



Gulf Herb Society Coast Newsletter

May
2021

Mailing Only: 109 Grand Blvd • Mobile, AL 36607 • www.gulfcoastherbsociety.org

Rosemary for Remembrance DATES

Meetings are done remotely via Zoom until further notice. We send out a meeting link every month.

- **May 25, 5:30pm.** GCHS Zoom Meeting. Nominating committee will present slate of officers for the coming year.
- **June 12, 2:00 pm.** GCHS Meeting. Outdoors at Alicia Davis's home. Address will be sent out.

See calendar page at the end of the newsletter for complete details.

Thymely NOTES

[Click Here to find us on Facebook!](#) Read herb tips, recipes, and see pictures from our latest events.

- Please **volunteer** in the herb garden whenever you can. Contact Pat Ivie peivie@comcast.net, 334-315-5874 for info.

Did You KNOW

How to Tell If You Are Overwatering Your Herb Garden
thespruce.com

Like all plants, herbs need to be watered regularly, but there is a point where you can give them too much water. The effects of overwatering can be as devastating as underwatering and your herbs can die if they receive more water than they can handle. While it is unfortunate, it's a rather common mistake when maintaining a herb garden. This, fortunately, means that there are plenty of tips on how to remedy the problem. Learn how to tell if you are overwatering your herbs and how you can fix the problem before it's too late.

Signs – No matter which herbs you plant, it is important to avoid overwatering your herb garden. Many herbs actually like a semi-dry soil, this is true for lavender, rosemary, thyme, and many herbs that are native to the Mediterranean or other dry climates. This is great for drought years because these plants can withstand extreme conditions.

In general, if your plants are wilting and the soil is wet, you are probably overwatering. Keep an eye on your herb garden and pay attention to the plants to look for any of these signs:

- Leaves become yellow and fall.
- Leaves become dark or black in color.

- A fuzzy mildew substance is seen on the herb.
- Signs of edema* appear on the leaves.
- The herb is not growing.
- The herb does not appear to perk up when watered.
- The stems and roots soften or break easily.



Sweet Basil

*Edema occurs when a plant receives more water than it can use. It will show as blisters, lesions, or indentations on the leaves.

If you believe that your herbs may be receiving too much moisture, check that the drainage is adequate. Standing water will rot the roots of any plant and cause issues with bacteria, fungus, and pests. Rotted roots will turn gray or brown and become slimy. It's best to remove these plants from the garden to prevent the issue from spreading to other plants.

How to Avoid Overwatering – First, be sure to plant herbs in groups based on their watering needs. This allows you to water generously in areas that require it, without overwatering herbs that like to remain dry.

A good rule of thumb is to water deep and less frequently. This will promote the greatest root growth, which is what your herbs need to thrive.

- Ensure that all of your plants have proper drainage, this includes potted herbs. If needed, amend the soil with wood chips, straw, or a similar organic additive. Ideally, this should be done prior to planting, but it can fix an issue mid-season if you're very careful.
- Wait for signs that your herbs need watering instead of watering on a set schedule. Look for the plants that are just beginning to wilt or droop, then test the soil. Stick your finger an inch or two into the dirt near the plant base. If it's dry, it's time to water.
- Water only the root area. This will reduce evaporation and help prevent diseases caused by moisture. Yet, during dry and dusty weather, do give your plants a bit of a shower to clean them off and repel insects.

As you gain more experience in the garden, you will learn to recognize the signs your plants are giving you. If you pay attention, a single plant can alert you to when you need to water the garden.

Basil is a fantastic indicator plant because the first day that it is thirsting for water, the leaves will droop. It's very apparent—and within minutes of a good watering—when they spring back to life. However, if you ignore them for too long, those precious leaves will turn yellow and be useless.

Some varieties of hydrangea as well as peppers, tomatoes, and parsley can also be good plants to watch for your watering schedule.

What Is Malabar Spinach? thekitchn.com

Did you know that salad really isn't a summer food? Yes, we can find tidy greens in the supermarket year round, but most lettuce varieties — as well as our beloved arugula — really don't like summer heat. Unless grown under inside or under cover, most greens bolt, wilt, fail to germinate, and basically pout all summer long until the cooler weather of early fall arrives. So the real stars of summer salads and sautés are found elsewhere. Enter Malabar spinach.

Unless you're in the cool (and moist!) Northeast, summer is just not a great time for salad greens in the garden. Most salad greens you find in the supermarkets are grown far away with a great expense of cooling and irrigating water. You can compensate for greens' dislike of heat with shady row covers, extra moisture, and heat-resistant breeds of lettuce, but many of the best lettuce varieties are really not happy in the summertime. So we grow Malabar spinach.

Malabar spinach (*Basella alba* or *rubra*, a redder variety) is actually not spinach at all. It's not even related! Well, OK, it's distantly related, but it doesn't taste much like spinach at all. When it's raw Malabar spinach has very fleshy, thick leaves that are juicy and crisp with tastes of citrus and pepper. When cooked, though, Malabar spinach does look and taste a lot more like regular spinach. It doesn't wilt as fast, though, and it holds up better in soups and stir-fries.

It is super easy to grow, too, and it really leaps when the temperatures hit 90°F and over — just the time when the rest of your salad greens are descending into bitterness and grumbling.

A few things to note, though, if you decide to grow Malabar spinach. First of all, it vines. So give it something to climb on. This can actually be helpful for little gardens that need to grow vertically. Secondly, some people have found it very invasive. If you are in a warm climate, where it won't die off in a hard frost, keep it contained and pull up any spreading shoots.

And if you can't grow it, then you can probably find it at Asian or Indian groceries. It's a popular green in Asian, Indian, and even African cuisine — although in Africa they tend to eat the tender vining shoots more than the leaves themselves.

One last tidbit: according to Wikipedia, one of Malabar spinach's Chinese names literally means flowing water vegetable.

Have you ever tried Malabar spinach? How do you like to cook it? I enjoy it mixed in to salads, although its meaty texture when raw isn't appreciated by everyone.

Round Brown Spots on Basil Leaves homeguides.sfgate.com

Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) is a herb often grown in the home garden because of its fragrant foliage and low maintenance. Basil is a warm season herb that loves sunlight and is hardy in USDA zones 9 through 11. While easy to grow, basil plants are vulnerable to several diseases that may cause round brown spots to appear on the leaves. These spots are usually caused by fungi or bacteria in the soil or seeds and spread during wet or humid conditions.

Bacterial Leaf Spot – Bacterial leaf spot is caused by the fungus *Pseudomonas cichorii*. Symptoms of infection first show as round brown spots on basil leaves. Infection usually occurs when water is splashed on the leaves during warm, humid weather or by unsanitary gardening practices, such as using dirty gardening tools. The spots that result appear waterlogged, and may be both angular and outlined by leaf veins, or irregularly shaped. Eventually the infection may extend into the stems. The bacterium that causes bacterial leaf spot in basil is carried in infected seeds. To control the spread of bacterial leaf spot on basil plants do not water overhead, and ensure your plants have enough space to allow for ventilation which reduces leaf wetness. Discard diseased plants and debris and use clean, sterile tools.

Downy Mildew – Signs of downy mildew (*Peronospora* sp.) first appear as yellowing that is concentrated around the middle vein of your basil plant's leaves. This yellowing eventually spreads through the entire leaf, and a gray, fuzzy powder forms on the leaf's underside. The yellow spots on leaf's upper surface turn dark brown when conditions are humid. The pathogen that causes downy mildew is believed to be transmitted by infected seeds. To control the spread of downy mildew in basil plants, ensure that the foliage stays dry by avoiding overhead watering and providing adequate space between plants.

Fungal Leaf Spot – Fungal leaf spot infections in basil plants are caused by *Colletotrichum* fungus. These infections show as dark brown to black spots on your basil plant's leaves. The spots eventually dry out, and the plant material dies and drops from the leaf, leaving a shot-hole appearance. Fungal leaf spot can lead to defoliation of the entire plant, stem lesions, tip dieback, and, if severe enough, plant death. The fungal spores that cause these spots are spread through water. Humid conditions and wet foliage promote the growth of fungal leaf spot, so to control infections, space basil plants far enough apart to allow adequate air circulation between plants and avoid watering overhead to decrease leaf wetness. Isolate diseased plants to prevent spread of the fungus.

Fusarium Wilt – Fusarium wilt is an infection caused by *Fusarium oxysporum*, a soil-borne fungus that is lethal, because it destroys the plant's ability to transport water. Basil plants infected by this fungus grow normally until they reach heights of between 6 and 12 inches. As they are deprived of water, the leaves begin to show brown patches. Eventually these brown spots progress to a total wilting of the plant followed by death. Infected plants should be removed and destroyed immediately.

Chemical Control – Minor infections of downy mildew and fungal leaf spots may be controlled using fungicides. Spray infected basil plants with copper-based fungicides or those containing potassium bicarbonate. Apply fungicides in weekly intervals. Read and follow the instructions for application rates and precautions on the product label to avoid

damaging your basil plant or any nearby plants.

Myrtle's MUSINGS

- **GCHS May 25th Zoom Meeting.**
- **Market in the Park- Spring.** Cathedral Square. 300 Conti St. April 24 to July 17. Saturdays: 7:30am to noon. Buy locally-grown, locally-produced and homemade items at Market in the Park!
- **Mobile Botanical Gardens MarketPlace.** Fridays noon - 2pm, Saturdays 9am - noon. Weather dependent. Our MarketPlace plant retail venue is located at the end of our parking lot. Masks are required - Thank you!
- **Gulf Coast Herb Society Dues.** Dues are \$15.00 for the remainder of the administrative year.
- We had a work party in the Herb Garden this past Saturday, weeding, trimming and adding pine straw. Harvested lots of lemon balm, it was just taking over!
-Anne Daniels
- Drying flowers and herbs for potpourris and the little globe ornaments.
-Barb Comstock



"DILL"-ICIOUS Greek Salad ~ loveandlemons.com

Servings: 4

Dressing:

- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano, more for sprinkling
- 1/4 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

For the salad:

- 1 English cucumber, cut lengthwise, seeded, & sliced 1/4 -inch thick
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped into 1-inch pieces
- 2 cups halved cherry tomatoes
- 5 ounces feta cheese, cut into 1/2 inch cubes*
- 1/3 cup thinly sliced red onion
- 1/3 cup pitted Kalamata olives
- 1/3 cup fresh mint leaves

1. Make the dressing: In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, garlic, oregano, mustard, salt, & several grinds of pepper.
2. On a large platter, arrange the cucumber, green pepper, cherry tomatoes, feta cheese, red onions, & olives.
3. Drizzle with the dressing & very gently toss.
4. Sprinkle with a few generous pinches of oregano and top with the mint leaves.
5. Season to taste & serve.

*Feta in brine is best for this recipe.

GCHS Officers 2020 - 2021

President ~ Annie Daniels • **President-Elect** ~ Beth Poates • **Recording Secretary** ~ Martha Adams

Treasurer ~ Kathy Lovitt • **Historian** ~ Jennifer Williams • **Ways & Means** ~ Kathy Lovitt

Parliamentarian ~ Martha Fuller • **Weeders & Planters** ~ Sybil Burnett & Nita Crandall • **Newsletter Editor** ~ Qjuana Cooney

GULF COAST HERB SOCIETY Calendar of Activities – 2020 - 2021

May 25, 5:30pm: GCHS Zoom Meeting. Nominating committee will present slate of officers for the coming year.

June 12, 2:00 pm: GCHS Meeting. Outdoors at Alicia Davis's home. Address will be sent out. Bring a chair and we will install officers for next year.

July meeting: It was suggested that we have a restaurant meeting like we have had in the past. We can decide when and where to go at the May or June meeting.

HERB DAY Postponed. Date to be determined.

NOTE: The above listed plans may change, or additional events and meetings may be added, so please check back frequently

MOBILE BOTANICAL GARDENS Calendar for 2020 – 2021

EVENTS/ SOCIAL (for more info [CLICK HERE!](#))

- **Mobile Botanical Gardens MarketPlace.** Fridays noon - 2pm. Saturdays 9am - noon. Weather dependent. Our MarketPlace plant retail venue is located at the end of our parking lot. Masks are required - Thank you!
- **Artful Garden Giftshop.** Open Wednesday - Friday 10am - 1pm & Saturday 10am - 3pm.
- **Georgia Roussos Boxed Lunches** Take it to go or eat in the Gardens! Pickup at Mobile Botanical Gardens between 11:30 and 12:30 on your selected menu day. Georgia Roussos Catering provides boxed lunches with desserts that may be purchased online and picked up curbside at the Gardens on Wednesdays and Fridays. Take it home or find a quiet spot at the Gardens to eat outside. We also have the Botanical Center set up with tables set far apart. Click [HERE](#) for more info.
- **Museums for All.** As a part of the national program, Museums for All, we are proud to offer reduced admission to those receiving SNAP benefits.

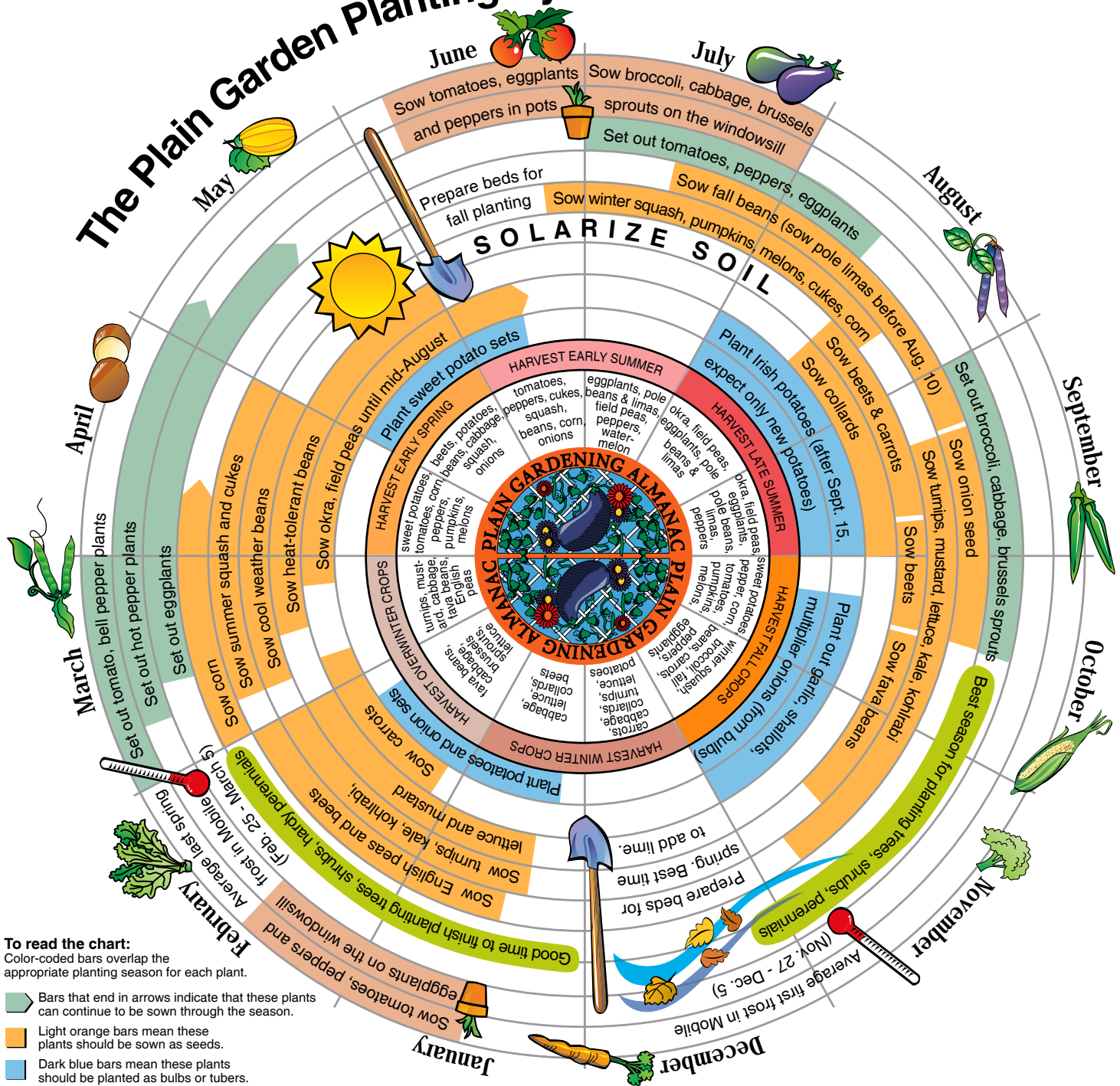
CLASSES (for more info [CLICK HERE!](#))

PRESENTATIONS (for more info [CLICK HERE!](#))

GCHS Food Team Duties

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| • Make sure kitchen tables and counters are clean | • Clean spills from floor | • If table and chairs are to be put up we will let you know - if not they can be left out | • Make sure all doors are locked |
| • No food left in fridge | • Take out garbage & place new - bags in cans bags are on to fridge | | • Thermostats must be left as you found them |
| • Pick any trash off floor | | | |

The Plain Garden Planting Cycle



To read the chart:

Color-coded bars overlap the appropriate planting season for each plant.

- Bars that end in arrows indicate that these plants can continue to be sown through the season.
- Light orange bars mean these plants should be sown as seeds.
- Dark blue bars mean these plants should be planted as bulbs or tubers.
- Green bars mean these plants should be 6-inch-high transplants when put in the garden.
- Brown bars indicate that these plants should be sown in pots in a cold frame or inside the house.