



THE WALTON COUNTY GARDENER

by Walton County Master Gardeners

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5 Tips for Adding Cool Season Herbs to Your Fall Landscape

It is common for homeowners to have to pick between design and function when planning their fall landscape. However, combining the two can result in a stunning display in the yard. In North Florida, several herbs do well in the cool weather of the fall. While herb gardens will always be famous, there are other understated, yet successful ways to incorporate herbs into the fall landscape this year. Herb gardening in the fall is not difficult; with a bit of forethought and creativity, you can use herbs to revamp an existing bed or create a brand-new one.

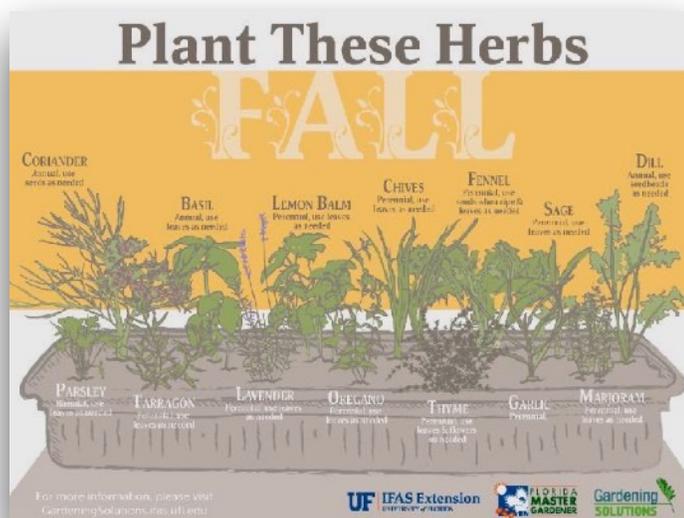
Herbs can be more than culinary specimens in the fall landscape. Herbs give a wide range of hues that enhance the landscape's color, giving depth and contrast to your current garden. Fill the gaps around, between, and beneath your existing flowers to frame them without taking away from their beauty. The variety of herb foliage textures adds interest to your landscape; you can alternate between glossy, velvety, soft, and hairy surfaces. Many herbs also have insect-repelling qualities that aid in pest management. Meanwhile, the herbs also attract beneficial insects and pollinators to the garden, which are vital for the well-being and growth of other landscape plants.

One of the first stages of enjoying your garden is deciding its function. What and how you grow will be influenced by an end-use. For example, simple access to fresh herbs while you cook could mean planting them next to your back door. You want those vibrant flavors near your hand if you need a sprig.



Space also needs to be considered while planning because plants will mature swiftly and flush out nicely, taking up more space. Each plant's height and spread affects how much light it receives. Plant your more striking, upright herbs further back, giving plenty of room for low-lying, creeping herbs to be planted closer to the front where they may still receive sufficient light. At least six hours of direct sunlight each day are required for cool-season herbs. They will also need well-drained soil and adequate watering. Knowing each plant's unique requirements can help homeowners care for herbs and identify unforeseen problems. Reinvent the way herbs have been grown in the past and incorporate their colors, textures, and blooms. Here are 5 ways to add cool season herbs to your fall landscape.

- **Containers:** Growing herbs in containers offers the flexibility of moving them. Potted herb gardens may be a perfect solution for small spaces like patios and balconies. Dill and fennel are great options for large containers.
- **Groundcovers:** Herbs that grow slowly and crawl, such as thyme, complement walkways and do nicely between paving stones.
- **Borders:** Herbs that form low mounds, such as oregano, make good borders, paths, and driveways.
- **Low Hedges:** Garden sage and other taller herbs create great low hedges that can aid in defining the boundaries of outdoor spaces.
- **Softening Hardscapes:** The billowing nature of cilantro and parsley herbs makes them perfect candidates for softening the hard edges of stone and concrete.



Citrus Leafminer



People who own citrus trees often notice wrinkled leaves with damaged patches marring their surface. These occur on many different types of citrus, and the damage may affect only a few leaves or be quite extensive. The culprit behind this is the citrus

leafminer, a tiny brown moth that can have a big impact.



The citrus leafminer moth, *Phyllocnistis citrella*



Stainton, only

lives for a few days as an adult. Female moths lay their eggs on new citrus leaves, usually one per leaf. Eggs hatch after about 10 days. The new larvae burrow into the leaf, eating as they go. Their feeding leaves a long, serpentine trail behind them. This damage

remains on the leaf long after the insect itself is gone, and leaves may curl and wrinkle around the injury as they grow. When the citrus leafminer larva is done growing after 1-3 weeks, it moves to the edge of the leaf, pulls the edge over itself for protection, and begins to pupate. Pupal development takes roughly another 1-3 weeks, after which the adult emerges and the cycle begins again.



How much damage can these insects do? For commercial citrus growers, the effects can be quite significant. Citrus leafminers will use many different species of citrus as their hosts, and populations can build up in situations where they have plenty of food. For homeowners, the

problem is typically much less severe and rarely warrants attention. Control methods can be difficult as well, as larvae are protected under the membrane of the leaf they are feeding in.

For particularly infested trees, especially very young ones, control may be desired. Citrus leafminers feed on young foliage only, so their life cycles are timed with flushes of new growth. This means that control methods must be timed in the same manner. For homeowners, applications of **horticultural oil** can be used to help control these pests, with treatment starting as soon as new growth appears. **Horticultural oil** can be re-applied every 10-14 days until leaves have hardened off. Avoid using these products when temperatures rise above 90°F, as they may harm plants. Older leaves showing damage from citrus leafminer do not need to be removed from the plant.

For more information on citrus leafminer, see our EDIS publication at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN165>. For more information about natural products to manage landscape and garden pests, see our publication at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN197>. For help in identifying a pest or disease problem, contact your local Extension office.

WHAT'S FLOWERING
in Florida?
DECEMBER

**NORTH/
CENTRAL**

- Beautyberry Native, deciduous (*Callicarpa americana*)
- Camellia Non-native, evergreen (*Camellia japonica*)
- Sasanqua Camellia Non-native, evergreen (*Camellia sasanqua*)
- Poinsettia*** Non-native, tender-evergreen (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*)
- Powderpuff* Non-native, tender-evergreen (*Calliandra haematocephala*)
- Tea Olive Non-native, evergreen (*Osmanthus fragrans*)

* In both North and South.

SOUTH

- Beautyberry***
- Pinkball Tree** Non-native, evergreen (*Dombeya wallichii*)
- Poinsettia***
- Powderpuff***
- Orchid Tree** Non-native, semi-deciduous (*Bauhinia* spp.)

A nice cup of... **Camellia**

**By Evan Anderson,
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Residents of North Florida are no doubt familiar with camellias – the large, glossy-green-leaved shrub that flowers during the cooler seasons. Common varieties include *Camellia sasanqua*, which blooms from October through December (depending on variety), and *Camellia japonica*, which blooms January through March. Both make huge, showy blossoms that demand attention, with forms that range from wild-rose-like to stunning geometric formal patterns. The popularity of these shrubs is not in doubt, but a cousin of theirs takes the prize as one of the most popular plants in the world. Not due to its flowers, this variety of camellia does bloom, but the leaves are most interesting to humans. It is grown in dozens of countries worldwide and global production is estimated at over \$17 billion worth of these leaves. The primary product made from this plant is a beverage that is consumed more than any other drink except water. It is, of course, tea.



Camellia sinensis was named by botanist Carl Linnaeus, “Camellia” to honor another botanist, Rev. Georg Kamel, who really had nothing to do with the plant at all, and “sinensis”, which means “from China”. You may be able to deduce where tea is native. The tea plant prefers

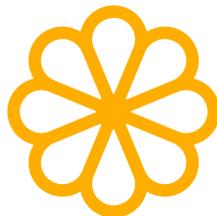
temperatures from 65 to 86 degrees Fahrenheit, doing well in zones 7-9. It can survive freezing or slightly-below-freezing temperatures, though leaves may be damaged by frost. It enjoys moist conditions, needing around 50 inches of rainfall per year. China tea (variety *sinensis*), which produces smaller, more serrated leaves, prefers more light than Assam types (variety *assamica*), which have larger, less serrated leaves. Either variety can be grown as a shrub or small tree.

Propagation may be accomplished either by seed, cuttings, or grafting; cuttings are the preferred method for reproduction, as seeds must be germinated before the seed coat hardens for best results. Caring for tea plants once established involves more frequent but light fertilization, mulching, and regular scouting for pests. *Camellia sinensis* is susceptible to mites, thrips, scale insects, and aphids, all of which are present in large numbers in our area. Luckily, most of these problems can be solved with an application of either insecticidal soap or horticultural oil, if control is even necessary.

Once a tea plant is large enough to harvest leaves from, it is the new growth which is plucked. The top 2-3 leaves are used either fresh or fermented for a period of time before they are brewed. Green tea comes from the fresh leaves of

China type tea plants, while either China or Assam types may be used to make black tea. Black tea leaves are picked, wilted or crushed, and allowed to ferment. Fermentation darkens the leaves and is halted by heating, which also serves to dry the leaves for storage.

Keep reading to learn more about camellias



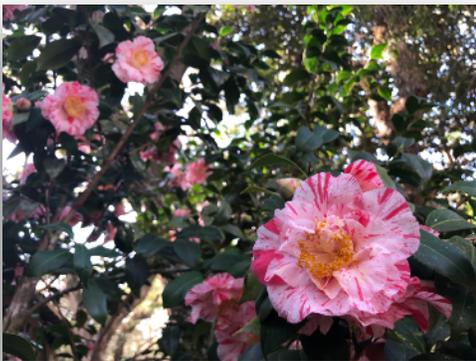
Camellias: Emblematic of the South

Camellia Japonica 'Governor Mouton'



It is a curiosity that many of the plants so closely associated with our thoughts of Southern gardens are not at all native to the area. One of those species is the well-loved camellia. Though identified with the South, the origins of these plants lie in Asia. Camellia is a genus of flowering plants in the family Theaceae. They are found in eastern and southern Asia, from the Himalayas east to Japan and Indonesia. There are more than 220 described species - with some controversy over the exact number - and also around 3,000 hybrids. They are hardy and evergreen, providing color with their glossy green leaves all year. But, in our gardens, they are most welcome because they brighten the long winter with their beautiful flowers, appearing as early as November (*Camellia sasanqua*), and continuing on until February or even later (*Camellia japonica*). While they are part of the tea family, these flowering beauties will not provide you with that particular beverage. For that you need to grow the *Camellia sinensis*, which produces a much smaller white flower (see above).

Camellia japonica 'Kickoff'



For local gardeners, growing camellias is something with which many of us have great success. But, for a real display of just how much variety they offer and what a great show they put on during their bloom cycle, we are fortunate to have available the varieties found at Eden Gardens State Park right here in Walton County. Many are showing off right now, and will continue to do so for these winter months. Most of the camellias there were planted by Mrs. Lois Maxon between 1963 when she purchased the land and 1968 when she donated the land to the state. Over the past 56-60 years since Ms. Maxon owned the property, some varieties have been lost and some have been added. Some of these camellia shrubs could be approaching 70 years of age.

The Friends of Eden is a Community Support Organization that provides many volunteer hours to maintaining the beauty of the Gardens. They have worked hard to put individual numbered tags on each camellia in the park and have found that there are now 370 camellias on the grounds (after

Camellia sasanqua
'Mine-No-Yuki'



planting 13 new ones this fall). There are 120 confirmed varieties of camellias for you to see when you visit. The website for Eden Gardens shows many of the photos of these beautiful flowers, and is updated as more begin to bloom. Some of the popular varieties in the park (found in multiple locations) are Governor Mouton (57 of them), Debutante, Professor Sargeant, Marie Bracey, and Mathotiana. Markers of a more permanent type are being ordered and installed.

The Friends of Eden are working on identifying 97 camellias on site that have no tags/labels. Over time, they have vanished or worn away. It is an interesting puzzle to solve, and there has been some success identifying some unique ones, but some others we may never know! If you are a camellia expert, you may wish to assist in this process of identification. The ones that remain unknown, are being photographed, and added to the bottom of the camellia page on the website. If you have some idea of the name of ones shown there, your expertise will be invaluable.



Propagation of camellias is a fascinating process. The Friends of Eden, together with support from the Walton County Master Gardeners, have for years engaged in air layering of these plants. This is a practice about which you may find volumes of information elsewhere. It basically requires you to score and wound a branch of a shrub, pack the wound with damp moss with rooting hormone, wrap it tightly with aluminum foil, taping the foil at both ends with electrical tape (to prevent rain water from accumulating and causing rot), and then spraying the aluminum foil with black paint (so that birds are not attracted to the shiny surface). Then, you wait and hope for roots to develop. That process usually requires months. At Eden, the air layering begins in the early summer, with cutting of the air layered branches occurring usually in October. At that point, the successfully air layered plants are potted in preparation for the Annual Camellia Festival. That Festival is scheduled for February 11th, 2023. These plants, with their origins at Eden, are offered to the public for purchase. The value of air layering is that you are not only receiving an exact cloned example of the parent plant, but you are also receiving one that may be as much as 60 years old.

Camellias may also be propagated by cuttings. While not as reliable as air layering, it is possible. It is also possible to grow a camellia from seed, although you will have no way of knowing the precise flower your plant may eventually produce.

With their wide hybrid variety of colors (white, pink, red, variegated) and forms (singles, doubles, peony form, rose form, anemone petal, formal doubles, etc.), there truly is a flower to suit



every interest. There are even some varieties that have fragrance. I invite you to explore the world of camellias, and – even if you don't have the inclination or perhaps the room to plant one – to take advantage of the beauty these shrubs offer by visiting Eden Gardens State Park.

Camellia sasanqua
'Mine-No-Yuki'



Camellia japonica 'Rosa Plena'



Camellia japonica
'Whoopee'



NORFOLK ISLAND PINE

(Araucaria heterophylla)



These small trees are quite popular as decorative table-top holiday trees. While they will stay quite modestly sized as houseplants, on their native Norfolk Island these trees stretch to an impressive 200 feet tall!

Characteristics

Norfolk Island pines are not true pines; they are members of a pre-historic family of conifers Araucariaceae, an incredibly diverse and widespread plant family during the Jurassic and Cretaceous time periods. The end of the Cretaceous period saw not only the extinction of the dinosaurs, but the extinction of members of the Araucariaceae family in the northern hemisphere. However, in the southern hemisphere, members of the Araucariaceae family continued to thrive. Today there are three genera—Agathis, Araucaria, and Wollemia—with a combined total of 41 species.

While this tree can grow quite large in its natural habitat, Norfolk Island pine is slow growing. After about a decade, it may eventually reach 5 to 8 feet tall as a houseplant, but this potted tree will not surprise you with explosive growth. (See picture on the last page, taken by Andrea Schnapp in Australia)

Norfolk Island, where this tree hails from, is located in the South Pacific between Australia, New Zealand, and New Caledonia. The flag of this Australian territory actually features the Norfolk Island pine. While sold here in the states as tabletop Christmas trees, in their native habitat these plants can incredibly reach 200 feet tall and have trunks that swell to 10 feet in diameter! In Florida these trees typically grow to only 60 to 80 feet.

Planting and Care

While not true pines, their tiered branches, slender pyramidal or columnar shape, and narrow evergreen leaves appear pine-like. Norfolk Island pines have a single upright trunk and occasionally develop a graceful lean. These trees are tropical plants that thrive on humidity and can't tolerate temperatures below 35°, so Orlando is the approximate northern range of this plant, although the picture right is in a landscape along Walton County's gulf coast, so it will survive the Zone 9a found there. Naturally found in coastal areas, it is no surprise that these plants have a high salt tolerance



In Florida we know all about humidity, but we strive to keep it out of our homes, so how do you make it humid for your houseplants? Overwatering is not the answer; Norfolk Island pines don't appreciate being too wet. Instead, fill a saucer with water and rocks or gravel, then place the potted plant on top making sure the pot is not sitting directly in water. There you have it—you've created your own little high-humidity microclimate. When you find the spot in your house with the right light for your plant, don't forget to turn the plant every week or so to keep it growing straight and upright.



As with so many holiday gift plants, some Florida gardeners may be able to plant their Norfolk Island pine in their landscape after they are done enjoying its beauty indoors. It should be noted though, that this naturally coastal tree does not hold up well during hurricanes. Be sure you have the room for a 60 to 80 foot mature trees. If not, consider simply enjoying this lovely little tropical tree in your home.

POINSETTIA

Pointers



Did you know?

The poinsettia is native to Mexico. The ancient Aztecs used poinsettias in their fall celebrations.

Named for Joel Poinsett, the botanist and U.S. Ambassador to Mexico who introduced the plant to the U.S. in 1825.

The colorful and showy "flower" is actually a cluster of modified leaves called bracts. The true flowers are small and clustered in the center of the bracts.

As a result of intensive breeding, there are more than 150 varieties of poinsettias to choose from.

Research has shown that poinsettias are not poisonous to people or pets, although some are mildly allergic to their white, milky sap.

References:
Brown, S.P. 2010. *Poinsettias at a Glance*. UF/IFAS EDIS publication ENY11083. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep349>



Caring for Potted Poinsettias

- 1 They do best on a porch or in a window with indirect sunlight for at least 6 hours per day.
- 2 If indoors, room temperatures of 65° - 70°F are best; keep them away from cold drafts and excessive heat.
- 3 Water thoroughly only when the surface of the soil is dry to the touch; do not water too frequently.
- 4 Indoors, fertilize lightly only every 4-6 weeks.
- 5 In April, when the leaves and bracts begin to deteriorate and fall off, cut the plant back and give it sun, water and fertilizer regularly.
- 6 A real challenge is to reflower plants indoors the next year. In October, start keeping the plant in complete darkness for at least 13-14 hours each day and in bright light the rest of the day. After about 2 months, your plants will develop a colorful display of holiday blooms.

Poinsettias in the Landscape

- 1 Varieties that naturally bloom in early to mid-November are the best for central and north Florida's landscapes.
- 2 It is best to keep these plants in brighter light during the winter, rather than indoors.
- 3 Plant in early spring as soon as the danger of frost is past. Choose a sunny spot (3-6 hours of sun) that will not receive artificial light at night.
- 4 Cut off fading bracts, leaving 4-6" of the stem on each branch.
- 5 Poinsettias prefer moist, well-drained soils with a pH between 5.5 and 6.5.
- 6 Keep mulched and well-watered until established; fertilize monthly with balanced amounts of nitrogen and potassium, and low phosphorus. Controlled release fertilizers are good.
- 7 Cut back once a month if needed, leaving 4 leaves on shoots; stop pruning in early September.
- 8 Poinsettias are nice in landscape containers, but proper watering is more critical.

For information about poinsettias, go to solutionsforyourlife.com, or visit your local UF/IFAS Extension office.