Q. My plants are wilting in this heat and we aren’t getting the typical afternoon rain showers. What can I do to save my plants?

A. Unfortunately, we are about four inches below normal for June, and overall, about six inches below normal for the year. However, there are some things you can do to lessen the stress of the hot temperatures.

- Mow at the highest setting, if you need to mow at all. This will encourage deeper roots.
- Water ornamentals only when they start to wilt to encourage them to develop deeper roots.
- Water deeply when you do water and increase the days with no water so your plants develop deeper roots.
- Avoid fertilizer as this will just encourage growth and increase the stress. For most residents in Sarasota and Manatee Counties, you are in the blackout period for fertilizer anyway.
- Mulch your plants. It will keep the soil cooler and lessen water loss.
- Remove weeds that are robbing your turf and ornamentals of water and nutrients.
- Select new plants that are drought-tolerant.

Visit our website [http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu](http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu) to get more information on drought-tolerant plants and other topics.

**Timely reminder:**
July - August is a great time to solarize your planting bed. First, remove all existing vegetation and till the soil to activate the nematode population. Rake the bed so it is slightly elevated in the middle, then moisten the soil to a depth of 8-12 inches. Cover the bed with 4-6 mil of clear plastic (NOT black plastic) and anchor it tightly on the edges. Nematodes and other soil pests such as fungi, insects, and weeds are killed by prolonged exposure, four to six weeks, to temperatures above 130 degrees.

**PLANTING GUIDE**
**Vegetables & Herbs** (plant herbs from transplants and vegetables from seeds or transplants): Basil, bay laurel, ginger, lemon balm, marjoram, mint, oregano, rosemary, thyme, okra, and southern peas.
**Annuals:** Begonia Celosia, Coleus, Cosmos, Crossandra, Dahlberg daisy, Gomphrena, marigold, Melampodium, Nicotiana, periwinkle, Portulaca, Salvia, Torenia, and Zinnia.
**Perennials:** Beach buttercup, beach sunflower, blue daze, Coreopsis, daylily, Gaillardia, Gaura, Mexican heather, Pentas, Salvia, shrimp plant, society garlic, and Verbena.
**Blooming plants:** Allamanda, beautyberry, bird of paradise, blackberry lily, Canna, crape myrtle, Crinum lily, crossvine, dwarf Poinciana, fiddlewood, firespike, frangipani, gloriosa lily, golden dewdrop, horsemint, Jacquemontia, Loropetalum, Magnolia, Natal plum, rain lily, Vitex, and yellow Poinciana.
Fruits in season: Avocado, banana, citrus (calamondin, key lime, lemon and lime), fig, guava, kumquat, longan, lychee, macadamia, mango, papaya, passion vine, pineapple, pomegranate, sapodilla, and sea grape.

Upcoming classes
Call 861-9900 or register on-line sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu for the following classes.

- Organic Vegetable Gardening: Fruit Crops, Warm Mineral Springs, 9:00 a.m. July 5
- Irrigation 101, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. July 5
- Good Bugs in the Garden, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. July 6
- Step-by-Step Florida-Friendly Landscaping (first of five sessions), Twin Lakes Park, 6:00 p.m. July 6
- Creating Wildlife Habitat/Urban Ponds, Shamrock Park, 2:00 p.m. July 7
- Natural Insecticides, Twin Lakes Park, 4:00 p.m. July 13
- Plant Propagation: Tips & Techniques, Twin Lakes Park, 6:00 p.m. July 14
- Rain Barrel Workshop, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. July 16
- Landscaping with Color, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. July 20
- Ants, Ants, Ants, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. July 20
- What to Do about Ants, Shamrock Park, 2:00 p.m. July 21
- Insect Pests of Woody Plants, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. July 27
- Native Shrubs for the Landscape, Shamrock Park, 2:00 p.m. August 4

GETTING HELP
The Master Gardener Help Desk is available to answer your questions, 861-9807, mghelpdesk@scgov.net. Walk-ins are welcome Monday-Friday from 9-Noon and 1-4 p.m., Twin Lakes Park, Clark Road east of I-75.
Satellite Help Desks: Weekly at four South County libraries, every 1st and 3rd Mondays at Gulf Gate Library, every 4th Saturday at Fruitville Library and every third Saturday at the Downtown Farmers’ Market, Sarasota.
New locations: every first Saturday at Lowe’s Sarasota, 10:00 a.m.-noon and Lowe’s Venice, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. and every third Saturday at Lowe’s North Port, 10:00 a.m.-noon.

(Patricia Porchey is an Urban Horticulture Agent with University of Florida/IFAS Sarasota County Extension. Website: http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu)

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