



GARDEN CLUB OF CAPE CORAL

PO Box 152022, Cape Coral, FL 33915

Member of National Garden Clubs, Inc., Deep South Garden Clubs, Inc.,
Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc., (District IX) and Fort Myers-Lee County Garden Council

: "Whoever said money can't buy happiness . . . has clearly never been to a garden center."

Source: "Some eecards"

(with thanks to Valorie Breen)

NEWSLETTER – March 2021

March Meeting

Our 10th March meeting will yet again be via Zoom, beginning at 6:30 PM. President Ann will send details shortly. This is an especially important meeting for us all since we will be given all the latest updates from our Ways and Means Committee for our upcoming *March in the Park* annual fund raiser, March 13th so be sure to log on. You will be able to have all your questions answered. There will also be a presentation by Master Gardener, Sandy Pennington on Caladiums and Propagation.



Cynthia Mahoney and
Marilou Lucas
(foreground)

Valentine's Day Gathering

Many members enjoyed this special event – not least the candy that was on hand for everyone!



Here are some pics from a very happy time at Rotary Park:

Terry Fisher and
Andy Garlanger enjoy
some shade.

Sue Dues (left),
Lynne Viacava
(center) and Valorie
Breen (right)



March Birthdays

Many happy returns of their special day to all our March birthday girls:

Colleen Carty	Peggy Monkus
Susan Kennedy	Justeen Oess
Karen Kight	Kathy Rabassi
Lisa Mahar	Twila Thalberg

March in the Park Reminders

- Remember to wear your *March in the Park* t-shirt, garden hat and a mask
- Bring any unsold Opportunity Drawing Tickets to the Opportunity Drawing Booth by 9 am
- Bring your plants for the Plant Booth by 7 am – set them on the ground in the Plant booth area for sorting by the Plant Booth team.

Nominating Committee Susan Noble

The Garden Club forms a Nominating Committee every two years to nominate candidates for a new Board. The Committee seeks club members to be on the next Board. The candidates are presented at the April meeting when club members will have the opportunity to vote on the matter. The approved candidates will then be installed at the May meeting. If any club member wishes to be on the next Board, they should contact one of the members of the Nominating Committee – Susan Noble, Sherie Bleiler, or Babu Mathew.

Also, I think this is also a good time to remind everyone that you should be on a committee and now is a good time to pick a committee for next year. Be part of the new team and help make a difference to your club!

GCCC on Instagram Lillian Peterson

The Garden Club of Cape Coral has a new Instagram account!

If any members are on Instagram, please follow us at:

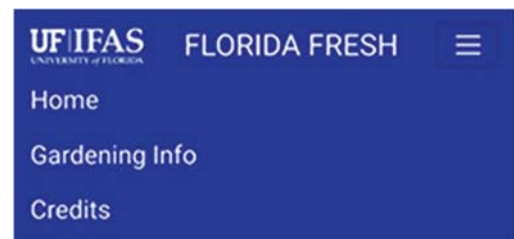
Capecoralgarden

Many thanks to Lillian for setting this up.

New Resources for Florida's Gardening Communities from UF/IFAS University of Florida

Did you know that the "Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide" is UF/IFAS Extension's most popular document? It received more than 113,000 views in 2020 alone.

Florida Fresh Web Tool



Home

This site provides a list of vegetables to **PLANT NOW** as well as the fruits and vegetable that are **FLORIDA-FRESH NOW**.
PLANT NOW info is based on your location in Florida;
FLORIDA-FRESH NOW lists the Florida-grown fruits and vegetables that are currently in-season and available in food markets. For more information on each vegetable and fruit, just click the photo, name, or MORE INFO

Florida Fresh is a very useful web tool that has received recent updates. Simply enter your zip code and the website displays crops to plant in your area this month. It also lists fruits and vegetables that are in season for your area. This web tool is easy to access on a computer or mobile device.

"The *Florida Fresh* web app offers a modern-day way to access the information in the vegetable gardening guide," says Sydney Park Brown. Park Brown is a UF/IFAS Extension associate professor emeritus and the content editor for Florida Fresh. We agree; the simple layout and personalized content make it a helpful resource for new gardeners. Clicking on "Gardening Info" at the top of the page sends users to a list of gardening resources. Links include the "Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide," Ask a UF/IFAS Extension Expert, and many more.

Over the years, the feedback for our original "Edibles to Plant" infographics has been overwhelmingly positive. Still, we felt there was room for improvement. In 2020 we began working on an updated and expanded edition of this popular resource.

Fans of the infographics often asked for more heat-tolerant crops. They wanted choices better suited to Florida's unique climate. More crop suggestions for May, June, and July were also commonly requested.

We're thrilled to tell you that the 2021 editions of "Edibles to Plant" are finally here. And they have been expanded to include more than a dozen new crops! We've added boniato, calabaza, papaya, roselle, tropical spinaches, and many other Florida favorites.



These new editions will be released in batches throughout 2021. Accessible versions are in production as well. Both will be available in full resolution and as PDFs on Gardening Solutions as they are released.

Amending a Sandy Situation Wendy Wilber UFL/IFAS

Gardening and landscaping in Florida can be a challenge. The growing climate is agreeable, but many parts of Florida have soils that are tough to grow in. They can be clay, rock, or deep sands, depending where you live. For most of the state we have very sandy soils. Gardeners have asked me, "Why is the soil so sandy?"

The answer to that lies in ancient history. Florida has been under shallow sea water several times during geological eras. The clays and organic matter were washed away, and the marine sand and rock remained.

What are we to do with these deep sandy soils that most of peninsular Florida contends with? The best thing you can do is to put the right plant in the right place. Many Florida native plants are admirably adapted to our sandy soils, and there are plenty of Florida-Friendly plants that are too.

However, almost all our plants would greatly benefit from added organic matter in the form of mulch or compost.

Good gardeners grow plants, great gardeners grow soil. The great gardeners that I know take their composting very seriously. My parents were so serious about composting that they had "his and hers" piles because they could not agree on the best method of composting. Dad's was heavy on shredded paper, food waste, and yard clippings; Mom's had everything in it but the kitchen sink. Both piles generated lots of organic matter to amend the rocky soils of southernmost Florida. When I went to visit my sister's first home, she didn't directly show me her new house, she first proudly took me to her steaming compost pile. My family, like many gardeners, realized the environmental benefits of compost such as keeping food scraps out of the waste stream and reducing methane gas production.

In the garden and landscape, adding finished compost to your soil improves the soil's water-holding ability, its nutrient-holding capacity, and increases the beneficial microbial activity of the soil. Increasing your soil's organic matter with compost by 5 percent can quadruple the soil's water-holding capacity. That would be a huge help to our plants during the dry season. Facts like these are in "Composting for a New Generation," this year's first selection for the [Master Gardener Volunteer book club](#). This book is informative and inspirational; it will give you the know-how and skills to get you composting this season. Will this book solve marital disputes on composting? Absolutely!

Choosing and Installing Mulches (UF/IFAS)

Mulch is used to cover the soil in a landscape or garden. It is often composed of tree bark, leaves, needles, wood, or grass. Sometimes mulch is made from stone and other inorganic materials,

such as recycled tires. Water savings, erosion control, weed suppression, and of course aesthetic appeal — there are so many reasons to add mulch to your landscape!

Proper mulching is an essential component of any Florida-Friendly landscape. Perhaps most importantly, it is the cornerstone of a great weed-control program. Mulch keeps the soil moist longer after irrigation. This gives plant roots extra time to soak up water. Mulch also protects plant roots from extreme temperatures by creating a buffer between the soil and the air. And mulch isn't simply good for your plants; it's good for your soil. Organic mulches can add nutrients to the soil as they decompose. This improves your soil's aeration, structure, drainage, and ability to hold nutrients. Mulch can even help reduce erosion and protect plants from certain diseases.

Choosing mulch is as much about appearances as it is about landscape health. In areas of deep shade, turfgrass and ornamental plants won't thrive. And some areas are too difficult to mow or irrigate to sustain healthy turf. Consider mulch as an attractive and Florida-Friendly alternative to bare ground in these shady and problematic areas.

When selecting a mulch, consider not only cost and color, but also origin, durability, and nutrient content. Cypress is an example of a mulch with a questionable origin. Unfortunately, some of this mulch comes from Florida's endangered wetlands. Because its origin is difficult to determine, the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program does not recommend the use of cypress mulch. Another mulch with an origin to reconsider is utility mulch. It comes from local trees and brush and can bring weed seeds and other pests along with it.

Durability is another important consideration. Organic (once-living) mulches decompose over time. As they do, they settle, reducing the depth of your mulch layer. At this point weeds will begin to germinate again. Erosion and evaporation from

the soil will increase. When the depth falls below two inches, it's time to replenish the mulch. You can do this easily by adding another thin layer of mulch on top of the existing bed. Replacing the mulch entirely isn't recommended; you may damage surface-level plant roots.

Inorganic (never-living) mulches, like pebbles or rubber mulch, are very durable. They will last a long time and don't settle like organic mulches. That said, their nutrient content is zero so they will not improve the soil below them. And because these products do not decompose, they can become a nuisance out of place. You will need to keep an eye out for mulch straying into your lawn or other un-mulched areas.

Below are descriptions of the mulch options available at most home and garden stores:

Pine bark is a byproduct of the forest industry. It comes in ground and nugget forms and has a rich brown color. Pine bark settles slowly. One study by UF/IFAS found it to maintain two-thirds of its original depth after two years.

Pine straw (needles) comes from pine plantations, which produce paper and wood products. They give a very natural look to landscapes. And, unlike some mulches, pine straw is not likely to wash away because the needles knit together. Pine straw is among the least expensive mulches, but it breaks down and settles quickly. You will have to re-mulch the area often.

Fallen leaves (including grass clippings) can be raked up for free in your landscape and used as mulch. This type of mulch is high in nutrients but decomposes quickly. You'll need to rake regularly to keep your beds covered. Like pine straw, leaf mulch brings a very natural look to the landscape. Large leaves, like sycamore, may require mowing to prevent the mulch layer from matting.

Cypress mulch is composed of both wood and bark. Cypress trees grow in Florida's forested

wetlands. They are often harvested for lumber and used in fencing, flooring, furniture, and other products. Leftover pieces are made into mulch, but cypress mulch may also come from whole trees cut from wetlands. As previously stated, the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program does not recommend the use of cypress mulch.

Mixed hardwood mulch is produced from scrap lumber, recycled pallets, or tree stems too small for use in manufacturing. Aesthetically, it is an excellent substitute for cypress mulch. Hardwood mulches are often dyed to add red, brown, black, or gray color to your landscape. They settle faster than pine bark but significantly slower than pine straw or fallen leaves.

Melaleuca mulch is made from the exotic invasive trees. It gives the same traditional look as mixed hardwood and cypress mulches. The product is cured at a high temperature to kill any seeds, so they won't germinate in your garden. It settles very slowly, meaning it will last a long time. In one study by UF/IFAS, melaleuca mulch outperformed pine bark and cypress mulch in durability.

Eucalyptus mulch typically comes from plantations in South and Central Florida. Trees there are grown specifically to be made into mulch. They grow quickly, so this mulch is considered renewable. Eucalyptus mulch is slightly less durable than cypress but longer lasting than utility mulch or pine straw.

Utility mulch is sold or given away for free by many utility companies. This mulch comes from the material gathered when trimming trees and plants growing too close to power lines. **Be aware that it can come with weed seeds and other undesirables.** Sometimes dirt and leaf matter come mixed in, too. For these reasons, utility mulch may not be a good choice for flower and vegetable gardens. It is, however, ideal for driveways, walkways, and natural areas.

Gravel and pebbles can be used as mulch. As inorganic materials, they won't contribute to the soil's nutrient content or water-holding capacity. Be sure to first install a woven ground cloth to keep stone mulches from sinking into sandy soils. Inorganic mulches last a long time but need to be regularly cleared of debris to look their best.

Rubber mulches made from recycled tires are **not recommended** by UF/IFAS. They are generally less effective than organic mulches in suppressing weeds. This recycled material also absorbs heat, leading to extremely high temperatures in the ground beneath. Some UF/IFAS Extension staff are concerned about the possibility of toxic chemicals leaching into the soil as the material slowly degrades.

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ recommends mulching to a depth of 3 inches. One cubic yard of mulch will cover 324 square feet of ground at 1 inch deep, or 108 square feet at 3 inches deep. At a three-inch depth, one cubic yard of mulch will cover an area about 10 feet wide and long. To find out how much mulch you need to cover a larger space, you'll need to calculate the square footage of the area.

Rectangular areas: Multiply the length (L) of the planting bed by the width (W). *Example: 5 feet long X 10 feet wide = 50 square feet to cover.*

Circular areas: Measure the distance from the center of the circle to its edge. This is the radius of the circle. Multiply the radius by the radius again, then multiply the answer by 3.14. *Example: 5 feet from the center to the edge X 5 feet from the center to the edge X 3.14 = 78.5 square feet to cover.*

Irregular areas: Estimate these areas by dividing them into circles and rectangles. Add the smaller areas together to estimate the whole. Once you have your square footage, multiply it by the desired depth of the mulch. Finally, divide that answer by 324 (the amount of mulch needed to cover one cubic yard). This answer will tell you how many cubic yards of mulch you need to cover your area. *Example: (128.5 square feet to cover X*

3 inches deep) divided by 324 = 1.2 cubic yards of mulch needed to cover.

When applying mulch in the home landscape, follow these simple guidelines: Maintain a 2- to 3-inch layer around established trees, shrubs, and bedding plants. Coarse materials, such as pine nuggets, may be applied 4 inches deep, but don't allow mulch to accumulate to a greater depth. Adding more mulch can harm plants if the mulch intercepts rain and irrigation meant for plants' root systems.

Rake older mulch to refresh its appearance and benefit plantings. Some mulches can become matted, preventing water and air from seeping through. Avoid "volcano mulching." When mulch is piled against the base of a tree, it holds moisture. This encourages rot in the trunk. Mulch piled against the trunks of young trees may also create a habitat for rodents. These animals chew the tender bark and can ultimately kill the trees. Mulch to the drip line or beyond. The mulched area around the tree should be at least 8 feet in diameter. In the forest a tree's entire root system, which usually extends well beyond the drip line, would naturally be mulched by fallen leaves. When using rock mulch, a little goes a long way. Rock mulch should be used minimally in the landscape. Reserve it for use on pathways, in dry creek beds, or under downspouts.

Lakes Park Reminders

1st Saturday Bird Walks year-round – 8 AM-10 AM. Meet at shelter A7

2nd Saturday Guided Garden Walks - Oct-April 9 AM– 10 AM Meet at Community Garden Sign; end of parking lot #3

Wednesdays Farmers Market runs October through April 9 AM– 1 PM

Tuesdays & Thursdays Volunteer Workdays year-round 8 AM-10 AM

Upcoming Events

March 9-11 Tues-Thur. "Art in Bloom"

Art and Floral Arrangements-Sanibel Library
Noon-5 PM Tues and 9 AM – 5 PM Wed-Thurs

March 12

Fort Myers-Lee County Garden Council Annual
General meeting via Zoom, begins 9:30 AM. Link
will be circulated by President Ann.

The presentation will be by Master Gardener,
Vanessa Hazelton, who will give a PowerPoint
presentation entitled *Plant this – Not That!*

Voting will also take place during the zoom
meeting on the slate of officers nominated for
2021-2023, as noted below.

President: Sue Lawson (GCCC)
First VP: Vacant
Second VP: Sylvia Swartz (GCCC)
Treasurer: Hampton Agnew (Bonsai Soc. SW
FL)
Asst. Treas.: Fran McIntyre (GCCC)
Rec. Sec.: Charlene Anderson (GCCC)
Corres. Sec.: Sylvia Lightbody (Fiddlesticks and
Jasmine Garden Clubs)
Advisors: Judy Francino, Mitzi Marckesano
and Paula Novander

March 13 10 AM At Edison Ford Estates
Monthly Garden Talk - *Why Native Plants are
Great!*
Edison Ford members \$10; \$15 non-members:

March 13 -9 AM – 1 PM Annual Plant/Bake Sale
and Strawberry Shortcake Festival– Alva Museum,

March 16 1:30 PM At Edison Ford Estates Garden
Class: *Shade Gardening in SWFL*
Edison Ford members \$35; \$50 non-members

March 20 8 AM to noon or 1 PM. to 5 PM at
Edison Ford Estates - *VIP Garden Tour*,
Edison Ford members \$125; \$135 non-members

March 20 —9 AM-3 PM Lyle Bowen Annual
Bromeliad Sale, Eagle Ridge off Daniels Pkwy. \$5
each or 6 for \$25

March 27 9 AM – 3 PM Port Charlotte Garden
Club's *Garden Extravaganza*, Port Charlotte
Beach Pavilions, 4500 Harbor Blvd., Port Charlotte

Newsletter Online

Our monthly newsletter is always available online
– go to our website at
<https://www.gardenclubofcapecoral.com/getinvolved/newsletter/>

Last Call!

Last call for entries for our Photography
Competition for the photo that will appear on the
cover of our next Yearbook! Deadline is March 31
– get those photos asap to Norah Hoover

*The next newsletter will be published in early
March – please submit ideas, articles,
suggestions to Sylvia Swartz, Editor,
tamarqal2@aol.com. Comments/suggestions
always welcome.*