

## Visit Garden Open House Saturday for Ideas That Work



*Photos by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: Heliconia hirsuta 'Peru' and Impatiens hawkeri 'Sonic Salmon' are but two of the plants you will see in Saturday's demonstration garden open house at the Leon County Extension Center.*

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For the true gardener, fall is a time of planting and planning ahead for the following seasons. But, for many of us who flounder about in our attempts to beautify our home landscapes, fall can be a time of lamenting the things that we should have done differently as another north Florida growing season tapers into the winter months. But take heart, fellow green thumb-seekers... it need not be that way!

First of all, put the morning of Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup> on your calendar right now. That is the day of the free Fall Demonstration Garden Open House at the Leon County Extension Center grounds, 615 Paul Russell Road (opposite Jack McLean Park).

Secondly, plan on being there, beginning at 9:00 that morning, for the opportunity to see the wonderful plant and landscape offerings that abound in the six different garden areas maintained by the Leon County Master Gardeners. You will see an array of plants that will not only give you ideas for your own landscape for years to come, but that will also give you hope for a color-filled garden even in the midst of the forthcoming Tallahassee winter. You will learn to select the right plant for the right place in your garden. You may stroll through the gardens at your leisure or participate in Master Gardener-led tours of the individual beds. Tours begin at 9 a.m. and continue every half hour. Activities end at noon.

The demonstration gardens are a treasure that I first discovered at the 2007 Fall Open House. I came away astounded at what I had seen and for months thereafter told anyone who would listen about the fabulous gardens that existed right in our midst that I previously knew nothing about! And furthermore, there was much more to be seen and learn about than the spectacular gardens on that fall day in 2007 – just as there will be this year. For the first time, visitors will have the opportunity to learn about the creation of butterfly gardens and will be able to take tours of the garden beds to learn from experts knowledgeable in local butterfly host and nectar plants.

There will also be an hour-long workshop demonstration on the construction of an inexpensive greenhouse – a valuable asset to those who want to overwinter some of those less than cold hearty tropicals or get a jump start on spring vegetables, herbs, or tender landscape plants. The folks from Sustainable Tallahassee will be there to promote their work in the community and to encourage better use of our fragile resources. And – there will be exhibits and experts who can give you information about the Florida Friendly Landscape (FFL) program and how you can receive a free yard evaluation that will assist you in meeting the requirements for FFL recognition.

Visitors will be able to gather information regarding creating a wildlife habitat in your yard that attracts owls, bluebirds, purple martins, bats, and other wildlife. Master Gardeners will be on hand to demonstrate plant propagation techniques, answer your plant questions and tell you about the Master Gardener Program, which will begin anew in early 2010. And as always, there will be refreshments and plant giveaways and reasons to have hope for that garden or yard that seems to be fading into winter oblivion.

So, please join us on Saturday, October 24 from 9 a.m. until noon for the free Fall Demonstration Garden Open House at 615 Paul Russell Road. If you are unable to attend the open house, be aware that the gardens are open year-round to visitors. Whenever you drop by, I believe that you will go away as excited as I was after my introduction to the gardens that day back in 2007.

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