

Get Ideas from Demonstration Garden Next Saturday



Photos by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: Skyvine (*Thunbergia grandiflora*), with its beautiful lavender-blue flowers, can be seen at the UF-IFAS Leon County Extension demonstration garden open house Saturday. *Acalypha* (Copperleaf) provides beautiful foliage color in the demonstration garden.

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October 24, 2004

Next Saturday, October 30, at 10:00 a.m., you will have the opportunity to see how you can make your home landscape more colorful, interesting, and fun. The University of Florida IFAS Leon County Extension will have an open house in our demonstration garden at 615 Paul Russell Road (about 1/4 mile east of the fairgrounds) [SEE MAP](#). Activities will conclude at noon with a drawing for door prizes.

Guided tours of the gardens will begin at 10:00 a.m., so be there at least fifteen minutes early to register. In the tours you will see many flowering plants that are blooming right now and learn how to use these plants in your home landscape. You will also learn about plants you need to plant at this time of year so that you will have color early next spring. Timing is very important in gardening.

In addition, you will learn how to grow the plants while maintaining an environmentally friendly home landscape. For example, the garden uses an efficient micro-irrigation system for watering. A 15-0-15 fertilizer, containing no phosphorus and containing slow-release nitrogen, is used in the garden so as to minimize water-pollution. Systemic insecticides which don't harm beneficial insects are used when insect control is necessary. Mulch provides weed control, moisture retention, soil and erosion control, and improves soil structure as it decomposes.

In the garden Saturday you will see a trend toward the use of colorful tropical foliage for easy color in the hot, humid north Florida summer landscape. Examples include:

- *Acalypha* (Copperleaf) – This tropical plant with colorful coppery-pink foliage combines well with

Get Ideas from

many of the sun-loving coleus to provide trouble-free color in sunny areas from late spring until the first freeze.

- Alternanthera 'Purple Knight' – This plant grows like a weed, but don't worry... it doesn't spread like a weed. It's foliage of deep, dark burgundy adds an interesting accent to the garden.
- Croton – We included this South Florida favorite in the garden this year. Give it a sunny, well-drained spot and it will provide spectacular foliage color from late spring until freezing weather.
- Magilla Perilla – Introduced into the gardening world only a couple of years ago, this plant having dark burgundy leaves with hot pink stripes is finding a place in sunny spots of many gardens.
- Coleus – For sun or shade, we have coleus of all colors. This should be one of your workhorses in the summer garden.
- Ornamental sweet potatoes – Anyone can grow these plants. Just give them sun and lots of room. You will see in our garden why they need lots of room. The lime-green 'Margarita' is still our favorite.
- Alpinia zerumbet 'Variegata' – This is a spectacular ginger with large, variegated leaves... an excellent plant for partial shade.

Other plants to see in the garden include flowering summer annuals such as torenias, angelonias, and plectranthus. Fall-blooming perennials such as *Thunbergia grandiflora* (skyvine), *Barleria cristata* (Philippine violet), *Salvia leucantha* (Mexican sage), and *Leonotis leonurus* (lion's ear) are at their peak now. In addition, the ornamental grasses are flowering. There are lots of plants to see, even though our area was buffeted by several tropical storms. So come out and join us Saturday, October 30, at 10 a.m. You may even win a plant in the door-prize drawings at noon. But, even if you don't, you're going to be a winner because you're almost sure to learn something new.

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