Demonstration Garden Open House

Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: Tibouchina and Tecoma stans are among plants you will see flowering in the demonstration garden Saturday.

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The demonstration garden at University of Florida’s IFAS Leon County Extension offers something very unique to residents of Tallahassee and the surrounding area. On Saturday, October 18, 2008 from 9:00 a.m. until 12:15 p.m., there will be an open house at the garden. The gardens of the Extension Center, at 615 Paul Russell Road, across the street from Jack McLean Park, are open year round, and visitors are encouraged to return often to view the ever changing plant varieties. But, Saturday’s activities will include special guided tours, demonstrations, and the opportunity to ask questions.

There will be seven guided tours which will focus on a select group of featured plants. Each tour will last for one hour, with the first starting at 9:15, and subsequent tours beginning at twenty minute intervals, at 9:35, 9:55, 10:15, 10:35, 10:55 and 11:15. Tour groups are limited to twenty people to insure that the groups are manageable and each person in the group can hear the tour guide. A door prize drawing will be held at the end of each tour for the participants in the respective tour groups.

Or, if you prefer, you may tour the gardens at your own pace. Master Gardeners will be located in the various beds to answer your questions about the plants. It is these Master Gardener volunteers who plant and maintain the garden. The garden serves as an outdoor classroom for the training of the Master Gardeners. And the garden also serves as a place for experimentation with new plants that can expand the choices we have in our home gardens. If you are interested in participating in the Master Gardener program, you will have an opportunity to discuss the program with volunteers on Saturday.
Our gardens are founded on the principles of the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods program. Those nine principles are: Right Plant, Right Place; Water Efficiently; Fertilize Appropriately; Mulch; Attract Wildlife; Manage Yard Pests Responsibly; Recycle Yard Waste; Reduce Storm Water Runoff; and Protect the Waterfront. You will see how these principles have been followed in planting and maintaining the demonstration garden.

One of our most popular exhibits will be offered again this fall. Ted Cowley-Gilbert of Just Fruits & Exotics Nursery will be demonstrating micro-irrigation systems throughout the morning. This is the type of irrigation we use in the demonstration garden. Such systems reduce water consumption by placing the water only where it is needed and are a natural for the do-it-yourselfer, as you will learn from Ted’s demonstration. If you are planning to add an irrigation system or to make changes to a current system, you will not want to miss Ted’s presentation.

Have you ever wanted to learn how to propagate plants? Master Gardeners will be demonstrating the various methods of plant propagation and answering your questions. Plant propagation enables us to get more from our gardening dollar and provides a real sense of accomplishment while enjoying our handiwork.

There will also be an exhibit on recognizing and controlling invasive plants. And, finally, you will have an opportunity to check out our wildlife habitat. This includes a bat house, purple martin houses, bluebird boxes, and appropriate habitat for many birds and animals. While invasive plants detract from our gardens, wildlife adds pleasure and helps to reduce pests.

So we invite you to join us Saturday for an enjoyable and informative morning.

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