

Photo by

## The Incredible Edible Landscape



*Photo by: Jeffery G. Williamson UF-IFAS. The blueberry provides interest, color, texture and taste to the landscape.*

*Keith Mickler is a county extension agent with the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service in Grady County . For more local gardening information, visit the UF-IFAS Extension website for Leon County at <http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu>*

Have you ever thought of your landscape as a source of food? Landscapes containing fruit such as apples, pears, peaches, satsumas, etc. can easily provide tasty treats. Fruit cannot only be a valuable addition to your home, but can add beauty and interest by providing texture, color and fragrance to the landscape.

Deciding where to plant is the first step in creating this delectable edible landscape. Second is selecting fruits, variety selection is of profound importance. You can do little to make up for a variety not adapted to growing in zone eight. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of selecting the correct varieties for local growing conditions.

Chilling requirements, disease/insect resistance, and weather conditions must be considered before making a decision as what variety to plant. In our case, zone eight will have different varieties grown than say zone seven. The limiting factor that determines which varieties we can grow is winter chill hours. Winter chill hours are temperatures at or below 45<sup>0</sup>F from October 1 - February 10.

Another term often used to describe fruit grown in zone eight is low chill. This means that it does not require many winter chilling hours to produce fruit. If a plant does not receive enough chill hours it may fail to bloom, bloom sparsely, produce no fruit, or very small fruit.

### **Deciduous Fruits**

We can choose from many different deciduous fruits. Apples, blackberries, blueberries, figs, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, persimmons, and plums are some different deciduous fruit we can grow in zone eight.

### **Apples**

Apple are one of the most widely grown fruits. They will grow wonderfully if planted in a deep, well-drained

Photo by

soil and given plenty of sunlight. There are three cultivars of apples to choose from that will do well in zone 8. They are the **Anna** which produces a medium red skin fruit that will ripen in late June to early July, **Dorsett Golden** which produces a medium golden skinned fruit which ripens in late June and **Ein Shemer** which produces large yellow skin fruit that will ripen in late June. All three of these apple cultivars require a pollinator to produce fruit. They will pollinate each other if planted together.

### **Blueberries**

There are two types of blueberries, rabbiteye and southern highbush. The rabbiteye blueberry is native to our area and will require less skill to grow than the southern highbush. There are many rabbiteye cultivars available. The most important thing to remember is to plant more than one variety for cross pollination. Cross pollination is necessary for fruit set. The blueberry harvest period normally starts in mid-May to July. A few blueberry cultivars are: **Tiftblue**, **Powderblue**, **Briteblue**, and **Brightwell**. These cultivars should be planted together because they ripen together around mid-season. **Chaucer**, **Climax**, and **Woodward** are another set to be planted together because they ripen together in early season.

### **Muscadine Grapes**

Muscadine grapes are truly a fruit for the South. Muscadines are best adapted to the Coastal Plain area. They are harvested in the months of September and October. There are many to choose from, but here are just a few. **Carlos** will produce a bronze colored grape which is good for wine and juice making and does not require a pollinator, **Fry** produces a bronze colored grape, which is good for fresh eating and does require a pollinator, and **Scuppernong** (the one everyone refers to when speaking of muscadine grapes) is a bronze-colored grape, which is good for wine making and fresh eating.

### **Nectarines and Peaches**

There is nothing better than picking a fresh juicy nectarine or peach right off the tree. Growing peaches and nectarines can be rewarding and fun, if you select the right cultivar. Throughout zone 8 we will need to select a low chill peach or nectarine. Peach and Nectarine harvesting usually occurs in the months of May and June. There are many cultivars available for you to choose from. Here are **just a few to try**: Peaches like **Flordadawn**, **TropicSweet**, **TropicSnow**, **FlordaKing** and **Flordglo** make excellent choices for zone 8, as well as nectarine cultivars **Sundollar**, **Sunraycer** or **Sunmist**.

### **Citrus**

Citrus is not just for central and south Florida . We can easily grow cold hardy citrus right here in zone 8. Citrus plants are very versatile around the home and may be used as individual specimens, in hedges, or grown in a container.

The most commonly grown cold hardy citrus for our area are satsuma and kumquats

Satsuma is one of our most cold hardy citrus. Satsuma is moderately vigorous and very productive. Satsuma is self fruitful, with fruit becoming ripe in October thru November.

Kumquats even exceed the cold hardiness of satsuma. They can tolerate temperatures down to 10<sup>0</sup>F when fully dormant. The fruit can be eaten whole (peeling and all), or used to make jellies.

I hope I have provided you with an appetite for starting your very own incredible, edible, landscape. Your greatest resource for information is the local county extension agent. They have publications available that will make your fruit growing adventure a success. You will soon be the envy of your neighborhood. Good luck and may your landscape be fruitful.

###

Photo by