Getting to the Root of the Problem

by Rebecca L. Jordi, County Extension Director/Horticulture Agent III

Roots are seldom glamorous as they spend all their time underground where no one sees them. They have no flashy flowers to cut and put in a vase. Roots have no sensual scents to entice anyone to “stop and smell” when we take a break from our busy schedules. Many trees have interesting foliage, bark or seed pods - but roots? We seldom give them any thought at all.

This neglect of roots, especially at planting, can become very costly three to seven years down the road. The potential problem will be circling and/or girdling roots. Poor roots can cause twig dieback, stunted growth, leaves coming out later in the spring, leaf color change occurring earlier than normal and nutrient deficiencies in leaves. Circling roots generally happen when trees and shrubs are grown in pots and as the roots hit the side of the pot, they turn. Once roots make the turn they continue to grow in the same direction.

If left in the pot, these circling roots can make several turns. If these plants are placed in the landscape without correcting the poor root structure, they will continue to develop circling roots. The best solution is to cut the roots just before they make the first turn at the time of planting – see circling roots.jpg photo. Ideally, roots should grow away from the trunk like the spokes of a wheel. Girdling roots grow around other roots restricting the ability of healthy roots to absorb water and nutrients.

In the second photo (Girdling_roots.jpg), you can see the large girdling root as it restricts other roots from growing outward. The last photo shows the tree about to be planted and how we have most of the upper roots cut so they will eventually grow out and away from the trunk.

We hand watered the tree at the re-planting and continued with supplemental water (thanks to Master Gardener volunteers) for at least 4 months. We fully expect this tree to completely recover from these damaging root problems.

The basic message – take the time to look over the roots before you plant and make the corrections immediately.

This process is time consuming but in the long run it will give you a healthier, more productive tree. Now, let’s go play in the dirt!

Information about all of the trees planted in the Nassau County Demonstration Gardens at the James S. Page Governmental Complex, and the Fruit Trees planted at the Yulee Extension office, can be found at http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture/demogarden/demogarden.html

For more information about the Nassau County Extension Service’s programs, see our website at: http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/index.html, or call the office at 879-1019 or 491-7340.
Program Announcements

Landscape Matters 10AM-11AM

**Turfgrass**
Wednesday March 13
Master Gardener Nelson Peterson

**Rain Barrels (Fee:$15)**
Wednesday April 10
Master Gardener Paul Gosnell

Plant Clinics 10AM-2PM

Monday March 4
Monday March 18
Monday April 1
Monday April 15

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 rljordi@ufl.edu.

Spotlight on Nassau Gardens

**December Winner - Beverly Combs**

Beverly Combs is a marvelous organizer and gardener in Amelia Park. She has been an important part of the gardening planning for the whole community. She also has a lovely garden area. For December it was wonderful to be able to show how beautiful the Holly is in Nassau County, Florida at this time of the year. Also camellias are in bloom and lemons, oranges and grapefruit are ripe.

View more photos online at [http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture/spotlight/spotlight.html](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.
Use rain barrels to water garden

By Master Gardener Paul Gosnell

This rain barrel was connected with fixtures that did not require adjusting the length of the downspout. The homeowner painted the barrel to match the color of her home, so it would blend into the landscape. 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 and bathing water increases, the use of non-traditional methods to water gardens, shrubs, or flowerbeds becomes more important.

Using stored water from rain barrels reduces the demand on public water systems to irrigate plants, 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 part of water conservation just as low-flow toilets and water flow controls on shower heads. And, they are not expensive or difficult to install.

Locally, home improvement stores and garden centers offer a variety of rain barrels. They come in different colors and shapes. All of them hold 50 or more gallons of rainwater. They can be painted to match the color of a house or decorated by the homeowner. Most are made of non-toxic plastics but wooden barrels and clay pots have also been used. Rain barrels can be purchased for less than $100, or homemade. But, it’s a great DIY project, too!

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 that opens to access the water as well.

There are only a few considerations when installing a rain 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 distance from the downspout to the rain barrel. There are flexible plastic extensions to customize the linkage between the downspout and the rain barrel. And, you can even have a rain barrels without a gutter and downspouts.

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 rain water 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. Let’s take care of our Earth and its unique life-supporting resource - water.
Driving recently through his family’s citrus groves in rural LaBelle, Fla., Mark Wheeler saw scores of oranges littering the ground. It was an ominous sign the trees could be ailing just as the citrus harvest gets under way in Florida.

The likely culprit was an incurable disease known as citrus greening that is ravaging the state’s orange and grapefruit trees. Researchers estimate more than half of Florida’s citrus groves are infected with the bacterial disease, which slowly kills trees as it causes them to shed fruit.

It “represents an existential threat to Florida’s signature crop,” said state agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam.

Although oranges from an infected tree are safe to eat, the disease gradually saps a tree’s vitality. Over time, its canopy thins, its leaves turn a yellowish hue and it produces smaller oranges, Mr. Wheeler said.

Last month, the U.S. Department of Agriculture cut its forecast for this season’s citrus production in Florida by 5%, to 146 million boxes from 154 million. Among the reasons it cited was an increased rate of droppage—a term referring to fallen fruit—now projected to be the highest since 1970.

“We have never seen a crop revision of this magnitude without a freeze or hurricane,” said Michael Sparks, chief executive of Florida Citrus Mutual, an industry group. “Many growers are gravely concerned.”

Greening is a growing source of concern in other citrus-producing states. In California, an infected tree was discovered in April in the backyard of a home in Los Angeles County. In Texas, the disease was detected for the first time.
in early 2012 in two citrus groves in San Juan, near the Mexican border: “It’s almost inevitable that it’s going to spread,” said Ray Prewett, president of Texas Citrus Mutual.

In Florida, it is still early in the citrus season, which runs from October to July, and the USDA continues to revise its crop estimates monthly. But growers are worried the dropage they are observing among early-season varieties of oranges—such as Hamlims and Parson Browns—could presage trouble for late-season varieties like Valencia.

If the USDA’s forecast proves accurate, it would carry serious implications for Florida’s $9 billion citrus industry, which supplies about 90% of the orange juice consumed in the U.S., according to Florida Citrus Mutual. Consumers could also face higher prices at the supermarket, Mr. Putnam said.

Retail orange-juice prices have been increasing in recent years, hitting $6.23 a gallon in 2012, up from $5.71 a gallon in 2007, according to Florida Department of Citrus data.

Scientists say they aren’t certain how much of the dropage is due to greening, also known as Huanglongbing or HLB. A long stretch of dry weather in the fall may have played a role. But the consensus is that greening is the main cause. “I would say that the vast majority of fruit drop I’ve observed, and I’ve done lots of investigating recently, is HLB-related,” said Jim Graham, a professor of soil microbiology at...
the University of Florida’s Citrus Research and Education Center.

Greening, which is believed to have originated in Asia, was first detected in South Florida in 2005. How it arrived is a mystery, scientists say, though they speculate it was transported on plants or in luggage from abroad. The bacterium is spread by a nonnative insect, the Asian citrus psyllid, which also somehow made its way to Florida.

Because a tree infected with the disease can take three to five years to manifest symptoms, greening can spread rampantly before it is discovered. It is now present in all 32 counties in Florida that produce citrus, Mr. Sparks said.

A study published in January 2012 by the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences estimated that since 2006, greening had cost Florida’s economy $3.6 billion in lost revenues and 6,600 jobs as a result of lower orange-juice production.

Another study published by the institute in September calculated that production costs for growers had increased 107% since 2002 due to greening and another, more-manageable disease called citrus canker. The added expenditures were for things like pesticides, nutrients and tree removal.

Researchers in Florida are fighting greening on multiple fronts, said Harold Browning, chief operating officer of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation. They are targeting the psyllids that carry the disease through chemical spraying and by unleashing predators that feed on them, such as a parasitic wasp from Asia. They are also attempting to breed psyllids less capable of transmitting the bacteria.

To protect trees, scientists are trying to devise antibiotics to battle the infection. They are hoping eventually to develop trees that are resistant to the disease.

Florida citrus growers have faced plenty of adversity over the years, including hurricanes, freezing weather and citrus canker. Yet greening presents what many consider the gravest threat ever to the industry.

Growers “are a very resilient population,” Mr. Browning said. “They believe, as I do, that we’re going to find solutions.”

A version of this article appeared January 2, 2013, on page A3 in the U.S. edition of The Wall Street Journal, with the headline: Disease Rips Through Florida Citrus.
Hello everybody! Welcome back to Harvest Gold. Although Spring is right around the corner, I would imagine many of us still have some of our cool season crops in the ground. With that in mind, I would like to talk about a couple of my favorite winter vegetables, kale and cabbage.

Both kale and cabbage are members of the Brassicaceae family, a relatively large family of vegetables including not only kale and cabbage, but mustards, collards, broccoli, cauliflower, kohlrabi, Brussels sprouts, turnips, and many other green leafy vegetables. Collectively, these vegetables are known as cruciferous vegetables, from the Latin word Cruciferae, meaning “cross-bearing,” because the four equal-sized petals on their flowers form a cross (which, I might add, makes the cruciferous vegetables rather appropriate to talk about now during the Lenten season). Farmers also sometimes refer to the vegetables within this family as “cole crops.” The word “cole,” which can be found in the word “coleslaw,” is derived from the Latin word caulis, and refers to the stalks of the plants, especially the stalk of the cabbage plant. (The word “caulis” itself is easily seen in the word “cauliflower.”)

Kale was probably the first of the Brassicas to be cultivated. Kale was grown by the ancient Greeks and Romans, and from the Roman Empire, traveled to Northern Europe and the British Isles. Up until the end of the Middle Ages, kale was one of the most popular green vegetables in all of Europe. From there, kale made its way to North America with the French explorer Jacques Cartier in the 16th Century. Over time, kale lost much of its popularity, being replaced by cabbages in colonial gardens. In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in kale because of its nutritional value.

One traditional Scottish story serves as a testimony to the health benefits of kale. According to this tale, there was once a young doctor who had just graduated from medical school. In his quest to find a place to set up practice, he sought advice from an older physician. The elder doctor looked at the younger and said, “Son, if you enter a town and see kale growing in its gardens, move along. They won’t be needing your services there.”

Although kale might not be a substitute for health insurance, it is one of the most nutritious of all vegetables. All cruciferous vegetables are well known for their health benefits, but kale stands out even among them because of its high levels of vitamins and minerals, and its broad range of antioxidants. Kale is naturally low in sodium and fat, contains no cholesterol, and is rich in fiber. Kale is rich in carotenoids, which promote healthy eyes, and contains 45 different flavonoids, which have antioxidant,
anti-cancer, and anti-inflammatory properties. Kale has slightly less iron than spinach does, but has more than three times the Vitamin C, almost twice the amount of Vitamin K, more Vitamin A, more B Vitamins, and more calcium, potassium, and protein than spinach. Kale is also a good source of minerals such as copper, manganese, and phosphorus. Studies have shown that the nutrients found in kale may help to promote heart health, lower cholesterol, and fight prostate, colon, lung, and oral cancers. Although the term has been overused lately in reference to some vegetables, kale truly can be labeled a superfood.

Botanically, kales are identical to collards, but true kale fans would claim there is a world of difference between the two. There are also differences between kales. Scottish kale, sometimes called borecole, has curly leaves very similar to curly leaf mustard. Siberian kale, on the other hand, has smooth leaves, often with frilled or feathered margins. Tuscan kale, an Italian variety, is sometimes called dinosaur kale because its leaves have a bumpy surface said to resemble dinosaur skin. Culinary kale cultivars are quite attractive plants that come in various shades from dark green to bluish-green, and purple to mahogany-red.

There are also a number of ornamental kales, which make striking additions to flower beds. Although ornamental kales can be eaten, they are most often seen as a colorful garnish in restaurants, and come in a variety of vibrant colors, such as red, pink, white, lavender, and purple.

In the kitchen, kale can be cooked in much the same way as any other green leafy vegetable. It is delicious sautéed, added to salads, soups, or stews, and even baked in the oven to make a potato chip-like snack. If you have a favorite way to cook collard greens, mustard, or turnips, try the recipe using kale. Sometimes I even use kale as a substitute for lettuce in a sandwich. Any way you prepare it, kale will make a delicious—and healthy—addition to any meal.

Cabbage and kale, along with cauliflower, broccoli, kohlrabi, Brussels sprouts, and other Brassicas, may look very different, but they are all the same species of plant. The differences between these plants are the result of thousands of years of human cultivation and selective propagation. The cabbage species is native to the Mediterranean, and is descended from wild sea kale, a loose-leafed herb that grows along the Mediterranean coast. Cabbages have been cultivated for more than 4000 years, and domesticated for over 2500 years.

Before domestication, these cole crops were collected from the wild, and were used primarily as medicinal herbs. The ancients placed great importance on the curative powers of cabbage, and held it could heal just about any malady. Deafness, dog bites, colic, and baldness were among the many ills they treated with cabbage. It was even believed that cabbage, when eaten before a night on the town, could prevent drunkenness.

As far as popularity goes, cabbage has had its ups and downs. The ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans simply loved cabbage. During Roman times, cabbage was so much in demand that for a long time, only the well-off could afford it. The Emperor Claudius’ love for cabbage was very well known. In fact, Claudius even once called upon the Roman Senate to vote on whether or not corned beef and cabbage was the best dish imaginable. Knowing Claudius’ love of cabbage, the Senate wisely voted that the dish was without equal.

In the Middle Ages, cabbage was dismissed by many, especially by some among the aristocracy, as having little nutritional value and only fit for peasants. But because cabbage was easy to grow, stored well, and produced abundantly (one acre of cabbage will yield more edible vegetables than any other plant), cabbage became a major crop in
Europe, and a staple in the diets of the poor. Back then, cabbage may not have been considered a glamorous vegetable, but it was never off the menu.

Cabbage was first introduced to the New World by the French explorer Jacques Cartier in the 16th Century. Cabbage was also an important food crop for the Pilgrims and other early colonial settlers in the 17th Century. Thomas Jefferson grew several different varieties at Monticello, including Jersey Wakefield and Savoy. By the 1880’s, more than 50 different cultivars of cabbage were sold by American seed companies. During World War II, cabbages were an important part of Victory Gardens, but after the war, because of its association with lean times, its popularity dropped (in the 1920’s, the average annual consumption of cabbage in the United States was about 27 pounds per person, but now it’s about 9 pounds).

Although at times cabbage was looked down upon as the lowly vegetable of the poor, today it is regarded as one of the most nutritious vegetables, thought to possess strong anti-aging and anti-cancer properties. Fresh cabbage is an excellent source of the natural antioxidant Vitamin C, and contains more Vitamin C per calorie than oranges. Cabbage is naturally low in cholesterol and sodium, and high in Vitamin K, beta-carotene, and fiber. Cabbage is known to contain compounds that are powerful antioxidants that help protect against breast, colon, and prostate cancers, and help to reduce LDL, or “bad cholesterol”, levels in the blood. Cabbage also contains adequate amounts of Vitamin A, B Vitamins, and minerals such as potassium, iron, manganese, calcium, and magnesium—not bad for a vegetable once looked down upon as having little nutritional value!

There are many cultivars of cabbage that come in different shades of green, blue-green, red, and purple. The heads even come in different shapes. We are most familiar with the round headed varieties, but cabbages come with flat and pointy heads as well. Cabbage leaves come in two different textures, smooth leaf, the typical cabbage texture, and Savoy, which has bumpy, wrinkly leaves. Savoy cabbages are considered by many to not only be the most beautiful of the cabbages, but also the most tender and best flavored.

Some of the more popular cabbages for planting in home gardens are Jersey Wakefield, Flat Dutch, Stonehead, Copenhagen Market, Mammoth Red Rock, and Savoy Ace. Like kale, cabbage also comes in ornamental varieties that are right at home in a flower bed. Ornamental cabbages come in an array of colors including green, red, white, magenta, pink, and purple.

In the kitchen, cabbage is a very versatile vegetable, and has found a place in almost every cuisine around the world from Asia and Europe, to Africa and the Americas. It can be made into coleslaw, boiled, added to soups, stews, and salads, stuffed, pickled, and sautéed. Following this column, I have included recipes for a couple of my favorite cabbage dishes, my mother’s coleslaw, and my grandmother’s pickled cabbage. And since we are approaching St. Patrick’s Day, I have also included a recipe for the traditional corned beef and cabbage. So pick up a head or two, and treat your family to an Irish feast. I am sure you will agree that the Emperor Claudius wasn’t too far from being right in considering corned beef and cabbage the best possible meal!

Well, my friends, that’s about it for now. Until we meet again, Happy St. Patrick’s Day, God Bless, and Happy Harvesting!

Peace and Goodness,

Joseph
Aunt Henrietta’s Kale Chips

Ingredients
• 1 Bunch Kale
• 2 Tablespoons Olive Oil
• 2 Tablespoons Sherry Vinegar (Optional)
• 2 Tablespoons Lemon Juice (Optional)
• Sea Salt (To Taste)

Directions
Preheat oven to 275 Degrees Fahrenheit. Wash and thoroughly dry kale. Remove stems and ribs from kale and discard. Tear leaves into uniform sized pieces (about 1½ to 2 inches across). Place kale into a large mixing bowl, and toss with oil and salt, making sure leaves are thoroughly coated. Spread kale evenly onto a baking sheet, and bake for about 15-20 minutes, or until crisp (be careful not to burn), turning the leaves about halfway through. Let cool, and serve as you would potato chips.

Notes
This is a very healthy (and delicious) substitute for potato chips. For a couple of delightful variations on this recipe, sherry vinegar or lemon juice may be added to the oil and salt when tossing the kale. Bake as described above. Also, apple cider, balsamic, or any other kind of vinegar can be substituted for the sherry vinegar.

Recipe courtesy of Mrs. Henrietta Witherspoons.
Aunt Henrietta’s Kale and Sausage Soup

Ingredients

• 2 Tablespoons Olive Oil
• 2 Cloves Garlic (Minced)
• 1 Onion (Diced)
• 3 Medium Potatoes (Diced)
• 2 Carrots (Chopped)
• 1 Stalk Celery (Chopped)
• 1 Bunch Kale (Stemmed and Chopped)
• 1 Pound Georgia Boy Smoked Sausage Links (Cut Into ½ Inch Slices)
• 8 Cups Chicken Broth
• 2 Bay Leaves
• 1 Teaspoon Cayenne Pepper Flakes
• Salt and Pepper (To Taste)
• ½ Teaspoon Nutmeg (Optional)

Directions

In a large pot, heat oil over medium. Add onion and garlic, and sauté for about 5-10 minutes, or until soft and fragrant. Add broth, potatoes, carrots, celery, bay leaves, cayenne pepper, salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Stir, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, and simmer about 10-15 minutes, or until vegetables are tender. Add kale and sausage, stir, and continue to simmer until kale is tender, and sausage is done. Remove bay leaves and serve.

Notes

For a creamier soup, puree several cups of the soup in a blender and return to the pot just before adding kale and sausage.

Recipe courtesy of Mrs. Henrietta Witherspoons.
Miss Alice’s Coleslaw

Ingredients
• 1 Cabbage
• 2 Tablespoons Sugar
• 1 Cup Mayonnaise
• Salt and Pepper (To Taste)

Directions
Cut cabbage in half. Grate one half of cabbage on small side of grater, and the other half on coarse side. Add cabbage, sugar, salt, and pepper to a bowl and mix. Add mayonnaise, and mix well. This coleslaw is best if made four or five hours before serving and refrigerated.

Notes
This is a simple coleslaw recipe, but my family loves it. For more visual appeal, make this coleslaw out of red cabbage, or mix some red cabbage in with the white.

Recipe courtesy of Alice Marie Smith.

Paddy O’Toole’s Corned Beef and Cabbage

Ingredients
• 3 ½ Pounds Corned Beef Brisket (With Spice Packet)
• 1 Large Cabbage (Cut into Small Wedges)
• 12 Small Red Potatoes (Cut in Half)
• 1 Onion (Diced)
• 6 Carrots (Cut into 2 Inch Pieces)
• Mustard (Optional)
• Horseradish (Optional)

Directions
Put corned beef in a large pot, and cover with water. Add spice packet. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for about 2½ to 3 hours, or until tender. Add potatoes, carrots, and onion, and cook until vegetables are almost tender. Add cabbage, and cook for 15 more minutes. Remove meat, and let rest for 15 minutes. Place vegetables in a bowl and cover. Add as much broth from cooking liquid reserved in pot to vegetables as desired. Slice corned beef, and serve with mustard or horseradish.

Notes
This simple recipe comes down from my sainted mother, God rest her soul. I have many sweet memories of the times she would prepare this for the family when I was but a wee lad on the old sod. Erin go Bragh!

Recipe courtesy of Paddy O’Toole.
**Ingredients**

- 2 Heads Cabbage
- 2 Bell Peppers
- 4 Onions
- 7 Cups Sugar
- 4 Cups Vinegar
- 1 ¼ Tablespoons Salt
- 4 Tablespoons Pickling Spice

**Directions**

Grate cabbage on course side of grater. Cut bell peppers into small slices, discarding seeds and veins. Peel and cut onions into small slices. Put prepared ingredients into a large pot. Add vinegar, sugar, salt, and pickling spice (tie pickling spice into cheese cloth so it cannot go into cabbage, bell pepper, and onion mixture). Stir. Bring to a boil, and cook for about 10 minutes longer, stirring occasionally. Immediately put cabbage mixture into prepared mason jars with ring lids, and seal (keep cooking while you are filling jars, so cabbage stays hot). Discard ball of pickling spice. This recipe is better if you let jars sit and season for several weeks before serving.

(This is another one of those recipes I prepare from memory, and do not have written down. I wrote it down just for this column, and the amounts above may not be exact. If you prefer sweeter or spicier cabbage, just add a little more sugar and pickling spice. If you don’t like it as sweet or spicy, add a little less. No two batches I make turn out exactly the same, but they all turn out quite good—or at least my family thinks so.)

**Notes**

This recipe comes from my mother, Bessie Scussel. When she made it, she would pack the cabbage into whole bell peppers. She called it Pickled Stuffed Bell Peppers. When I was a child, I loved the cabbage part, but did not care for the bell peppers, so I took a fork and removed the cabbage and ate that, and left the bell peppers in the jar. My children did the same thing. So now, when I make it, I cut the bell peppers up in the cabbage—that way, it all gets eaten!

Recipe courtesy of Alice Marie Smith.
For years my daddy’s rose cuttings have been passed along to family members and friends. We never actually knew the name except as a “cracker rose”. This is truly a “cracker rose” as it has been in the Mills family since they first settled in Suwannee County, coming from the Carolinas, in the 1800’s. North East Florida is known as “cracker country”. The American Rose Society defines “old rose” as any rose introduced before 1861. We have carefully used only cuttings or roots in order to insure we have the original rose. My cuttings and roses came from my sister’s garden in Jacksonville. She brought the rose from our daddy’s garden in Live Oak and her garden is filled with dozens of roses. Yes, her roses are much prettier than my roses on Amelia Island as her growing conditions are more similar to Suwannee County. Older sisters, of course, always think they are the best in all respects.

Much interest has surfaced in the last few years about “heirloom” roses. They are easy to grow, easy to bloom and so easy to appreciate. Many modern roses have been bred to capture the nostalgic style of old garden roses. The roses are known for the lovely perfect buds that open into many-petaled blooms, rewarding you with a wonderful fragrance. They are so carefree that even first time gardeners will be amazed and delighted with their healthy foliage and beauty. Native roses are usually winter hardy and will bounce back in spring.

Use fertilizer sparingly, moderate watering at the roots as misting may cause yellowing leaves. They are insect resistant and need pruning only to conform to the space it is allotted.

Yes, we have found the name of our “cracker rose” identified in Cross Creek (home of Marjorie Rawlings author “The Yearling”). This location also deep in “cracker country”, is very near Suwannee County. Our cracker rose is “Louis Philippe”.

Antique roses can be found at some of our local garden centers that specialize in native plants. Read label carefully for the right location and right care. Soon you will be rewarded with your own “heirloom” rose that you can pass-along.
I am fascinated by the wood storks (Mycteria Americana) that occasionally feed in the retention pond behind my house. They seem to arrive in a group of about six. Weighing about 7 pounds, an adult stands about 3 feet tall with a wing span of over 5 feet. Their plumage is white, head is bald and grayish, and its tail, wings and legs are black. Their bill is almost nine inches, down-curved and pale yellow.

To watch them, they look old and slow. To me, they look like they have been playing in the mud for a long time! In fact, I used to call them “mud-storks”, before I knew their real name. These storks favor cypress trees in marshes and, have adapted to suburban surroundings, hunting in golf courses, retention ponds and farm fields.

Storks eat fish, crayfish, amphibians, even young alligators and snakes. Prey is caught by submerging its beak in the water and feeling for fish passing by. It startles prey out of hiding places by stirring the water with its feet.

Wood Storks’ reproductive cycle is triggered when waterholes dry up sufficiently to concentrate fish in sufficient numbers for efficient feeding of the chicks. So, if the food is not plentiful, storks wait to have their babies! Stick nests are built in colonies near the tops of trees or shrubs, sometimes as high as 100 feet, and there may be up to 25 nests in one tree! Females lay up to five eggs and both parents help incubate the eggs. The eggs hatch after 30 days and both parents are there to care for the young. Both are watchful for raccoons, the leading predators of nests. A colony is considered successful if its parents average at least 1.5 fledged young per nest!

Wood storks were listed on the Federal Endangered Species in 1984. Since 2000 however, nesting has ranged from 7,000 to almost 9,000 nesting pairs — just short of the 10,000 a year that is the target for removing it from the list entirely. Overall, the Fish and Wildlife Service said Florida had 5,000 nesting pairs in 2011. Additionally, the birds now breed in Georgia and South Carolina, and can be found foraging in North Carolina and Mississippi.

On a given day, you’ll see wood storks scavenging in mud around the island from retention ponds to Egan’s Creek to Fort Clinch and, even off the southern tip of the Island, near the Timucaun Ecological and Historical Preserve. Check them out….they are fascinating!

For more information, check out:
1) http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/12/18/3147901/wood-storks-no-longer-endangered.html#storylink=cpy
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, amaranth, asters, baby’s breath, balsam, begonias, browallia, calendulas, calliopsis, celosia, coleus, cosmos, crossandras, dahlias, dusty miller, exacums, 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](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](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021).

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
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, verbena, 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
Garden Talk - Hummingbirds by Rebecca Jordi

Q: I have heard if you give hummingbirds sugar water it will cause liver disease. Is it true?

A: I called the Audubon Society about this question just to be sure no new problems had cropped up of which I was unaware. I was particularly interested in your question as I know many gardeners supplement our landscapes with hummingbird feeders. The University of Florida would suggest you always have trees, shrubs and flowers in your yard to attract hummingbirds and provide them with sufficient nutrient sources. Planting a red buckeye or wild azaleas in a shaded site in your landscape will provide nectar in the early spring as these native plants are the first to put out nectar flowers in Northeast Florida. A sugar solution can be made for feeders using 4 parts clean water, and 1 part white, granulated sugar. Use warm water so the sugar will dissolve easily but be sure to stir the solution sufficiently so all sugar particles dissolve. Allow the water to cool before pouring it into the feeders. 1) Never use artificial sweeteners or honey as these can be toxic to the birds. 2) Never add red food coloring as the bird’s kidneys cannot process the dyes. These two important factoids, regarding the sugar water, may be where the rumor of sugar feeders being lethal got their start. If you use multiple feeders, keep them about 10 feet from each other to avoid fights between the birds as hummers are very territorial. Change out the water every 3-5 days as it can become rancid. Wash the feeders when changing out new sugar solutions. Do not use soap or chlorine to clean the hummingbird feeders – just warm water. Bottlebrush trees, butterfly bush, firespike, plumbago, and coral vine are easy care plants to attract hummers to your yard. For more information on hummingbirds check out the University of Florida publication: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/UW/UW05900.pdf