Learn Garden Solutions at Saturday Open House

Photos by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: *Agastache ‘Acapulco’* and *Euphorbia cotinifolia ‘Burgundy Wine’* are just two of hundreds of plants you’ll see at Saturday morning’s tours of the Extension demonstration gardens, 615 Paul Russell Road.

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We’ve all struggled with those “problem areas” in our home gardens. You know the ones… those beds in deep shade, or those slopes that are exposed to erosion. Or perhaps there’s that hot dry area that’s tough to water. Factor in the Tallahassee area’s recent weather patterns, which have been far-ranging to say the least, and the home gardener has every reason to be discouraged at times.

Lose that discouraged attitude, friends! Your thumbs are about to turn green, as brighter and healthier yards and gardens are coming your way! This Saturday, May 30, from 9 a.m. until noon, the Master Gardener volunteers of the UF-IFAS Leon County Extension Office will be hosting the Spring Demonstration Garden Open House. The Extension center and gardens are located at 615 Paul Russell Road, across the street from Jack McLean Park, in Tallahassee. Parking is off Zillah Street, which is on the east side of the Extension center. The event is free, but if you would like a list of the featured plants, complete with color photos, bring $5.00, and you can have one as long as the supply lasts.

The demonstration gardens are truly one of Tallahassee’s little known treasures. Although open to the public year round, the Spring Open House affords the visitor the opportunity to take part in organized tours of the gardens and learn about the plants from experienced Master Gardeners. Selecting the right plant for the right place in your garden is one of the primary keys to success in the home landscape. The tours help you do just that, select the right plant for the right place.

The first of the seven tours begins at 9:15 and will continue at 20-minute intervals until the final tour at 11:15. Visitors may also simply stroll through the six diverse plant bed areas and speak
with the hosting Master Gardeners. The volunteers, who plant and maintain the garden, will be willing and able to answer questions and provide suggestions for the use of the garden plants and techniques.

For the home gardener, the real beauty of the demonstration gardens lies in the fact that the gardens deal with the same problems that we all face when trying to improve our own landscape, for they are set in a diversity of micro-habitats. You will find planted areas that range from those in deep shade to those fully exposed to the summer sun. Similarly, you will witness the uses of a vast array of plants, from North Florida native species to truly unusual and stunningly beautiful tropicaals that are adaptable to the Tallahassee area.

Furthermore, there will be exhibits and expert volunteers to provide information on other elements of the home landscape that are so important to us these days. For example, there will be an expert explaining how to install a simple micro-irrigation system. The use of such a micro-irrigation system can save money on your water bill yet improve the health of your plants. You will see examples of how to recycle yard wastes through the use of mulches, compost piles, and brush piles for wildlife. You can ask about fertilization and pest control techniques. And there will be an exhibit and experts that can help you identify and control invasive exotic plants that plague many of our yards as well as public areas.

You can even learn about making your home landscape more friendly to wildlife. There are purple martin houses, bluebird houses, an owl house, and a bat house. And don’t be surprised if you see hummingbirds and butterflies zooming in to visit the flowers. The gardens are home to many types of birds, insects, and other wildlife.

If you would like to learn even more about how to make your home landscape Florida-Friendly, plan to visit the exhibit on the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods (FYN) program. You can even complete an application to have a team of certified Master Gardeners visit your landscape to evaluate how well it meets the nine principles of the FYN program.

So – there you go! Please come and join us this coming Saturday at the Spring Demonstration Garden Open House, 615 Paul Russell Road, to see and learn what more you can do with your home landscape and how you can make it more Florida-Friendly.

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