

May in the Tallahassee Garden



Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: For light shade or filtered sunlight try *Plectranthus* 'Mona Lavender' with its lovely spikes of lavender flowers and purple tinged foliage

Katherine LaRosa is a Master Gardener Volunteer with the University of Florida IFAS Extension in Leon County. For editing questions, she can be reached at 385-8959.

Shrubs and Trees: Finish pruning and fertilizing spring-flowering shrubs such as azaleas and spiraea this month. Prune spring-flowering climbing roses after they finish blooming to create a good supply of new wood for next year's flower formation. If whiteflies are a problem on shrubs, use insecticidal soap. Spray about ten days after seeing a large infestation of adults to kill the young after the eggs have hatched. Crape myrtles can be fertilized now if you didn't fertilize them in March. Container grown plants may be planted now, but keep them well watered after planting. Correct planting procedure will increase the probability of success. For helpful tips visit http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu/new_tree_planting_procedures.htm

Flowers: For color during the summer months sow seeds of cleome, cosmos, zinnia, and gomphrena (globe amaranth). Become familiar with the appearance of the newly emerged seedlings so that they won't be pulled while weeding. Plant heat-resistant summer flowering annuals and perennials. In the shade plant begonias, impatiens, *Justicia carnea* (jacobinia), and coleus. For light shade or filtered sunlight try *Plectranthus* 'Mona Lavender' with its lovely spikes of lavender flowers and purple tinged foliage. In the sun plant salvia, marigolds, torenia, verbena, ornamental peppers, *Buddleia* (butterfly bush), purple coneflowers, melampodium, narrow-leafed zinnias, angelonia (summer snapdragon), or gaillardia. Keep the old blooms picked off plants to encourage more blooms. Perennials planted now will need special attention to watering. The hot weather will dry the root balls quickly. Keep them well watered and mulched. Plant chrysanthemums for fall bloom. Fertilize daylilies lightly as the buds appear. After blooming, remove the seed pods.

Bulbs, corms, rhizomes and tubers: Plant hardy or semi-hardy summer flowering bulbs. Some to look for in garden centers or catalogs include *Sprekellia formosissima* (Aztec lily), *Haemanthus multiflorus* (blood lily), *Hedychium* spp. (butterfly ginger), caladium, crinum, gladiolus, *Neomarica gracillis* (walking iris), *Morea* spp. (African iris), *Tulbaghia violacea* (society garlic), *Kniphofia uvaria* (red-hot-poker), daylilies, *Watsonia* spp., alliums, begonias, *Vallota speciosa* (Scarborough lily), or *Tigridia pavonia* (tiger flower). For more on bulbs for Florida visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG029>

May in the

Roses: Watch for insect problems and treat promptly. Continue to spray hybrid tea roses for black spot and mildew control. Shrub or old garden roses don't need regular preventive spraying. Spray only if problems appear.

Lawn care: Good cultural practices help maintain a healthy lawn and discourage insects and diseases. Fertilize your lawn, if needed, with a fertilizer with 1-0-1 or 2-1-2 ratio of major nutrients, such as 15-0-15, 15-5-15, or similar analysis. Use at the rate of ½ pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. This would be 3 1/3 pounds of 15-0-15 fertilizer per 1,000 sq. ft. If the 15-0-15 fertilizer has at least 7.5% water-insoluble or slow-release nitrogen, then you can use 6 pounds per 1,000 sq. ft. Be sure to water in well. Excessive applications of fertilizer cause extremely lush growth that is more susceptible to pest problems. Seed, sprig or plug your lawn, if needed, and keep well watered. Water established lawns infrequently, but deeply. This encourages a stronger root system and less opportunity for infection by disease organisms. Mow with a sharp blade. Centipede grass should be cut no lower than one and one-half to two inches. St. Augustine and bahiagrass generally should be cut to a height of three to four inches. An extremely low mowing height slowly starves the lawn by not allowing enough leaf surface to manufacture food.

Fruit: Keep grass and weeds away from the base of fruit trees and vines to avoid competition for nutrients and water. Keep fruits well mulched, especially figs and blueberries. Fertilize one to two year old figs and grapes monthly through July. Fertilize one year old pecans and Chinese chestnuts this month. Spread fertilizer evenly under the branches and water in well. Place bird netting over your fruits before they ripen if you are trying to keep a few berries or figs for yourself.

Vegetables and Herbs: 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 directed. Harvest vegetables as they ripen. Water deeply when needed, and always water in the morning to prevent disease problems. To prevent blossom-end rot in tomatoes, try to maintain consistent moisture levels. Watch for insects and diseases and control promptly. Never compost diseased plants. Squash vine borer damage, the rapid wilting and death of the vines, is caused by larvae of the clear winged vine borer moth. Eggs are deposited on stems near the crown and once they hatch, the larvae tunnel into the stem. Prevent squash vine borer damage by applying *Bacillus thuringiensis* on a regular basis. This is a biological control product and is sold under several trade names including Biotrol, Thuricide and Dipel.

###

Return to [Monthly & Seasonal Articles](#).