

June in the Tallahassee Garden



Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: Zinnias can be seeded throughout the summer for continuous color in sunny spots.

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Shrubs and Trees: The best way to conserve moisture in the landscape is by mulching. A two to three-inch layer over the root zone retains moisture, keeps the soil cooler and helps prevent weed seeds from germinating under your shrubs, trees and flowers. Drip and low-volume spray emitters can reduce landscape water use for irrigating shrubs, trees and groundcovers by substantial amounts. These systems can also reduce runoff, maintain ideal soil moisture and minimize leaf disease problems due to wet foliage. Feed young trees and shrubs very lightly with an application of a complete fertilizer, such as 15-0-15 or 16-4-8 , to encourage production of new growth. Watch out for spider mites and lace bugs which feed on the underside of leaves. Their piercing and sucking causes the leaves to look stippled and bleached or bronzed. Insecticidal soaps or oils are useful for controlling mites and lacebugs.

Lawn care: Don't mow your grass too short. This leads to more weed problems and thinning of your lawn area. Centipede grass should be cut to a height no lower than one and one-half to two inches. St. Augustine and bahiagrass should be cut to a height of three to four inches. Water only as needed. When one-third of the lawn has begun to wilt, apply one-half to three-quarters of an inch of water. If you have declining turf areas that are so bad that you need to do some replanting, refer to the following University of Florida IFAS publications: Establishing Your Florida Lawn by L. E. Trenholm <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH013> ; and Renovation of Turf Areas by L.E. Trenholm and J. Bryan Unruh <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH032>. These are projects which should be undertaken now, early in the growing season, so that the grass can become established prior to the return of cold weather.

Flowers: Annuals and perennials that tolerate the hot, muggy weather include celosia, coleus, crinums, impatiens, nicotiana, ornamental peppers, pentas, portulaca, salvia, torenia, vinca, shrimp plant, gaillardia, firebush, and zinnia. Zinnias can be seeded throughout the summer for continual color in sunny spots. Amaryllis, crinums, daylilies, Easter lilies and other bulbs need a complete fertilizer now. Do not cut foliage from these plants until it dies completely. Provide supplemental water for drought sensitive plants such as hydrangeas, coleus, caladium, geranium, dahlia, azalea, and camellia. Plant mums now for fall bloom. Pinch back established mums, along with other fall bloomers like Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*) and swamp sunflower (*Helianthus augustifolia*) to encourage compactness and more flowers. Spring-planted bedding plants and herbaceous perennials which have completed spring flowering may need some extra care now.

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Remove old flowers and pinch back terminal growth to encourage re-bloom. Fertilize lightly. Watch daylilies for signs of rust and other diseases. For information on daylily rust see [an article by Keith Mickler](#), County Extension Agent with the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service in Grady County .

Vegetables and Herbs: There is still time to plant some of the more heat tolerant vegetables including lima beans, okra, pole beans, peanuts, pumpkins and southern peas. Set out plants of eggplant, peppers, and sweet potatoes. One of the most common tomato disorders is blossom end rot. This is not a disease but a problem caused by a lack of calcium and fluctuating soil moisture. Keep the soil evenly moist and mulch to conserve moisture. Blossom end rot usually affects the first tomatoes to ripen. Cut back overgrown herbs like oregano and lemon balm.

Fruit: Keep figs well mulched. Do not fertilize fig trees in the summer months. Continue a spray program on fruit trees for insect and disease pests. Leave peaches on the tree until they reach the soft ripe stage. Keep rotting fruit picked up around your trees. Remove suckers and water spouts from fruit trees. Remove old unproductive blueberry canes and remove blackberry fruiting canes after harvest. Prune new canes to encourage side branching.

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