

## Gardens Open House Saturday



*Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: Learn of new plant possibilities for your garden, such as this cockspur coral tree, at the Extension Garden Open House this Saturday morning from 9:00 a.m. until noon.*

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Are you puzzled about what to plant in a particular spot in your yard? Perhaps you want to learn how to grow your own vegetables. Or maybe you want to plant to attract butterflies or hummingbirds to your yard.

The answers to those and many more gardening questions will be available Saturday, May 21st, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the UF/IFAS Leon County Extension Center. The event, free to the public, is the Spring Garden Open House. The Extension Center is located at 615 Paul Russell Road, across the street from Jack McLean Park.

You will be able to take leisurely self-paced tours of the six distinct areas of the landscape garden, the vegetable garden, and the herb garden. A booklet of color photos of the featured plants, along with information about how to grow them, will be available in a limited supply for \$4.00 each. Master Gardener volunteers will be available throughout the gardens to answer your questions about the numerous trees, shrubs, flowers, vines, groundcovers, herbs, and vegetables.

The demonstration gardens are part of Extension's Florida Friendly Landscaping (FFL) program. The nine principles of the FFL program guide us in having landscapes that help protect Florida's water resources. The first principle is to select the right plant for the right place. The

demonstration gardens are a place where you can see numerous examples of right plant, right place, as well as examples of the other principles such as fertilizing appropriately or watering efficiently.

The demonstration gardens depict a wide variety of growing conditions. You will be able to see which plants thrive in various levels of light, from full sun to deep shade, and all in between. You will see examples of extremely drought tolerant plants as well as some of the more thirsty types such as impatiens. Many of the plants have had enough years in the garden to give you a good idea of their size at maturity. This helps greatly in determining how much space a particular plant will need.

One of the Master Gardeners, who happens to be president of the Tallahassee Rose Society, will be there showing off the lovely low-maintenance types of roses he has contributed to the garden. He will explain how you can have the same results in your garden, which varieties perform best in our area, and where to purchase them.

The Spring Open House is always very interesting in that you can see how various plants responded to the cold winter. Some perennials, such as the blue thunbergia and yellow *Caesalpinia gillesii*, are already in full bloom. Some of the other more tender tropicals were dug and overwintered in the small greenhouse onsite. They are back in the garden now and growing quite well. The colorful leaves of 'Burgundy Wine' euphorbia, 'Cuban Gold' duranta, and crotons, for example, are already providing lively accents to the late spring landscape.

Other tropicals that were left in the garden for the winter are slowly awakening now. You can see the new growth of spicy jatrophas, mandevilla, firebush and others shooting up from the roots. It's quite remarkable, really, to watch the transition in Garden Five, from almost a brown desert in winter to newly emerging growth in spring and on to a tropical paradise later in the summer and on through the fall.

A large vegetable garden has been added to the demonstrations this year. There are two separate plantings, one using traditional methods, and the other using all organic methods. There's even a small area of hydroponically grown vegetables. Master Gardeners and Extension Agents will be on-hand to answer your vegetable gardening questions.

In the wildlife habitat area you will be serenaded by purple martins as you are entertained by the hummingbirds darting from plant to plant. You will also see examples of bluebird boxes, a bat house, and a barn owl house. It's also a good place to learn about plants you can use in the garden to attract butterflies.

The newly installed 40,000-gallon rooftop rainwater recycling system and other water saving information will be available at the "Water World: Irrigating Efficiently Exhibit." An exhibit of an efficient, easy-to-install irrigation system for the home landscape will be on display and volunteers will provide details on how you can easily install and operate such a system.

Bring pencil and paper or your camera to take pictures of your favorite plants, all labeled with signs. There will be free refreshments, all donated and the majority homemade, by the Master

Gardener Volunteers. Be sure and enter the drawing for door prizes, gift certificates donated by local plant nurseries.

Visitor parking is at Jack McLean Park, directly across the road from the UF-IFAS Leon County Extension center. Handicapped parking is at the Zillah Road entrance of the Extension center. For more information, please call or email the Master Gardeners at 850-606-5202, [mastgard@leoncountyfl.gov](mailto:mastgard@leoncountyfl.gov) , or visit the website at <http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu/>

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