting Time

In general, the compost units that will provide compost in the least amount of time are also those which require the most management. They will require more frequent turning and more attention to placing the proper proportions of materials in the compost unit.

Making Your Own Unit

There are at least as many different ways to construct a compost unit as there are people who build them. If you decide to build a compost unit, the first step is to decide which type of unit is best for you.

Many county Extension offices have composting demonstration projects with homemade compost units. Many magazines, organizations, or Extension offices in other states also have information available.

Types of Units

Compost units can be classified as "holding bins" or "turning bins." Holding bins are stationary bins that have been constructed from masonry, plastic, wood, wire, or a combination of these materials. Turning units include barrels that are turned horizontally or end to end.

Holding Bins

The holding bin unit is the most popular type of home yard compost unit. The simplest and least expensive type of bin compost unit can be constructed from wire fence material. If you can obtain it, snow fence works quite well. Consider using vinyl-coated fence wire, which is now available at building supply stores. You may also want to consider splitting the cost of a roll of wire with neighbors or friends.

Wire

The length of wire needed for a circular unit will be approximately three times the diameter of the bin. You can wire together the ends of the fence, or use a steel rod or post
to permit quick disassembly for removing the compost or for turning the composting material. If wood or steel corner posts or other side support is provided, wire bins can also be square or rectangular.

Unless extensive side support is provided, these units can be unsightly. Additionally, they may dry out very easily because of the large amount of open area on the sides and top, while excessive water can collect in these areas during rainy weather.

To prevent these problems, some wire bin manufacturers now sell plastic liners with some holes for aeration. Add a cover to your bin if wildlife or excessive rainfall is a problem.

**Wood**

You can also construct bin units from lumber or landscaping timbers. Although these units are more expensive than the wire units, they can also be much more attractive.

Some attractive units can also be made by using lattice panels in wood frames.

A very inexpensive bin unit can be constructed by fastening four wood pallets together at the corners with wire or or wood or metal posts. A fifth pallet can be used for a lid if needed.

**Concrete**

Concrete blocks are another alternative for your bin compost units. You can build a nonpermanent unit by stacking the blocks and driving steel posts through the holes and into the soil.

To make sure your bin will be aerated, leave ½ to ¾ inch gaps between the ends of the blocks, or turn some of the blocks on their sides to achieve the same effect.

The concrete block units can be very attractive if they are painted to match the house or landscape.

**Other Materials**

You can also make a simple bin compost unit from large metal or plastic trash cans. The only modification required is the drilling of aeration and drainage holes. Although these units have a limited capacity and do not retain heat well, they are easily mixed by emptying the unit and refilling it.

**Turning Bins**

Turning bins will produce compost more quickly than a holding bin if properly managed. However, many manufactured units do not have a large enough volume to effectively retain heat or to handle the waste from many yards.

**Plastic**

Plastic barrels are most commonly used to make turning units. They are available in many places that handle mineral oils, detergents, or similar products. Avoid using barrels that previously contained hazardous or toxic materials.

Barrel compost units can be turned on either the vertical or horizontal axis. Steel pipe and pipe flanges are convenient ways to mount the barrels on supports made from wood or concrete block. Some barrels have large screw-on lids for loading and unloading. You can make a door on other barrels by cutting a hole in the side or end and using a piano hinge and a latch. Drill holes in the barrels to provide aeration and drain excess water.

Adapted from:

R. Nordstedt and A. Barkdoll, *Construction of Home Compost Units (AE23)*, Agricultural and Biological Engineering Department (archived).

“Composting Bins,” Florida’s Online Composting Center, UF/IFAS Extension (accessed 08/2012).
Tomatoes: Ripe for Improvement

By KENNETH CHANG    August 26, 2013
GAINESVILLE, Fla. — Science is trying to build a better supermarket tomato.

At a laboratory here at the University of Florida’s Institute for Plant Innovation, researchers chop tomatoes from nearby greenhouses and plop them into glass tubes to extract flavor compounds — the essence of tomato, so to speak. These flavor compounds are identified and quantified by machine. People taste and rate the hybrid tomatoes grown in the university’s fields.

“I’m 98 percent confident we can make a tomato that tastes substantially better,” said Harry J. Klee, a professor of horticultural sciences. He hopes that the fruits of his labor will be available to commercial growers within four or five years and in supermarkets a couple of years after that. He thinks he can make seeds for better tomatoes available to home gardeners even sooner, within a year or two.

The insipid-tomato problem is well known both to salad lovers and scientists. For example, a gene mutation that tomato breeders love because it turns the fruit a luscious red also happens to make it blander. Refrigeration, transportation and other factors also take their toll. Over the decades, the average tomato has become not only less tasty but less nutritious.

Enter Dr. Klee, who helped found the Institute for Plant Innovation a decade ago and has been in a quest for a more flavorful and nutritious mass-market tomato ever since.

It is easy to find a better tasting and more nutritious tomato. Go to a farmer’s market or grow one in the backyard. It is also easy to breed a plant that produces something tastier than a supermarket tomato — cross a sweet heirloom with the supermarket variety. In the greenhouse, Dr. Klee pulls one such hybrid tomato off a vine, and it does taste sweeter. But a hybrid also loses some of the qualities highly valued by commercial growers — it is not as fecund, not as resistant to disease, not as easily grown, not as pretty.

As growers are paid by the pound, a better-tasting but less productive tomato holds little economic appeal, and thus was the supermarket tomato doomed to blandness.

Dr. Klee’s goal is to tweak the tomato DNA — through traditional breeding, not genetic engineering — to add desired flavors while not compromising the traits needed for it to thrive commercially. “I figure that with approximately five key genes we could very significantly improve flavor,” he said. He said three genes that control the production of key flavor compounds have already been located. The next step is to identify versions of the genes that lead the tomato plant to produce more of them.

The chemistry of tomato flavor has three primary components: sugars, acids and what are known as volatile chemicals — the flavor compounds that waft into the air carrying the fruit’s aroma. There are more than 400 volatiles in a tomato, and Dr. Klee and his collaborators set out to first determine which ones are the most important in making a tasty tomato.

This involved grinding up a lot of tomatoes, looking at what was in them, and asking a lot of people to taste them (unpulverized), gathering comments like “a bland firm watermelon,” “soft and sloppy,” and “Sweet! Finally a sample with some sweetness.”

From there, Dr. Klee and his collaborators, who include Linda Bartoshuk, director of human research at the university’s Center for Smell and Taste, used statistics to correlate people’s preferences with the presence, or absence, of particular flavor compounds, to devise a chemical recipe for the ideal tomato.

The supermarket tomato — even when grown with care and picked ripe — did not excel. “The best it will do is middle-of-the-pack,” Dr. Klee said.

Cherry Roma tomatoes were at the top of the charts, followed by heirloom varieties like Matina, Alisa Craig and Bloody Butcher. Other heirlooms like Marmande and Oaxacan Pink ranked at the bottom, below the supermarket tomatoes, though perhaps these particular types just do not grow well in Florida.

The taste analysis produced several surprises. Some compounds, abundant in many tomato varieties and thus thought to be major contributors to
flavor, turned out to be irrelevant, while others, in scant quantities, had major influences. With the new knowledge, “you can’t help but get a better tomato,” Dr. Bartoshuk said.

The most important attribute was sweetness. The sweeter the tomato, the higher the rating. The biggest surprise, though, was that it was not just sugar that made a tomato sweet. Some of the flavor compounds enhanced the perception of sweetness.

That is the key to Dr. Klee’s plans. Tomato breeders have already tried to maximize sugar, but the plants are bred to produce a lot of big tomatoes all at once, and then do not have energy and sunlight through photosynthesis to make enough sugar to go around.

The sweetness-enhancing compounds, however, are present in much smaller quantities, so getting a plant to produce more of those is a much more achievable goal, Dr. Klee said. (The compounds also offer promise for sweetening other foods without adding the calories of sugar.)

“His work is really groundbreaking,” said James Giovannoni, a professor of plant biology at Cornell who studies the ripening of fruit and was one of the leaders in the sequencing of the tomato genome published last year.

He said Dr. Klee has been deciphering the molecular machineries in tomatoes that produce the flavor compounds, and that is not an easy task. “One, there is a lot of them,” Dr. Giovannoni said, “and two, a lot of them are really not understood, how some of these produce these compounds hasn’t been known.”

Modern genetic engineering has provided tools to study that, and tomatoes are one of the most common plants that plant geneticists study, much in the same way that animal geneticists focus on mice, and now researchers can knock out particular compounds and see if they played a key role in flavor or not.

There has been one genetically engineered tomato in the supermarket. In the 1980s, plant geneticists at the University of California, Davis, just as frustrated by bland tasting tomatoes, also tried to make a better tomato. That led to a biotechnology company, Calgene, in 1994, developing the Flavr Savr tomato, the first genetically engineered food of any kind in the supermarket, its DNA tweaked to inhibit a protein that turns a tomato mushy over time. While it sold well, Calgene foundered in the logistics of industrial agriculture and was bought by Monsanto, which discontinued selling the seeds.

The Florida team is not repeating the Flavr Savr game plan.

Although Dr. Klee experiments with genetically engineered tomatoes to test and confirm findings, he said that none of the ones eventually destined for supermarkets will be — partly to avoid potential consumer backlash and partly because his university cannot afford the estimated $1.5 million that would be needed to obtain regulatory approval to sell a genetically engineered tomato.

Instead, the tomato would be created through traditional breeding techniques, but using genetic tests to determine which of the plants possess the desired genes.

The quest for year-round produce at the supermarket has also led to tomatoes being grown in less-than-ideal places — like Florida, where the soil is too sandy and there are plenty of pests — when the traditional tomato-growing areas farther north are too chilly.

Dr. Klee does not expect the improved tomato to taste as good as the best heirlooms. Supermarket tomatoes would still be grown in large quantities, picked green and shipped long distances before being gassed with ethylene to ripen. In addition, the tomatoes are often mishandled en route. Refrigeration, Dr. Klee notes, destroys the flavor compounds in even the best tomato. “I might be able to get 75 percent” of the best tomato in one that can be grown in greater quantities, he said.

Some traditional breeders are skeptical that Dr. Klee can do what he thinks he can as quickly as he predicts. “I don’t think the taste of tomatoes is going to be fixed by molecular biologists,” said David Francis, a professor at The Ohio State University who has bred and released several tomato varieties, “because flavor is a lot more complicated than manipulating one or two genes.”

After working with tomatoes for so long, Dr. Klee admits he does not eat many of them, but he does want the public to be able to buy appetizing ones. Part of his quest is to get people to eat less junk food. If he can improve the taste of tomatoes, he said, it could be an important way to coax Americans to eat healthier foods.

Tomatoes aren’t the only focus of the Institute for Plant Innovation. Researchers are working on a more fragrant rose, a project that involves the genetic engineering feat of inserting — yes — a tomato gene in a rose plant. They are also trying to grow tastier strawberries and blueberries. One new blueberry variety could be described as positively crispy, almost apple-like in its texture.

Consumers who tasted these blueberries liked their firmness, and the quality is also a boon to growers, because the fruit lasts longer.

“It’s a blueprint,” Dr. Klee said of his tomato quest, “for a much bigger program of bringing back flavor.”
Hello everybody! Welcome back to Harvest Gold! When I was a young child, around this time of year I would often hear my grandparents say, “Christmas is right around the corner.” I did not know what they meant by that, as when I peeked around the corner, any corner, looking for Christmas, everything looked the same to me. I asked my grandmother once what she meant when she said “Christmas is right around the corner”. She replied, “That means Christmas is almost here, and we need to start getting ready.”

By getting ready for Christmas, my grandmother meant getting the gifts ready. My grandmother was big on homemade gifts. Crocheted doilies and sweaters; homemade jams and jellies; home baked cookies and cakes….She made it all, and gave it all with love to family and friends at Christmas. Nothing says “I love you” like a handmade, homemade gift that you have put not only your time into, but your heart as well.

Last summer when I was talking with Claudie Speed about herbs, she shared her recipe for homemade herb vinegar with me. We both agreed that homemade herb vinegar, made with homegrown herbs, would make an excellent Christmas gift. Put a nice ribbon and bow on the bottle, and you have a present that anyone would be proud to receive.

Herb vinegar is very easy to make. Just add some herbs to vinegar (see Claudie’s easy to follow recipe below), and there you have it. There are many types of vinegar available in the supermarket. Depending on the herbs you choose, white, apple cider, white wine, red wine, or plain rice vinegar can be used.

Different types of herbs and other ingredients go well with different types of vinegar. Rosemary, raisins, orange peel, and garlic go well with white wine vinegar. Sage, parsley, and shallots are great when used with red wine vinegar. Lemon thyme, lemon verbena, lemon balm, lemon zest, and lemon basil add a nice lemony flavor to rice or white wine vinegar. Sage and apple cider vinegar are a wonderful combination, and goes well with pork. Combine several different herbs to create a bouquet garni (French for “garnished bouquet”). Mix and match your favorite herbs and all will turn out just fine. With herbs, personal taste is what it is all about. Claudie and I encourage you to confect holiday gifts out of homegrown herbs and vinegar; gifts everyone will appreciate, made with love, and coming from the heart.

In closing, I will share with you Claudie’s recipe for homemade herb vinegar. Thanks Claudie! After Claudie’s recipe, I will present The Second Annual Master Gardeners’ Holiday Feast, containing recipes from the kitchens of Nassau County’s Master Gardeners for your enjoyment. Thanks to all the Master Gardeners who shared their family recipes with us. Without you, this Holiday Recipe Column would not have been possible. And a special thanks to Kathy Warner, the inspiration and artist behind Harvest Gold (and the editor and artist of the entire newsletter, I might add), who makes my column look good, and attracts many of you to it with her colorful illustrations and beautiful photos. Without you, Kathy, this column would not even be here. Finally, thanks to all of you readers for sharing your time with me this past year. Without you, this column would not be a success. Until we meet again in the New Year, Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, God Bless, and Happy Harvesting!

Peace and Goodness,

Joseph

NB: All vegetables, herbs, fruits, and nuts marked with an asterisk (*) in the following recipes can be successfully grown here in Nassau County.
Claudie’s Herb Vinegar

Ingredients

• Fresh Herbs* of Your Choice
• Vinegar of Your Choice

Directions

Heat vinegar, but do not boil. Fill a glass jar or bottle about one-quarter to halfway full of fresh herbs (do not pack), and then completely fill the jar or bottle with vinegar. Let cool. Cover bottle or jar with a non-metal lid. Set aside for about a week or so to allow the herbs to steep in the vinegar before use. Store in a cool, dark location. (Storing your herb vinegar in a dark location is important, as light will not only cause the color to fade, but will cause the flavor to diminish as well.)

Notes

Herb vinegars are very popular (and quite expensive!). Save money; make some for yourself, and surprise a friend with a bottle! Fresh homemade herb vinegar not only makes a lovely gift to give at Christmas, but makes a great birthday present, housewarming gift, or anniversary present as well.

Recipe courtesy of Claudie Speed.
Becky’s Glazed Holiday Ham

Ingredients

- 1 Large (6-8 Pounds) Spiral Cut Ham Butt
- ¾ Cup Water
- ½ Cup Organic Honey*
- ½ Cup Light Brown Sugar
- 2 Tablespoons Dijon Mustard
- ½ Teaspoon Ground Cinnamon

Directions

Preheat oven to 300 Degrees Fahrenheit. Place ham in a roasting pan, and pour about ¾ cup water into the bottom of pan. Cover tightly with aluminum foil. Bake according to the directions on the package, or until heated through and the ham is soft and tender. Ten minutes before completely cooked, take ham from oven, remove aluminum foil, and pour or brush glaze over the top of all portions of the ham. (To make ham glaze, whisk honey, brown sugar, Dijon mustard, and cinnamon together in a microwave safe dish, and bring to a simmer in microwave—about 1-2 minutes. Do not allow to boil over.) Raise oven temperature to 400 Degrees Fahrenheit. Return ham to the oven, and cook (uncovered) for 10 minutes, or until glaze is caramelized and bubbly. Let rest for 10 minutes before serving.

Notes

This is a holiday ham that everyone will love. It would be great for Thanksgiving or Christmas, but if your family prefers a traditional turkey for Thanksgiving, please see last year’s Holiday Edition of Horticulture News at http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture/newsletter/newsletters12/6novdec12.pdf and scroll down to Page 5.

Recipe courtesy of Becky Jordi.
Kathy’s Cheese Nip

Ingredients

• 1 Teaspoon Dijon Mustard
• 1 (12 Ounce) Package Havarti Cheese
• 1 Teaspoon Dried Parsley* Flakes
• ½ Teaspoon Dried Chives*
• ¼ Teaspoon Dried Whole Dillweed*
• ¼ Teaspoon Dried Whole Basil*
• ¼ Teaspoon Fennel* Seeds
• 1 Sheet Frozen Puff Pastry (Thawed)
• 1 Egg (Beaten)

Directions

Spread mustard over top of cheese. Sprinkle with all dried herbs. Place cheese, mustard side down, in center of pastry. Wrap package style, and trim off excess pastry. Seal seam. Place seam side down on a lightly greased baking sheet. Brush with egg. Chill for 30 minutes. Bake at 375 Degrees Fahrenheit for 20 minutes. Brush with egg again, and bake an additional 10 minutes, or until golden brown. Serve warm with assorted crackers, or sliced apples or pears. Yield: 8 to 10 appetizer servings.

Notes

I often use Jack or Pepper Jack cheese instead of Havarti. Be prepared to share this recipe, because everyone loves it!

Recipe courtesy of Kathy Warner.
Vicki’s Vegetable Tarts

Ingredients

- 1 Package Flaky Dough Sheet or Crescent Rolls (Close Up the Scored Marks)
- ½ Cup Shredded Gruyere Cheese
- 1 Small Tomato* (Diced)
- 4 Asparagus* Spears (Cut Crosswise into ¼ Inch Thick Slices)
- 1 Egg
- 3 Tablespoons Whipping Cream
- Salt and Pepper (To Taste)

Directions

Preheat oven to 375 Degrees Fahrenheit. Unroll dough until flat, and cut into 12 equal squares. Line mini muffin tins with mini baking cups. Place dough squares in cups, and shape edges to keep contents from spilling out. Divide cheese among cups, and top with vegetables. Pat down with a spoon. Set aside. In a small bowl, combine egg and whipping cream, and beat until frothy. Add salt and pepper to taste. Using a spoon, divide egg mixture over vegetables, and gently spread to the edge of the dough. Bake tarts for about 15 minutes. Cool slightly before serving.

Notes

These Vegetable Tarts make a tasty appetizer. To create a meat-lover’s version of this dish, simply substitute cheddar cheese and crumbled bacon for the vegetables and Gruyere.

Recipe courtesy of Vicki Martin.

Janet’s Chick Pea Salad

Ingredients

- 1 Can (16 Ounces) Garbanzo Beans* (Chick Peas*)
- 1 Medium to Large Green Bell Pepper* (Diced)
- 1 Medium to Large Red Bell Pepper* (Diced)
- 3 Small to Medium Carrots* (Diced)
- ½ Cup Dried Cranberries
- ½ Cup Sunflower* Kernels or Sliced Almonds
- 3-4 Ounces Poppy Seed* Dressing

Directions

Rinse and drain garbanzo beans. Put all ingredients into a bowl. Add salad dressing, and mix well. Cover and refrigerate before serving.

Notes

This is a very healthy (and tasty) addition to a holiday meal. The green bell pepper, and the red bell pepper and cranberries, lend a festive, even “Christmassy”, look to this dish.

Recipe courtesy of Janet Barnes.
Gertrude’s Cranberry Salad

Ingredients
- 1 Packet Small Red Jell-O
- 1 Packet Plain Gelatin
- ½ Cup Sugar (Or Less, To Taste)
- 12 Ounces Fresh Cranberries
- 1 Orange* (Cut into Quarters)
- 1 Can Crushed Pineapple* (With Juice)
- Chopped Pecans* (To Taste)

Directions
Dissolve gelatins and sugar in 1 cup of hot water. Use a food processor to chop the quartered orange and the cranberries, but not too much—the crunch and bumps are what makes it good! Add the chopped fruits, pecans, and pineapple to the gelatins, mix, and chill until firm. Sit and rest—it’s that easy!

Notes
I worked with Gertrude in the Training Department at The May Company in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1967. She was a great cook, and a good friend to a novice cook.

Recipe courtesy of Candace Bridgewater.

Vicki’s Broccoli Salad

Ingredients
- 1 Head Fresh Broccoli* (Cut Florets into Small Pieces)
- ½ Cup Carrots* (Shredded)
- 1/3 Cup Craisins  (Or Dried Cranberries)
- 1/3 Cup Red Onion* (Chopped)
- ¼ Cup Sliced Almonds or Pecans* (Plain)
- ¼ to 1/3 Cup Light Mayonnaise
- 1 Tablespoon Sugar (Splenda or Other Artificial Sweetener Can Be Substituted)
- 2 to 3 Tablespoons Balsamic Vinegar or Red Wine Vinegar

Directions
Prepare fresh veggies, and place all ingredients except mayonnaise, sweetener, and vinegar into an oversized bowl. Set aside. Wisk together mayo, sweetener, and vinegar until creamy. Eyeball whether you will have enough dressing to coat the veggies, and prepare more if necessary. Mix dressing into veggies, chill, and enjoy!

Notes
This quick salad is quite versatile, and makes a great addition to a holiday meal. (It makes a great addition to any meal!) Also, raisins could be substituted for some or all of the dried cranberries.

Recipe courtesy of Vicki Martin.
Aunt Henrietta’s Vegetarian Roasted Stuffed Pumpkin

Ingredients

Stuffing

• 1 ½ Sticks Butter (Or Margarine)
• 1 Large Vidalia Onion* (Coarsely Chopped)
• 1 Cup Celery* (Diced)
• 1 Cup Fresh Mushrooms (Sliced)
• 8 to 10 Slices Whole Wheat Bread (Toasted and Cubed)
• 1 Cup Apples* (Peeled, Cored, and Chopped)
• 1 Cup Pecans* (Coarsely Chopped)
• 2/3 Cup Raisins
• 2 Eggs
• 2 or 3 Cloves Garlic* (Minced)
• 1 Teaspoon Oregano* (Or To Taste)
• 1 Teaspoon Sage* (Or To Taste)
• ½ Teaspoon Cinnamon (Ground)
• ½ Teaspoon Nutmeg (Ground)
• ½ Teaspoon Cumin (Powdered)
• ¼ Teaspoon Sea Salt
• ¼ Teaspoon Black Pepper (Freshly Ground)
• 1 Cup Dry White Wine (For the Stuffing)
• 1 Large Glass Red Wine (For the Cook)
• 1 Small Pumpkin* (About 8 to 10 Inches in Diameter)

Gravy

• 4 Tablespoons Cooked Stuffing (From Pumpkin)
• 2 Tablespoons Extra-Virgin Olive Oil
• 4 Tablespoons Flour
• 2 Cups Water
• Large Pinch of Sea Salt
• Drippings from Pumpkin Roasting Pan
Directions

The Stuffing: Melt 2 tablespoons of butter or margarine in a large skillet, and sauté chopped onion over medium heat until the pieces are limp and translucent. Add diced celery, and cook for 3 to 4 minutes. Add mushrooms, and cook for 1 additional minute. Remove skillet from heat. Set aside. Oven toast whole wheat bread, and cut into ¾ inch cubes. Put bread cubes in a large mixing bowl, and add the sautéed vegetables, apple pieces, chopped pecans, and raisins. Set aside. Beat 2 eggs in a separate container, and pour into bowl. Mix thoroughly, and set aside. In a small frying pan, sauté garlic in 6 tablespoons of butter or margarine for 1 minute. Pour butter/garlic mixture over ingredients in the bowl, and mix stuffing with a large wooden spoon. Sprinkle in oregano, sage, cinnamon, nutmeg, cumin, salt, and pepper. Add 1 cup dry white wine, and mix thoroughly. (For a healthier alternative to the butter mentioned above, use olive oil instead of butter for sautéing—2 tablespoons of butter equal 1 ounce of olive oil.)

The Pumpkin: Prepare the pumpkin by thoroughly washing, and then cutting a large circle around the stem (as if you were preparing a Jack-O-Lantern). Lift top off and discard. Scoop out seeds and strings. Fill pumpkin with stuffing. Press the stuffing mixture into the pumpkin shell by hand to make sure the pumpkin is completely filled. Cut a number of small, slit-like pockets at different levels in the exterior wall of the pumpkin using a sharp knife. Take remaining butter (½ stick), and press a small amount into each of these slits. Place stuffed pumpkin into an oiled baking dish, and bake for about 2 ½ hours in a 350 Degree Fahrenheit preheated oven. (Cooking time may vary depending on the thickness of the pumpkin shell.) As the pumpkin bakes, the butter will trickle down the sides. Periodically baste pumpkin and stuffing with pan juice using a pastry brush. The pumpkin is done when it turns a rich orange-brown color, the exposed stuffing is dark and crisp, and a fork can be inserted and withdrawn from the pumpkin flesh easily. Remove from oven, and let cool for 20 to 30 minutes before serving. (While pumpkin is baking, the cook enjoys his or her well deserved glass of wine.)

The Gravy: Heat oil over medium heat in a small frying pan. Add pumpkin drippings and stuffing, and carefully break up the stuffing as it simmers. Slowly add the flour, all the while constantly stirring. When the flour starts to brown, gradually pour in the water a little at a time, still stirring continuously. Add salt, and stir some more. When gravy thickens, remove from heat. If gravy cools and becomes too thick, just add a bit more water and slowly reheat.

Notes
It is important to choose a suitable pumpkin for baking. Home grown is always best, but adequate pumpkins can be found at the grocery store. If you decide to go store-bought, look for a pumpkin that has the stem still attached, is firm to the touch, and has no bruises or scratches from shipping. DO NOT get one of those large, bright orange monstrosities sold around Halloween that are not good for anything except carving into Jack-O-Lanterns, and then tossing onto the compost heap. These do not cook well. Small sugar pumpkins are the best because of their firm texture. Calabazas are also a good choice. Avoid misshapen pumpkins. The pumpkin should be able to sit upright in order to cook evenly. Also, get a pumpkin that is uniformly orange or tan, and has no green areas. Finally, do not get a pumpkin that is too large. A nice, round, 8 to 10 inch in diameter pumpkin would be perfect to serve 6 to 8 people. This roasted pumpkin makes an excellent main course for a vegetarian meal, or a delicious side-dish for a traditional Thanksgiving feast. If you decide to go vegetarian this year, possible side dishes might include mashed potatoes or brown rice with pumpkin gravy, cranberry sauce, broccoli, and mince pie. (Also, many of the other recipes in this column can be used as part of a vegetarian meal. JS)

Recipe courtesy of Mrs. Henrietta Witherspoons.
Kathy’s Crab Stuffed Chicken with Shrimp Newburg Sauce

Ingredients
- 2 Tablespoons Butter
- ¼ Cup Finely Chopped Green Onion*
- 1 Cup Cooked Crabmeat
- 1 Can (3 Ounces) Chopped Mushrooms (Drained)
- ½ Cup Saltine Cracker Crumbs (Coarsely Crushed)
- 3 Tablespoons Snipped Parsley*
- 2 Tablespoons Dry White Wine
- ½ Teaspoon Salt
- 4 Boned and Skinned Whole Chicken Breasts (5 Ounces Each)
- Vegetable Oil (For Brushing)
- Shrimp Newburg Sauce
- Hot Cooked Rice
- Paprika (To Taste)

Shrimp Newburg Sauce
- 2 Tablespoons Butter
- 2 Tablespoons All-Purpose Flour
- ¼ Teaspoon Salt
- ¼ Teaspoon Paprika
- 1 ½ Cups Half-and-Half
- 1 Cup Shelled Cooked Shrimp
- 2 Tablespoons Dry Sherry

Directions
Preheat oven to 375 Degrees Fahrenheit. In a medium skillet, melt butter. Add green onion. Cook over medium-high heat until tender, stirring occasionally. Stir in crabmeat, mushrooms, cracker crumbs, 2 tablespoons snipped parsley, wine, and salt. Mix well. Spoon about 1/3 cup stuffing mixture onto each chicken breast. Fold 2 sides in, roll up, and tie with string. Place in a baking pan. Brush chicken with oil. Cover and bake for 30 minutes, or until tender. While chicken is cooking, prepare Shrimp Newburg Sauce. (For Shrimp Newberg Sauce, melt butter in a medium saucepan. Blend in flour, salt, and paprika. Add half-and-half. Stir constantly over medium-high heat until mixture thickens and bubbles. Stir in shrimp and sherry. Keep warm. Makes about 1 ¾ cups sauce.) To serve, remove string from cooked chicken breast. Place chicken breast on top of hot rice on individual plates. Spoon about 1/3 cup Shrimp Newburg Sauce over each chicken breast. Sprinkle with paprika and remaining parsley. Makes 4 servings.

Notes
For many years, I served this as Christmas brunch with fruit and asparagus. This dish makes an excellent entrée, or an elegant side dish for a traditional Thanksgiving feast when served as a casserole. To serve as a casserole, simply arrange sliced chicken breasts over rice, and top with sauce.

Recipe courtesy of Kathy Warner.
Captain Bump’s Mirliton and Shrimp Casserole

Ingredients

- 10 to 12 Medium to Large Mirlitons (Chayote)*
- 1 Stick Butter
- 1 Large Onion* (Chopped)
- 6 Green Onions* (Chopped)
- 5 Toes Garlic* (Chopped)
- 2 ½ Pounds Raw Shrimp (Peeled and Deveined)
- 2 Tablespoons Parsley* (Chopped)
- Thyme* (To Taste)
- Salt, Pepper, and Tabasco Sauce (To Taste)
- Italian Bread Crumbs (As Needed)
- More Butter (For Topping, To Taste)

Directions

Boil mirlitons until they can be penetrated by a fork. Let cool. Cut mirlitons in half, discarding the seed. Peel mirlitons, and cut into chunks. Melt 1 stick butter in a large frying pan. Sauté the onions and green onions in butter until soft. Add garlic, and sauté a little more. Add shrimp. When shrimp turn pink, add mirlitons and simmer. Add parsley, salt, pepper, Tabasco sauce, and thyme. Add bread crumbs to thicken and hold mixture together. Stir. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed. Put mixture into a greased casserole dish, and top with additional bread crumbs and pats of butter. Bake at 400 Degrees Fahrenheit until browned (about 20 to 25 minutes).

Notes

This Cajun delight is a family favorite over the holidays. At our house, Christmas would not be complete without it.

Recipe courtesy of Captain Bumpy Rhodes.
Shirley’s Squash Casserole

Ingredients
- 2 Pounds Cooked Squash* (Drained)
- ½ Stick Butter (¼ Cup)
- 1 Egg
- 1 Can Cream of Mushroom Soup (Divided)
- 1 Large Vidalia Onion* (Chopped)
- 1 Cup Pepperidge Farm Stuffing Mix
- 10 Ritz Crackers (More or Less, To Taste)

Directions
Put squash, butter, egg, ½ can soup, onion, and stuffing mix into a large bowl. Mix well. Pour mixture into a buttered casserole dish, and spread out evenly. Add a little water to remaining soup, and spoon over mixture. Crumble Ritz Crackers over top. Bake at 350 Degrees Fahrenheit for 30 minutes. This dish can be made ahead of time and frozen.

Notes
We’ve adapted a vegetarian squash casserole that is a staple of our holiday table. I hope you like it. (If there are no vegetarians in the family, cream of chicken soup can be substituted for the cream of mushroom soup if desired.)

Recipe courtesy of Shirley Lohman.

Bea’s Candied Sweet Potatoes

Ingredients
- 4 to 6 Large Sweet Potatoes*
- 1 Stick Butter
- 1 Cup Honey
- 1 Tablespoon Nutmeg (Or To Taste)
- 1 Tablespoon Cinnamon (Or To Taste)

Directions
Boil potatoes until firm. Don't overcook. Peel and cut in half lengthwise, or cut into ½ inch slices. Lay potatoes in a 9x13 inch baking dish. Set aside. Place stick of butter in a saucepan, and pour honey over it. Heat until butter is melted, stirring occasionally. Pour butter/honey mixture over potatoes in the baking dish, adding more butter/honey mixture if desired. Sprinkle nutmeg and cinnamon over the potatoes. Bake at 350 Degrees Fahrenheit for 20 minutes. Turn over the potatoes to coat the other side, and let sit for about 10 minutes. Serves 6 to 10 people, depending on portion size.

Notes
I make this candied yams/sweet potato dish every year, and have tried to replace it with something healthier, but to no avail—the family prefers this traditional dish.

Recipe courtesy of Bea Walker.
Grandma Laura’s Braised Cabbage and Carrots

Ingredients
- 1 Large Head Green Cabbage* (About 3 Pounds)
- 4 Slices Extra-Thick Bacon (Cut into 1 Inch Squares)
- 1 Cup Water
- 2 Tablespoons Smash Seasoning (Recipe Follows)
- 1 Ten Ounce Bag Baby Carrots*
- Salt and Freshly Ground Black Pepper (To Taste)

Directions
Core cabbage and chop into 2 inch pieces. Clean thoroughly, and let drain. In a large pot over medium heat, cook bacon halfway through (until lightly browned, but still moist). Add cabbage, water, and Smash Seasoning. Cover, and reduce to a simmer. Simmer for 2 hours, stirring every 15 minutes. Drain water from pot and add carrots. Cover and simmer for another 15 minutes, or until carrots are tender. Add salt and pepper to taste.
(For the Smash Seasoning, thoroughly mix 1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper*, 1 teaspoon celery seed, ½ tablespoon lemon pepper, and 1 tablespoon garlic powder. Store in a tightly sealed container.)

Notes
This is an excellent side dish that has been a part of our family’s holiday meals for well over 30 years. My grandmother passed this recipe on to my mother, who then passed it on to me.

Recipe courtesy of Vicki Martin.

Valerie’s Roasted Cauliflower

Ingredients
- 5 to 6 Cups Cauliflower* Florets (From Medium Sized Cauliflower)
- ¼ Cup Extra-Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 Tablespoon Garlic* (Sliced)
- 2 Tablespoons Lemon* Juice
- 1 Teaspoon Salt
- ½ Teaspoon Black Pepper
- 2 Tablespoons Parmesan Cheese (Grated)
- Chives* (Chopped, For Garnish)

Directions
Preheat oven to 500 Degrees Fahrenheit. Place the cauliflower florets in a large sauté or roasting pan. Drizzle olive oil over the cauliflower, and season with garlic, lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Place the sauté/roasting pan in the oven, and cook for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally to ensure even roasting. Remove pan from the oven, and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Garnish with chives. Serve.

Notes
We added this recipe to our Thanksgiving menu last year. I was never a fan of cauliflower before I tasted this. My sister Valerie introduced this recipe, and we all loved it. I once made it with one of my “Fresh from the Garden” broccolis*, and that turned out really tasty as well. (This year, I may try a mixture of cauliflower and broccoli, and see how that turns out!) I also sometimes just pour olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and seasonings over it, and bake or convection roast at 400 Degrees Fahrenheit until a little bit brown. Yummy too!

Recipe courtesy of Vicki Martin.
Aunt Doris' Corn Casserole

Ingredients
- 1 Can Whole Kernel Corn* (Drained)
- 1 Can Creamed Corn*
- 1 Box Jiffy Cornbread Mix
- ½ Cup Melted Butter
- 1 Cup Sour Cream
- 1 Egg (Beaten)
- 1 Cup Cheddar Cheese (Shredded)

Directions
Combine all ingredients except cheese. Place in an 8x8 inch pan. Bake at 350 Degrees Fahrenheit for 15 minutes. Add cheese on top. Bake 25 more minutes. Serve.

Notes
Aunt Doris was a little lady less than five feet tall, who retired after a life-long career as a registered nurse. She had so many social engagements with her little lady friends that the family had to get on her calendar! She lived to be 92 years old, and was never fond of being in the kitchen. She went out with her friends for lunch, and was a part of many lunch groups who frequented various church potlucks. She acquired this recipe along the way, and “toiled in the kitchen” to share this dish with the family for the holidays. It was very popular amongst us, and became her signature contribution to the holiday meal. Since I may be the only one in the family with a copy of the recipe, I have been elected to make this recipe in her place. It is very simple to make, and should be a big hit with your family also.

Recipe courtesy of Janet Barnes.

Evelyn’s Escalloped Potatoes

Ingredients
- 2 Tablespoons Butter
- 2 Tablespoons Flour
- 1 Cup Milk
- 1 Teaspoon Salt
- 3-4 Medium Potatoes* (Sliced)
- 4 or More Bacon Slices (Uncooked)

Directions
In a casserole dish, make a white sauce by melting the butter, blending in the flour and salt, adding milk, and stirring constantly until smooth and thick. Do not let it boil. Peel and slice 3-4 medium potatoes. Add potatoes to the white sauce. Mix together. Top with bacon slices (Be sure to cover entire top with bacon). Bake for 1 hour at 350 Degrees Fahrenheit. Serve.

Notes
This is a dish my mother made, but I am not sure she used a recipe. It is easy to make, and tastes delicious.

Recipe courtesy of Ginny Grupe.
Kathy’s Cheese Biscuits

Ingredients

- 2 Sticks Unsalted Butter (Room Temperature)
- 1 Pound New York Sharp or Extra Sharp Cheese (Grated)
- 4 Scant Cups Self Rising Flour (Sift, Then Measure)
- 1 Teaspoon Sugar
- ½ Teaspoon Cayenne Pepper* (For a Milder Version, Try ¼ Teaspoon First)
- Granulated Sugar (For Shaking)

Directions

Cream butter and cheese together. Add sugar and cayenne pepper to flour. Gradually add flour mixture to butter/cheese mixture. Roll out to ¾ inch thick. Cut with a small cookie cutter (I use a 1 inch round cutter from my canapé set). Place biscuits on a parchment paper lined cookie sheet, and bake at 300 Degrees Fahrenheit for 30 minutes. (Biscuits should not get brown.) After cooling, using a zip-lock bag, shake a batch at a time with granulated sugar. Makes about 8 dozen.

Notes

These cheese biscuits were a much awaited gift from one of my aunts every Christmas. They are great as a gift. I also take them to social functions (such as our Master Gardener luncheons). They are fantastic, and everyone always wants the recipe. I used to tell people I would give them the recipe, but then I’d have to kill them!!!

Recipe courtesy of Kathy Stevenson.
Vicki’s Blueberry Crunch

Ingredients

• 1 20 Ounce Can Crushed Pineapple* (Undrained)
• 2 to 3 Cups Blueberries* (Fresh or Frozen)
• 1 Cup Sugar
• 1 Box Yellow Cake Mix
• 2 Sticks Butter (Melted)
• 1 Cup Pecans* (Chopped)

Directions

Preheat oven to 325 Degrees Fahrenheit. Butter a 9x13 inch baking pan, and spread the following ingredients in layers in this order: Pineapple (juice and all), blueberries, ¼ cup of sugar sprinkled on the berries, dry yellow cake mix, melted butter, pecans, and ¼ cup of sugar sprinkled on top. Bake for 35-40 minutes, or until brown on top. Serve with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.

Notes

I especially like to make this dessert for the holidays because of the raves it gets from everyone, not to mention the ease in making!

Recipe courtesy of Vicki Martin.
Aunt Henrietta’s Cranberry-Mincemeat Pie

Ingredients

• 3 Pounds Baking Apples* (Peeled, Cored, and Chopped)
• 1 Cup Dried Cranberries
• 1 Cup Golden Raisins
• ½ Cup Pecans* (Chopped)
• ½ Cup Dark Brown Sugar (Packed)
• ½ Stick Unsalted Butter or Margarine (Cut into Pieces)
• ¼ Cup Unsulfured (Light) Molasses
• ¼ Cup Apple* Cider (Or Apple* Juice)
• 7 Tablespoons Christian Brothers Brandy
• 2 Tablespoons Fresh Lemon* Juice
• 2 Teaspoons Lemon* Peel (Grated)
• 1 Teaspoon Ground Cinnamon
• ¼ Teaspoon Ground Allspice
• ¼ Teaspoon Ground Cloves
• Pinch of Sea Salt
• 1 Tablespoon Milk (Or Egg White)
• 1 Tablespoon White Sugar
• 1-9 Inch Pie Crust
• Lattice for Pie

Directions

Choose fresh Florida-grown baking apples, such as Anna or Dorsett (Store-bought Jonathan or McIntosh apples will also do). Combine all ingredients except milk or egg white, white sugar, crust, and lattice in a heavy, large saucepan. Cook over low heat for about 50 minutes, or until apples are tender and mixture is thick, stirring occasionally. Cool completely. Cover and refrigerate. Position rack in bottom third of oven, and preheat oven to 400 Degrees Fahrenheit. Roll out 2 dough disks about 13 inches in diameter on a lightly floured surface. Transfer one dough disk to a 9 inch glass pie dish. Gently push dough into dish forming crust, and trim any overhang. Using a fork, punch a number of holes in sides and bottom of crust. Brush crust with milk or egg white, and sprinkle with 1 tablespoon sugar. Fill with mincemeat. Cut other dough disk into long, ½ to ¾ inch ribbons. Form lattice on top of pie. Trim lattice strips, allowing about ½ inch overhang. Fold parts of the lattice that overhang the edges under the crust, and crimp edges of crust. Brush lattice with milk or egg whites, and bake for about 45 minutes, or until crust is golden brown and mincemeat bubbles thickly. (To prevent edges of pie from burning while pie bakes, cover edges with strips of aluminum foil. Remove foil about 15 minutes before pie is done.) Transfer pie to a rack and cool completely.

Notes

Make mincemeat at least several days in advance in order to allow flavors to seep through. Store bought pie dough, or a store bought, ready made pie crust (unbaked), could be substituted for homemade. The lattice top makes a nice presentation, but if you have never made one, or feel intimidated by it, YouTube has a number of good videos showing how one is made. Your family will love this mincemeat pie, and it will quickly become a Christmas family tradition!

Recipe courtesy of Mrs. Henrietta Witherspoons.
Aunt Henrietta's Holiday Wassail

Ingredients

- 1 Gallon Unfiltered Apple* Cider
- 2 Cups Baked Apples* (Peeled, Cored, and Cut into Medium-Small Pieces)
- 1/3 Cup Water
- 1 Cup Sugar
- 1 Teaspoon Ground Nutmeg
- ½ Teaspoon Ground Ginger
- ¼ Teaspoon Ground Mace
- 6 Whole Cloves
- 6 Allspice Berries
- 3 Cinnamon Sticks
- 2 Cups Cream Sherry
- 1 Cup Christian Brothers Brandy (Or More, To Taste)
- 3 Eggs (Separated)
- Cinnamon Sticks (For Garnish)
- Whipped Cream (Optional)

Directions

Heat apple cider and baked apples in a saucepan. In another saucepan, boil water, sugar, nutmeg, ginger, mace, cloves, allspice berries, and 3 cinnamon sticks. In a third saucepan, heat cream sherry and brandy. Separate egg whites from egg yolks. In a small mixing bowl, beat egg whites until firm and stiff, but not dry. In a large mixing bowl, beat egg yolks until creamy and light in color. Fold egg whites into egg yolks, and add spice mixture (first remove allspice berries, cloves, and cinnamon sticks, and discard), a little at a time, stirring continuously. Add sherry/brandy mixture, and then apple cider mixture. Stir. Serve warm, garnished with a cinnamon stick, and a dollop of whipped cream if desired. If wassail cools down, reheat. (If you wish, wassail can be prepared ahead of time, stored in containers, and warmed up just before serving.)

Notes

This time-honored Yuletide libation is perfect for a holiday party on a cold winter’s night. One deacon at the church described it as “like drinking a hot apple pie that not only warms you up, but lifts your spirits as well.” Although it might seem like a big undertaking to prepare, you won’t be disappointed by all of the compliments you receive. Just be sure to make plenty, because it disappears pretty fast!

Recipe Courtesy of Mrs. Henrietta Witherspoons.
Candace’s Pumpkin Roll

Ingredients

- 3 Eggs
- 1 Cup Sugar
- 2/3 Cup Cooked Mashed Pumpkin*
- 1 Teaspoon Lemon* Juice
- ¾ Cup Flour
- 1 Teaspoon Ginger
- 1 Teaspoon Nutmeg
- 2 Teaspoons Cinnamon
- 1 Teaspoon Baking Powder
- ½ Teaspoon Salt
- 1 ¼ Cups Powdered Sugar (Divided)
- 8 Ounces Cream Cheese (Softened)
- ¼ Cup Butter
- ½ Teaspoon Vanilla

Directions

Beat eggs for 5 minutes on high. Gradually add sugar, beating well. Stir in pumpkin and lemon juice. Combine flour, cinnamon, baking powder, salt, ginger, and nutmeg. Add to pumpkin mixture and blend. Spoon batter into a greased 15x10x1 inch jellyroll pan. Spread to corners. Bake at 375 Degrees Fahrenheit for 15 minutes. Turn cake onto a dishtowel sprinkled with ¼ cup powdered sugar. Beginning at narrow end, roll cake with towel and let cool. Combine 1 cup powdered sugar, cream cheese, butter, and vanilla. Beat until smooth and creamy. Unroll cake, and spread with filling. Roll cake without the towel, chill (seam side down), and slice. Serves 10.

Notes

When I was a young tennis player this recipe was served at a ladies match, and recipes were available to all the women. At the time I didn't like pumpkin pie, and was surprised to fall in love with these. Then a neighbor brought me a home-made pumpkin pie, and I began to understand!

Recipe courtesy of Candace Bridgewater.
Mama’s Christmas Sugar Cookies

Ingredients

- 1 Cup Powdered Sugar
- 1 Cup Granulated Sugar
- 1 Cup (2 Sticks) Butter (Softened)
- 1 Cup Vegetable Oil
- 2 Eggs (Well Beaten)
- 1 Teaspoon Vanilla
- 4 Cups Flour
- 1 Teaspoon Soda
- 1 Teaspoon Cream of Tartar
- ½ Teaspoon Salt
- Finely Chopped Pecans* (To Taste, Optional)

Directions

Cream butter and sugars in a large bowl. Add oil, eggs, and vanilla. Mix until smooth. Add dry ingredients, and pecans if desired. Chill for several hours. Roll into balls the size of a walnut, and place on a cookie sheet. Flatten with a teaspoon or glass dipped in water. Sprinkle with red or green sugar, or Christmas sprinkles. Bake at 350 Degrees Fahrenheit for 10 minutes, or until slightly brown. Makes about 5 to 6 dozen. Store in a closed tin can to keep crisp.

When I make these cookies, after putting the balls of dough on a cookie sheet, I pour green sugar on a small plate or bowl. Then I take a glass with a pattern on the bottom, gently touch it on the cookie dough to slightly grease it, put it on top of the sugar so sugar sticks to the bottom of the glass, and gently push it onto the cookie to flatten it a bit. (I often only bake 1 cookie sheet with 16 cookies, and cover the bowl and store it in the refrigerator until we are ready for another batch.)

Notes

My mother, Katherine K. Geiger (whom my children affectionately called Nannie), baked Christmas cookies in early December to give and exchange with friends, and to have on hand for the Holiday season. This is her recipe for the delicious sugar cookies we all enjoyed.

Recipe courtesy of Libby Wilkes.
Ginny’s Strawberry Long-Cake Roll

Ingredients

• ¾ Cup All Purpose Flour
• 1 Teaspoon Baking Powder
• ½ Teaspoon Salt
• 4 Eggs (Separated)
• 1 ¼ Cups Granulated Sugar
• 2 Teaspoons Vanilla
• Confectioners’ Sugar
• 1 Pint Heavy Cream
• 2 Pints Strawberries* (Cut in Half if Large)

Directions

Heat oven to 375 Degrees Fahrenheit. Lightly coat a jellyroll pan (a cookie sheet with sides) with vegetable cooking spray. Line the bottom with wax paper. Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt in a small bowl. Set aside. Beat egg whites until foamy using an electric mixer at high speed. Gradually add ½ cup of the granulated sugar, one tablespoon at a time, and continue to beat until stiff peaks form. In another bowl, beat the egg yolks and another ½ cup granulated sugar until pale and thick. Beat in 1 teaspoon vanilla. Use a rubber spatula to gently fold the flour and beaten yolks into the whites until just blended. Spread in pan. Bake for 15 minutes, or until the cake springs back when lightly touched. Meanwhile, place a clean dishtowel on the counter, and dust lightly with confectioners’ sugar. When cake is done, loosen the edges from the pan with a knife, and invert the cake onto the towel. Peel off the waxed paper. Roll the cake lengthwise, along with the towel, and set aside at room temperature to cool. (Cake can be made a day ahead.) Whip the cream with the remaining ¼ cup of sugar and 1 teaspoon vanilla until soft peaks form. Unroll the cake and spread with ½ the whipped cream. Top with half the strawberries, and reroll without the towel. Serve with the remaining strawberries and whipped cream.

Notes

I found this recipe in a magazine several years ago (I don’t remember which one), and have served it many times. It is a light dessert and works well after a meal. Just recently I put candles on it and used it to celebrate my friend’s birthday.

Recipe courtesy of Ginny Grupe.
Susanne’s Pumpkin Custard Pie

Ingredients

Pumpkin-Custard Filling
- ¾ Cup Light Brown Sugar (Packed)
- 5 Eggs (1 1/3 Cups)
- 1 Teaspoon Cinnamon
- ½ Teaspoon Ginger
- ¼ Teaspoon Nutmeg
- ¼ Teaspoon Cloves
- ½ Teaspoon Salt
- 1 Can (16 Ounces) Pumpkin* (Or Use Fresh Pumpkin*, Cooked and Pureed)
- 1 Cup Heavy Cream

Decorative Whipped Cream Border
- ¾ Cup Heavy Cream
- 2 Tablespoons Confectioner’s Sugar
- ½ Teaspoon Vanilla (Optional)
- Pecan* or Walnut Halves

Directions
Set oven at 350 Degrees Fahrenheit.  Butter inside of a 9 inch pie plate (Glass seems to work best for sliding out the custard).  In a large bowl, combine filling ingredients, beating thoroughly until smooth.  Pour 1 ½ cups of filling into a two-cup measuring cup.  Pour rest of filling into buttered pie plate.  Set pie plate in a large, shallow pan.  Place in oven, and add reserved filling.  Pour water in shallow pan around pie plate to measure ½ inch deep.  Bake in pre-heated oven for 50 minutes, or until knife tip inserted at center comes out clean.  Cool on wire rack.  Gently loosen edges with spatula.  Chill well—about 4 hours or overnight.  Several hours before serving, loosen custard all around edge and underneath, shaking gently to loosen.  Holding custard above the rim of a cooled, pre-baked pie shell, slip filling into shell (this is not as difficult as it sounds).  Whip heavy cream with confectioner’s sugar and vanilla.  Decorate edge with whipped cream piped from a pastry bag using a star tip, and top with nut halves.  (The whipped cream border looks great, and hides any space between the shell and filling.)  Let come to room temperature before serving.  Makes 8 servings.

Notes
This is a recipe that we’ve used for our Thanksgiving pumpkin pie for over thirty years.  The recipe originally came from the McCall’s Cooking School series.  Use your favorite pie crust recipe for a 9” pie pan.  (Be sure to bake the pie crust separately to keep it from becoming soggy.)  While the shell is cooling, make the filling.

Recipe courtesy of Susanne Schlaifer.
Gammie's Applesauce Cake

Ingredients

- 2/3 Cup Butter
- 2 Cups Sugar
- 2 ½ Cups Apple* Sauce
- 4 Scant Teaspoons Soda
- 4 Cups Flour
- 1 Teaspoon Allspice
- 1 Teaspoon Nutmeg
- 1 Teaspoon Cinnamon
- 1 Pound Seedless Raisins
- 4 to 8 Ounces Watermelon* Rind Preserves or Citron
- 1 Cup Pecans*
- ½ Cup Chopped Candied Cherries
- ½ Cup Apple* Butter

Directions

Cream butter and sugar together. Add apple sauce. Sift together flour, soda, allspice, nutmeg, and cinnamon. Combine the above two mixtures. Add raisins, watermelon rind preserves or citron (I prefer watermelon preserves—recipe follows), pecans, candied cherries, and apple butter. Mix well. Pour into a stem pan, and decorate the top with pecan halves, candied cherries, or other candied fruits as you would a fruit cake. Bake for 2 hours at 250 Degrees Fahrenheit, or until surface feels firm and springs back.

Notes

This is my favorite holiday cake, and brings back fond memories of my childhood. This is not a “traditional” holiday fruitcake, but I like it MUCH better! Gammie is my mother—but we called her Gammie (what she called her Grandmother) once the first Grandchild was born. I actually think that my mother got this recipe from her Gammie.

Recipe courtesy of Anne Karshis.
Anne’s Watermelon Rind Preserves

Ingredients

- 1 ½ Quarts Trimmed and Cut Watermelon* Rind and Pieces
- 4 Tablespoons Salt
- 1 Tablespoon Ground Ginger
- 4 Cups Sugar
- ¼ Cup Lemon* Juice
- 1 Lemon* (Thinly Sliced, Optional)
- Water (See Directions)

Directions

Prepare watermelon rind by trimming the green skin and pink flesh from a thick watermelon rind, and cut into 1 inch pieces. Dissolve salt in 2 quarts of water, and pour over rind. Let stand for 5 to 6 hours in refrigerator. Drain, rinse, and drain again. Cover with cold water, and let stand for 30 minutes. Drain. Sprinkle ginger over rind. Cover with water, and cook until fork tender. Drain once more. Sterilize canning jars. Combine sugar, lemon juice, and 7 cups of water. Boil for 5 minutes. Add prepared watermelon rind, and boil gently for 30 minutes. Add sliced lemon if desired, and cook until the melon rind is clear. Pack hot preserves into hot jars, leaving ¼-inch headspace. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel, and top with two-piece metal canning lids. Process in a boiling water canner for at least 5 minutes. Makes about 6 half-pint jars.

Notes

I grew up in Tennessee, and my mother made these preserves many times. They are quite delicious, and are an essential ingredient in Gammie’s Applesauce Cake.

Recipe courtesy of Anne Karshis.
Fruitcake à la Candace

Ingredients

- 1 Pound Candied Pineapple*
- ½ Pound Candied Cherries
- 1/8 Pound Candied Lemon* Peel
- 1/8 Pound Candied Orange* Peel
- ¼ Pound Candied Citron
- 1 Pound Golden Raisins
- ½ Pound Seeded Raisins
- ¼ Pound Currants
- ½ Cup Dark Rum or Brandy
- ¼ Pound Blanched Shelled Almonds
- ¼ Pound Shelled Walnuts or Pecans*
- 2 Cups Sifted All-Purpose Flour
- ½ Teaspoon Mace
- ½ Teaspoon Cinnamon
- ½ Teaspoon Baking Soda
- 5 Eggs
- 1 Tablespoon Milk
- 1 Teaspoon Almond Flavoring
- ¼ Pound Butter or Margarine
- 1 Cup Sugar
- 1 Cup Brown Sugar (Firmly Packed)

Directions

Making this traditional holiday fruitcake is a two day process. On the first day, prepare all fruits. Pick over the raisins and currants to remove any stray stems or seeds, and soak them overnight in rum or brandy. Cut nuts up coarsely. The next day, line a 10 inch tube cake pan with brown paper. Set oven at very low heat (275 Degrees Fahrenheit). Sift flour. Measure 1 ½ cups flour by lightly spooning it into the cup. Sift with spices and soda onto wax paper. To keep fruits and nuts from sticking together, mix with remaining ½ cup flour in a large bowl. Beat eggs slightly. Measure milk and almond flavoring into a cup, and combine with beaten eggs. Using your hands, cream butter or margarine well, then cream in white sugar, and finally brown sugar until light and fluffy. Thoroughly mix in flour, and egg and milk mixture. Pour batter over fruits and nuts. Mix with both hands. Lift batter into pan, then press down firmly with palm. Bake for 3 hours and 15 minutes. Let stand a full half hour after you take it out of the oven. Remove from pan, and turn upside down on wire rack. Tear off paper. When cake is cold, place in crock or can. Cover tightly, and store in a cool place. This makes a 5 ½ pound cake. (In addition, I wrap the cake with cheesecloth, and then throughout the year occasionally add a little liquor to maintain the moisture. It's also good refrigerated, although refrigeration is not traditional.)

Notes

My own family had no fruitcake tradition, but my boyfriend's family did. When I was a freshman in college at Denison University in 1963, my roommate asked her mother to share their family cake recipe so I could make it for my boyfriend. It must have worked, as we will soon celebrate our 47th Anniversary! The first time I made it the ingredients cost about $8 minus the rum. In 2012, the ingredients cost $36, and I couldn't snitch the rum from my mother!

Recipe courtesy of Candace Bridgewater.
Santa’s Christmas Pinwheel Cookies

Ingredients

- 4 Cups All-Purpose Flour
- 1 Teaspoon Baking Powder
- ¼ Teaspoon Baking Soda
- 1 Teaspoon Salt
- 1 1/3 Cups Butter
- 1 Cup Packed Light Brown Sugar
- 2/3 Cup White Sugar
- 2 Eggs (Beaten)
- 1 ½ Teaspoons Vanilla Extract
- Red Food Coloring (To Color Desired)
- Green Food Coloring (To Color Desired)
- Finely Chopped Pecans* (To Taste, Optional)

Directions

Sift flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together. Resift. Beat butter with the brown and white sugars in a mixing bowl until light and fluffy. Beat in the eggs and vanilla until smooth. Gradually stir in the flour mixture, and chopped pecans if you desire, until evenly blended. (For this last step, you can use a dough hook with the mixer set on low speed.) Gather the dough into a ball, and divide into two equal parts. Place one half in a second bowl. Add a few drops of red food coloring to the dough in one bowl. Using a fork, blend the food coloring into the dough until evenly blended. Add additional drops of food coloring until desired shade is achieved. Do the same with green food coloring for the dough in the second bowl. Roll out the red dough to a ¼ inch thickness. Then roll out the green dough to a ¼ inch thickness, and place on top of the red dough. (It is best to roll the dough between two pieces of wax paper. Doing so makes it not only easier to roll, but also makes it easier to lay one piece on top of the other.) Beginning on one edge, roll the dough sheets to make a log in which the two colors spiral inside each other. Wrap the log in waxed paper, and refrigerate overnight. Preheat oven to 400 Degrees Fahrenheit. Lightly grease 2 baking sheets. Unwrap the dough log, and place on a clean, lightly floured surface. Slice the log into rounds approximately 1/8 inch thick, and place on prepared baking sheets. Bake in preheated oven until done (about 7 to 12 minutes, depending on thickness of cookies, thickness of baking sheets, and preferred texture of cookies). Watch carefully to prevent edges from browning. Remove from oven, and cool on racks. (A small amount of peppermint extract, or any flavor extract you desire, can be added to give the cookies more flavor. A lovely red and white pinwheel can be made by only coloring half of the dough with red food coloring, and leaving the other half plain; or a chocolate pinwheel variation can be made by adding a bit of cocoa powder to half of the dough to make a chocolate layer. Make different variations of cookies using your favorite flavors and colors. All of them will turn out just as beautiful as they are delicious!)

Notes

My, oh my! How time does fly! It seems like it was just yesterday that I sent in a recipe for my husband’s favorite gingersnaps for last year’s Harvest Gold holiday recipe column. This time around, I am sending in a recipe the old cookie lover came up with all by himself. He got the idea while flying over Holland and saw all the windmills decorated up for Christmas. I am sure you will like them as much as he does!

Merry Christmas to All!!!

Recipe courtesy of Mrs. S. Claus.
November Checklist

**Citrus:** Weed as needed. Protect above and below grafted area if hard freeze occurs which is 28 degrees for 4 or more hours.

**Fruit:** Weed as needed.

**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.

**Roses:** Continue spray program. Water, water, water. Cut and remove spent blooms. DO NOT fertilize. Have soil tested, especially pH. Make necessary soil corrections.

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

**Lawns:** Avoid the temptation to apply winter fertilizers in NE Florida. Check your mower. Resharpen blades, change the oil, and clean mower of debris.

**Perennials:** Plant now for fall color. Mexican bush sage has spikes of purple-and-white flowers that will wave in the wind. Pineapple sage has brilliant red blooms and leaves each with the hint of pineapple aroma. Firespike with its red bloom spikes is great for partial shade. Philippine violet brightens fall days with its lavender flowers. The brilliant yellow of swamp sunflower will stop traffic a block away. Cigar flower 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. Plant trees so the top root is just at or slightly above soil level. Irrigate well to encourage root development.

**Vegetables:** Keep crops picked to encourage new production. Irrigate during morning hours (6-10 AM) with drip irrigation to discourage disease. Hardy veggies to plant now include beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, Chinese cabbage, collards, kohlrabi, bulbing and bunching onions, radishes and spinach.

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
December Checklist

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

**Bulbs:** Check for declining plant portions and pests. Examine bulbs in storage and remove adhering soil or damaged portions. Consider replacing any bulbs which show discoloring sections as this may indicate fungal disease.

**Roses:** Water as needed. Continue spray program, if fungi or pests are present.

**Citrus:** Weed as needed. Protect grafted area if freeze occurs. If you think a freeze is coming: Leave the fruit on the tree. It may not freeze, and if it does, you still have several weeks to make juice or use the fruit before it deteriorates. The rule for fruit still on the tree is to consider it edible if it looks, smells, and tastes good. Leave the fruit on the tree if you suspect it is still not ripe. Fruit that has been frozen will develop white spots on the membranes between the sections and should be used as soon as possible.

**Fruit:** Weed as needed. DO NOT cut blooms. DO not fertilize.

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

**Lawns:** Do not apply fertilizer or any nitrogen this time of year, wait until grass is fully growing and any cold temperatures have passed. Keep mowing height the same year round. Water 1/4 to 3/4 inch every 10-14 days if we receive no rain.

**Trees and Shrubs:** Late December is the ideal time to begin transplanting plants if the weather has turned cool. It is best to transplant trees and shrubs after they have gone into dormancy. 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. Be sure to keep plants out of the ground as little time as possible. Do not put any amendments in the transplant hole, simply keep the plant irrigated well for 3-4 months.

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

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
Q: I would like to plant a tree in the yard which I can decorate each year as an outside Christmas tree. I am just not sure what tree would grow here.

A: We have several easy growing trees which will give you the “Christmas Tree” look you are seeking. These are evergreen trees so they can be decorated year after year. Consider taking photos with your family each year to document the changes in the tree – it makes for wonderful memories which can be shared from generation to generation. Several top choices would be the Southern Redcedar, Sand Pine, Virginia pine, Arborvitae, Leyland Cypress or one of the newest the Arizona Cypress. We have the Southern Redcedar and the Arizona Cypress in the Extension Demonstration garden at James S. Pages Governmental Complex. Take some time to go visit the site and look over the trees. In addition, go to our website to get specific information of all of our plants in the gardens. Adding a tree to the landscape is always a great idea – it provides oxygen, beauty, and a home for local wildlife. http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture/urbantrees/urbantreelist.html

‘Carolina Sapphire’ Arizona Cypress
Q: What is this pretty wildflower I am seeing along the roadsides here in Callahan? It is tall, maybe about 4 to 5 feet.

A: Thanks for bringing in a sample to the office. I sent photos to the University of Florida to verify its identity and they believe it is the perennial wildflower called Ironweed in the genus *Vernonia*. This plant is commonly found throughout Nassau County, Florida and most of the U.S. except for a few western states. The dark, purple flowers bloom from August through October. It prefers moist, well-drained soil and can live in full sun to partial shade. There are several cultivated varieties which can be purchased through on-line vendors or a local native plant nursery. Most are tall, with the potential of reaching heights up to 12 feet. This makes it a rare plant for most landscapes. However, there is one particular variety, grown in rocky soil, which grows no taller than about 2 feet. The hummingbirds, bees and butterflies love Ironweed. It is so popular with the pollinators you would be hard pressed to find it sitting alone with no animal visitors. If you love to photograph pollinators, Ironweed will provide you great success. The genus name 'Vernonia' was given in honor of William Vernon, an English botanist who gathered plant specimens from North America. 'Ironweed' refers to the toughness of the stem and how difficult it is to dig up even with a shovel. Native Americans used the root to relieve pain... Be careful about using the common name “Ironweed” as there are other plants with this name so if you are interested which are not nearly as attractive. Use the genus to narrow your field of search when looking for it on-line.

Q: I found this insect on the wall of my garage the other day. I don’t think it is a dragonfly but the wings look similar. What is it?

A: I had several of these around my house a few weeks ago too and since they are beneficial insects – I left them alone. Interestingly, we just recently received a publication on this insect which I attached to this answer for you. The eastern dobsonfly, *Corydalus cornutus*, is one of our largest non-lepidopteran (butterflies and moths) insects. Its larvae, known as hellgrammites, are the top invertebrate predators in rocky streams where they occur. Adult male dobsonflies are particularly spectacular because of their large sickle-shaped mandibles (jaws). The dobsonfly is found throughout most of eastern North America east of the Continental Divide from Canada to Mexico near flowing streams which provide habitat for its larvae. Dobsonflies are beneficial insects and should be conserved. Hellgrammites are prized as bait by fishermen (particularly for smallmouth bass) and are available for sale at bait shops in some areas. Because of the effort required to collect them, they are fairly expensive to purchase. Therefore, they may be subject to over-exploitation and their collection for sale is regulated in some states. Although, hellgrammites are great fish bait, they are rarely found in the stomachs of fish - probably because they spend most of their time under rocks where they are inaccessible. [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in987](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in987)
Q: What kind of spider is this? Is it some kind of exotic tarantula?

A: You know how I hate identifying spiders – old throw back from childhood. However, I believe this spider, with the orange coloration, is probably an adult female called the Regal jumping spider, *Phidippus regius*. Females completely covered with orange scales can be very striking. Although jumping spiders do not make webs to capture prey, they do use silk. Hunting spiders trail a dragline behind them to break their fall in case they miss a jump. Adults most often can be found living in palms and palmettos in Northeast Florida. Jumping spiders are harmless, beneficial creatures. The larger species, such as *P. regius*, are capable of delivering a painful bite, but will do so only if held tightly. For that very reason, I would not recommend handling any spider – they all have a potential for causing painful bites. Plus, it’s just creepy!

http://orange.ifas.ufl.edu/mg/mg_compendium/pdffiles/in/IN30900.pdf

Q: What is causing my citrus leaves to curl?

A: I have received nearly a dozen calls on this same problem and although I have addressed it in this column before, it appears to be worth repeating. Please bring all the citrus samples into the Extension office in sealed freezer bags as there are insects and diseases such as canker and citrus greening we do not want to spread to other trees. I can generally diagnose most citrus problems through the bag. The leaf problem is caused by a small leaf mining moth, *Phyllocnistis citrella* Stainton, or the citrus leafminer (CLM). Citrus leafminer (CLM) was found in late May 1993 in several citrus nurseries in south Florida. Since that time, CLM has been found everywhere in Florida where citrus is grown. Adults of the CLM are minute moths (4 mm wingspread) with white and silvery iridescent scales on the forewings, with several black and tan markings, plus a black spot on each wingtip. Adults generally are so small in fact, people barely notice them. They are active mostly during the day but have been known to continue their normal activities in the early evening hours. Adults live for only a few days but in Florida generations are produced about every three weeks. They are not easily controlled using chemicals as they burrow between leaf and stem tissue and are therefore protected. They will actually fold a portion of the leaf over themselves to pupate. I take great pleasure in breaking them out of the leaf fold and destroying them. If that is too gruesome for you then consider lightly pruning the infected leaves. The pruned leaves should then be bagged and destroyed to help manage the insect populations. A predatory wasp, encyrtid parasitoid, *Ageniaspis citricola*, was introduced from Australia to Florida in 1994-95, and seems to be a key element in suppressing this leafminer to an acceptable level. The good news – the moth does not transmit disease although it does make the tree look terrible. For more information on this insect, check out the University of Florida publication: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in588
Garden Talk - Orchids  by Rebecca Jordi

Q: How do I repot my orchid? It was a gift from my son and I want to keep it alive.

A: The first thing I notice about your plant is that it has algae growing on the roots, which often indicates too much moisture. The orchid is currently being held in a plastic pot with large slits which is perfect. However, this pot was placed into a larger solid, glazed pot. This meant the roots have not been exposed to enough air circulation which has caused the moisture build-up. So, the first step is to use the outer glazed pot for something else – not orchids.

The best time to repot is always confusing for most people but to keep it simple – just don’t repot when the orchid is flowering. Be sure your hands and tools are clean and sanitized and the working area is void of any potential disease or debris. Use a sterile orchid medium which can be purchased at most any garden center. I know it sounds too simple but you can even use plain tree bark medium – avoid garden soils made for vegetable gardening. Remove any dead or mushy root material, throw away old medium and thoroughly rinse it off roots. Place orchids back into a larger pot with slits, which allow for air around the roots, add bark material, moisten whole pot, drain excess water and you are set to go. You may need to use clips to hold the orchid in place. These also can be purchased at local garden centers.

For more Garden Talk” questions answered by Ms. Jordi, see our website at http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture/questions/questions.html