

FACT SHEET: Spring Gardening in Hillsborough County

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FLORIDA-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPING™ AGENT

March is ready, set...garden month in Hillsborough County. We're past the last chance of frost; local area gardening festivals are occurring and we can recycle and redesign our landscape beds. You've already completed most of your pruning. And if you haven't, it's a good time to shape and reduce the size of landscape plants. Don't prune Gardenias and Azaleas until after they have bloomed. For ornamental grasses, cut the stems to 4-12 inches above the ground depending on the size of the clump.

Recycle your clippings in your compost bin. If you're raking oak leaves, compost or use them as mulch in a landscape bed. To learn about the do's and don'ts of composting, sign-up for a composting workshop offered one Saturday a month at the Extension office from February through November. Register at:

<http://hillsborough.extension.ufl.edu/HomeGardening/event-calendar.html>.

It's time to plant annuals and vegetables. Beans, corn, eggplant, peas, squash, tomatoes, watermelon and more can be planted in March. If you like to grow your own herbs and spices, consider basil, chives, dill, ginger, lemon balm, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage and thyme. Bulbs, a great landscape addition, provide color, form and texture. Some bulk beauties are African Lily, Amaryllis, Blackberry Lily, Caladium, Crinum, Elephant Ears, Rain Lilies, Shell Gingers, Voodoo Lily and Walking Iris.

Fertilize vegetables, perennials and palms. Check the Hillsborough County Gardening Calendar, created by Sydney Park Brown, UF/IFAS Extension, for a month-by-month guide on what to plant, prune and fertilize. It is available at:

<http://hillsborough.extension.ufl.edu/HomeGardening/Garden-Almanac.html>.

Watch for Lubber grasshoppers, aphids and mites. Lubbers can be 'pruned' in half, picked off the plant, thrown to the ground and stepped on. Who knew gardening was this dangerous...at least for Lubbers?! Insecticide soap sprays control aphids and mites if their natural predators (Lady beetles for one) don't. Roses should be sprayed with a fungicide to control black spot and powdery mildew diseases.

Let's get outside and dirty our hands so our gardens can return to their former beauty. For horticultural assistance, contact the Hillsborough County Extension Office, 744-5519, or visit us at 5339 County Road 579, Seffner, FL 33584. Master Gardeners are available Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. We can help!