



## Welcome to the Plant Clinics

Cheryl Swanson, SRCMGV

UF/IFAS Santa Rosa County Master Gardener Volunteers (SRCMGV) plant clinics are available throughout Florida and offer free services to the public. Here in Santa Rosa County our plant clinic operates through the Santa Rosa County Extension Office. In addition to our Milton office, we offer services in Navarre as well.

What can our plant clinic do for you? Our horticultural agent as trained and certified MGV can help you with questions related to plant selection and care, vegetable gardening, lawn care, managing pests (both insects and weeds), and diagnosing plant diseases. We serve long-time country residents as well as newcomers who may not be familiar with what grows well in



Norene Gideon SRCMGV (right) answers questions at the Navarre plant clinic

Northwest Florida. Our plant clinic also offers soil pH testing which determines the suitability of your soil for growing various kinds of plants. The pH in soil refers to a measurement of how acidic or alkaline a soil is, which affects the availability of nutrients to plants. This can make the difference between a healthy garden or lawn and one that is less likely to thrive. We can also refer you to the UF/IFAS Extension Soil Testing Laboratory in Gainesville, FL which offers a more complete test for the availability of nutrients in your soil. Our satellite location in Navarre is manned by Master Gardeners and has a courier service that transports soil samples and other samples that require additional identification to the Milton Extension Office

## June 2026

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### June Lecture

Edible Gardens with Flowers

Presenter:  
Norene Gideon, SRCMGV

June 16, 10:00 am  
SRC Extension Building  
6263 Dogwood Dr.  
Milton, FL



One of our Master Gardeners who works with clients in Navarre likes to remind us that “every visit to the plant clinic is a learning opportunity.” But the visits are fun, too. As another Master Gardener often says, “If it ain’t fun, don’t do it!”

The addresses and walk-in hours for the plant clinics are:

### **Santa Rosa County Extension Office**

6263 Dogwood Drive  
Milton, FL 32570

Monday-Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

### **Navarre Library**

8484 James M. Harvell Road  
Navarre, FL 32566

1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month  
9:00 am to 1:00 pm

You can also ask questions by phone at (850) 623-3868  
or email: [SantaRosaMG@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:SantaRosaMG@ifas.ufl.edu)



Alan Schuman SRCMGV analyzing soil samples at the Milton Office



Larry Busbee SRCMGV answering questions at the Milton office

## **African Blue Basil A Pollinator Magnet!**

**Jennifer Slycord, SRCMGV**

Pollination is necessary for home gardens. It allows plants to reproduce and is instrumental in growing food and flowers. Pollinators, such as bees, bats, butterflies and hummingbirds are important because they take pollen from one plant to another.

African Blue basil is one of the best pollinator plants that you can have in your garden. It is a magnet for numerous types of bees, wasps, butterflies and moths. This plant will attract so many bees and other pollinators that sometimes I cannot count them all. The bees start visiting in early spring and stay until the weather starts to cool off.



[Type]

This plant is a hybrid plant that originated from a cross between two other basil plants native to Africa and Asia:

**-*Ocimum kilimandscharicum***

a camphor based native to East Africa with a strong camphor scent and flavor

**-*Ocimum basilicum* 'Dark Opal'**

a cultivar of sweet basil with purple leaves, from Asia

African Blue basil has a strong camphor flavor that some might not prefer over traditional basil flavors. The leaves of this plant can be used in salads, pesto and tea. I like the smell of this basil and will set it out in my house, sometimes simmering the leaves in water.

### Growing Conditions

This basil can grow 1 to 3 feet tall and spread 1 to 3 feet wide. It grows best in full sun to part shade and likes regular watering. Amend the soil with compost and make sure that the soil has good drainage.

African Blue basil grows best in USDA hardiness zones 10-11. Grow it As an annual in other zones. This basil does not like cold weather. However if you plant your basil in a pot you can easily protect it over the winter in your garage.



Also, planting basil in a pot will allow you place the pot beside a plant that requires pollinators.

### Propagation

The flowers of this basil are sterile so you will not have seeds to grow. However, it roots fast in water. Remove the bottom 2/3's of the leaves and place it in a cup of water. Change the water out ever few days. When you are propagating, be sure to only use the green growth. The woody sections will not root as well. Another good option is to get transplants and start them when it warms up outside. These plants will grow fast in pots.

### Pests

The only pests that I have had issues with are Mealybugs. Scouting is very important because Mealybugs can blend in and look like the flowers on the plant.

Killing insect pests will also kill the pollinators so you need to take care. If I do have a Mealybug infestation I start by physically removing them and putting them in a bucket of soapy water. I will even cut off parts of the plant that are saturated with bugs. I will use Neem oil only if removing them by hand does not work. Be sure to follow the directions on the Neem oil container.



Resource:

<https://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/2017/07/05/african-blue-basil-a-pollinator-favorite/>

Photo Credits: Jennifer Slycord

[Typ

## Roselle Hibiscus

### Flower, Food, or Landscape Plant?

**Nicole Hughes SRMGV**

In general, plants with multiple purposes are my favorite. I was introduced to Roselle Hibiscus through a friend from Trinidad. I have fallen in love with it, and it is now an annual staple in my garden.

The Roselle Hibiscus (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*), often called Florida cranberry or red sorrel, is a striking and practical plant that offers beauty, nutrition, and wellness benefits. A member of the Malvaceae family, it is closely related to plants like okra, cotton and cocoa. Roselle is beloved for its edible red calyces, traditionally used in teas and holiday beverages, and its contributions to sustainable gardening make it a worthwhile addition to any garden.

Roselle's history goes back to West Africa, where it was first used in traditional cuisine and wellness practices. The plant then traveled through Asia and the Caribbean, where



it became associated with celebratory drinks and folk remedies. Today, it is widely grown in Florida and throughout

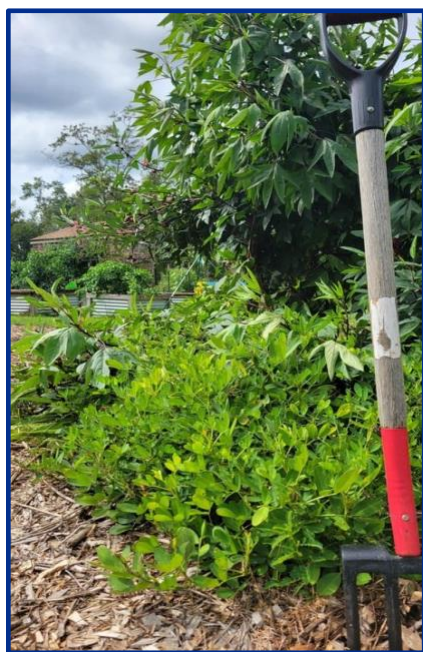
warm climates for its culinary and ornamental qualities. In Caribbean traditions, it flavors a spiced Christmas drink, while in Egypt, it serves as a symbol in wedding ceremonies.

Roselle's vibrant, tart calyces are high in Vitamin C and antioxidants, which boost immune health and combat oxidative stress. Popular as the base for Agua de Jamaica, a refreshing hibiscus tea, it is also used in jams, sauces, and fresh salads. This versatility and nutritional value make Roselle a delightful and functional food source.

Roselle is easy to grow in USDA zones 8 to 11, preferring full sun and soil with good drainage. Seedlings thrive after the last frost and are ready to harvest in three to four months. Blooms start appearing at the end of summer as the days get shorter, followed by the plant's calyces, which are harvested for their many uses. Drought-tolerant and low-maintenance, Roselle fits seamlessly into sustainable gardens and supports pollinators like bees and butterflies, enhancing overall garden health.

For those interested in companion planting, Roselle grows well with legumes (which enrich the soil with nitrogen) and taller plants that provide beneficial shade. Roselle's minimal care requirements and drought tolerance make it an ideal candidate for eco-friendly and food forest gardens, supporting both biodiversity and soil health.

The Roselle Hibiscus is a versatile, easy-to-grow plant that enriches gardens and kitchens alike. Its rich history, wellness potential, and ecological contributions make it a standout choice for gardeners and herbal enthusiasts seeking both beauty and utility. Embracing Roselle in the garden brings a living tradition of plant-based wellness to life.



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Unfortunately, though the plant is well documented worldwide, which is credited to its long history and having travelled around the tropics before making its way to the United States, there is not much recent research information available. However, UF/IFAS extension agents are changing that and are currently evaluating sorrel varieties for production in Florida in partnership with local farms.

[https://projects.sare.org/sare\\_project/os21-146/](https://projects.sare.org/sare_project/os21-146/)

<https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/roselle/>

Photo Credits: Nicole Hughes

## Gardening Words of Wisdom

When your garden is finished, I hope it will be more beautiful than you anticipated, require less care than you expected, and have cost only a little more than you had planned

- Thomas D. Church

No race can prosper until it learns there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem.

- Booker T. Washington

## Where can I find more information?

### UF/IFAS SRCMGV Websites:

<https://www.srcmastergardeners.org>

<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/santa-rosa/master-gardener-volunteer-information/>

### Facebook:

Santa Rosa County Master Gardeners: <https://www.facebook.com/SRCMasterGardeners>

Santa Rosa County Extension: <https://www.facebook.com/SRCExtension/>

Gardening in the Panhandle: <https://www.facebook.com/GardeningInThePanhandle/>

UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions website: <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/>

### Master Gardener webinars:

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/mastergardener/volunteers/education/webinars.html>

Gardening in the Panhandle web archives: <http://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/>

Listing of local Extension Offices: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/find-your-local-office/>

The Santa Rosa County Residential Horticulture Agent, Josh Criss, can be reached at 850-623-3868. [joshua.criss@ufl.edu](mailto:joshua.criss@ufl.edu)