



## FYN Garden Q & A Series

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Yards & Neighborhoods



### FYN Topic: Lilac Chastetree

**Question:** Where can I purchase *vitex agnus-castus* plants? Email from Penny W., Sanibel, FL.

**Answer:** One type of *Vitex* is available locally. Commonly called chastetree, this small tree or shrub is difficult, but not impossible to find in a SW Florida nursery. Specifically, ask for the lilac chastetree, *Vitex agnus-castus*. Generally, gardeners don't recognize this plant. It has been occasionally planted in highway medians or as a street tree. Gardeners too can grow it in a multitude of 'Right' places: sunny gardens, landscapes or in large planter containers. Or, train it as a standard. Use as an accent flowering tree or use multiple plants in a mixed planting border containing other butterfly attracting, woody and herbal perennials. Used by herbalists. *Vitex* has sage-scented, lavender-colored flower panicles that attract butterflies and bees. *Vitex* can also be transplanted or grown from softwood cuttings if done this time of year or it can be grown from seed. When shopping for plants, look for newly improved flower colors like white 'Alba' and 'Silver Spires' or pink, 'Rosea.' *Vitex* is a non-native plant in North America. *Vitex* is grown as a deciduous shrub in a large range of hardiness zones including 6a (as far north as South-Central PA). *Vitex* has many other Florida-Friendly qualities including: tolerance to acidic or alkaline soils, blooms continuously in the high heat of summer and prefers sandy, well-drained soil containing little organic matter or fertility. Unlike its extremely invasive cousin, *Vitex trifolia* 'Variegata' the lilac chastetree is safe to transplant here. See the chastetree in the Herb Garden at Terry Park. Read more about growing chastetree in Florida at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/ST/ST66400.pdf>



### Useful Links

<http://www.floridayards.org>

<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>

<http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

<http://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by emailing [Extgardener@leegov.com](mailto:Extgardener@leegov.com). Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

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