

THE WALTON COUNTY GARDENER

JUNE/JULY 2023

Andrea M. Schnapp, Editor

Evan H. Anderson, Walton County Agent

Didn't we just celebrate Memorial Day? June just flew by and here we are, late with the June newsletter. So we are calling it June/July and next month's will be July/August with no August issue.

In this issue:

“Herbs - the Useful Plant”

Margaret Morrison, Walton County Master Gardener

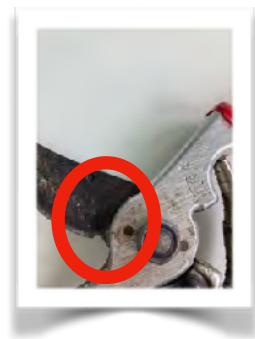
“Magnolia Scales”

Andrea M. Schnapp, Walton County Master Gardener

“Early Bird Crapemyrtle”

Gardening Tip:

Every pruner has a notch at the base of the blade. This is used for cutting wire! As long as I have been gardening, I never knew this! I am a firm believer in using the tool as it was meant to be used. This comes in handy.





THE WALTON COUNTY GARDENER

by Walton County Master Gardeners

June 2023

Herbs – The Useful Plants

By Margaret Zonia Morrison, Walton County Master Gardener



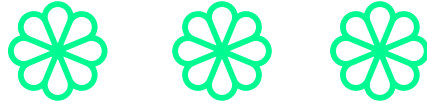
Anyone who knows me knows two things for certain: I love to cook and I love to garden. And, the beauty is that there is something wonderful that helps bring these two things abundantly together: herbs. Whether used to heal, to beautify, to decorate, or to flavor, most cultures throughout history have valued herbs. In Chinese and Greek culture, herbs were cultivated for healing. In Roman society, they were cultivated to bring flavor to the table. Monasteries in medieval times had herb gardens close at hand for multiple purposes, and usually had at least one monk who was an herbalist, being the human repository of the various benefits and uses of the herbs cultivated. Potpourris abound even in our present times, with their origins in the Middle Ages when people used them in homes (either in containers or scattered among the floor rushes), to dispel the unpleasant odors of daily life. As early as 50,000 B.C.E. there is evidence that our primitive forebearers found uses for certain plants that made food taste better. In Rome, at the death of Nero in 65 C.E., his wife used up an entire year's worth of cinnamon for his funeral rites. Spices were even sent to the moon in 1969 to flavor the astronauts' food, and there are no end of tales about the intense competition over spice routes and the incredible values attached to those transported from the Far and Middle East into Europe since the first spice monopoly was formed in 595 C.E.

While many past articles in this newsletter have cautioned you about the challenges of gardening here in the Panhandle of Florida, I can assure you from personal experience that you will enjoy success with herbs. For, while not every type of herb grows here, those that do will flourish. And, while I will suggest that you plant them close at



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hand so that you will easily develop the habit of using them in the kitchen, they may also serve in many decorative ways – both in containers and in the ground – and will offer you great beauty along with their utility.



I have found uses for herbs in a wide variety of ways: aromatherapy, folk art decoration, healing, and skin care, but, by far, my favorite use is in cooking. Many of the herbs that do well growing here are to be found mentioned in recipes for all varieties of cooking. Rosemary, sage, fennel, borage, mint, lemon balm, thyme, basil, bee balm, yarrow, lemon grass, lemon verbena, oregano, marjoram, pineapple sage, and sorrel are just a few of the types that do well here and are not strictly seasonal. Others, such as dill, and cilantro – for example – will do well in cooler seasons only. In the absence of an unusually cold winter like the one we experienced recently, many of my herbs have become perennial. In that regard, when we have more “normal” weather, you could even think about this area as being similar in growing patterns to some of the hotter and more humid Mediterranean areas. Many of us have marveled at the shrublike habits of rosemary here in the Panhandle, knowing that in many parts of the country, this is primarily a summer plant or a struggling indoor plant in winter.



There are numerous articles on growing herbs from seed, and I encourage you to explore those. Stores carry the “usual suspects,” however, all gardeners know you can generate many more plants at a reduced cost by growing them from seed yourself. Some will even do well being directly planted, foregoing the necessity of careful nurturing through the seedling stage in carefully controlled conditions. Some common examples for direct planting would be basil, parsley, cilantro, and dill. Others will need to be acquired from growers or others who will pass along slips, like lemon verbena, pineapple sage, and various mints. Once you have the plants, additional propagation is simple.

Cooking with fresh herbs will give you an entirely different appreciation of their importance. There is absolutely no comparison between fresh parsley and that in a jar.

Many grocery stores have learned this and now provide fresh herbs in their produce departments to satisfy discerning palates. I encourage you to try different combinations – ones that you might at first find unusual: like cinnamon with beef (Greek and Hispanic cuisine), mint with chicken (Greek and Middle Eastern cooking), and rosemary with lamb, peas, or grilled meat (Italian, French and Greek cooking). But, the use of herbs is not limited to soups, salads, and main courses. They can also surprise the palate in sweets, like cookies, cakes, or even frozen treats. Try some bee balm or lavender flowers in your shortbread cookies. Try bee balm in ice cream or pound cake or even as a tea. Experiment with lavender in your ice cream, or by making lace cookies with pineapple sage flowers. A relatively new addition to my efforts has been the growing of “cranberry hibiscus,” also known as



roselle, Florida cranberry, or Jamaican sorrel. It makes a very delicious tea, and can even flavor ice cream, lending an intense rose color to all it enhances.

Obviously, there are so many ways herbs may be used. The purpose of this article is not to be a complete survey of their application, enjoyment, and utility, but rather to encourage you to grow them, appreciate their beauty, and be open to incorporating them into many different uses, not limited only to cooking.

The trick with herbs is to be open to experimentation. For culinary uses, scout the Internet, get lost in the “black hole” of Pinterest, talk with friends who enjoy cooking and find all the many ways to incorporate these flavor marvels into your meals. Just know that by growing them yourself, not only will these plants invite pollinators to your gardens, they will also enhance the beauty of your containers or garden beds with their colors and variety of leaf patterns. Give herbs a try in all the ways I have suggested. You will be amazed and pleased with the results; I am certain.

Just to encourage your efforts, let me give you some recipes to try.

Bee Balm Pound Cake (from *Edible Flowers*, by Cathy Wilkinson Barash, Fulcrum Publishing, 1995, page 89)

1 cup butter (room temperature)

2 cups granulated sugar

2-1/4 cups all-purpose flour

6 eggs

Juice of 1 lemon

1 tsp. vanilla

1/2 cup bee balm flowers, coarsely chopped

1/8 tsp. salt

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Cream butter and sugar together until light and fluffy,

In a separate bowl, sift and measure flour. Alternating flour and eggs (one at a time) to the creamed sugar, beating continually. Add lemon juice, vanilla, bee balm flowers, and salt. Mix for 1 minute.

Pour batter into a buttered and floured tube pan and bake about 1 hour and 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Take cake out of oven, put on rack to cool for at least 10 minutes, Remove cake from pan and cool completely on rack.

Serves 15 to 20



Lemon Balm Lemonade (from *Herbal Sweets* by Ruth Bass, Storey Communications, Inc, 1996, page 60)

4 lemons, scrubbed

Small bunch of lemon balm (about 3 ounces)

½ cup sugar

2/3 cup boiling water

2-1/2 cups water

Extra lemon balm sprigs for garnish

Peel rinds off lemons, avoiding the pith. Put rinds in a small bowl. Tear off lemon balm leaves and add them to the rinds. Add the sugar. Pour in the boiling water and stir well, crushing the leaves to release their flavor. Let the mixture stand for 15 minutes.

Cut lemons in half and squeeze out juice. Put a few fresh sprigs of lemon balm into a large glass pitcher, then strain the lemon juice into it, and add the cooled, strained syrup. Add the rest of the water and chill. Yield: 1 quart

(Shortcut: make the herb infusion and add it to frozen concentrate.)*

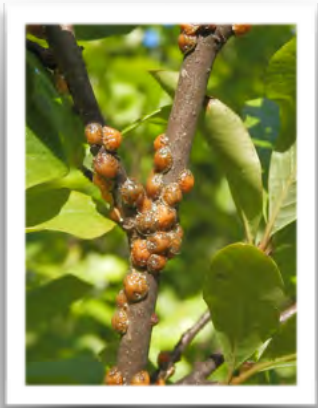
Additional Suggested Reading:

1. [The Pleasure of Herbs: A Month by Month Guide to Growing, Using, and Enjoying Herbs](#), by Phyllis Shaudys, Alpine Press, 1989.
2. [The Illustrated Herb Encyclopedia](#), by Kathi Keville, Mallard Press, 1991.
3. <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/VH020>, “Herbs and Spices in the Florida Garden,” by Mary Salinas, Sydney Park Brown, and James M. Stephens.

MAGNOLIA SCALES

Soft Scale

I recently visited a friend's home in Miramar Beach, on the Choctahatchee Bay. While I was looking at the awesome view of the bay in front of me, I suddenly took a step back to look at a very ill magnolia grandiflora. In this picture, notice that bottom leaves have a black substance on them. This is a **sign** that something is very wrong. On these leaves is honeydew, insect excrement. Honeydew grows a fungus called black sooty mold. It does not damage the leaf, and -



Soft Scale

although this fungus can make a plant look horrible - it is not fatal. However, one must heed this **sign** as it an

indication of an insect - in this case, an insect infestation of soft scale (picture left). You know that it is *soft* scale because it is the one scale that produces honeydew. Scale lives on the branches and has a protective cover making it a little difficult to control. The favored treatment for scale is Neem or horticulture oil. Mix with water and spray the infected areas with this mixture. *It can not be used to prevent scale.* Application should be done late afternoon, when the sun is not strong. Since this is an oil, it can burn the area when exposed to mid day sun. Check your tree in a few weeks and if scale is still present, give it another application.



One other thing to consider is the presence of ants. Ants love the honeydew and often times will bring scale to the tree for the honeydew. It is important that you get rid of the ants or the problem will just repeat itself.

You can also add dish detergent to the oil mixture and spray the leaves to get rid of the mold.

So will soft scale kill your tree? Not entirely. Scale feeds on your tree by sucking fluids through the phloem, a layer under the bark that provides the tree with fluids. If not controlled, the branch where the scale is present will eventually die or at least, leaf drop.

False Oleander Scale

This scale can be mainly seen on the leaves along the mid vein as a white dot, an insect is under this. False Oleander Scale can cause stunted growth and, if severe, leaf drop. To prevent this scale, treat with horticulture oil around May. If you see this scale now, treat with the oil and again in two weeks. But remember to use oil only in the late afternoon.



Edibles to Plant in July

EDIBLES TO PLANT IN July

	North	Central	South
EASY TO TRANSPLANT 	Gingers, Peppers, Roselle, Tomatillo, Tomatoes, Tropical Spinaches	Boniato, Gingers, Roselle, Sugarcane, Tropical Spinaches	Sugarcane, Tropical Spinaches
TRANSPLANT CAREFULLY 	Amaranth, Calabaza, Long Squash, Luffa, Seminole Pumpkin	Amaranth, Cassava, Calabaza, Long Squash, Luffa, Papaya, Pigeon Pea, Pineapple, Seminole Pumpkin	Amaranth, Papaya, Pineapple, Sweet Potatoes
USE SEEDS 	Chayote, Cucumbers, Peas (southern), Pumpkin	Chayote, Okra, Peas (southern), Pumpkin	Chayote

For more information, please visit: GardeningSolutions.ifas.ufl.edu

'EARLY BIRD' LAVENDER



CRAPEMYRTLE

Meet 'Early Bird' Lavender crapemyrtle, a Southern Living offering. Several characteristics make this a unique crapemyrtle. First, it flowers earlier than other crapemyrtles, second, it grows as a shrub rather than tree-form and lastly, it re-flowers! This shrub will flower for 100-120 days! Mine has been flowering since mid-May and keeps setting out new buds. I help mine along to get even more days by deadheading all spent blooms. After the first flush of flowers, give this shrub a good pruning to help maintain a good shape. It can get quite large, up to 8 feet, but can be maintained easily without committing "crape murder". You can order this online or shop at local garden departments or nurseries.