

MARCH 2023

Andrea M. Schnapp, Editor

Evan Anderson, Walton County Agent

Happy Spring Everyone! - Finally

and

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US! The Master Gardener Program throughout the US was created 50 years ago on March 20, 1974

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Matt Lollar, Commercial Horticulture Agent, Santa Rosa County

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Dara Dobson, Marissa Benton, and Barbara Young
Walton County Master Gardeners

Many thanks to Jeff Talbert who took the amazing wildflower photos

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BEEP BEEP VAROOM

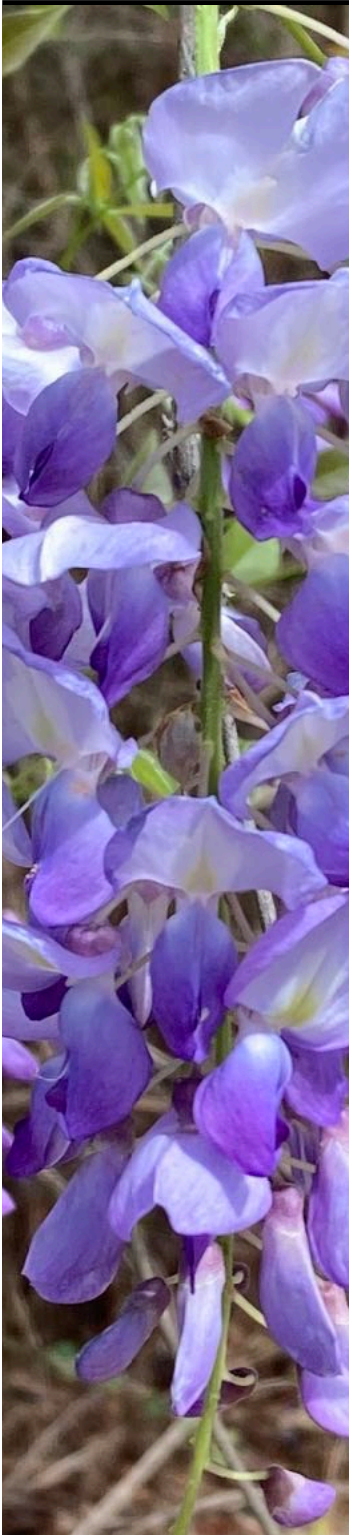




THE WALTON COUNTY GARDENER

by Walton County Master Gardeners

March 2023



PLANT PROPAGATION TIPS

Matt Lollar, Commercial Horticulture Agent, Santa Rosa County

It's always fun to add new plants to the landscape. And it's even more fun to propagate your own plant material. The question is, what plant propagation method is best? The answer depends on a number of factors such as:

1. How much time and money is available?
2. Is a uniform crop desired or is trait variation preferred?
3. What is the plant species being propagated?

Plants can be propagated either by seed (sexual propagation) or by segments of vegetative material (asexual propagation). Sexual propagation takes far less time and effort because new plants are being started from the seeds (offspring) of parent plants. This type of propagation promotes genetic diversity because offspring may not have the exact characteristics of the parent plants. Sexual propagation increases the possibility of hybrid vigor, which is the improved quality of plant material to that of parent plants. Asexual propagation usually takes more time, but generally ensures that propagated plants will maintain the same characteristics as the parent plant. For some species it may be the only way to pass on desired traits to subsequent generations and it may be the only way to propagate certain species. A plant produced vegetatively can become larger than a plant produced by seed in the same amount of time.

Tips for Successful Sexual Propagation

- **Seed Collection** – Seeds should be collected when fruit is ripe, just before they fall to the ground. In general, seeds should be cleaned, dried, and stored at 40 degrees Fahrenheit (in a refrigerator). However, palm seeds should be planted immediately after harvesting and cleaning.
- **Seed Dormancy** – Some seeds have thick seed coats that inhibit germination. Some seeds need to be scarified (breaking of the seed coat) and/or stratified (stored in a specific environment) in order to germinate.
- **Seed Sowing** – Seeds can be germinated in flats or other suitable containers in a seed starting media. Seeds should be planted at a depth of two to three times their diameter, but no deeper than 3 inches. Cycad seeds should be planted just below the medium surface.



Tips for Successful Asexual Propagation

In general, asexual propagation is the propagation of plant material from cuttings of stems, leaves, and/or roots.

- **Rooting Hormones** – Increase rooting percentage, hasten root initiation, increase the number of roots per cutting, and increase root uniformity. Auxin based rooting hormones (Indolebutyric acid (IBA) and Naphthalenacetic acid (NAA)) are available in dry or liquid forms. It is important to use the correct concentration for the particular plant species because over application can cause damage to cutting base.
- **Sticking Cuttings** – Cuttings should be stuck in the medium only deep enough to support the cuttings and hold them upright (1/2" to 1" deep).



- **Post-Rooting Care** – Fertilization should be applied as soon as roots emerge from the cuttings. However, overfertilization can increase soluble salts and burn roots.

Examples of Asexual Propagation

- **Softwood Cuttings** – Taken from woody plants usually three to four weeks after a new flush of growth. Commonly propagated species using this method include: crape myrtle; magnolia; oleander; azalea; jasmine; and boxwood.
- **Semi-hardwood Cuttings** – Similar to softwood cuttings, but the lower portion of the cutting has become lignified (woody). Usually taken from new shoots six to nine weeks after a flush of growth. Commonly propagated species using this method include: camellia; pittosporum; junipers; and some hollies.
- **Hardwood Cuttings** – Taken from the *previous* season's growth, just before or during the dormant period. Commonly propagated species using this method include narrow-leaved evergreens and deciduous species during the dormant season after leaves have dropped.
- **Leaf Cuttings** – Comprised of only the leaf blade or the leaf blade and petiole (leaf stalk). Cuttings are stuck upright in the propagation medium with the basal end (petiole end) of the leaf inserted into the propagation medium. Commonly propagated species using this method include begonias and peperomias.
- **Root Cuttings** – Taken in late winter or early spring from two to three-year-old plant material. Plants propagated by root cuttings may not reproduce true to type if they are budded or grafted. Commonly propagated species using this method include: plumbago; bayberry; oakleaf hydrangea; and yucca.



For more information on plant propagation please visit [University of Florida Plant Propagation Glossary](#) or [Plant Propagation Techniques for the Florida Gardener](#). Please be advised that some plant material is patented and it is illegal to propagate patented material without written authorization or licensing of the patent holder. If it is patented, a notation of patent number will be on the tag.

AN UNEXPECTED GIFT

Sometimes you get an unexpected chance to propagate. This is 'Let's Dance' hydrangea. Last year a branch from this shrub got buried in the garden soil right at a node on the branch. I dug it up and cut off the branch and voila! A new hydrangea - added plus - one of my favorites.



When removing, make sure you cut at the right spot, just above the node. This is where the new growth started



Once you remove, inspect the root system. Any torn roots should be given a crisp cut. Roots can be pruned without any problems if you cut, not tear. These roots will heal over.



I have a new plant! This will sit in this pot until after the threat of frost is over (when will that be?) and placed in a container for the summer.

In the northern parts of the county growing zone is mid April

This is another form of propagating asexually, burying a portion of stem where a node exists. It is often suggested that you need to slit the branch at the node in order to get to root. This shrub did it all on its own.

This is *Illicium* 'Florida Sunshine' (Florida anise)



Cut just above root zone at the node.



Dig out the small root zone.

Pot it up!



Two free shrubs!



WILDFLOWERS

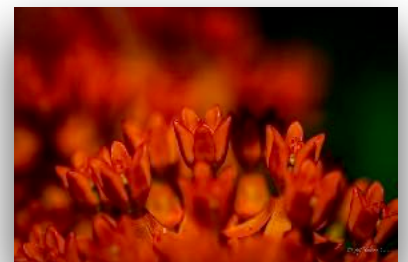
Dara Dobson, Marissa Benton, and Barbara Young
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Jeff Talbert Photography

Wildflowers are easy to plant, low maintenance, beneficial to pollinators and beautiful. What's not to love! What is a true Florida Wildflower? A plant whose natural range included Florida at the time of European contact, about 1500 AD according to the vest available scientific and historical documentation, there are approximately 2m800 true Florida wildflowers, When planting wildflower seeds use Florida native ecotype seeds or Florida native species seeds. Order from floridawildflowers.com or American meadows.com. What is he difference? Native ecotypes are harvested from plants grown from seeds from naturally occurring populations o genetically true Florida wildflowers, Florida species are kited species that grow natively in Florida but may be harvested from plants grown in another state,

When do we plant? Wildflower research has shown that the best time to plant wildflower seeds is late fall. That gives the seeds time to germinate and grow from the regular fall and winter rain patterns. Some species that bloom in summer and fall can be planted later with good success. You can sculpt a kittle corner, or order a walkway, or do a large area. If you have a small amount, you can plant seeds in pots. The area needs to be prepared by removing grass competition. Select plants that bloom in the fall and in the spring. You don't have to start over - just tuck a few wildflower plants into your existing beds.



Jeff Talbert Photography

Know your growing zone before you start picking out your plants. Right plant right pace - is it sunny or shady? How big will the plant be? Is our growing zone compatible to the plant? Walton County zones - 8a extreme north county, 8b most of the county and 9a South Walton County (along the beach). 20 Easy to Grow Wildflowers from the Florida Wildflower Foundation (flawildflowers.org)



Jeff Talbert Photography

can answer these questions. To plant the seeds remove the grass competition scratch the ground, spread the seeds, tamp down, water for a couple of days - done! When you see your plant being eaten down to the stalk, BE HAPPY! You have caterpillars! Don't be too tidy in the garden, leave some dead stalks, leaves, and spent flowers with seed heads - they will feed the birds. Leave some leaf litter in the winter. The only maintenance is to mow or cut the wildflowers in midsummer (only if you feel the need) and then finally in November. Leave the area alone until the end of March. Mow and let them sprout again.

Why wildflowers? They enhance the conservation of our natural resources and usually ensure a low maintenance, sustainable garden. But most importantly they attract and support our birds and other wildlife while limiting turf grass in our landscape.

In summary, wildflowers are beautiful, attract pollinators, eliminate turf grass, and are low maintenance. Plant them in the Fall mainly, but also in the Spring. Scratch the ground, toss the seeds, trample, water until sprouted, enjoy! A good resource is [Native Wildflowers of Florida's Panhandle](#).

Note: Walton County Master Gardeners tried to establish a roadside wildflower program in Walton County like the one in Santa Rosa County. We had little success. However, we have a one mile trial stretch north of Defuniak Springs with signs made by the county road crew. This program limits nothing all along the tree one during the months wildflowers bloom. A safety strip is mowed next to the road. Since that program was most unsuccessful, we are promoting wildflowers for homeowners' landscapes. Give it a try, you won't be disappointed!



Jeff Talbert Photography



SUCCULENT FUN

Succulents make wonderful arrangements and are a lot of fun to make.

Below are the steps to making a successful (and cute) succulent arrangement

Picking out your container. There are so many options, the only requirement is that the container has a drainage hole. Tea cups, ceramic bowls, even concrete containers can be used. To make a drainage hole, use a Diamond bit attached to a drill. Make sure you water close by to keep the bit cool. You can hold the container under running water while you drill.



It's best to use cuttings. Succulents cutting without a root system. If you have succulents, you can cut your own. Want colorful cuttings? You can buy colored succulent cuttings on Etsy.

Succulent potting medium. I make my own with 1/3 succulent potting soil, 1/3 perlite and 1/3 of tiny pea gravel or chicken grit.

Here we go.....

Succulent soil, because it's so loose, needs to be packed tamped down and tightened. Succulent containers will settle with time so you need to make sure the container is full.

These are succulents I purchased from Etsy (\$10.00) with a few of mine own. Notice most have a bit of a stem. I pick out cuttings that have a variety of colors.



Note how I place them tightly close to each other. Succulents love to be crowded. Try to make your arrangement so that the soil does not show.



Hold onto your cuttings while you make your arrangement. I use a chopstick to make holes if the stem is too short. I use a small brush to wipe off any soil that gets on the cuttings.

Keep adding succulents until you have the look you want!



So here's the outcome! How cute is that? Doesn't that make you smile? This sits on my kitchen window. It needs full sun to keep the colors of the succulents. They will go green without the needed sun. This arrangement will last for months.

When you decide to make your arrangement cut your succulents about **3 days** before so they develop a seal over the cut.

- Wait for 3-4 days to water. Succulents maintain moisture in their leaves so you are not jeopardizing the life span by not watering. Cuttings ordered on line can be planted and watered immediately.
- Because they do not have a root system, one or two may fall out while watering. No worries, just pop them back in.
- When they get over-grown for the container, you can plant them each in their own container, or redo your arrangement making new cuttings from the over grown ones.
- Sometimes air roots will grow. That is a signal you may need to water more often. These air roots are not harmful. I usually remove them, as they aren't very attractive.

Now I know you all are wondering where I got the cute Volkswagen container. Etsy!

Here are other arrangements I've done:



Don't forget your pumpkin arrangement! These are hot-glued on!

