Roselle, a relative of hibiscus, was once used widely as an edible plant in Florida. The flowers are less showy than other hibiscus varieties, but their calyces (sepals at the base of the flower) are amazing! As the flower dies the calyx gets fleshy and in the sunlight shines like rubies. But even better than its beauty is its sweet/tart flavor. Florida pioneers grew roselle in their gardens to make cranberry sauce to serve with the Thanksgiving turkey, they called it the Florida Cranberry. The Caribbean islanders make a special rum drink at Christmas made with steeped roselle calyces which they call sorrel. One ingredient in Red Zinger tea is roselle calyces, and it’s called hibiscus tea!

How to Grow

It’s easy to grow – just throw a few seeds in a pot. They are basically annuals, so you have to plant new seeds each year. If you want to aim for a November fruiting, it takes about 6 months, so April and May would be a good time for starting seeds. After they sprout, protect them from iguanas. Yes, iguanas like them as much as they like their big showy relatives, but with roselle, it’s the leaves they love. Put the pots in a sunny, but protected area; water regularly. When you’re ready to put them in the ground, you’ll have to put a cage around them, iguanas will strip every leaf and it’s hard for a young plant to recover. For more of a bush-like shape, put 3-4 seeds in a small pot and plant them all together. Roselle prefers a sunny location in the garden with a little afternoon shade. When it’s too big for its cage, wrap netting over and around and keep it held together so birds can’t get in – not attractive – but the bush eventually gets to a good size and the leaves get tougher so it can withstand the occasional iguana feast. Remember to water them regularly and apply some fertilizer throughout the growing season. It’s a short lived plant and it wants to grow fast.
Shelly recently accomplished the following activities:

- Shelly is the South Florida coordinator for the 2020-2023 Greater Amberjack Visioning Program and will be leading the December 9th greater amberjack listening sessions. Read more in the media release “Florida Sea Grant leads call to action on Greater Amberjack, public input needed” follow the links to register for one of seven sessions.
  

- Shelly is a member of the Florida Sea Grant Fisheries Work Action Group and gave updates to the group bi-annual meeting to determine upcoming priorities and performance measures for reporting to the National Sea Grant office.

Shelly was invited by Mote Marine Lab on Summerland Key to teach and train them to participate in the Florida Horseshoe Crab Watch Program, which is a partnership with the FWC and uses volunteers to collect horseshoe crab data. Shelly co-wrote the EDIS document “The American Horseshoe Crab,” which was peer-reviewed and now available online:

https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/sg190

Michelle Leonard-Mularz
UF/IFAS Environmental Horticulture Agent

Michelle recently accomplished the following activities:

- 13 Master Gardener volunteers are now participating in the Community Rain Network known as CoCoRaHS. This citizen science project began at Colorado State University and now has participants throughout the country collecting rainfall data that is used by scientists and gardeners; in addition all of the data is available for free to the public. This information helps gardeners reduce water use in the landscape by identifying larger trends in rainfall patterns.

- Join us December 16th from 2pm to 4pm to discuss Butterfly Gardening in the Keys. The presentation will be hosted by Key West Botanical Society and kicks off their speaker series season. Register for the event by calling (305)292-4501 or click the link below:

https://ufl.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUrdO6gqzJGd3a7C8CYApVxEwoiFKNsLx

The 2020 Master Gardener Course concluded with 29 residential participants completing the course. The 10-week course covered a wide range of horticultural topics with 7 guest lecturers from across the state. This greatly increases our volunteer participation in the County with 70 volunteers that will be able to assist the horticulture agent in sustainable gardening and landscaping outreach including water conservation, fertilizer and pesticide use reduction, and waste recycling.

Be sure to “Like” us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter and Instagram!
Alicia recently accomplished the following activities:

- Alicia taught Advisory members about current and future programs, held a collective session to determine Extension initiatives.
- Alicia taught national program participants about the Climate Smart Floridian's program, evaluation and outreach.
- Alicia has developed 2021 program goals including supportive programs for non-profit development.
- Alicia developed a national climate change module as part of the Sustainable Living Leadership Training, a partnership with UF, Perdue and the Michigan State University.
- Alicia participated in the Natural Resource Leadership Institute Class XX, review of roots of conflict and conflict management through review of red snapper fisheries management.

How to Harvest

Harvest the fleshy calyces after the flowers have died and fallen off. They should be shiny, fleshy and firm. There is a circle of greenish tips around them, you can cut these off, but isn’t necessary. There is a large seed inside. Take a sharp knife and cut the base off just above the points, then you can pop the seed out. Remember to leave a few of the fruit on the bush to mature into seeds so you’ll be able to plant some next year. Some have had luck cutting it back before the cooler weather so it will come back the next spring.

ROSEELLE SAUCE
by Suzy Cushman

**Ingredients**
- 2 cups of prepared calyces (washed and seed pods removed)
- 1 1/3 cup water
- 1 cup sugar

**Directions**
1. Place prepared calyces into saucepan, add water. Simmer until soft (about 15 minutes).
2. Add sugar. Bring to a boil (stirring often). then turn down to a gentle simmer.

*Note: If you have a cooking thermometer, cook until temperature reaches 222 degrees.

Yields 5/4 pint

*Recipe can easily be doubled

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UF/IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

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Newsletter Editor: Brynn Morey, Extension Coordinator

This newsletter can be accessed online at: http://monroe.ifas.ufl.edu/newsletter.shtml
We’re on the Web at: http://monroe.ifas.ufl.edu

Scan this code to go directly to our UF/IFAS Website for more information!

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UF/IFAS/MCES QUARTERLY CONTACTS

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Learn more about it on Shelly’s Blog!

https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/monroeeco/2020/09/28/2020-florida-horseshoe-crab-watch-census-free-virtual-

It’s Not to Late to Register for the Virtual Horseshoe Crab Training!

FLORIDA HORSESHOE CRAB WATCH
linked with Stimulus

Learn more about it on Shelly’s Blog!