

PRUNING NOTES

By Amanda Martin | GROUNDED SOLUTIONS INC. | GroundedSol.com

Annual wildflowers

Grow each year from seeds, during one of 4 seasons. Make sure the area you are planting in is weed free for a while prior to planting. Allow annual flowers to germinate, vegetatively grow (prune a little for height during this time if needed), then let annuals go into full flower. Allow seeds to fully ripen on the plant and drop seeds back into beds during that month.

Deadheading is not necessary for annuals.

Perennial flowers

Persist in the landscape for at least 2 years. Perennial flowers can allow for larger, fuller, structured flower beds when compared to the structure of seed scattered annual beds. Light deadheading can lead to more blooms per season, if you don't mind sacrificing next years seed source.

Flowering shrubs

Are best pruned during their vegetative growth cycle, meaning, when no blooms are being created. Prune to desired shape, then let grow into full bloom & collect seeds when they are dry. Store seeds in paper envelopes for airflow to share. Note the species you collect, the month and year.



Prune Like Fire

In Florida, summer storms bring lightning strikes across the state. These lightning strikes can ignite dry grasses and a 1-3 foot flame can creep through an ecosystem. Prescription burns throughout the state prevent out-of-control or high heat burning wildfires. One major difference between Florida ecosystems is the average length of time between natural burn cycles. Ecosystems like sandhill, with extensive grass coverage are prone to burn frequently. Other ecosystems like scrub, naturally produces large, white sand gaps between plant populations making fire difficult to carry across the landscape. The result is a less frequent burn. Native plants use natural burn cycles to promote nutrient recycling and reduce small canopy competition as forms of regular maintenance, directly relating to the flowering capacity of each season. Mimicking burns without fire is a way to prune natives.

Translated to your landscape:

Depending on the plant species, pruning cuts can be made multiple times a year, once a year, every other year, or once every 3 - 5 years. You may need to prune a few inches, a few feet, or take it all the way to the ground. Learn what plant you have and the ecosystem it originated in for clues on how to best maintain these ancient species.

Seasonal Notes:



Groundcovers & Walkways

Replacing sod with native alternatives opens up bi- or even tri- monthly mowing options.

- Twinflower - *Dychoriste humistrata*
(shown above)
- Frog-fruit - *Phyla nodiflora*
- Creeping sage - *Salvia misella*
- Sunshine mimosa - *Mimosa strigillosa*

Typical sod species like St. Augustine and Zoysia need regular watering, seasonal fertilizer, pest and fungal applications in order to grow thick, stay green, keep their delicious roots from being eaten or from rotting away. We are finding more examples of how disruptive regular fungicide applications are to the naturally diverse biome of the soil.

Native groundcovers have the potential to grow water adaptable and/or deeper roots than sod. Thus requiring reduced water, no fertilizer or fungicide for positive growth outcomes. Some groundcover species are butterfly larval hosts; offering leaves, nectar, pollen and caterpillars to all interested parties.

Mow native groundcovers as desired. Rhizomes (below ground horizontal runners) can handle more frequent and tighter mowing habits than stolons (above ground horizontal runners). Edging is key for stolon spreaders.

February

After threat of freezes pass, prune hard. This is a good time to make the plant regrow, especially if it grows fast and big throughout the year.

March *

Plant and Seed your new garden. Irrigate if no rains, watch for the difference between weed seed germination and spring annual flowers.

April

Continue to monitor the garden. Let the rains come, keep weed seeds from taking root, water germinating wildflowers, trim tall stalks where needed.

May

Continue to monitor the garden. Harvest spring fruits & seeds, mulch appropriately in freshly turned areas. Watch for summertime annuals as they germinate. Don't mistakenly weed wildflowers or let young ones dry out.

June *

Prune for future shape. Spring flowers have faded & summer flowers have yet to open. Take a few inches off shrubs or prune heavy, know your plant.

July

Rains are usually here. Everything wants to grow like crazy. Previous pruning and weeding pays off. Enjoy summertime wildflower blooms. Trim lightly.

August

Rains are usually here. Temperatures are high. Maybe storm damage. Any remaining weeds are pretty obvious and easily pulled. No extra work please.

September *

Plant and Seed your new fall garden. Stay safe in case of storms. Irrigate if no rains. Collect summer wildflower seeds to share, re-mulch landscape.

October

Continue to monitor the garden. Fall grass blooms dominate the landscape. Fall annual wildflowers and flowering shrubs in full bloom. Previous pruning and weeding activities pay off as you fine tune the view.

November

Continue to monitor the garden. Harvest fruits & seeds, mulch appropriately in freshly turned areas. Watch for winter annual germination. Leaf color change and leaf drop cycles are in full swing for deciduous trees and shrubs.

December *

Continue to monitor the garden. Winter flowers come in as dormancy cycles reveal the twiggy nature of some trees and shrubs. Remove expired fall annuals, add plenty of colorful lights and enjoy the holidays.

January

Let freezes come, no need to cover or protect for Central Florida natives. Feel free to mow back clumping grasses at this time, otherwise chill.

* Indicates key seed germination months. Watch for wildflower seedlings while weeding!



Clockwise from bottom, *Eragrostis*, *Conradina*, *Monarda*, *Prunus*, *Hamelia*, *Elephantopus*