Summer in the Florida Vegetable Garden

UF/IFAS Urban Horticulture Extension Agent, Theresa Badurek
You’re not in Kansas anymore...

- Florida is different!
- We grow:
  - Warm season vegetables in the early fall/late spring
  - Cool season vegetables in the winter
- Few traditional crops work here in summer
Define “Summer”

- May, June, July and August
- By May we should be done with most “traditional” vegetable crops
  - Harvest and remove
- In August we can begin to plant for a fall garden
Hot and Humid

- High temps prevent some crops from flowering or fruiting (Ex. Most tomatoes won’t set fruit when nighttime temps exceed 70 degrees)
- Increase odds of some fungal disease development
- Uncomfortable for gardeners

Avoid heat stress!
http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/hot_topics/agriculture/heat_stress.shtml
Tips for YOU to Keep Cool

• **Slow down.** Work during the coolest part of the day.

• **Dress for summer.** Lightweight, light-colored clothing reflects heat and sunlight

• **Don’t get too much sun.** Sunburn makes it harder to cool off.

• **Drink plenty of fluids** even if you don’t feel thirsty.

• **Do not drink alcoholic beverages.** Alcohol dehydrates you.

• **At-risk folks with health issues** should consult their doctor.
Pests!

- Insect pests more plentiful and active
- Plants stressed by environment are more likely to have pest and disease troubles
Heavy Rains

- Water is a good thing in the garden, but...
- Torrential summer downpours are not
- Can damage and flood crops
What can you grow?

- Sweet potatoes
- Okra
- Southern/black-eyed peas
- Jerusalem artichoke (not an artichoke!)
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>South</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survives Transplanting</td>
<td>Eggplant Sweet Potatoes</td>
<td>Sweet Potatoes</td>
<td>Sweet Potatoes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transplant With Care</td>
<td>Mustard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use Seeds</td>
<td>Beans (lima) Okra Peas (southern)</td>
<td>Okra Peas (southern)</td>
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For more information, please visit GardeningSolutions.ifas.ufl.edu
## Edibles to Plant in June

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<th>North</th>
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<tr>
<td>Survives Transplanting</td>
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<td>Beans (lima)</td>
<td>Okra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Okra</td>
<td>Peas (southern)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use Seeds</td>
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<tr>
<td>50% Seeds</td>
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# Edibles to Plant in July

## Florida Map

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<th>North</th>
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<th>South</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survives Transplanting</td>
<td>Eggplant, Jerusalem Artichoke, Peppers</td>
<td>Jerusalem Artichoke</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transplant With Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use Seeds</td>
<td>Beans (lima), Okra, Peas (Southern), Watermelon</td>
<td>Okra, Peas (Southern)</td>
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For more information, please visit [GardeningSolutions.ifas.ufl.edu](http://GardeningSolutions.ifas.ufl.edu)
# Edibles to Plant in August

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broccoli, Cauliflower, Collards, Peppers, Tomatoes</td>
<td>Broccoli, Collards, Eggplant, Peppers</td>
<td>Collards, Eggplant, Peppers, Tomatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans (bush, pole, lime), Corn (sweet), Cucumbers, Onions (green, shallot), Peas (southern), Pumpkin, Squash (summer, winter), Turnips, Watermelon</td>
<td>Celery</td>
<td>Beans (pole), Corn (sweet), Okra, Onions (green, shallot), Peas (southern), Pumpkin, Squash (summer, winter), Watermelon</td>
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Feeling Adventurous?

- Generally crops/varieties from Southeast Asia, another humid subtropical zone, will do well in Florida’s climate.
- Look to tropical varieties from Caribbean countries to the south.
More (Possible) Summer Crops from Miami-Dade Extension

- Bean, Jack (Canavalia ensiformis, C. gladiata)
- Bean, Lima
- Bean, Yard-long
- Calabaza (also known as Cuban pumpkin, Cuban squash, Cucurbita moschata)
- Cassava
- Chayote
- Collards – however, the flavor is better when grown during the cooler months.
- Eggplant
- Ginger
- New Zealand spinach
- Peppers, hot
- Pigeon peas – these can live for 3 to 4 years or longer.
- Seminole pumpkin (also known as cushaw, cashaw, Spanish calabaza, Cucurbita moschata)
- Sweetpotatoes and boniato (Cuban sweet potato). Plant them in their own planting bed since they will crowd out other plants.
- Turnip greens
- Rosemary
- Lemon grass
Other Garden Options

- Solarization
- Cover crops
- Rest
Solarization

- uses sun’s energy to kill pests and diseases in soil
- effective against nematodes, tiny worms that feed on plant roots
- in summer remove plants, break up soil, add desired amendments, and irrigate

Nematodes are microscopic: here is a size comparison of a typical plant-parasitic nematode to a cotton thread. Graphic: UF/IFAS
Solarization

- cover with sturdy, clear plastic film
- secure edges to hold in heat
- leave on for 6-8 weeks
- can reach up to 130 degrees, baking the nematodes and reducing their population
- also reduces weeds and diseases
Cover Crops (living mulch)

- Control weeds – compete for space, light, water, nutrients (living mulch)
- Prevent soil erosion from heavy rainfall or winds

Southern Peas: USA, ARS, National Genetic Resources Program (Credit: Gillaspie, G.)
Cover Crops (green manure)

- Recycle and restore nutrients in a crop system
- Retain and harvest residual nutrients that would be leached in the off-season
- Provide habitat for beneficial insects and birds

Sunn hemp ‘Tropic Sun’ in flower. Photo credit: Danielle Treadwell
Cover Crops (pest control)

- Nematode population control
- Sunn Hemp (pictured) produces compounds that are lethal to some nematodes
- Dig deeper:
  http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ng043
Preparing for Fall

• Stay-cool plans:
  • Research
  • Plan crops, rotation, etc.
  • Buy seeds, grow your own transplants
  • Watch our how-to videos: http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/home_landcape/index.shtml
    Look on the right under my picture!

• Hot jobs:
  • Build raised beds
  • Install drip irrigation
  • Compost
  • Amend/replenish soil (soil sample?)

Soil Test: http://soilslab.ifas.ufl.edu/ESTL_files/SS18700.pdf
Where to find help...

- Palm Harbor Library Master Gardener Help Desk, Wednesdays from 10am-2pm (Jan.-mid-Nov.)

- Main Extension Office
  - 12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo, FL 33774
  - Mon.-Fri. 8am-5pm, except county holidays

- Weedon Island Master Gardener Help Desk, see website for dates and times
Where to find help...

• Send photos and questions to: hort@pinellascounty.org

• Call Lawn & Garden Helpline:
  • 727-582-2110:
  • Mon., Tues., & Thurs., 9am–12pm and 1pm–4pm.
Thank you!
tbadurek@pinellascounty.org