

The SEASIDE Gardener

THE FEBRUARY GARDEN | BY JENIFER MARX



—WHAT TO PLANT NOW—

Annuals/Bedding Plants

Plants that perform better in the cooler months include petunia, pansy, verbena, dianthus, strawflower, and lobelia.

Protect from frosts and freezing temperatures.

https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/annual_landscape_plants

Bulbs

Many bulbs can be planted now. Inoculate the planting holes herbs and bulbs with beneficial bacteria and mycorrhizae and provide adequate water for establishment. Mulch bulbs to protect them from low temperatures. Consider planting agapanthus, amaryllis, Amazon lily, caladium, canna, crinum lily, crocosmia, dahlia, hurricane lily (*Lycoris spp.*), rain lily and spider lily.

https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic/bulbous_flowers

Herbs

To plant now include basil, oregano, chives (both onion and garlic), dill, fennel, parsley, sweet marjoram, mint, sage and thyme. Another caution: Plant dill and fennel far from one another, otherwise their flavors could mingle.

Vegetables

Numerous warm and cool season vegetables can be planted this month. They include arugula, beans, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cantaloupes, carrots, cauliflower, celery, Chinese cabbage, collards, cucumbers, eggplant, endive/escarole, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard, okra, bunching onions (green and shallots), peas, peppers, Irish

and sweet potatoes, radishes, spinach, squash, sweet corn, Swiss chard, tomatoes, turnips and watermelons. **Vegetable**

Gardening in Florida

https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/vegetable_gardening

Remember to keep hot and sweet pepper plants far apart so they don't cross breed and lose their distinct flavors.



Whether planting vegetables in the garden or in containers, be sure to inoculate the planting holes and/or drench the soil with microbial product. Peas

and beans should be inoculated with the correct nitrogen-fixing bacteria.

Vegetable Seeds to sow in February for March planting include arugula, beans, cabbage, cantaloupes, Chinese cabbage, cucumbers, kohlrabi, okra, peppers, Southern peas, spinach, squash, sweet corn, Swiss chard and watermelon.

Starting herbs from seed allows you to grow varieties not readily available in local garden centers. The planting depth is usually listed on the seed packet, or you can use this rule of thumb: plant no deeper than twice the diameter of the seed. Tiny seeds can be pressed into the soil and lightly covered. Seeds can be directly seeded into the garden or started in containers; plant at 2–3 week intervals to ensure a continuous harvest.

If starting seeds in containers, use a commercial seed-starting mix because it allows for optimum root growth and is free of pests and weeds. Make sure the container is clean and has drainage. Place containers in bright indirect light and keep soil evenly moist. Once the seedlings emerge, gradually increase the light level until it matches the garden area where they will be transplanted. Thin the seedlings to the recommended spacing by snipping them off at the soil line. Pulling them out may damage the remaining seedlings.

Transplant when there are several sets of leaves and a well-developed root system. Plant at the same soil depth as they were growing in the container, and water frequently so the young transplants stay moist until established.

Groundcovers

Consider replacing areas of grass with drought-tolerant, low-maintenance groundcovers. See <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/miami-dade/landscapes--gardening/groundcovers-a---i/>

For more information on adding life to your soil, email Sally Scalera, Brevard County Urban Horticulture Extension agent at sasc@ufl.edu.

"A plant palette with hardy plants saves time, money and resources."
Gail Hansen/IFAS

—WHAT TO DO—

February is typically the coldest month in Florida, so having a frost blanket on hand is especially helpful. Check out the post *Protect Your Plants from the Cold* to learn more about keeping



your plants warm. There are maybe a dozen times during the season where I pull mine out to cover my plants, typically during December through March.

Make plans to enhance your landscape with “*Twenty-two ideas for a low-care, low-cost landscape*” <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP442>

Palms

Give cold-damaged palms proper care to encourage their recovery. See *Cold Protection and Chilling Damage of Landscape Plants*: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic/landscapes_and_cold

Citrus

Check citrus trees for scab disease. Apply a copper fungicide when new leaves appear and again when two-thirds of the flower blossoms have fallen. See *Home Citrus Culture* https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic/citrus_home_citrus_culture

Citrus and other fruit trees: Fertilize now if not done in January. Frequency and amount of fertilization depend on the age of the tree. See *Home Citrus Culture* https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic/citrus_home_citrus_culture and

Temperate Fruit for the Home Landscape https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic/home_temperate_fruit

Roses

Prune roses this month to remove damaged canes and improve the overall form. After pruning, fertilize and apply a fresh layer of mulch. Blooming will begin 8–9 weeks after pruning. See **Roses** <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic/rose>

Holiday Plants

Extend the life of holiday plants by putting them in a cool, bright location. Water them when the soil surface begins to dry.

Shrubs

Fertilize shrubs by spreading organic fertilizer evenly over the soil surface and watering it in. Follow with a fresh layer of mulch to conserve moisture and reduce weeds. See *Landscape Fertilization* https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic/landscape_fertilization

Lawn

Apply a preemergence weed killer (not a "weed and feed") to lawns this month to prevent germination of warm-season weed seeds. Apply when temperatures rise to 65°F for 4–5 days. Timing is important for good control. See **Lawn Weeds** https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic/lawn_weeds

Preen and Espoma are two organic pre-emergents. Make sure your re-emergent is 100% corn gluten meal, and not just made from corn. See *February is Ideal to Apply Pre-emergence Herbicides in Central Florida* (UF/IFAS Extension Osceola County –ufl.edu)

TIP – If you’ve fertilized with concentrated quick-release product, are the leaves of some of your bedding plants or shrubs browning at the edges? Fertilizer makes plants thirsty! Quick-release fertilizers are salts and applying too much prevents plants from absorbing water, and may actually leach water from plant tissues. The stress from too much salt leads to root burn and the scorching of new growth. This happens easily in container plantings and you may see white

crustiness on the soil surface. Opt, instead, to *use organic slow-release products and compost*. This costs more but is well worth it because they nourish rather than kill the soil microorganisms that produce nitrogen and other nutrients.

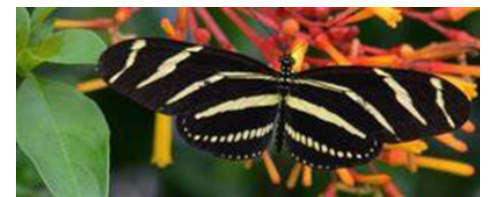
Florida-Friendly Products

Azomite is a marvelous product that is full of minor minerals and trace elements that will help your lawn, vegetable, and garden ornamentals. The granular form (best for lawn, garden, and ornamentals) may be available at your local Ace Hardware store, or they can order it for you. It is also available online, including at Walmart, Lowes and Home Depot. See *Azomite* <https://azomite.com>.

Use liquid seaweed on all your plants. There are a few types that you can purchase both locally and online, but like Maxi Crop, that you can typically find at any ACE Hardware Store. Milorganite is a beneficial organic product. Take a look at: *What is Milorganite Fertilizer?* It can be found in most big box stores.

Gardening for Butterflies

Florida has over 200 species of butterflies, some of which cannot be found anywhere else on Earth. To attract these delicate creatures, your butterfly



Butterflyatala butterfly.jpgATALA

garden must provide food for both the adult butterflies and their caterpillars. Though many

butterflies will drink nectar from a variety of flowering plants, their caterpillars are often limited as to which plants they can feed on.

Major Components of a Successful Butterfly Garden

- Adult nectar sources: attract and nourish adult butterflies.
 - Larval host plants: attract ovipositing female butterflies, serve as a food source for developing larvae.
 - Shelter: vegetation that provides protection from temperature extremes, storms/rain, and predators as well as locations for roosting/sleeping.
 - Water source with fountain: allows for easy and consistent access to water for drinking and thermoregulation.
- More: <https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/design/types-of-gardens/butterfly-gardens.html>



Passion fruit is a short-lived evergreen perennial woody vine that produces an aromatic and tropical-tasting fruit. There are many cultivars Under favorable conditions, new plants grow vigorously and typically begin producing flowers and fruit within a year of planting. The life span of a productive passion fruit vine is typically about three to four years, though they may occasionally live longer. Passion fruit prefer well-drained soil and full-sun. They have shallow root systems and can be used as ground cover as well as climbing vines.

The History of Passion Fruit
The first European report of passion fruit was by Cieza de León in 1553 when he was a civil servant in Colombia. He called the fruit "*granadilla*" (small pomegranates). In 1569, Nicolás

Monardes, a physician in Spain, associated the passion flower morphology with the crucifixion of Christ. Subsequently, the passion fruit flower was used by early missionaries in Brazil as an illustrative aid in an effort to convert the indigenous population to Christianity. Specifically, it was referred to as "*flower of the five wounds*" to represent Christ's crucifixion. The symbolism

endured such that Carl Linnaeus established the scientific name of the genus *Passiflora* (Latin for passion flower) in 1737.

Unpopular But Important Pollinators

Growing Passion Fruit in Florida
<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/hs1406>

Florida's carpenter bees do more good than harm. The western honey bee is perhaps our most important agricultural pollinator. The pollinating activities of butterflies, birds and bats are well-known. However, but there many bee species, such as the bumble bee, that provide valuable field and greenhouse crop pollination services. In fact, there are more than 315 species of wild/unmanaged bees in Florida that play a role in the pollination of agricultural crops and natural and managed landscapes. These include mining bees, mason bees, sweat bees, leafcutter bees, feral honey bees, and carpenter bees.

Carpenter bees are amazing native pollinators and are an important part of the ecosystem. These large bees pollinate flowers, feed birds, and increase the yield of certain plant species including tomatoes, eggplant, blueberries and cranberries. The damage they do to buildings is

The Passion Fruit

FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



The public is invited to the 2023 Florida Friendly Landscaping seminar. Reserve your space. Hosted by Sally Scalera.

annoying, but only just that. The large yellow-and-black insects excavate nests, commonly called galleries, along the direction of the wood grain and they actually do surprisingly little structural damage this way; the value of these creatures far outweighs the damage that they could cause.

Carpenter bees are the largest bees in North America, and because of that, they are capable of some things that other bees just aren't built to do. Rain and cold weather keep honey bees from venturing forth but do not impede carpenter bee activity. Their size deters most pests and predators. This has led to carpenter bees being very docile; the females will only sting under extreme circumstances, such as being stepped on. The males, which can be seen hovering in their territories around nest sites or flowers, will usually fly straight towards intruders at high speeds. These males do not have stingers. Their large size also makes them easy pickings for hungry birds. Large bees such as carpenter and bumble bees are important food sources for birds, especially in spring where they may be active before other insects.

In our vegetable and flower gardens, carpenter bees are generalists and may be found foraging on a number of different species. They, like bumblebees, are early morning foragers. Carpenter bees land on flower blossoms they become living tuning forks. Using their powerful thoracic muscles carpenter bees sonicate the dry pollen grains out of the flower's anthers. This type of pollen gathering is called "buzz pollination." Carpenter bees are excellent pollinators of eggplant, tomato and other vegetables and flowers.

From time-to-time carpenter bees are quite ingenious in their foraging for nectar. On flowers such as salvias, penstemons, and other long, tubular flowers the carpenter bee, due to its large size, is unable to enter the flower opening. Instead, they become nectar robbers. Using their mouthparts, they cut a slit at the base of corolla and steal away with the nectar without having pollinated the flower.

A widespread western US species, *Xylocopa varipuncta*, has an unusual mating system. Its green-eyed golden males (the

females are all black) have huge perfume glands in their thoraces. Territorial males take up positions in non-flowering plants near other males. As a group (lek) they actively release their rose-scented blend of chemicals. Females are attracted from downwind and choose a male with which to mate. Sources: Taken from the book, *A Guide the Wonderful World Around Us: Notes on Nature* by Brannen Basham and the U.S. Forest Service.

Pollinator Weed of the Month- Purple Cudweed (*Gnaphalium purpureum*)

Purple cudweed, commonly called **everlasting**, is a native low-growing velvety broadleaf weed forming a rosette of whitish, wooly foliage. The stems are silver-green and hairy. An annual, its small blossom



©NealKramer: CalPhotos

heads are purple or pale lavender. A member of daisy family (Asteraceae), purple cudweed is found throughout the country in coastal areas, grasslands, forest edges, fields, weedy gardens, waste places, along roadsides, and in disturbed areas. In the winter and spring, it often appears in our sandy lawns. Learn to tolerate cudweed because it is a wildlife food source and a larval plant for the American lady butterfly.

American Lady Butterfly

The orange and black American Lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*), ranges in size from 1.75–2.75" and is found throughout the



United States except in the northwest. It is a low-flyer, preferring open areas with low vegetation, weedy fields, and woodland clearings. Unable to survive cold winters, adults overwinter in warm southern regions.

The American Lady feeds on nectar from a variety of flowers, and also on tree sap and decaying fruit. Host plants include plants in the sunflower family, asters, cudweed, pussytoes, everlasting, evax, ironweed.

See: <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/wildflowers/butterfly/american-painted-lady/>



Butterflypainted lady butterfly.jpg American Painted Lady

—The Best Seed Catalogues—

[Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds](#)
[High Mowing Organic Seeds](#)
[Sow True Seeds](#)

[Johnny's Selected Seeds](#)

Other outstanding catalogs include Botanical Interests, Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, Seed Savers Exchange, Fedco Seeds, The Cook's Garden and Pine Garden Seeds

[Florida Garden Seeds](#) is a Jacksonville family-owned heirloom seed company.

These companies specialize in seeds for Southern gardens. Their websites are treasure troves of information.

Southern Exposure Seed Exchange – Southern Exposure was started in the early 80's by a husband-and-wife team. They pride themselves on providing heirloom and non-gmo seeds provided by their own network of small American farms. Their seeds are true to type and very high quality. They have over 700 varieties of seeds to offer and add adding more each year.

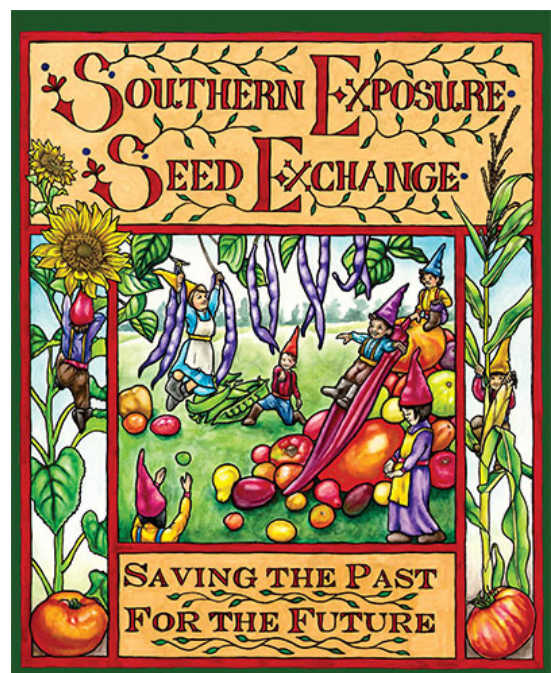
Victory Seeds

<https://victoryseeds.com/>

Also family owned and operated, has been around for a very long time. Specializing in heirloom, open-pollinated seeds, Victory seeds are the die-hard preservationists of the seed world. Besides hard to find seeds like tobacco and grain crops, they also offer the gardener everything they would need for worm composting as well as some really awesome hand-forged traditional hand tools.

Johnny's Selected Seeds

Although Johnny's is geared more towards those who farm for a living, some of my favorite plants come from them. The really great thing about Johnny's is that they also provide SO MUCH information on starting seeds and growing a garden, big or small. I have learned so much about things like weed prevention, bug control and row covers from their instructional videos and articles. Even their catalog is very thorough on the growing needs and challenges of each type of plant. My favorite things to buy from Johnny's are their spring mix, organic garden sprays and row covers.



Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds

<https://www.rareseeds.com>

Baker's Creek can be more expensive than many of the other companies, but if you are looking for something rare or unusual, they are the people to buy from. They have recently added the option of purchasing live plants. I like Dwarf Bok Choy, Rocky Top Spring Mix, and Black Cherry Tomato.

Territorial Seed Company

Besides having hundreds of different varieties of seeds, they have a large selection of live plants, mushrooms spawn, garlic and potatoes, as well as fruits and vines. You can really get anything you could ever need from them. A fun site to explore.

Sustainable Seed Company

<http://sustainableseedco.com>

Located in California, but offers heirloom Southern varieties. They have ornamental and regular tobacco, including the ornamental 'Jasmine' variety which pollinators appreciate.

The following sites are fun places to browse, although most of the offerings are not well-adapted to our 10a growing zone.

Row 7 Seeds

<https://www.row7seeds.com/collections/seeds>

Johnny's Seeds

<http://www.johnnyseeds.com>

Renee's Garden

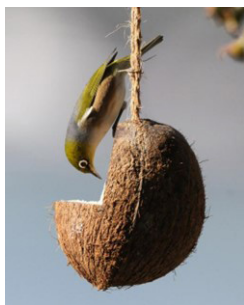
<https://www.reneesgarden.com>

Cornucopia

<http://www.cornucopiaseeds.com>



QUEEN EMMA LILY



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