

May in the Tallahassee Garden

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Annuals and Perennials: Plant heat-resistant summer flowering annuals such as begonias, impatiens, coleus, salvia, marigolds, torenia, verbena, ornamental peppers and gaillardia. Keep the old blooms picked off to encourage more blooms. Perennials planted now will need special care. The hot weather will stress them and may ultimately affect their performance. Keep them well watered and mulched. Fall is a better time to plant perennials. To move bulbs such as daffodils and lycoris, dig when the foliage dies. Store in a cool dry place until ready to plant in the fall.

Fruit Trees: The loquat, or Japanese plum, is a beautiful tree and makes an excellent ornamental for a garden. The fruit is delicious when it is fresh from the tree. It can also be frozen and used later. Loquats are excellent in pies and for jelly, jam and preserves. Loquat trees are easy to grow from seed. Seeding trees are satisfactory for ornamental use, but they may bear inferior fruit. Plant cutting grown or grafted trees for superior fruit. Look for a variety that ripens early to avoid our January and February freezes.

Shrubs and Trees: Finish pruning and fertilizing spring-flowering shrubs this month. Use insecticidal soap for whiteflies. Spray about ten days after seeing a large infestation of adults to kill the young after the eggs have hatched. Complete pruning of oak-leaf hydrangeas and climbing roses to insure a supply of new wood for next year's flower formation. The blooms of oak-leaf hydrangeas may be left for winter garden interest or for use in dried arrangements, but this will reduce the number of blooms next year.

Lawn care: Good cultural practices help maintain a healthy lawn and discourage insects and disease. Water deeply, applying one-half to three-quarters inch of water only when one-third of the grass begins to wilt. Mow with a sharp blade. Centipede grass should be cut to a height of one and one-half to two inches. St. Augustine and bahiagrass should be cut to a height of three to four inches. Fertilize your lawn, if needed, with one-half pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet. Be sure to water in well. Seed, sprig or plug your lawn, if needed. Its too hot now for herbicide applications.

Vegetables: Harvest vegetables as they ripen to encourage continued production. That one giant hidden cucumber or zucchini can cause production to decline. Monitor the moisture in your garden as the temperatures rise. Water deeply when needed. Corn especially needs water while tasseling and silking. Watch for insects and diseases and control promptly. When spraying pesticides, coat the undersides of the leaves. Diseased plants should be destroyed by burning or disposed of off-site, never composted. Protect your bees and other pollinators by applying pesticides in the evening. Don't use dusts because they can be carried back to the hive on the bees' hairy bodies. Plant sweet potatoes, melons, pole beans, southern peas, butter beans, mustard, green onions and okra. Fertilize monthly or, if using slow release fertilizer, apply as often as directed.

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IFAS Extension in Leon County.

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