

## Good Times in the April Garden

What a great time of the year to be outside working in the yard and garden. There are always things to do, and the following are some suggestions for that April 'honey do' list.

You still have time to dig, divide and replant clumps of bulbs or perennial flowers before the stresses of summer heat arrive. Use the plant divisions to increase your garden display, start some new planting beds, or share with friends and neighbors as 'pass-along' plants. But make sure you aren't passing along potentially invasive plants such as lantana, Japanese honeysuckle, or Mexican petunias.

Many warm season vegetable crops will still do well if planted in April. Some of the plants you will want to get into the ground this month include tomatoes, peppers, corn, squash, green beans, and melons. Some warm season vegetables such as okra, eggplant, southern peas, lima beans, and sweet potatoes have a longer planting season and can be planted in late spring or early summer. For a complete list of vegetable planting dates in North Florida, check out the UF/IFAS Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH021>

Start checking your shrubs and flowers for aphids. These small insects are about 1/8 inch long and are usually green or dark in color. They feed on many different plants by piercing the plant tissue and sucking out the plant juices. They love to feed on the new flush of plant growth that is abundant in the early spring. Signs of feeding aphids include curled leaves, distorted flowers, or faded leaf color.

You may also notice a black 'sooty mold' on leaves. The mold is caused by honeydew which is the sticky excretion of aphids as well as several other small juice sucking insects. Ants like to feed on the sweet honeydew, so if you see ant activity on a plant, check under the leaves and along new shoots for feeding aphids. To learn more about aphids, go to <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG002>

Many homeowners prefer to remove aphids and suppress populations by simply spraying the insects off with the garden hose. Once they are washed off, they won't be able to make their way back to the plants and other critters just eat them up. Another environmentally friendly way to control aphids is to use insecticidal soaps. Always use insecticides according to the directions on the label.

Join us for our upcoming 2-day workshop on Gardening North Florida Style, April 24<sup>th</sup> and April 25<sup>th</sup>. Call the UF/IFAS Columbia County Extension Office for more information. 752-5384 (*Published 4-15-12*)

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