



# GET THE DIRT WITH FLORIDA YARD EXPERT



Lynn Barber, Hillsborough County Extension



If you are interested in growing your own vegetables, please read on. One of the biggest mistakes we make is to purchase the plants first and create our planting plan later. We should sketch our vegetable planting plan first, but only after reading the University of Florida (UF) publication, "Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide," by Sydney Park Brown, etc. You can access this guide at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021>.

This document is an excellent resource containing the steps you should take when creating a vegetable garden. The steps include site selection, drawing the garden plan, preparing the soil and adding organic matter. The location should be near a water source, receive a minimum of six hours of direct sunlight each day and in an area that is well drained. You can conserve the amount of water you need by using mulch, organic matter and microirrigation drip tubing.

The guide contains planting dates for each of the vegetables listed (we're in central), spacing needed, days to harvest and more. Till or spade the area and add organic matter, which can include compost or commercial soil mixes, several weeks before you intend to plant. Fertilizer recommendations are included in Table 1. The pH for vegetable gardening should be between

5.8 and 6.3. For information on how to take a soil sample, see the UF publication, "Soil Sampling and Testing for the Home Landscape or Vegetable Garden," by Amy L. Shoher, etc. at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ss494>. Leslie Hickland said, "This guide made a big difference in my success at growing veggies in my home landscape. I'm glad I have this tool which definitely increased my production."



Vegetable pests can be two- or four-legged, winged or microscopic. Consider using the no-pesticide approaches identified in the guide which include: plant in-season vegetables only, rotate the crops, control weeds, purchase insect-free plants, scout the garden for pest problems, learn to identify good versus bad bugs, harvest the crop when ripe and remove crop when done producing and add organic matter. If you decide to use pesticides, see Table 2, and follow the label directions.

To watch the University of Florida vegetable gardening videos, Florida Vegetable Gardening Basics, Alternatives to Traditional Vegetable Gardening, Managing the Organic Garden and Managing Pests of the Vegetable Garden, go to [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/hot\\_topics/lawn\\_and\\_garden/veggie\\_gardening.html](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/hot_topics/lawn_and_garden/veggie_gardening.html).

## Treat Your Cat To A Country Purradise

By Marisa Webber



Eileen Dalton and Scott Dalton, owners of A Country Cat House in Riverview, and their cat, root for the Miami Hurricanes. The boarding facility offers a variety of options to keep cats happy while owners are away.

"I wanted a nice place for cats to stay without being bothered by dogs," said Eileen Dalton of her business, A Country Cat House. This is an understatement to the accommodations made for the comfort of each cat in their care.

A Country Cat House is a boarding resort for cats while their owners are gone on vacation or business. Offering a variety of condos, villas, and townhouses, cats are guaranteed optimal comfort. Each room has its own unique view, whether it is a window overlooking the garden, their very own fish tank, or even a TV. This business is more than a place for cats to stay; it also provides optional grooming services, along with daily brushing, and special



diets upon request. "We love cats. Everything is designed to make the cats feel comfortable," said Dalton, who has four of her own cats. The employees at A Country Cat House understand the importance of every cat's well-being and make the comfort and care of each cat a priority.

The business began over 25 years ago and was based on Dalton and her husband Scott's love for cats. Originally basing their business out of Miami, they created another facility in Riverview in hopes of expanding. Twenty-two years later, A Country Cat House in Riverview is thriving and continues to provide the best possible care for each cat.

Located in a quiet, comfortable area, A Country Cat House can be found at 15501 Boyette Rd. in Riverview. For more information on office hours, pricing, and services, visit [www.acountrycathouse.com/index.html](http://www.acountrycathouse.com/index.html) or call 654-2287.

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## JUST ADD WATER

Learning to swim is about building skills to help ensure safety while participating in a healthy activity that can last a lifetime. The Y offers a variety of swim lessons for all ages, and the Infant Swimming Resource (ISR) program. View all of our aquatics offerings online at [www.tampaymca.org](http://www.tampaymca.org).

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