

Fall 2020, Issue 15

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**Veggie Garden**

Bulbing onions, lettuce, arugula, spinach and more thrive this time of year. For a complete list, download the North FL Gardening Calendar: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/EP/EP45100.pdf>  
or The Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021>

**Gardening Tips from UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County Horticulture Department**

The slightly cooler fall months provide a respite from the scorching heat and are an ideal time to spend outdoors and in our gardens. We can plant cool season crops in our vegetable gardens such as broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, turnips, mustard, and strawberries. Fall gardens aren't complete without herbs to flavor the upcoming holidays meals; try planting dill, fennel, oregano, cilantro and parsley.

Consider planting fruit trees such as olives, pomegranates, persimmon, figs, and even apples in northeast Florida to add to your edible landscape. Add color and texture with cool season annuals such as pansy, viola, snapdragon, alyssum, and chrysanthemum.

**Wishing you a safe, peaceful and happy holiday season!**



# Florida-Friendly Hollies for the Holidays

Terra Freeman, Urban and  
Commercial Horticulture  
Agent, UF/IFAS Extension  
St. Johns County

Foraging from our native Florida landscape can be a fun and creative way to create unique holiday decorations and gifts. Holly berries make colorful additions to winter wreaths, garland, centerpieces and swags. When gathering, look



<http://www.pddl.purdue.edu>

for various shades and textures of foliage. Gather showy, evergreen foliage, berries and cones from native plants such as Eastern Red Cedar limbs and their bluish berries; palm fronds; fresh pine branches and pine cones; magnolia leaves and seeds; beautyberries; grass seed heads and more to use in your creation. Add a bow or ornament and you're on your way to creating a one-of-a-kind holiday decoration. This activity can be done with the kids or other family members to create special memories of your holidays, or to give as gifts (without having to mingle with the holiday shopping crowds!). For a tutorial on how to create a simple evergreen swag, visit:

<https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/design/outdoor-living/diy-evergreen-swags.html>

I'd be remiss without adding an element of plant identification to your holiday crafting, so let's explore some basic characteristics and differences among Florida's native hollies – which have gorgeous berries and foliage to add to your creations. Florida is home to several native hollies, notably the Dahoon, American, Yaupon, and a hybrid of American and Dahoon known as 'East Palatka'. Hollies offer different forms, sizes and functions in the landscape, although one thing they all have in common is they are dioecious (meaning they have separate male and female

plants; only the female plants produce berries), evergreen, and alternately arranged along the stem.

The Dahoon Holly, *Ilex cassine*, has a narrow form at 20' – 30' tall by 8'-12' wide, and leaves that are 2"– 4"

long with a few sharp leaves along the upper half. The leaves are thick and stiff, dark green shiny on top, and paler green underneath. It's evergreen leaves and color resemble the American Holly (*Ilex opaca*), except the American Holly is stiffer and usually has sharp, spine-toothed margins; and is taller at 30'-50' by 15'-25' wide. Also, American holly wouldn't be found in the poorly drained habitat of the Dahoon. Both have red berries of approximately 1/4".

The Yaupon Holly, *Ilex vomitoria*, has a rounder shape and modest size of 15' to 25' tall by 15' to 25' wide. The leaves are small at 1/2" to 1 1/2" long with crenate margins, which sets it apart from other native hollies. It's 1/4" berries can be red, orange or yellow. *Ilex vomitoria* 'Shillings' is a popular dwarf shrub in home landscapes and *Ilex vomitoria* 'Pendula' is a classic weeping form. Yaupon Holly is also becoming popular as an alternative crop grown for tea.

Whether you use this information to practice your native plant identification skills, or to create a special holiday embellishment, I hope the information inspires ideas on how to spend some enriching time in the fresh, outdoor air as our temperatures begin to drop and become more comfortable for outdoor adventures.

# Florida-Friendly Native Hollies

Terra Freeman, Urban and  
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American Holly, *Ilex opaca*

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Dahoon Holly, *Ilex cassine*

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*Ilex x attenuata* 'East Palatka' Holly. Photo by  
Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

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Yaupon Holly, *Ilex vomitoria* (left is standard form; right is weeping)

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# Fall Lawn Care True or False

Carol O'Hagan,  
Master Gardener,  
UF/IFAS Extension SJG

Fall is a beautiful time in Northeast Florida. The weather begins to cool off and the humidity is hopefully reduced. Here's a fun quiz to see how much you know about caring for your lawn here during the Fall. I've put links at the end of each question if you'd like to explore more information, but I will also give the answers below. Enjoy!

1. The last lawn fertilizer application should be around the middle or end of November in north Florida and early December in central Florida. [Click here for answer](#)
2. When mowing your lawn, you should always pick up the clippings because they create thatch. [Click here for answer](#)
3. For preemergent control of winter annual weeds such as annual bluegrass, apply an herbicide when nighttime temperatures drop to 55°F–60°F for several consecutive days (early October for North Florida; late October to early November for Central and South Florida). [Click here for answer](#)
4. When applying a preemergent you should make sure your lawn is dry before and after. [Click here for answer](#)
5. You do not need to water your lawn in the late fall/winter because the lawn is dormant [Click here for answer](#)



## ANSWERS

1. **False.** Our warm-season grasses have their most active growth in the summer as they respond to increasing temperature and day length. As those two elements reduce and the grass begins to become dormant, the turf cannot take up nutrients as efficiently. It's important not to fertilize when grass is not growing as this can increase the chance of nutrients running off and leaching (so you waste your money and possibly hurt the environment). In our area the last lawn fertilizer application of the year is closer to the end of September in north Florida and early October in central Florida.
2. **False.** In general, it is a good practice to leave clippings on your lawn. They contribute nutrients to the lawn and in most cases will not create thatch. It is important, however, to sweep up clippings from hard surfaces such as sidewalks and driveways so they do not wash into the storm drain and contribute to water pollution. Just sweep those clippings back into your lawn where they can be helpful rather than harmful.
3. **True.** To minimize winter weeds, apply a preemergent in early October or when nighttime temperatures drop to 55-60 degrees Fahrenheit.
4. **False.** Always irrigate before and after application of a preemergent. The preemergent needs to be watered in to the ground to be effective but you don't want to apply so much water you wash the herbicide too far down. In general, moisten the lawn a little prior to application and then apply ¼ inch of water after preemergent application. The herbicide should be effective for 6-9 weeks after application, so for season-long control you may want to put down another application in mid to late December.
5. **False.** As always, you want to irrigate according to need, not schedule. If it is very dry and there is little to no rainfall (as can be true in late fall/winter here) you should irrigate every two to three weeks in the fall. This is true even if the grass is dormant as this regular irrigation will help the grass green up more quickly in the spring.

# Growing Apple Trees in North Florida

Melissa Strohminger,  
Master Gardener,  
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

Think it's too hot to grow apples here? You're mostly right, but there are a few cultivars that work well in North Florida. 'Anna' and 'Dorsett Golden' are two apples that have low enough chilling requirements to give us the sweet and crispy treats we covet from our northern neighbors.

'Anna' was bred in Israel and tastes similar to a 'Gala' apple. It was introduced to the U.S. in 1959 and is Florida's most popular apple to grow. 'Dorsett Golden' is more like a 'Golden Delicious' and was bred in the

Bahamas, also in the 1950s. Both varieties ripen in May or June and will keep in the refrigerator for 6-8 weeks, or can be canned, dried or frozen for your fall baking.

'Anna' and 'Dorsett Golden' should be planted together for cross-pollination. Both varieties do best in full sunlight with slightly acidic soil and good drainage. They also need good air flow around them, so give them plenty of space. If planted in late December, they will have time to establish roots before they start growing in the spring. Fertilize with a 10-10-10 application twice a year, in January and June. A soil test is recommended as micro-nutrients (specifically zinc and boron) play a big role in fruit quality.



'Anna' Apple; UF/IFAS North Florida Research and Education Center



'Doresett Golden' Apple; UF/IFAS North Florida Research and Education Center

The deciduous apple trees grow 16 to 25 feet and should be kept weed free. The blooms are white and pink with a delectable smell. We actually had a couple of apples the first year, but with some care, your trees could have a bumper crop of fruit by the third year.

For more information, visit:

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg368>.

# Crazy for Camellias

Melissa Strohming,  
Master Gardener,  
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

My very favorite winter flowers are camellias. They add such a welcome splash of color to the landscape. The lush, evergreen shrubs can bloom from October through May with ruffled blossoms in shades of red, pink, and white, occurring as single, semi-double and double flowers. Some are even multi-colored.

Camellias have a vast and interesting culture and history. Native to southeastern Asia and cultivated for over 1000 years, there are around 250 varieties and tens of thousands of hybrids. Tea leaves are actually leaves from the *Camellia sinensis* species. Drinks are also made from other varieties. Tea oil for cooking is made from some camellias and camellia seed oil is also popular in Japan as a hair treatment. A fungus found on camellia bushes is used to make an anti-parasitic drug.

People have been crazy for camellias off and on since the 1700s. They were brought to Europe by the East India Tea Company in 1650. There are Camellia societies, camellia trails, and many botanical gardens featuring camellias in the southern U.S. and around the world.

Camellia bushes are slow growing and live for a long time. There is supposedly a bush at a Chinese monastery that was planted in 1347. The most commonly grown species in North Florida are the *Camellia japonica* and *Camellia sasanqua*. Camellias can be planted between November and February. They like partial shade and a slightly acidic soil.

Almost everyone can fit a camellia into their garden. They can even grow in pots and they can take more sun and less water as they mature. The most difficult part of growing them is deciding which ones to plant!

To learn more, visit:

<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/media/sfylifasufledu/baker/docs/pdf/horticulture/demonstration-gardens/Camellias.pdf>

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/camellias.html>



Camellia flower forms. From top left: single form, semi-double form, anemone form. From bottom left: peony form, formal double form, rose form double (flower opens to reveal stamens). Credit: Leu Gardens. Rose form double: Sydney Park Brown



# Not Your Ordinary Black-Eyed Susan

Shirley Barber,  
Master Gardener,  
UF/IFAS Extension  
St. Johns County



Our starter plants were installed in February, started blooming in June; and the photo shows it in glorious bloom on August 13. This heavy bloomer will reward you with plenty of cut flowers.

Butterflies, bees and pollinators are flocking to this beauty! Its golden-yellow flowers with black centers and arched petals are held high above a compact, dome-shaped crown. Plant in full sun or light shade near the front of the border as a “see through” plant. Provide good drainage, avoid over watering, and do not place near a sprinkler.

This patented perennial displays clean vigorous mounding foliage showing no signs of leaf spot typical of most *Rudbeckias*. Check out the photo of its foliage taken September 10. These plants have survived spring drought, summer rains, high humidity, grasshopper invasion and neglect. Plants should be available in the near future at a local nursery; you may also find them from an online source.

Visit the AAS gardens with its ever-changing display of seasonal flowers and vegetables in the Botanical Gardens at the St. Johns County Extension Center. *Rudbeckia* x ‘American Gold Rush’ is already a winner in our gardens. Time will tell its survival as a perennial in northeast Florida.

Every year plant breeders introduce new and exciting varieties with potential to be the highlight of the garden. They promise ever-blooming flower displays, disease resistance and weather tolerance. Many of these varieties are trialed and evaluated throughout North America by the All-American Selections® (AAS) non-profit organization. AAS selects the best of the bunch and announces them as the current year’s All-American Selections® winners.

Who doesn’t love Black-Eyed Susans...there are so many outstanding varieties. An article appeared in the Fall 2017 issue of this newsletter extoling the virtues of *Rudbeckia hirta* ‘Prairie Sun’ (AAS 2003). This gorgeous green-eyed variety is considered an annual; it flourished in our cool winter temperatures but was not tolerant of our rainy season.

The 2020 AAS winner *Rudbeckia* x ‘American Gold Rush’ is creating quite a stir in the Botanical Gardens at the St. Johns County Extension Center.

