

HORTICULTURE CALENDAR FOR OKALOOSA COUNTY



TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW	1
GENERAL INFORMATION	2
Soil Tests	2
Mulch	2
Climate Zones	3
Vegetables and Herbs	3
Turf Grass Pests	4
JANUARY	5-6
FEBRUARY	7-8
MARCH	9-10
APRIL	10-11
MAY	12-13
JUNE	14-15
JULY	16-17
AUGUST	18-19
SEPTEMBER	20-21
OCTOBER	22-23
NOVEMBER	24-25
DECEMBER	26-27
INVASIVE PLANTS TO AVOID	28
RESOURCES	29
GLOSSARY	29
OKALOOSA COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICES	30

OVERVIEW

Okaloosa Extension is the outreach arm of the Institute of Food & Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida. It is a three-way cooperative arrangement between the Board of County Commissioners, the University of Florida, and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Extension Agents, located in every county, are the bridge between specialists on the University campus and you. The Extension Staff develop and coordinate educational programs in the areas of agriculture, 4-H, family & consumer sciences, horticulture and marine science.

Okaloosa County Master Gardeners assist the Extension Agents by disseminating horticultural-related information based on the University of Florida guidelines.

The information in this publication is derived from the University of Florida guidelines and based on research to produce best practices in horticulture.

Florida Friendly Landscaping Principals:

- Right plant right place
- Water efficiently
- Fertilize appropriately
- Mulch
- Attract wildlife
- Manage yard pest responsibly
- Recycle
- Reduce storm water runoff
- Protect the waterfront

GENERAL INFORMATION

Soil Tests

It is wise to have a soil test done to determine pH and nutrient needs for your soil. Soil pH governs how available nutrients are to all plants, including vegetables and herbs, flowering plants, turf grass and trees and bushes. Your county extension office has information and soil test kits to help you with this. Call 850-689-5850

Fertilize according to soil test recommendations.

Most common landscape plants are well suited to a wide soil pH range. For example, popular woody shrubs and trees (e.g., pittosporum, viburnum, oak, and pine) grow well in acidic to moderately alkaline soils. In addition, several common home lawn grasses can tolerate wide ranges in soil pH. The best pH range for vegetable and flower gardens on sandy soil is 5.8 to 6.3. If your soil pH is between 5.5 and 7.0, there is no need to adjust pH. However, there are a few acid-loving plants like azalea, blueberry, and gardenia that do not grow well in soils with pH greater than 5.5. *The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guide to Plant Selection & Design* provides information about the soil pH tolerance of many landscape plants well suited to Florida growing conditions. *The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guide to Plant Selection & Design* is available at http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYN_Plant_Selection_Guide_v090110.pdf or from your county Extension office.

Mulch

Mulching refers to organic or inorganic material that can be used in your garden or landscape in areas that are hard to maintain or prone to erosion.

Mulching has many benefits. This practice reduces water loss due to evaporation, prevents runoff and erosion, reduces weeds and moderates the soil temperature.

You may get mulch several ways. Grass clippings, leaves/pine needles, and tree trimmings can all be chopped up and reused rather than thrown away. This free mulch is the most environmentally sound and least expensive way of returning nutrients to the soil. Mulch can be purchased at most home improvement stores and nurseries. To determine how many bags you may need, consult the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Workbook Maximize Mulch section (pdf). Bag labels often claim that cypress mulch has a natural resistance to pests. While this is true of old-growth cypress trees, it is not true of younger trees, which are more commonly shredded for mulch.

Mulching is one of the easiest steps in maintaining your garden or landscape as well as provide an element of color and texture to complement your plantings.

When applying mulch, add a 2 -3 inch layer around plants and trees. Be sure to keep the mulch a few inches away from the base of the plants and tree trunks to prevent rotting. Replenish the mulch once or twice a year to maintain the 2 -3 inch depth. Beware mulching the trimmings from invasive species because it may spread the seeds. Never throw excess clippings or mulch down storm drains. This can facilitate the migration of plant species and clogs drains.

livinggreen.ifas.ufl.edu/landscaping/mulch.

Climate Zones

When you select a plant for the garden, one of the most important things to consider is the plant's hardiness zone. The Department of Agriculture has designated eleven climate zones for the U.S. to guide gardening efforts. There are four zones in Florida—8, 9, 10, and 11. Okaloosa County zones are 8a, in the northern part and 8b in the southern part of the county. The USDA hardiness zones are based on the average lowest temperatures, helping you choose plants that can survive the winter. Use the zones as a guide for selecting the plants best suited for your area.

Vegetables and Herbs

Okaloosa County has varied sandy soils, but, in general, the closer to the Gulf of Mexico, the sandier the soil (more nutrient deficient). Most of the county is in USDA hardiness zone 8b; the most northern border of the county is zone 8a. However, north of I - 10, seasonal temperatures can be 5-10 degrees F. colder or hotter than in the southern part of the county. Suggested planting dates are for north of I -10; for south of I -10, plant a week to 10 days earlier in the spring and a week to 10 days later in the fall.

Location of vegetable gardens should ensure at least six (6) hours of direct sunlight daily, be close to a water source, and be well-drained. Avoid growing vegetables of same family repeatedly in one location.

Most soils benefit from addition of animal manures, rotted leaves, compost, commercial soil mixes and cover crops. Thoroughly mix un-composted amendments into soil at least one month (preferably longer) before seeding. Mix in composted organics at planting time.

Herbs require similar sun, soil and watering conditions as do vegetables. They grow well in containers, and some can be grown indoors in a sunny window or under “grow” lamps. In the garden, to avoid roots disturbance, plant perennial herbs in one area and annuals in another. Also, herbs should be grouped away from vegetables, so spraying for pest control is restricted to vegetables only.

Soil, weather, pests and disease render gardening in Florida a challenge. The University of Florida has done research on the **best varieties of vegetables** suitable for growing conditions in northern Florida. Good varieties, as well as, **pest management recommendations** can be found by visiting the website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/SP103>.

Monitor the garden at least twice a week for evidence of pests and disease. Pests can often be manually removed and destroyed. Diseased leaves and plants should be removed and not used for compost. A pest-spraying plan may be necessary; it is best to start with the least toxic applications. Read all instructions and know when it is safe to harvest following any application. Remember you are growing a garden to eat its produce.

Turf Grass

Grass	Advantages	Disadvantages	Fertilization Recommendations (lbs. N 1000 sq.ft. per year)	Mowing Height
Bahiagrass	Good drought tolerance Low fertility requirements Low maintenance Tolerant of sandy, acidic infertile soils Establishes from seed	Produces abundance of seedheads Open growth habit encourages weed competition Susceptible to mole crickets Coarse stems are difficult to mow Not wear tolerant	2- 3	3-4 inches
St. Augustine	Shade tolerance but varies with species Tolerant to wide range of soil pH Establishes quickly from sod The “standard” – we know how to manage it	Grows by stolons Poor wear tolerance Forms excessive thatch No chinch tolerance Loss of herbicides for grassy weed control	2-4	2.5-4 inches
Zoysiagrass	Nematode issues Disease more prevalent than some other species Coarse leaf texture Prone to thatch	Good turf quality Blue-green leaf color Reduced maintenance Shade tolerant	2-3	1-2 inches
Centipedegrass	Few insect and disease problems Slow growing and prostrate Reduced mowing needs Reduced fertilization and irrigation	Grows only by stolons Susceptible to “Centipedegrass Decline” if overfertilized	1-2	1.5-2 inches

Irrigation

- Apply ½ inch to ¾ inch when turf shows symptoms of wilt
- This should not vary seasonally; only frequency of irrigation varies
- During the growing season, irrigate 2-3 times a week; in the fall the need for irrigation will go down and in the winter, even less frequency is required

Fertilization

- Florida Timing – 2-4 times a year during growing season
- Keep fertilizer off impervious surfaces
- Maintain a buffer zone (10 feet) around water bodies
- Apply only the correct amount
- Know your pH and nutrient concentration through a soil test
- Low phosphorus
- Only fertilize during the growing season

Turf Grass Pests

Several insects and mites feed on grass, but not all of them cause economic or aesthetic damage. Many are harmless, some are beneficial, and some are pests. Only a few cause significant damage and need immediate control. Keep in mind that insects are only one of many potential causes for thin or brown grass. Diseases, nematodes, drought, and nutritional disorders can also be damaging. Correct identification of the problem can save money and prevent unnecessary pesticide applications. In general, healthy turf is less vulnerable to pests and can recover faster from infestation. Avoid overusing soluble nitrogen fertilizers, mow at the correct height for the grass species, reduce thatch, and avoid over-watering to minimize pest habitat. Check every 7 to 10 days for pest activity, especially in “hot spots” where damage tends to reoccur. Check this website for the description of insect pests and possible insect controls. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ig001>

JANUARY

Flowers

Plants that can be added to the garden during the coolest months include pansy, viola, petunia, and snapdragon.

It's bulb-planting time. Add agapanthus, amaryllis, crinum, freesia, hyacinth, gloriosa, narcissus, daffodils, and prechilled tulips and hyacinths. (Marie Harrison)

Finish dividing crowded perennials.

Lawn Care

Check soil moisture during winter and water as needed.

When growing season begins, the following chart offers suggestions for the mowing heights of Florida home lawns.

Turfgrass Species	Optimal Mowing Height
Bahiagrass	3.0 – 4.0 inches
Bermudagrass	.075 – 1.5 inches
Centipedegrass	1.5 – 2.0 inches
St. Augustinegrass	3.5 – 4.0
Zoysiagrass	2.0 - 3.0 inches

Trees and Shrubs

Plant bare root deciduous ornamental shrubs and trees and deciduous fruit trees.

Transplant larger shrubs and trees.

Fertilize existing trees.

Prune, where needed, dormant shade trees and NON spring flowering shrubs and trees.

Do NOT prune: spring flowering trees and shrubs, such as camellias, azaleas, spireas, loropetalum, forsythias, and gardenias as the buds for their flowers were formed last summer and fall. Pruning before flowering will remove most flowering buds.

Do NOT prune cold damaged trees and shrubs until new growth appears, so you can keep as much healthy plant material as possible.

CELEBRATE Florida Arbor Day (3rd Friday of January) by planting a tree. Consider a hurricane resistant tree such as a live oak, bald cypress, cabbage palm, or crape myrtle.

Vegetables and Herbs

Seed beds with carrots (Imperator), English peas (Wando), Snow peas (Oregon types), kale (Vates Dwarf Blue Curled or Tuscan), mustard greens (Florida Broad Leaf), bunching onions (Evergreen Bunching), radishes (Cherry Belle), turnips (Purple Top). Note: spinach (Bloomsdale & Tyee) is difficult to grow in our county. Although not true spinach Malabar Spinach and New Zealand Spinach are warm weather vines producing spinach-like leaves good for salad.

Put transplants in prepared beds: broccoli (Packman), Brussels sprouts, cabbage (Copenhagen Mkt), Chinese cabbage (Bok Choy or Pak-choi), cauliflower (Snowball strains), kohlrabi, (Early White Vienna) leek (Lancelot).

Herbs to plant include: coriander/cilantro, fennel, garlic (Valencia), parsley, sage.

Be aware of possible freezing temperatures that necessitate protecting tender plants.

Make sure fall-planted strawberries are consistently & adequately watered over winter.

FEBRUARY

Flowers

Since temperatures can drop to freezing this month, new additions to the garden must be able to withstand cold. Plants that can take a chill include dianthus, pansy, viola, and dusty miller.

Many bulbs can be planted now. Provide adequate water to establish and protect from cold weather with mulch. Some to try are dahlias, crinum, and agapanthus.

Prepare flowerbeds for spring planting by adding and incorporating soil amendments like mushroom compost, manure or homemade compost. Till or spade the bed to incorporate the amendments with the existing soil to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. Allow the prepared bed to lie undisturbed for 3 to 4 weeks before planting.

Replenish mulch in flowerbeds.

Lawn Care

Apply a pre-emergent herbicide if the day temperatures reach 65° - 70° for four or five consecutive days. Pre-emergent herbicides are used before a weed germinates and grows.

Monitor landscape turf weekly for problem areas.

It is not necessary to mow the lawn when it is dormant. However you can mulch the leaves on the lawn by mowing, as needed. The leaves should be kept to a minimum on the lawn to avoid blockage of sunlight. Keep the mowers on a high setting. It is never a good idea to scalp the lawn!

Trees and Shrubs

Finish planting ornamental shrubs and trees and deciduous fruit trees.

Fertilize established fruit trees such as peach, plum, pear, persimmon, apple, and fig.

Fertilize pecan trees with special fertilizer that contains zinc. Use 2 pounds for each year of age up to 55 pounds. Spread fertilizer evenly beneath canopy of tree. Fertilize roses.

Prune, where needed, dormant shade trees, summer flowering deciduous shrubs and trees, such as altheas, hibiscus, and crape myrtles, as they bloom on the current season's growth and pruning may enhance flowering.

Prune roses to remove damaged/dead canes and weak, crossing, or rubbing branches. May remove up to 1/3 of remaining strong stems to improve form.

Prune old overgrown evergreen shrubs to rejuvenate. These may be cut back to within one to two feet of the ground. NOTE: Do NOT use this technique on needle evergreens, such as junipers.

Do NOT prune spring flowering trees and shrubs as the buds for their flowers were formed last summer and fall. Pruning before flowering will remove most flowering buds.

Do NOT prune cold damaged trees and shrubs until new growth appears, so you can keep as much healthy plant material as possible.

Do NOT prune citrus.

Spray shrubs with dormant horticultural oil emulsion.

Refurbish mulch in shrub beds and around roses, keeping it 1 to 2 inches away from trunks and stems.

Vegetables and Herbs

Cool weather vegetables to plant: beets (Detroit Dark Red), broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, celery (Utah), Chinese cabbage, collards (Georgia), endive/escarole, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuces (Leaf – Red Sails & Sierra; Romaine – Paris Island Cos & Valmaine), mustard, English peas, Snow peas, potatoes, radish, and turnips.

Start potatoes about Feb 5th; purchase certified seed potatoes (Red Pontiac); do not use table-stock for seed. Plant 2oz. seed pieces with eyes, 3-4 inches deep.

Start seeds of sweet peppers (Declaration), eggplant (Black Beauty) & okra (Clemson Spineless) indoors about Feb. 1st for transplanting into the garden about April 1st.

Start tomato seeds (large fruit -Amelia, Big Beef, Celebrity, Fletcher and small fruit- Juliet, Sweet One Million) indoors Feb. 15th.

Herbs to plant: chives, coriander/cilantro, dill, ginger, marjoram, parsley, sage, thyme.

MARCH

Flowers

Dianthus and other cool-season annuals will continue to flourish.

Consider planting warm season annuals such as angelonia, wax begonia, and zinnia at the end of the month.

Plant dahlia, canna, and gloriosa bulbs for spring and summer flowering bulbs in beds that have been amended with organic matter. Provide stakes as needed to support growth.

Caladiums are tropical plants and require temperatures above 60° F to flourish. Thus, it is critical to wait to plant caladiums until temperatures are 60° F or above

Lawn Care

Rake dead grass to allow new grass to grow. This also increases the effectiveness of fertilizers applied to the lawn.

Apply a pre-emergent herbicide if the day temperatures reach 65° - 70° for four or five consecutive days. Pre-emergent herbicides are used before a weed germinates and grows. . These application timings generally coincide with blooming of landscape plants, such as azalea and dogwood. If goosegrass is the primary weed species expected, wait 3–4 weeks later than these suggested application dates, since goosegrass germinates later than most summer annual grasses. See Publication #ENH884

With our warm season grasses (centipede, St. Augustine, bahia, bermuda, zoysia and carpet grasses), it is best to wait until the grass has completely greened up in the spring before applying any fertilizer. Fertilizing too early (before green up) can result in turf injury and leaching of fertilizer nutrients. So do not fertilize at this time.

Trees and Shrubs

Fertilize ornamental shrubs and small trees with a good general purpose landscape fertilizer (15-0-15), in which at least 30% of its nitrogen is slow release.

Fertilize azaleas, camellias, and gardenias using special azalea/camellia type fertilizer for acid loving plants.

Fertilize mature palms with a special palm fertilizer that has an 8-2-12+4Mg (magnesium) with micronutrients formulation. Apply one pound of fertilizer per 100 sq. ft. of canopy area.

Finish pruning summer flowering deciduous shrubs and trees, such as abelias, altheas, hibiscus, oak leaf hydrangeas, oleanders, and crape myrtles, as they bloom on the current season's growth and pruning may enhance flowering.

Finish pruning cold damaged trees and shrubs as new growth begins keeping as much healthy plant material as possible.

DELAY pruning spring flowering trees and shrubs, such as camellias, azaleas, spireas, loropetalum, and forsythias, until AFTER last flowers fade, but before new buds set.

Pick up ALL fallen camellia blossoms and remove from your property to help prevent petal blight next season.

Finish spraying shrubs with dormant horticultural oil emulsion.

Refurbish mulch in shrub beds and around roses. Use leaves from evergreen or semi-evergreen trees such as live oak and laurel oaks, which shed their leaves in spring. Keep mulch 1 to 2 inches away from trunks and stems.

Compost live oak and laurel oak leaves that are not used for mulch.

Water heavily pruned shrubs, if weather is dry to help give them a quicker recovery.

Buy azaleas now in order to be assured of getting specific colors, though it is not ideal planting time.

Vegetables and Herbs

In the southern part of county, set out transplants of tomatoes & peppers latter part of month, but in northern areas it's better to wait until April 1st.

Mound up soil around potato stems to protect tubers from sun damage.

Herbs: plant seeds or transplants of anise, basil, borage, chervil, chives, coriander/cilantro, cumin, dill, ginger, Spanish lavender, lemon balm, lovage, marjoram, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, sorrel, Mexican tarragon (French type can't handle our humidity), thyme.

Watch for late freeze warnings and protect tender transplants.

APRIL

Flowers

Annuals to plant include celosia, coleus, dusty miller, gaillardia, geranium, hollyhock, impatiens, marigold, ornamental pepper, penta, phlox, portulaca, rudbeckia, salvia, sweet William, verbena, vinca and zinnia. New varieties of coleus do well in sun or shade and provide vivid colors and patterns for months.

This is an ideal time to plant many bulbs. Consider planting blood lily, caladium, or canna. Louisiana iris makes a beautiful cut flower and thrives in most soil types although they prefer moist soils with a high organic matter content.

Divide perennials and bulbs. Divide clumps of bulbs, ornamental grasses, or herbaceous perennials to expand or rejuvenate garden beds or to pass-along to friends.

Lawn Care

Calibrate the irrigation system so that approximately ½ inch of water is applied at each use. Contact the Extension Service for specific instructions.

Water lawns in the early mornings between 4:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. to help prevent disease problems.

Apply fertilizer around April 15, after the grass has completely greened up and has been cut at least twice. Do not apply more than ½ pound of water-soluble nitrogen per 1000 square feet at any one time. If using a fertilizer that has at least 50% of the nitrogen in slow-release form, up to 1 pound of nitrogen per 100 square feet may be applied.

Early detection of insects is vital to ensure a healthy lawn. Check the lawn for pest activity every seven to 10 days. Factors other than insects can result in problem areas. Correct identification of the problem can save money, prevent excessive damage and refrain from using unnecessary pesticides. See Publication #ENY-300

Trees and Shrubs

Plant new shrubs or spring flowering trees in the landscape, choosing from a wide variety available at this time.

Fertilize, as needed, ornamental shrubs and small trees with a good general purpose landscape fertilizer (15-0-15), in which at least 30% of its nitrogen is slow release.

Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs, after the last flowers fade, before new buds set.

Monitor for insects weekly. Look for aphids on new tender growth of trees and shrubs, such as camellia, crape-myrtle, gardenia, hibiscus, oleander, and roses. These may be controlled by beneficial insects, spraying with a forceful stream of water from a garden hose, using a specifically formulated commercial soap, or using a spray made from dishwashing liquid (3 tablespoons per gallon of water for shrubs or 2 tablespoons per gallon of water for bedding and flowering plants) weekly. NOTE: Do not use dishwashing liquid containing a degreaser or automatic dishwashing soap or detergent. For more information see "Aphids on Landscape Plants" <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg002>. Monitor for beneficials, such as lady beetles, hover fly larvae, assassin bugs, ambush bugs, and spiders, to conserve and encourage.

Mulch to conserve moisture and minimize weeds. Use leaves from evergreen or semi-evergreen trees, such as live oak and laurel oaks, which shed their leaves in spring. Keep it 1 to 2 inches away from trunks and stems.

Compost live oak and laurel oak leaves that are not used for mulch.

Water heavily pruned shrubs, if weather is dry to help give them a quicker recovery.

Vegetables and Herbs

Vegetables to plant: bush beans (Blue Lake 247), pole beans (Kentucky Wonder), lima beans (Henderson), cantaloupe (Ambrosia & Hale's Best), swiss chard (Bright Lights), collards, sweet corn (Spring Tree, Montauk), cucumbers (Burpless 26), eggplant, mustard, okra, peppers, pumpkin (Big Max & Jack O Lantern), Malabar or New Zealand spinach, summer squash (Early Prolific Straightneck & Zucchini Elite), winter squash (Early Butternut, Waltham), tomatoes, turnips, watermelon (large- Jubilee & Crimson Sweet; and small- Sugar Baby).

Plant seeds of southern peas, and sweet potato slips (Beauregard), about April 15th. Purchase only certified weevil free sweet potato plants.

Transplant tomatoes, peppers, & other vegetables if not done in late March. Moisten soil before removing plant from container. Stake tomatoes with 5-ft. rigid stake or use cage.

MAY

Flowers

Annuals that can take summer heat include salvia, angelonia, wax begonia, and ornamental pepper.

Planting early-, mid-, and late-blooming varieties of daylily ensures months of color from these low maintenance plants.

Fertilize March-planted annual flowerbeds. Use a complete granular or liquid fertilizer.

To determine which perennials are best for your situation and taste, see The University of Florida Publication #ENH-68, "Gardening with Perennials in Florida."

Lawn Care

If a fertilizer was not applied in April, it is time to apply a slow release nitrogen fertilizer with an analysis of 15-0-15.

Water lawns in the early mornings from 4:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. to help prevent disease problems.

"On most lawns, grass clippings should be returned to help recycle nutrients to the soil. If the lawn is mowed frequently enough, clippings cause few problems." *Publication #ENH10*

Early detection of insects is vital to ensure a healthy lawn. Check the lawn for pest activity every seven to 10 days. Factors other than insects can result in problem areas. Correct identification of the problem can save money, prevent excessive damage and refrain from using unnecessary pesticides. See publications on the UF/IFAS website for specific information.

Trees and Shrubs

Fertilize, as needed, citrus with a special citrus fertilizer containing about 1.6% magnesium, about 0.5% manganese and small amounts of copper and boron.

Finish pruning spring flowering trees and shrubs. Prune damaged or weak branches of trees in preparation for hurricane season.

Look for aphids on new tender growth of trees and shrubs, such as camellia, crape-myrtle, gardenia, hibiscus, oleander, and roses. For more information see “Aphids on Landscape Plants ¹” at <edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg002>.

Look for spider mites on Japanese hollies, lacebugs on azaleas and pyracantha, scales on camellias and hollies, and whiteflies on ligustrum and gardenias.

Look for beneficials, such as lady beetles, hover fly larvae, assassin bugs, ambush bugs, and spiders, to conserve and encourage.

Look on oleanders for chewed or ragged leaves as a sign of caterpillars.

<http://edis.ifa.ufl.edu/in135>

Check for yellowing of leaves on new growth of gardenias, which may indicate a micronutrient deficiency. (<http://edis.ifa..ufl.edu/mg336>)

Mulch as needed to keep it 2 inches thick to conserve moisture and minimize weeds, keeping it 1 to 2 inches away from trunks and stems.

Water newly planted shrubs or trees frequently until they are well established. Small shrubs take about 3 months to become established and larger shrubs or trees about 6 months to a year.

Vegetables and Herbs

Continue planting warm weather seeds and transplants of eggplant, lima beans, okra, southern peas & sweet potatoes.

When Irish potatoes plants die back, cut stems but leave tubers in ground about two more weeks to toughen the skin. Carefully dig up potatoes so as to not bruise or cut skin. Wash off and dry in the sun before storing.

JUNE

Flowers

Annuals that can take full sun during hot summer months include celosia, portulaca, vinca, and some coleus.

Add bright color to the landscape with a variety of salvias including blue sage, 'Hot Lips' salvia, Mexican sage, and rose leaf sage.

A colorful splash of color for the summer includes copper plants, croton, mandevilla, ixora, pentas and bougainvillea.

Lawn Care

Early detection of insects is vital to ensure a healthy lawn. Check the lawn for pest activity every seven to 10 days.

Check for the following lawn pests:

Spittlebugs in centipedegrass

Chinch bugs in St. Augustinegrass

Sod webworm in all turf

Tawny mole cricket in bahiagrass and Bermudagrass

Shortwinged mole cricket in St. Augustinegrass and Bermudagrass

Factors other than insects can result in problem areas. Correct identification of the problem can save money, prevent excessive damage and refrain from using unnecessary pesticides. See publications on the UF/IFAS website for specific information.

Trees and Shrubs

Plant palms during this warm rainy season.

Fertilize, as needed, mature palms with a special palm fertilizer that has an 8-2-12+4Mg (magnesium) with micronutrients formulation. Apply one pound of fertilizer per 100 sq. ft. of canopy area. Be careful to keep lawn “weed and feed” type products out of flower and shrub beds.

Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs, by early June, BEFORE new buds set.

Prune summer flowering shrubs lightly to encourage further blooming.

Prune junipers as needed.

Prune damaged or weak branches of trees in preparation for hurricane season.

Monitor for insects, looking at undersides of azalea and pyracantha leaves for spider mites and lace bugs. Inspect maples, especially silver maples, for maple soft scale, which is a white substance with some black on one end. Scales are about ¼ inch in diameter and resemble bird droppings. Look for spider mites on shrubs, thrips on roses and gardenias, whiteflies on ligustrum and gardenias, and caterpillars on oleanders. Look for beneficials, such as lady beetles, hover fly larvae, assassin bugs, ambush bugs, and spiders, to conserve and encourage. Water newly planted shrubs or trees frequently until they are well established. Small shrubs take about 3 months to become established and larger shrubs or trees about 6 months to a year. Water as needed, watching for signs of drought stress.

Vegetables and Herbs

Herbs: the leaves, seeds, flowering tops, and some roots, of herbs are used for flavoring and aroma. Harvest leaves of herbs you want to dry store just as they start blooming; best time to harvest is in early morning. Tie stems together in small quantities & hang upside down in paper bag in darkened well-ventilated area until dried. Remove dried leaves from stems. Harvest seed crops when mature & color turns from green to brown or gray; dry well. Store in metal, cardboard or dark glass containers away from light.

Root tomato suckers for a fall crop.

JULY

Flowers

Coleus, crossandra, ornamental pepper, impatiens, kalanchoe, portulaca, salvia, vinca and tropical milkweed planted now should last until November. As the heat continues, keep annuals evenly moist.

Butterfly lily, gladiolus, and society garlic are bulbs that can be planted during the middle of summer.

Lawn Care

Early detection of insects is vital to ensure a healthy lawn. Check the lawn for pest activity every seven to 10 days. Factors other than insects can result in problem areas. Correct identification of the problem can save money, prevent excessive damage and refrain from using unnecessary pesticides. See publications on the UF/IFAS website for specific information. Keep lawn mower blades sharp. This reduces some disease problems and gives the lawn a neater look when it is cut.

Lawns will begin experiencing more stress as temperatures rise this summer. Raise the mowing height one-half inch as hot weather approaches.

Post-emergent herbicides control weeds after germination. They must be applied according to the label instructions, especially those regarding Florida temperatures.

Trees and Shrubs

Plant palms during this warm rainy season. Support large palms with braces for 6 to 8 months, being careful not to drive nails directly into palm trunks.

Do **NOT** heavily prune any spring flowering trees and shrubs, such as camellias, azaleas, spireas, and forsythias. Removing new growth may remove buds for next spring's flowers.

Prune crape myrtles lightly to remove spent flower heads, so they will bloom again.

Prune summer flowering shrubs lightly to encourage further blooming.

Prune hydrangeas as soon as blooming is finished, so they will have sufficient time to re-grow before the dormant season.

Prune junipers, as needed.

Prune damaged or weak branches of trees in preparation for hurricane season.

Monitor for insects

Mulch as needed

Water newly planted shrubs or trees frequently until they are well established. Small shrubs take about 3 months to become established and larger shrubs or trees about 6 months to a year. Water, as needed, watching for signs of drought stress.

Vegetables and Herbs

Start broccoli, cauliflower, collards and cabbage around July 15th so you will have transplants for the fall garden.

Fertilize peppers, okra and other warm season vegetables to encourage production through summer. Gardeners find it convenient to use available grades like 6-6-6, or 10-10-10, but some Okaloosa County soils have enough phosphorus (middle number in NPK formulations), and need only additional nitrogen and potassium. Refer to your soil test.

When nighttime temperatures stay in the 80s and above, blossoms of tomato, bush beans, cucumbers and peppers may drop. If temps stay cooler, production will continue.

It's important to pick vegetables regularly so plants continue to produce.

Blossom end rot on tomatoes or a similar rot on peppers is caused by a calcium deficiency or fluctuation in soil moisture. Keep plants evenly moist. Discard rotting fruit.

Remove diseased vegetable plants or infected leaves from garden. Don't compost them.

Prevent disease spread by watering carefully at soil level; avoid splashing on leaves.

As basil begins to bloom, cut plants back just above a pair of leaves to spur growth.

AUGUST

Flowers

The hottest days of summer limit planting now to heat tolerant vinca, gaillardia, bulbine, and coleus. Remove spent blooms, cut back, and fertilize flowering annuals and perennials to extend the bloom season into the fall months.

Aztec lily, butterfly lily, walking iris, and spider lily can be planted any time of the year, even late summer.

Lawn Care

Early detection of insects is vital to ensure a healthy lawn. Check the lawn for pest activity every seven to 10 days. Factors other than insects can result in problem areas. Correct identification of the problem can save money, prevent excessive damage and refrain from using unnecessary pesticides. See publications on the UF/IFAS website for specific information.

Trees and Shrubs

Fertilize, as needed, shrubs that show signs of deficiencies due to leaching rains/rapid growth and mature palms, if older fronds show signs of deficiencies (yellowing may indicate a magnesium or potassium deficiency). Use an appropriate palm fertilizer. Be careful to keep lawn “weed and feed” type products out of flower and shrub beds.

Prune hydrangeas and gardenias. This should be completed this month.

Do NOT prune any spring flowering trees and shrubs, such as camellias, azaleas, spireas, and forsythias. Removing new growth will remove buds for next spring’s flowers.

Monitor for insects/pests. Look for large black defoliator caterpillars on azaleas, as they can strip and weaken plants quickly, and should be controlled by hand picking or with an approved insecticide. Look at undersides of azalea and pyracantha leaves for spider mites and lace bugs.

Look for spider mites on shrubs, thrips on roses and gardenias, whiteflies on ligustrum and gardenias, and caterpillars on trees and shrubs. Look for beneficials, such as lady beetles, hover fly larvae, assassin bugs, ambush bugs, and spiders, to conserve and encourage.

If you see white webbing that may cover branches and trunks of trees. This is an indication of the presence of psocids (tree cattle). These insects do NOT injure trees as they feed on surface debris.

Mulch as needed.

Water as needed.

Vegetables and Herbs

It’s time for fall gardening, so test the soil before planting cool season crops. Add amendments as suggested in “Considerations Before Planting Vegetables & Herbs.”

Direct sow seeds of beans, cucumber, bunching (green) onions, peppers, southern peas, pumpkin, turnips and watermelon. Monitor for pests and provide adequate water.

Plant tomato suckers that were rooted earlier.

Set out transplants of broccoli and cauliflower.

SEPTEMBER

Flowers

If summer beds need refreshing, try ageratum, celosia, zinnia, and wax begonia for color into fall.

Add color, texture, and pattern to the garden with the many varieties of Elephant's Ear (Alocasia) available now. Others to plant now include calla, narcissus, and zephyr lily.

Divide and replant perennials and bulbs that have grown too large or need rejuvenation. Add organic matter to new planting areas and monitor water needs during establishment.

Lawn Care

Apply fertilizer. Do not apply more than ½ pound of water-soluble nitrogen per 1000 square feet at any one time. If using a fertilizer that has at least 50% of the nitrogen in slow-release form, up to 1 pound of nitrogen per 100 square feet may be applied. Root growth is greatest in fall, followed by the spring period and nearly stops during the high heat in the summer. Since the fertilizer helps the roots, it will help the grass tolerate stress better.

Trees and Shrubs

Plant trees and shrubs in the fall, as our relatively mild winters allow for root growth and they will be well on their way to having their roots established before hot weather arrives.

Fertilize, as needed, mature palms with a special palm fertilizer that has an 8-2-12+4Mg (magnesium) with micronutrients formulation. Apply one pound of fertilizer per 100 sq. ft. of canopy area. Be careful to keep lawn “weed and feed” type products out of flower and shrub beds. THIS IS THE LAST MONTH of the year to do so.

Do NOT prune unless it is absolutely necessary. Pruning can stimulate new tender growth, which may be damaged by low winter temperatures.

Monitor for insects/pests. Look for black twig borer damage on the small twigs of the outer canopy of hardwood trees. Remove and destroy the infested twigs.

Mulch as needed

Water newly planted shrubs or trees frequently until they are well established. Small shrubs take about 3 months to become established and larger shrubs or trees about 6 months to a year.

Purchase crape myrtles while still in bloom to assure color selection.

Vegetables and Herbs

Try planting vegetables in an attractive design to add interest to the landscape.

Plant seeds for radish, beet (soak seed first), carrot, leafy greens, lettuces, green beans, green onions and cucumber early in month. Choose varieties that will mature in 7-8 weeks.

Plant strawberries late this month. Choose short-day varieties (Florida 90, Chandler, Oso Grande, Sweet Charlie) and grow as an annual crop.

Set out bulbing onions (Granex, a Vidalia-type). Choose only short-day varieties.

Set out broccoli, cabbage, collards, Brussels sprouts (Jade Cross), and cauliflower. Check plants often for caterpillars.

When planting fast maturing vegetables, make plantings at 10-14 day intervals to have a steady harvest.

OCTOBER

Flowers

Get ready to protect valuable container grown tropical and subtropical plants. Move them indoors when night temperatures drop to 40°

Even though temperatures are still warm, begin planting for the cooler months ahead. Digitalis (foxglove), petunia, and shasta daisy are good plants for the fall garden.

Divide crowded perennials such as ajuga, daylilies, lirioppe and mondo.

There are many daffodils that are suitable for Florida. Fragrant varieties include 'Carlton', 'Fortune', 'Silver Chimes', 'Thallia', and 'Sweetness'.

Lawn Care

For pre-emergence control of winter annual weeds such as annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*), apply an herbicide when nighttime temperatures drop to 55°F–60°F for several consecutive days.

Continue mowing and providing general care, including irrigation.

Avoid the application of fertilizer as this could encourage new growth that would result in winter damage.

“Over seeding” is sometimes used to provide a green winter turf cover. UF/IFAS recommends ryegrass on home lawns. It is best to wait to over seed when the daytime temperatures are consistently in the low- to mid- 70° range. Rake and mow the grass before applying the seed. After applying the seed, water should be applied lightly and carefully once or twice a day until the seeds have germinated. Once the plants are well established, water on an as-needed basis.

Trees and Shrubs

Plant trees and shrubs in the fall, as our relatively mild winters allow for root growth and they will be well on their way to having their roots established before hot weather arrives.

Plant evergreen hollies to enhance the landscape for the holidays. Water well. Mulch.

Do NOT prune unless it is absolutely necessary. Pruning can stimulate new tender growth, which may be damaged by low winter temperatures.

Monitor for insects/pests. Make an application of horticultural oil on shrubs and woody ornamentals, IF scales, mites, and other plant sucking insects have been a problem.

Mulch as needed

Water newly planted shrubs or trees frequently until they are well established. Small shrubs take about 3 months to become established and larger shrubs or trees about 6 months to a year.

Vegetables and Herbs

Continue to plant strawberries, bulbing onions, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower.

Plant seeds of radish, carrot, beet, green onion and leafy greens.

Plant garlic cloves (Creole, Valencia) now for harvest next summer. Place clove in soil so that pointed end is two (2) inches below surface and space cloves 6-8 inches apart.

Herbs to plant include parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme.

NOVEMBER

Flowers

Create a display of fall colors with cool season plants. Some to try are pansy, viola, petunia, snapdragon, Shasta daisy, ornamental kale, ornamental cabbage and chrysanthemum. Bulbs to plant this month include amaryllis, crinum, and daylily. Plant Lycoris (spider lily) in partial shade. Plants will produce foliage in winter and beautiful red flowers emerge in late summer.

Lawn Care

“Over seeding” is sometimes used to provide a green winter turf cover. UF/IFAS recommends ryegrass on home lawns. It is best to wait to over seed when the daytime temperatures are consistently in the low- to mid- 70° range. Rake and mow the grass before applying the seed. After applying the seed, water should be applied lightly and carefully once or twice a day until the seeds have germinated. Once the plants are well established, water on an as-needed basis. Allow the permanent lawn to gradually go dormant by withholding fertilizer.

Trees and Shrubs

Plant evergreen hollies to enhance the landscape for the holidays.

Plant camellias later in the month to add color to your winter landscape. Remove some of the buds now to ensure larger blooms later. See <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep002>.

For fall color, consider planting black gum, hickory, dogwood, crape myrtle, sweet gum, oakleaf hydrangea, or red maple.

Plant magnolia and dogwood seeds, harvesting as soon as they are ripe. Remove the outer pulp and plant immediately, before they dry out.

Locate and order fruit trees for planting in December.

Transplant shrubs and trees as needed.

Do NOT prune unless it is absolutely necessary. Pruning can stimulate new tender growth, which may be damaged by low winter temperatures.

Monitor for insects/pests, making an application of dormant horticultural oil on shrubs and woody ornamentals this fall, IF scales, mites, and other plant sucking insects have been a problem.

Mulch as needed

Water only if needed, turning off water systems. Plants need less supplemental watering in cooler weather.

Protect small citrus trees if freezing temperatures are predicted by watering well at least a day before the freeze. You may also use covers that extend to the ground.

Vegetables and Herbs

Plant strawberries before Nov. 15th.

Plant seeds of radish, carrot, beets, green onion, leafy greens, spinach, Chinese cabbage.

Put in transplants of broccoli, cabbage, bulbing onions, collards, Brussels sprouts, shallots.

Start thinning vegetables when plants reach 2 to 3 inches in height.

DECEMBER

Flowers

To add color to the winter garden, plant masses of petunia, pansy, snapdragon, lobelia, alyssum, and viola.

Prepare sensitive plants for freezes

If the area receives cold temperatures and plants freeze, do not prune damaged wood until spring.

Amaryllis is a popular plant for the holiday season. They can be forced to bloom now or planted outdoors for spring blooms.

Lawn Care

Mow the “over seeded” lawn when needed.

Check soil moisture during the winter and water as needed.

Trees and Shrubs

Plant camellias later in the month to add color to your winter landscape. Remove some of the buds now to ensure larger blooms later. See <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep002>.

For fall color, consider planting black gum, hickory, dogwood, crape myrtle, sweet gum, oakleaf hydrangea, or red maple.

Plant magnolia and dogwood seeds, harvesting as soon as they are ripe. Remove the outer pulp and plant immediately, before they dry out.

Locate and order fruit trees for planting this winter.

Transplant shrubs and trees as needed.

Start hardwood cuttings, such as althea, fig, grape, hibiscus, crape myrtle, honeysuckle, and forsythia.

Prune sucker growth below graft on citrus.

Do **NOT** prune unless it is absolutely necessary. Pruning can stimulate new tender growth, which may be damaged by low winter temperatures.

Do **NOT** prune cold damaged plants. Wait until warm weather and new growth appear.

Monitor for insects/pests. Make an application of horticultural oil on shrubs, woody ornamentals, and dormant fruit trees this fall, IF scales, mites, and other plant sucking insects have been a problem.

Mulch as needed

Water newly planted shrubs or trees frequently until they are well established. Small shrubs take about 3 months to become established and larger shrubs or trees about 6 months to a year.

Water only if needed, turning off water systems. Plants need less supplemental watering in cooler weather.

Protect small citrus trees if freezing temperatures are predicted by watering well at least a day before the freeze. You may also use covers that extend to the ground.

Vegetables and Herbs

Vegetables that can be planted include: beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, Chinese cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, leek, mustard, bulbing and green onions, parsley and radish.

Locate sources for Irish potato and English pea seed, as they can be started next month.

Invasive Plant Species	
Mimosa, silk tree Albizia julibrissin	Wild taro (Elephant Ear) Colocasia esculenta
Asparagus fern Asparagus aethiopicus	Water hyacinth Eichornia crassipes
Air potato Dioscorea bulbifera	Cogon grass Imperata cylindrical
Lantana, shrub verbena Lantana camara	Glossy privet Ligustrum lucidum
Popcorn tree Sapium sebiferum	Japanese honeysuckle Lonicera japonica
Coral ardisia Ardisia crenata	Chines privet, hedge privet Ligustrum sinense
Cat's claw vine, Cat brier, Smilax Macfadyena unguis-cati	Heavenly bamboo Nandina domestica
Arrowhead vine Syngonium podophyllum	Torpedo grass Panicum repens
Mexican petunia Ruellia simplex	Kudzu Pueraria Montana

Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council

Edited for Okaloosa County by Margaret Stewart

GLOSSARY

Annual – flowering plant having a life cycle that lasts only one growing season. Annuals are typically split into two categories: warm season and cool season

Biennial – a plant that completes its life cycle in two growing seasons

Deciduous – a plant that naturally sheds all of its leaves at any one time

Herbaceous – a plant with little or no woody material

Perennial – a plant that can live for two or more growing seasons

Stolon – a modified stem growing horizontally above the soil level

Rhizome – a modified stem growing horizontally under the soil level

Thatch - Thatch is defined as an intermingled layer of dead and living shoots, stems, and roots that develops between the zone of green vegetation and the soil surface. Thatch consists of a loosely interwoven collection of plant matter that leaves the turf feeling spongy or puffy. When excessive (1 inch or more), thatch causes serious problems in Florida lawns.

Tuber – a swollen underground stem with multiple growth points scattered over its surface

Woody – a plant with hardened (woody) stems or trunk

RESOURCES

Brown, Sydney Park. “*North Florida Gardening Calendar.*” Document ENH1190/EP451. Web. <<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep451>>

Brown, Sydney Park, Stephens, J.M., et al. “*Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide.*” <<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/sp103/vh021>>

Elliott, M.L. and Harmon, P.F. “Turfgrass Disease Management.” <<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh040>>

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program's sample plant lists and designs for four Florida Regions: FFL Book Zone 8A-8B (PDF) edis.ifas.ufl.edu

“*Gardening In a Minute.*” University of Florida Extension. <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/giam/maintenance_and_care/soil_fertilizer_and_nutrients/quick_vs_slow.html>

“*Guide to Landscape Plants for Fisher House.*” Master Gardeners of Okaloosa County

“*Monthly Garden Tips.*” Santa Rosa County. <http://santarosa.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn_garden_tips.shtml>

Okaloosa County Horticultural Garden Project: “*Vegetables and Herbs.*”

Stephens, James M., et al. “*Fruit and Vegetable A-Z Index.*” <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_vegetables_a_thru-z>

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Trehnolm, Laurie E., and J. Bryan Unruh, eds. “*The Florida Lawn Handbook.*” 3rd ed. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2005.

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University of Florida/Institute of Food & Agriculture Sciences (IFAS) Internet Sites

edis.ifas.ufl.edu

hort.ifas.ufl.edu

wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu

okaloosa.ifas.ufl.edu

solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu

turf.ufl.edu

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The University of Florida IFAS Extension Okaloosa County Master Gardeners area volunteer group who perform public outreach by education homeowners on Florida friendly landscaping, integrated pest management, and water conservation techniques through education workshops, exhibits, and diagnosing lawn or garden problems.

