



The Seaside Garden

By Jenifer Marx
Garden Club by the Sea

PASSION VINE – A Florida Native Perennial Makes an Interesting Groundcover

If you have an area where turf struggles, think of using the Florida native passion vine (*Passiflora incarnata*) as a ground cover. Also known as the **maypop**, it is a robust perennial vine that makes an attractive textural groundcover favored by pollinating insects including carpenter and bumblebees. It is a larval host plant of several butterflies including the [Gulf fritillary](#), Variegated fritillary and [Zebra longwing](#). Passion vine, while not salt tolerant, does extremely well in our sandy soil and seldom requires watering. Be aware that it does spread rather aggressively.

The passion vine's lovely flower has a story to tell. The pistil and stamens together are said to represent the crucifixion of Christ, the Passion. The ten sepals are said to represent the ten disciples, excluding Peter and Judas. The five stamens represent the five wounds inflicted on Christ's body, the knob-tipped stigmas are said to resemble nails, and the blossom's delicate fringe represents the crown of thorns.

Most often found as a climbing vine, it is an interesting groundcover reaching about 18-24 inches in height and spreading to cover about 10 feet. The leaves are a lively dark green and the gorgeous blooms close in the evening and open by early afternoon. Maypop fruits, so called for the sound the fried fruit makes when squeezed, are small and egg-shaped, turning from green to yellow as they ripen. The seeds are embedded in a sweet sticky edible flesh, which was eaten by native Americans, who also brewed medicinal concoctions from the leaves, stems, and blossoms. Even now the plant is used in the preparation of infusions, tinctures and herbal remedies to calm nervousness and fight anxiety and insomnia.



Did You Know??

- Florida is home to more than 180 species of butterflies and about 2,500 species of plants that are native, or naturally occurring.
- The **Zebra Longwing**, *Heliconius charitonius*, is Florida's state butterfly. The adult butterfly can live up to several months, much longer than many other species. Visiting caterpillars feast on the Purple Passionflower.
- Florida's state wildflower is the *Coreopsis*, a great nectar source for butterflies. Thirteen *Coreopsis* species occur in Florida. Most have bright yellow, daisy-like flowers. *Coreopsis*, also known as tickseed, are hardy perennials in the Aster family and are dependable hot weather bloomers. They attract a variety of beneficial insects for pollinating flowers, trees, shrubs, and garden vegetables. They also attract birds and butterflies. Relatives of sunflowers, coneflowers and asters, *Coreopsis* are low maintenance and last about four or five years. They require full sun and thrive in well drained, moderately moist soils. Regular deadheading of spent blooms increases flower production. *Coreopsis* may be cut back

by one-third in early fall for continued blooming. They may die back during the coldest months. A decrease in flowering indicates it's time to divide them and start new ones from seed.

Pair the bright, cheerful yellow selections with contrasting blues or purples for a classic color combination. Combine with *Echinacea* (coneflower), *Hemerocallis* (daylily), *Monarda* (bee balm), *Achillea* (yarrow), and *Gaillardia* (blanket flower) in an informal meadow setting.

The edible petals of *Coreopsis* can be sprinkled on salads. A beverage made from the dried plant was once used as a coffee substitute. The roots have been used to brew an anti-diarrheal tea. An old folk



belief holds that women who want to conceive a female baby can increase the chances by drinking an infusion of the entire *Coreopsis* plant minus the root.

Coreopsis makes a lovely yellow dye, which is especially vibrant on wool. Look at a California woman's experiments with dyeing wool with *Coreopsis*. <https://myramadecolor.com/2013/06/28/coreopsis-dyes/amp/>



Photo Courtesy of Hooked and Dyed 1

Here is a tutorial for dyeing linen and cotton with the flowers.

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/design/outdoor-living/dyeing-fabric-with-coreopsis.html>

—What To Plant In The May Garden—

Annuals/Bedding Plants: Plants that can take summer heat include salvia, torenia, wax begonia, celosia, portulaca, vinca, some varieties of coleus and ornamental pepper.

See *Annuals*: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_annual_landscape_plants

Bulbs: Some lilies do better when their roots are crowded. Try planting Amazon, Aztec, and Clivia lilies in containers to increase blooming. See *Bulbs for Florida* https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_bulbous_flowers

Herbs: Plant heat-loving herbs, including basil, Mexican tarragon, ginger, cumin, summer savory, and rosemary. Pinch back regularly to prevent flowering and enhance branching.

See *Herbs*: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_herbs

Fruit: Did you know pineapples are related to Spanish moss and that they propagate vegetatively without flowers? A pineapple is a seedless syncarp, a single fruit made up of many flowers. Pineapple growing in the Florida home landscape: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/MG055>

Vegetables: Some spring crops like peppers and eggplant may continue into summer. Set out transplants of okra, sweet potatoes, sugarcane, boniato, cassava, chayote, peanuts, Seminole pumpkin, calabaza, hot peppers, and tropical "spinach" such as Sisso, Malabar and New Zealand. See Vegetable Gardening in Florida: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_vegetable_gardening

Southern Peas: How to Cook Field Peas – Southern Living
<https://www.southernliving.com/food/kitchen-assistant/the-farm-stand-how-to-cook-field-peas>

Southern peas are a group of vegetables that are part of the bean family, and they love hot weather and sandy soil. First cultivated in India and Africa, they were a staple of ancient Greek and Roman diets and have been a diet staple of many cultures down through the ages. These types of beans are extremely nutritious. Canned and frozen they are very good; but eaten fresh they are so much more delicious.



There are at least 400 types of beans but here we can grow three types of Southern peas, all tasty and very nutritious: crowder, cream, and black-eyed. Crowders have a robust flavor, cream peas are milder, and the flavor of black-eyed peas is somewhere in between.

Like all legumes, Southern peas have the ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen, meaning they produce their own nitrogen, but they still require some (organic, please) fertilizer. Southern peas are drought tolerant, but mulching helps the soil retain moisture.

Be sure to harvest your peas frequently to encourage continuous flowering and pod production. When they cease to bear, work the declining plants into the soil as green manure.

—What To Do In The May Garden—

April and May, the windy months at the end of our dry season are stressful for plants. Be vigilant in monitoring your landscape for signs of desiccation, insect problems and disease. An ounce of prevention is definitely worth a pound of cure. Water newly installed shrubs and trees frequently until well-established.



Pruning: Several light trims with hand pruners over the summer will keep fast-growing shrubs such as Ligustrum, viburnum and Photinia looking neat. "Pinch" tips for compact growth. Poinsettias should be pruned several times from May through August.

Photo – UF/IFAS Extension Suwanee County 1

Pests & Diseases: Watch for thrips, scale, and mites on ornamental plants because they become more active in warm weather. See *Landscape Pest Management* https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/landscape_pests and *Managing Scale Insects on Ornamental*

Plants: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/MGoos>

Check weekly for powdery mildew (crape myrtles, roses), black-spot on roses, scale, aphids, thrips on roses, spider mites on daylilies, caterpillars on cannas, and oleander and grasshoppers on lilies.

The Good Guys – Lacewings



Green Lacewing Eggs. MSU Extension 1

Lacewings are beneficial Predators. Florida has both brown and green lacewings. Adult brown lacewings are voracious consumers of aphids as the larvae of both groups. Lacewings feed on nectar, pollen and aphid honeydew. Lacewing larvae feed on caterpillars, beetle larvae and insect eggs.

You may have noticed the distinctive tiny eggs of the green lacewing, which are laid on the underside of leaves at the end of a protruding almost invisible stalk.



Adult Green Lacewing. UF/IFAS
UF/IFAS



Green Lacewing Larva, aka Trash-Bug.

Soil: If you prefer to give your vegetable garden a rest during the summer, take advantage of the summer sun to solarize the soil. This kills nematodes, weeds, and other harmful pests with heat. [Read more about soil solarization.](#)

Gardenias: One of the loveliest, most fragrant and romantic of all flowers, a single gardenia can perfume an entire room with its intoxicating scent or evoke long ago memories of your first prom corsage. There are over 200 species of gardenias. In Florida, varieties of *Gardenia jasminoides* are used almost exclusively. Many cultivars are available and there is considerable variation in form, flower type, and plant size. Because of this, gardenias can be used as specimen plantings, hedges, or even as groundcovers.

To encourage your gardenia to thrive give it at least an inch of water or rain every week, morning sun, afternoon shade and moist well-drained soil.



Caution: overwatering creates a perfect environment for fungal diseases to develop in the roots.

Distinguish between normal yellowing of older leaves and the yellowing of new growth, which usually indicates a micronutrient deficiency. *Iron deficiency is common in gardenias grown in alkaline soil.* Alkaline soils can turn iron into solid which can't be absorbed by the roots of the plants. In severe cases, the leaves will start to scorch and develop brown spots on the edges due to dead plant cells. Applications of blood meal or fish emulsion may help adjust soil acidity. Unless a gardenia has no buds or blooms, is stunted or has massive yellowing of leaves, there is no need to fertilize. However, here are some good formulations if you should need a good fertilizer for gardenia, ixora, blueberries, camelia, azalea, and other acid-loving plants:

Down-to-Earth Blood Meal, Jobe's Organics Bone Meal, Dr. Earth Acid Lovers, Fox Farms Big Bloom Yum Yum Mix, Espoma's Holly Tone, Jobe's Soil Acidifier, Espoma Soil Acidifier, Vigoro Azalea, Camellia, and Rhododendron Plant Food

Gardenias: <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/gardenias.html>

Gardenias at a Glance: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep338>

Oleanders: Inspect chewed or ragged leaves for oleander caterpillars at work. **See Oleander**

PestManagement: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_oleander_ipm

Lawns: Mow at the recommended height; mowing too short encourages weeds. Watch for damage from chinch bugs in St. Augustine grass and begin scouting for newly hatched mole crickets in Bahia grass lawns. **See Turfgrass Pest Insects:** https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_turf_pest_insects May is normally a dry month, do not mistake irrigation problems with a pest infestation. **See Lawns and Drought:** https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_lawns_and_drought

Prevent or minimize lawn disease by following proper cultural practices. **See Turf**

Diseases: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_turf_diseases

Tomatoes: Watch for pests, disease, and nutritional disorders on tomato plants. It is too late to plant any tomatoes but some types of cherry tomatoes and the wild Everglades tomato. **See Home Tomato Gardening:** https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_tomato_gardening



Photo UF/IFAS Extension Hillsborough County

—Preparing for Hurricane Season—

The Atlantic hurricane season officially runs from June 1 through November 30, but it is important to realize that dangerous storms can occur outside that six-month span. The height of hurricane season varies for different at-risk regions, though worldwide the greatest number of strongest storms occur in September. Later in the season, the ocean is warmer and storms have more opportunities to strengthen to dangerous levels, but even a weaker hurricane can cause great damage to an unprepared yard.

May is the month to get your landscape prepared for the hurricane season. Last year our area was spared but that means nothing. This year Colorado State University's climate experts predict that, owing to a weaker La Niña pattern and warmer than average water temperatures, Florida may well be a hotspot for major hurricanes making landfall compared to the rest of the coastal states. The forecast calls for a 96% chance of a named storm impacting Florida, a 75% chance for a hurricane (category 1-2) and a 44% chance for a major hurricane near or making landfall in Florida. These exceed projections in the 2021 season.

Plan Ahead: It's not too soon to prepare for the eventuality of a hurricane. Prune trees and shrubs removing dead, dying, or weakened branches. This will keep your landscaping in good condition and provide plenty of time to dispose of yard debris before storm season. Do not prune while a hurricane is approaching or the cuttings may not be collected before the winds rise and debris could become dangerous projectiles.

HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS

For general advice, visit the Florida Department of Health's Hurricane Preparedness Page: <https://www.floridahealth.gov/newsroom/2019/05/052919-hurricane-preparedness.pr.html>

Trees: Prepare for hurricane season by checking trees for damaged or weak branches and prune if needed. Hire an ISA-certified arborist. See *International Society of Arboriculture*: <http://isa-arbor.com/> and *PruningLandscape Trees and Shrubs*: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_tree_pruning

—Don't Let Your Landscape Be a Breeding Ground—

The plants you bring home from garden centers and nurseries may look beautiful in your landscape, but you could be inviting non-native invasive species to escape your yard and quickly spread into other areas, becoming an ecological and economic nightmare.

Some common landscape plants that are invasive in Florida include wedelia, asparagus fern, and certain varieties of lantana.

- Invasive plants can disrupt natural ecosystems, clog waterways, degrade natural resources and hinder agricultural production.
- Non-native invasive plants, along with others, impact some 1.5 million acres of Florida.
- Each year, the State of Florida spends more than \$45 million on managing invasive plants.

What You Can Do: Learn which plants are invasive. The [UF/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants](#) is one of several excellent resources for checking a plant's invasive status.

INVASIVE PLANTS: Don't Let Your Landscape Be a Breeding Ground

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WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- ✓ Learn which plants are invasive. The University of Florida IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants is one of several excellent resources for checking a plant's invasive status. plants.ifas.ufl.edu.
- ✓ Remove invasive plants from your landscape. Try pulling them out by hand before attempting chemical methods. Be sure to bag and dispose of all plant debris in the trash to prevent cuttings and seeds from establishing elsewhere.
- ✓ Plant native or non-invasive alternatives. Fortunately, there are many beautiful, Florida-friendly alternative plants to choose from. Ask your local UF/IFAS Extension office for help in choosing safe alternatives. sty.ifas.ufl.edu/find-your-local-office.

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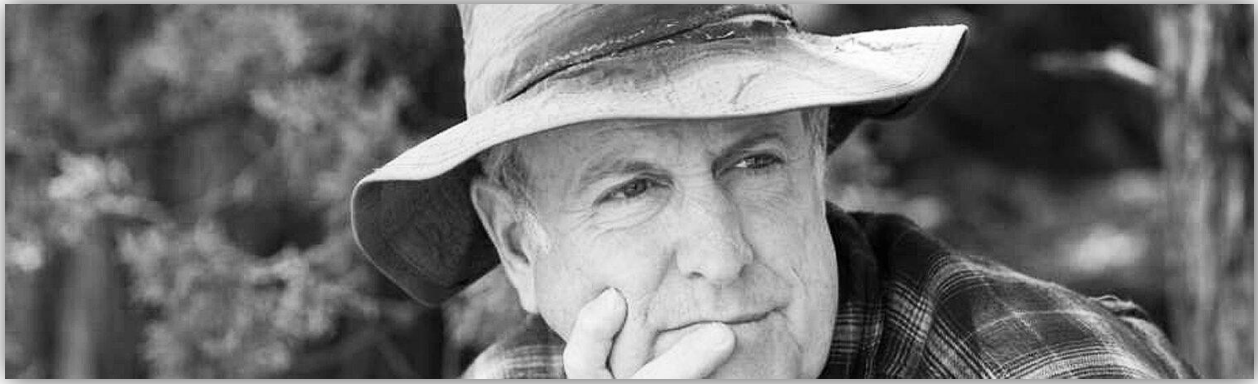
Source: *Plant This, Not That: A Guide to Avoiding Invasive Plant Species in Florida* (p. 67), by Tina McIntyre, Rachel Guter, Sandra Wilson, and Morgan Proffers, UF/IFAS Extension, Seminole County. Available at ESBBooks.ufl.edu.

UF/IFAS Extension Florida-Friendly Landscaping

Garden Tip: Avoid getting water on leaves when watering because it makes them more susceptible to damaging sunburn by disturbing the protective waxy coating.

A TREAT FOR YOU – Spend an hour with Dr. Doug Tallamy as the University of Delaware professor and author of the best-selling book “Bringing Nature Home” presents: *A Guide to Restoring the Little Things that Run the World*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkSdBZl2qoM>

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“We are at a critical point of losing so many species from local ecosystems that their ability to produce the oxygen, clean water, flood control, pollination, pest control, carbon storage, etc., that is, the ecosystem services that sustain us, will become seriously compromised.”—Doug Talamy

Orchids: This spring when Publix had a BOGO special on *Phalaenopsis* orchids, I ended up with four beauties. One, the loveliest, is still blooming months later. Each came in a translucent little pot tucked into an opaque light blue plastic pot. Orchids including the roots need light and air, which they currently are deprived of. All four will need their roots examined and trimmed before repotting.

I grow most of my orchids bare rooted on trees, but they do very well in appropriate pots. Healthy phalaenopsis roots, whether growing bare rooted or inside or outside a pot, will be thick, firm, and white with lime green tips when dry but will quickly turn all green when watered.

When I have a question about orchids or orchid culture I go straight to the website of the American orchid Society, which has a wealth of reliable information and excellent videos. So, before repotting your *Phalaenopsis* take a look at an AOS article on “Growing the Best *Phalaenopsis*; Media, Transplanting, Water and Nutrient Requirements”

https://www.aos.org/AOS/media/Content-Images/PDFs/GrowingtheBestPhalaenopsisPart_2.pdf

Here’s a tutorial from the AOS Video Library on repotting a *Phalaenopsis*:

<https://www.aos.org/orchids/aos-video-library/repotting-a-phalaenopsis.aspx>

—A Garden Reflection—

“Some of the most valuable lessons that I have learned from butterflies are not to fear change, that rest time (and sometimes lonely and painful times) are necessary for growth, and that each step of our journey is important to who we become.”

—Theresa Riley, Rockledge Gardens

Romantic Summer Evening, Dining *al fresco* in the Garden.

Please get in touch with me with any garden questions. You can also call the Brevard County Extension Office at (321) 633-1702, ext. 227 to speak with a master gardener. Here is a [list](#) of master gardener clinics.

Happy Summer, Happy Gardening!

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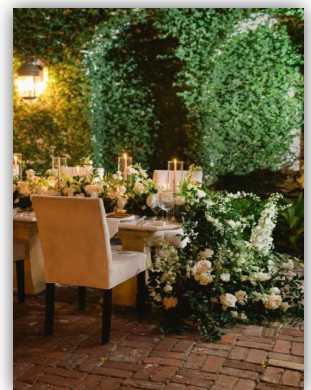


Photo courtesy of Flower Magazine 1