

THE WALTON COUNTY GARDENER NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER, 2023

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In this issue -

We are focusing on growing **vegetables** in our area. Did you know that Walton County has 3 *growing zones*? Those of you north of DeFuniak Springs are in zone 8a; those of you north of the Choctawhatchee Bay to Defuniak Springs are zone 8b and those of you along the coast and south of the Bay are zone 9a.

The first article is by *Lona Robinson, Walton County Master Gardener*, who grows her vegetables in zone 8a; - she also includes her favorite vegetable soup recipe and canning instructions.

The second article is by *Gena and Carl Henderson, Walton County Master Gardeners*, who grow their vegetables in zone 8b. They too have included a favorite eggplant recipe that is guaranteed to make your family an eggplant lover.

In zone 9a we have Steve Peters who has a garden in Cultivate Community Gardens, a community garden, in Santa Rose Beach. He has included his list of successful vegetables as well.

Originally introduced to the US from Asia in the early 1900's, to be used as packing material, **Cogongrass** has become a top invasive plant in the southeast. Learn how to eradicate this beast.

“NOW IS THE TIME IS THE TIME TO TREAT COGONGRASS - MAKE IT COUNT”

Mark D. Mauldin, Extension Agent II, Livestock and Forages, Washington County






THE WALTON COUNTY GARDENER

by Walton County Master Gardeners

VEGETABLE GARDENING

Lona Robinson, Master Gardener, ZONE 8A



This year our gardening goal was to grow all the veggies we'd need for my mom's soup recipe. The recipe calls for corn, tomatoes, & okra. We planted Silver Queen corn, Clemson spineless okra and Big Boy, Roma, and Homestead tomatoes. All three crops were ready at the same time so we were able to pick the vegetables first thing in the morning and have the jars pressure canned by the afternoon. As the weather gets cooler let's look back at the garden that gave us these quarts of beautiful soup mix.

In order to successfully grow vegetables in our dry sandy soil, we often add compost made from kitchen scraps, leaves, & manure from our goats, chickens, and cows. However, this year we added a couple of new practices and what a difference it made!

First, we planted a winter cover crop of **Abruzzi rye** and cut it down many times during the winter months. The rye was tilled in with compost before planting.

Second, we used a fertilizer injector along with our drip tape & buried the drip tape rather than laying on the surface of the soil. The results of the irrigation system using Chilean nitrate & Calcium nitrate were impressive. We grew more okra and tomatoes than ever before. We had no blossom end rot and nematode damage was not apparent until late in the season.

Doing new things payed off for us in our garden this year.

Be encouraged to try something different in your vegetable garden this year. Maybe you'll grow some soup!

Soup Mix Recipe

Scald & peel 5 quarts of tomatoes - Core & cut into quarters.

Combine -

5 qts. tomatoes

2 qts. Corn

2 qts. Okra 2 Tablespoons salt

Cook to thick consistency.

Pack & pressure can Pints: 10 pounds pressure for 40 minutes

Quarts: 10 pounds pressure for 45 minutes.

My note: Stir in 1/4 cup of lemon juice after cooking, before putting in jars.

If not using heirloom tomatoes the acid content may not be high enough so lemon juice or citric acid will help keep your food safe

Soup Mix Recipe (from a food preservation book published by the Alabama Polytechnic Institute in 1957)



WINTER VEGETABLES FOR THE GARDEN

GENA AND CARL HENDERSON, ZONE 8B

Mustard greens

Rutabaga – We enjoy both roots and tops. Rutabaga greens are the Best!

Celery

Collards – need to cook them long enough. (Smoked pork neck-bones are recommended...)

Cabbage – slice and roast in oven after spraying with olive oil. Try making your own sauerkraut!

Curly kale

Daikon radish (Nice for salads, grated or sliced thinly. Also try fermenting them!)

Turnips (mostly purple-top)

Arugula – once it goes to seed, it will usually happily come up each year at the appropriate time.

Cilantro – ditto.

Carrots – Suggest planting carrot seed along with radish. Radish comes up quickly, and lets you know where your carrots were planted!

Beets (tops AND roots)

Swiss Chard

Multiplying onions

Elephant garlic



EGGPLANTS!

“Eggplant is the queen of the garden. Almost purple-black in color with a glossy sheen and a cap like a crown, it looks like royalty. The taste is fit for royalty, too! Mouth-watering eggplant parmigiana, stuffed eggplant or a southern-style dish like french-fried eggplant is always a treat at the table.

Eggplant Beginnings

Eggplant has been around for a long time. It originally came from India and was known in Arabia, where sheiks and shahs thought very highly of it. It was introduced by Arabians to the people of Spain, who later brought it to this country, and both purple and white varieties were growing here by 1806.

One of the earliest references to eggplant is from a fifth-century Chinese book. It seems that Chinese women considered it high fashion to stain their teeth with a black dye made from eggplant. They then polished their teeth until they shone like metal.

But eggplant as a food or fashion accessory wasn't popular everywhere. In 15th- and 16th-century Europe, eggplant were called "mad apples" because it was thought that eating them would make a person insane. Even when this fear started dying away, Europeans still wouldn't eat eggplant as they considered it poisonous. Eggplant is a member of the nightshade family, the same as tomatoes, potatoes, tobacco and belladonna. Eye drops derived from belladonna (also called deadly nightshade) were used by fashionable women to make their eyes appear larger. Once in a while someone would drink belladonna and die of the effects. No wonder, knowing eggplant and deadly nightshade were related, people shied away from eating eggplant.

Modern Eggplant

Ultimately, eggplant became as popular in Europe as in the Middle East. Now you can grow eggplant varieties as large as melons or as small as eggs in purple, white, green or violet and white striped. Still, eggplant remains more popular overseas than it does here. There are more varieties under cultivation in Europe and Japan than there are in America.

[<https://garden.org/learn/articles/view/511/The-History-of-Eggplant/>]

‘New Leader’ and ‘White lightning’ are our current favorites (we were introduced to them by Jim Conlee, President of the Niceville Garden Club.) They’re thin-skinned, not bitter, hence no need to salt and press. Small seeds.

THE DALAI LAMA'S EGGPLANT

Slice eggplants into thin rounds – no thicker than ¼”. (Hint: A sharp knife makes this easier!) Dip into an egg wash – just eggs – and fry in olive oil until just browned. Set aside. (Carl’s notes: Warning: If you start nibbling on these rounds, you may never have enough to complete your dish! We call these little rounds “pancakes” when with our grandchildren, and they love them! Leftover egg wash is fried for making fried rice, which is also good with diced eggplant!)

In a casserole dish – 10x13 or so – spread a layer of tomato sauce (you may wish to cook the typical tomato sauce down by about 1/3 to make it thicker). Feel free to add garlic, thyme, oregano, and minced celery leaves and onion...!

Add a layer of eggplant, and grate mozzarella cheese and parmesan cheese in a thin layer. Repeat with a layer of tomato sauce, eggplant, and cheeses for 2-3 more layers. Finish with tomato sauce and cheeses on top.

Bake at 325F for about 45 minutes. The casserole should be bubbling around the edges as well as in the middle, and beginning to brown on top. (As the author says, ‘It’s a no-fail recipe. At the worst, it will be good. At the best, like a baked eggplant- tomato custard.) Let it cool a bit – to set up – before serving. Enjoy! We encountered the recipe for ‘The Dalai Lama’s Eggplant’, and it became our favorite way to prepare eggplant. [<https://themodernhomestead.us/resources/kitchen/eggplant-parmesan/>]

EDIBLES TO PLANT IN November

	North	Central	South
EASY TO TRANSPLANT	Arugula, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chinese Cabbage, Collards, Kale, Kohlrabi, Sugarcane, Swiss Chard	Arugula, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chinese Cabbage, Collards, Endive, Kale, Kohlrabi, Lettuce, Sugarcane, Swiss Chard	Arugula, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chinese Cabbage, Collards, Eggplant, Endive, Kale, Kohlrabi, Lettuce, Peppers, Strawberry, Sugarcane, Swiss Chard, Tomatillo, Tomatoes, Tropical Spinaches
TRANSPLANT WITH CARE	Celery, Mustard, Spinach	Celery, Mustard, Pineapple, Potatoes, Spinach	Amaranth, Calabaza, Celery, Long Squashes, Luffa, Mustard, Pineapple, Potatoes, Seminole Pumpkin, Spinach
USE SEEDS	Carrots, Onions (bunching), Radish, Turnips	Carrots, Onions (bunching), Peas (English), Radish, Turnips	Beans (bush, lima, pole), Carrots, Corn, Cucumbers, Onions (bunching), Peas (English, southern), Radish, Squashes, Turnips

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VEGETABLE GARDEN

Steve Peters, ZONE 9A

CULTIVATE COMMUNITY GARDENS, SANTA ROSA BEACH

Arugula and lettuce grow well from October through April either planting seed directly or with transplanted seedlings. I grow carrots, beets and radishes from seed from October thru May. Brussel's Sprouts were a star of last years Spring garden with 5 plants producing more than we could eat. I didn't have success with Brussel's Sprouts from seed but did with transplanted seedlings. I planted them in September this year and they are off to a strong start. I also planted broccoli seedlings this September and they are growing well. I plant Tomatoes from pots in early Fall for a November/December crop. Last year I had tomatoes into January and harvested the rest before a severe cold spell. I plant tomatoes again in March for a Spring crop but they don't survive the summer heat. Cherry tomatoes are more reliable than larger varieties. I planted green beans in late Spring and had lots of flowers but no beans until the weather cooled a bit but then they were abundant. Cabbage grown from transplanted seedlings is a good and reliable winter vegetable. The summer heat overwhelms me so I don't garden in the Summer any more. In past Summers I've had the best luck with Okra and Tomatillos which tolerate heat well."



NOW is the Perfect Time to Treat Cogongrass – Make it Count

by Mark Mauldin

Without question, Cogongrass is the most troublesome invasive plant that I (and my clients) deal with. Here in Northwest Florida, we have a lot of it, and it is very difficult to manage. It has been my observation that the difficulty of management and limited early success often lead to frustration and ultimately a loss of interest in control efforts on the part of landowners/managers. This is the absolute worst-case scenario, as diligence over time is paramount to successfully managing cogongrass. With all this in mind, optimizing the impact of the initial control effort is crucial both in terms of biology (efficacy on the plants) and psychology (keeping the landowner encouraged and motivated). If you have cogongrass to fight, take every step you can to get the absolute best results out of every treatment, especially the first one.

The following is a discussion of some of the steps you can take to maximize the efficacy of your control efforts.

1) Timing Matters

Cogongrass is best treated with a fall-spring, one-two punch. Mid-summer and mid-winter treatments are not advisable. **NOW is the time to treat.** As I write this it is mid-October with rain on the way – by the time this is published the front will have passed and the timing will be perfect. If you ask me the absolute best time of year to treat cogongrass, I will tell you, without hesitation, “**October through November, before first frost, with good soil moisture**”. Spray now and be prepared to spray again in the spring when you have at least 12 inches of green leaf and good soil moisture. With that one-two punch successfully delivered, you should see significant reduction in the size of the infestation by this time next year. Keep repeating the spring-fall process until you can no longer find any cogongrass.



2) Coverage & Leaf Area are Crucial

To make the most out of each treatment you must maximize the amount of chemical you get into the plant. This is done by getting thorough coverage on as much green leaf area as possible. **Make sure you have plenty of green leaves (at least 12 inches) and spray them like you're painting a wall.** You don't want runoff, but you want every square inch of leaf covered with spray. Don't mow or burn for at least 30 days after you spray. Cogongrass can be hard to spot when it is growing mixed with other grasses/ green foliage. Look diligently to find the edge of the patch and then spray 10ft past the known edge on all sides of the patch.

3) Get the Spray Mixture Right

Notice, I didn't say pick the right chemical. There's more to it than that. The following recommendations will be based on managing cogongrass with the active ingredient glyphosate. *(Imazapyr is also very effective on cogongrass, but due to its soil activity it is inherently more complicated to use and ensure the safety of desirable plants near the treatment area. I am not comfortable recommending imazapyr without first seeing the site where it is to be applied and discussing the risk to other vegetation with the landowner. Glyphosate must enter a plant through a green leaf making it much easier for applicators to ensure the safety of desirable vegetation.)* Generally speaking, **the efficacy of glyphosate will increase if a water conditioner and surfactant are included in the spray solution.** To clarify, this would be three separate products going into the spray tank – one herbicide and two adjuvants. The preferred water conditioner would be a 34% liquid Ammonium Sulfate (AMS) product and the surfactant would be an 80/20 Non-ionic surfactant (NIS). These products should be available anywhere ag chemicals are sold (not the garden center at a big box store) under many different name brands. Selecting a glyphosate product can be somewhat confusing, simply because there are so many different products on the market. The product amounts listed below are based on a 41%, 3lbs acid equivalent (ae) per gallon glyphosate product. This is a relatively common formulation, but there are many others available. All can be effective; it is just a matter of value and correctly adjusting the rate to match the formulation you are using.

Mauldin's mixture for treating a small patch with a hand-held single nozzle sprayer:

Fill spray tank $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ full of water (run agitation if available)

For each gallon of spray solution you are making add:

- **2oz of 34% AMS water conditioner (add this first and let it completely mix before proceeding)**
- **5oz of 41% 3lbs ae glyphosate herbicide**
- **5oz of 80/20 NIS**

Finish filling spray tank

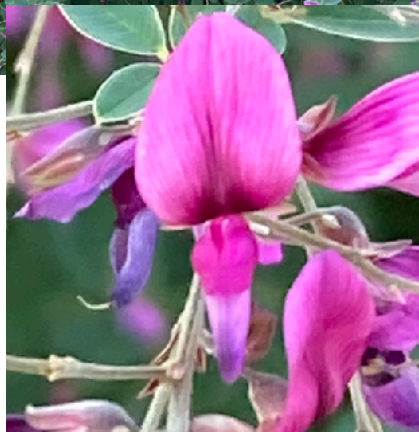
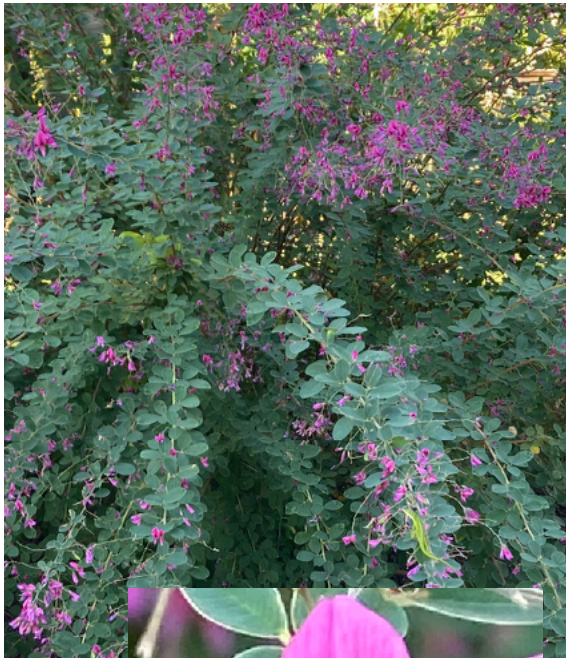
For a broadcast application using a tractor mounted sprayer or other similar equipment, mix a spray solution such that 1 gallon of 41%, 3lbae glyphosate herbicide is applied per acre. Ideally this would be delivered in 10-20 gallons of water (be sure spray equipment is properly calibrated). Add a liquid AMS water conditioning product at 2% v/v before adding herbicide to the tank. Add a non-ionic surfactant (80/20 NIS) at 1qt per 50-100 gallons of spray solution after the herbicide has been added.

I understand that nobody likes to have to deal with all the numbers, especially the various formulations of glyphosate. Unfortunately, that's just part of it... There are so many different products out there that the numbers are necessary to communicate the recommendations in a way that is widely applicable. Please don't hesitate to contact me (850-638-6180) or your local **UF/IFAS Extension Agent** for assistance sourcing vegetation management products or tailoring the recommendations to match the specific products you have on hand. The most important thing is to get the mixture right and make the application be as effective as possible.

More than any other weed I manage, Cogongrass penalizes the applicator for not paying attention to the details. It is a very difficult plant to control; partial efforts are essentially a waste of time. I encourage you to take the extra time, effort, and expense and make the most of every application.

WHAT'S FLOWERING IN MY FALL GARDEN

Andrea M. Schnapp, Walton County Master Gardener



Philippine Violet

Lespedeza thunbergii 'Little Volcano'