



# YOUR NORTH FLORIDA YARD & GARDEN

Flagler County Extension Service & UF/IFAS Florida  
Master Gardeners

ISSUE XXXII

January-March, 2011

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## From the MG Desk...

*David Tibbetts, Newsletter Editor*



A new year already! I hope you have all enjoyed, or continue to enjoy, the holiday season. To reduce the stress on those of us who try to put this newsletter together, we are going to try a new tactic for this New Year edition. It will consist of articles previously published, re-researched and dusted off to make them look like new. So, if you've been a newsletter subscriber for awhile, then you may come across something that you've read before, or perhaps written in the dim and distant past. Credit to those who wrote these articles originally will be given, so there should be some familiar names anyway. I hope the New Year finds you all well and raring to go for a great 2011!

**Q:** When should I prune back my Crape Myrtle and how far back should I make the cuts?

*(Continued on page 17)*



FLAGLER COUNTY EXTENSION SERVICE &  
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[WWW.SOLUTIONSFORYOURLIFE.COM](http://WWW.SOLUTIONSFORYOURLIFE.COM)

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## Upcoming Programs at the Flagler County Extension Service:

### **Joy of Bonsai– January 14-16, 2011 Sponsored by Kawa Bonsai Society**

Contact Louise Leister at [mysecretbonsai@bellsouth.net](mailto:mysecretbonsai@bellsouth.net) or call 386-446-1233 for program fee information and pre-registration.

### **Irrigation Workshop- Saturday, January 29, 2011, 10 am—2 pm. Sponsored by Flagler County Water and Environmental Education Program.**

No fee for attending, but pre-registration is encouraged. Call Flagler County Extension Service to register.

### **Florida Yards & Neighborhoods, Florida Friendly Landscaping Series—Mondays February 7, February 21, February 28, March 7, March 21 and 22, 10 am-1 pm.**

No fee for attending programs but pre-registration required. Contact Ruth Micieli 386-437-7464 or e-mail [rmicieli@flaglercounty.org](mailto:rmicieli@flaglercounty.org) to pre-register. Program details posted on website [flaglercounty.org](http://flaglercounty.org).

### **Spring Flagler County Master Gardener Volunteer Training Program– Wednesdays March 9– May 18, 9 am-4 pm.**

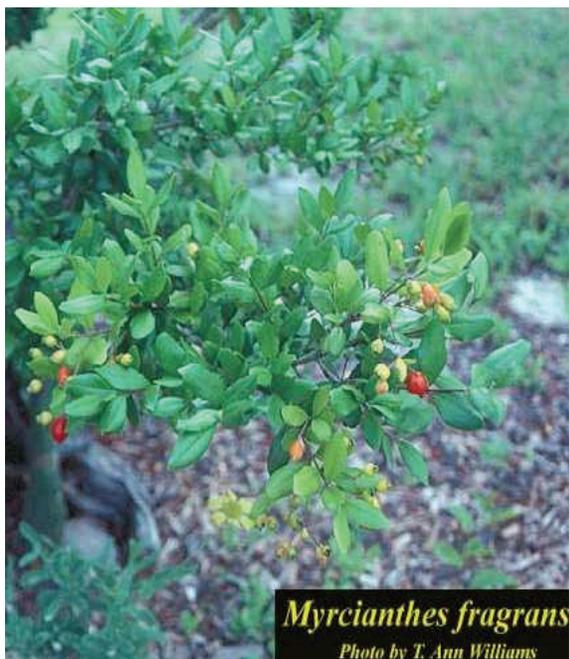
Contact Flagler County Extension Service 386-437-7464 for application packet. Completed applications must be received by February 11, 2011 for review. Flagler County residents only. Class size limited. Class fee for supplies and materials is \$250.00 (includes \$100.00 refundable deposit) per applicant.



# The Good... By Eleanor Fella, UF/IFAS Master Gardener

## Simpson's Stopper

Simpson's Stopper (*Myrcianthes fragrans*), also known as Twinberry Stopper, ranks as one of the most beautiful and ornamental woody plants native to Florida. It is a densely branched and densely leafy plant that can vary from a small spreading shrub to a rather large tree, depending on the plant's genetics and growing situation. The height can vary from six to twenty feet, or higher.



*Myrcianthes fragrans*  
Photo by T. Ann Williams

The small leaves are a rich, dark green when mature and contrast beautifully with new growth, which may range in color from pale char-treuse to deep wine red. Also attractive is the plant's flaking bark, revealing a mosaic of orange-brown, gray, pale green and beige.

The foliage complements the fragrant, pure white flowers as well as the ripe-orange-red berries that promptly follow. Flowers and fruits are borne intermittently in light to heavy flushes throughout the year, especially after heavy rains preceded by dry spells or warm weather preceded by cold weather.

This native plant can be used as a specimen tree, accent plant, or a hedge for privacy. Very little maintenance is required, other than pruning to any desired size or shape. However, when used as a hedge and if it is trimmed too frequently, flowering and fruiting may be curtailed.

Simpson's Stopper may be planted in partial shade to full sun. It will grow in most soils, and tolerates drought and poor drainage.

Since it often grows in coastal hammocks, this is a good choice for coastal areas. It is also recommended that it be grown near a birdfeeder or birdbath as a refuge for shy birds such as painted buntings and cardinals. This would put Simpson's Stopper and painted buntings in the same threatened category as they are both losing their natural environmental habitats.

The information for the native plants shown on Pages 2 and 3 is taken from "A Gardener's Guide to Florida's Native Plants," by Rufino Osorio. This book is recommended for both the beginner and experienced Florida native gardener. It is abundantly illustrated in full color with detailed descriptions and methods of cultivation for 350 of Florida's most attractive and easily grown native plants. Besides these three plants it also contains information on ferns, wildflowers, trees, vines, aquatics, epiphytes (air plants) and other shrubs.

# The Good...(cont.)

## Firebush

Firebush (*Hamelia patens*) is a densely branched and densely leafed fast growing shrub or small tree, with whorls of textured leaves that take on a reddish color in full sun. A Florida native evergreen, Firebush is a valuable plant for its nectar rich flowers that attract hummingbirds and butterflies. The small tubular flowers, in varying combinations of yellow and red, grow in clusters toward the ends of the branches and are showy during the summer months.

It will flower and fruit throughout the year except during prolonged cold or dry spells. This plant also appeals to an assortment of small animals and birds through its prodigious production of juicy berries.

Even without flowers, firebush will attract attention by its dark green leaves tinged in various shades of red or burgundy. In addition to its use in native and butterfly gardens it is suitable as a specimen or accent plant. Only in areas where it does not die back can it be utilized as a hedge. It may also be used in a perennial border or in mass plantings.

Though it may grow rapidly, it can be kept much shorter by pruning if used in a more formal garden. The height may vary from 3-5 feet tall and often dies back to the ground in Flagler County in the winter months. In South Florida it can grow to a height of 15 feet. If it does die back pruning may be done in the spring once new growth has begun.

There are a few predators, such as the caterpillar of the sphinx moth, and aphids, but this plant recovers quite well. It will tolerate most soils, poor drainage, moderate drought and heat. Spreading of this plant is by bird-dispersed fruit. Cuttings may easily be taken for propagation.



*Hamelia patens*  
Photo by Allen Boatman

## Yellow Anisetree

The Yellow Anisetree (*Illicium parviflorum*) is a native shrub with highly aromatic anise- or licorice-scented foliage. It can grow up to 15 feet, but is usually smaller, with a broad, densely leafy crown. This is an evergreen, with numerous small pale yellow flowers in spring, and with unusual, star-shaped fruit maturing in late summer or autumn. The small flowers are not very showy but they, and the star-shaped fruits, do add a quaintly charming accent to the plant.

The Yellow Anisetree is a rare plant native to rich, moist forests in six counties in north-central Florida. It has proven to be an exceptionally tough, broadleaf evergreen amenable to a wide variety of landscape uses and situations, and makes an excellent hedge or screen. Like most broadleaf plants it looks best as an informal hedge that is not pruned into a rigid geometrical shape. It is a maintenance free shrub, which may be pruned to any shape or height.

Once fully established, it exhibits drought tolerance and will grow under a range of light conditions from deep shade to full sun. It rarely spreads uninvited. It likes rich, wet areas, in partial to full shade. It is virtually pest and disease free.

The foliage is exquisitely fragrant and, as a result, this plant is being cultivated by Florida herb gardeners.

The Florida anisetree (*Illicium floridanum*) is a related plant restricted to the central and western Panhandle. It requires cool, moist, shady conditions, and tends to be smaller and has larger and showier maroon-red flowers.



*Illicium parviflorum*  
Photo by Bruce Hansen  
USF Herbarium Slide Collection

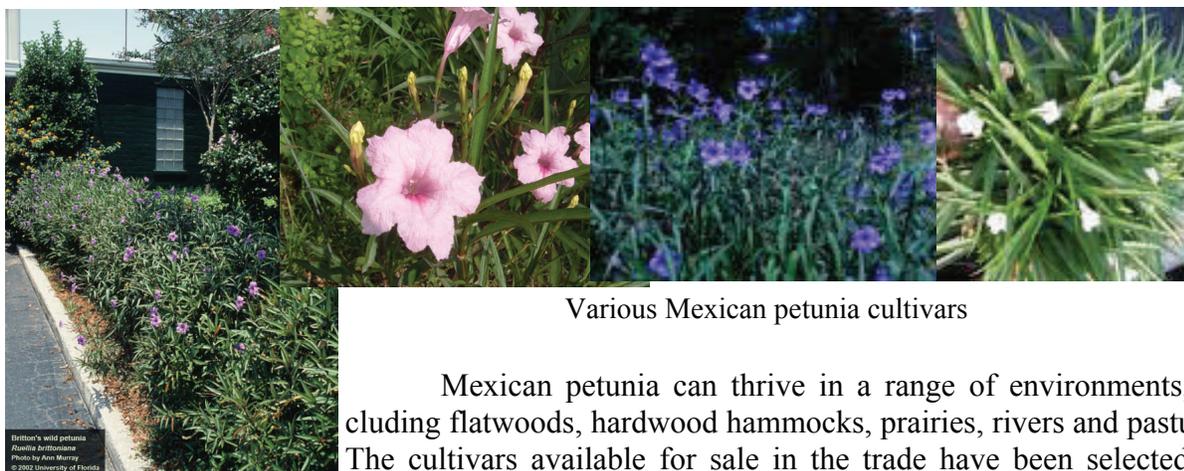


# The Bad...

By: Sheri Pruitt, UF/IFAS Master Gardener

## Mexican Petunia – Friend or Foe?

Mexican Petunia, variously listed as *Ruellia tweediana* or *Ruellia brittoniana*, is a beautiful blue, white, purple or pink flowering shrub that is used abundantly, but beware, it may take over your yard. The Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (EPPC) lists *Ruellia brittoniana* as a Category 1 invasive species, which is defined as “Invasive exotics that are altering native plant communities by displacing native species, changing community structures or ecological functions or hybridizing with natives.” However, it is not on the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (FDACS) or the USDA noxious weed list, which accounts for its continued presence in various gardening retail shops.



Various Mexican petunia cultivars

Mexican petunia can thrive in a range of environments, including flatwoods, hardwood hammocks, prairies, rivers and pastures. The cultivars available for sale in the trade have been selected for their flower color or size (tall or dwarf), however there has been very little research dedicated to determining the invasive characteristics of the cultivated varieties. With this in mind, disposal of cuttings and removed plants should be made in landfill trash rather than in green waste or in the empty lot across the street.

Mexican petunia is able to tolerate a wide range of environmental conditions including variations in light, temperature, and moisture. Other characteristics that make it a successful invasive are its rapid growth rate, affinity for disturbed locations, prolific production of seed, and lack of germination requirements such as scarification. Mexican petunia can also resprout from crowns or rootstocks when cut back or killed back by frost.

To keep them in bounds, they need to be whacked back two times a year. Roundup has not been found to be effective. Best way to remove them is to do so manually.

Native alternatives to Mexican petunia for use in home landscaping include wild petunia (*Ruellia caroliniensis*), blue curls (*Trichostema dichotomum*), butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), or swamp milkweed (*Asclepias perennis*).

A study conducted by University of Florida researchers at the Indian River Research and Teaching Center for Environmental Horticultural at Fort Pierce (<http://irrecenvhort.ifas.ufl.edu>) on different *Ruellia tweediana* cultivars, found that the ‘Katie’ dwarf series produced fewer seeds than the prolific wild type. In this study, the ‘Purple Showers’ cultivar did not produce seeds, but is more aggressive as a vegetative sprawler than the wild species types. It is recommended that only the ‘Purple Showers’ sterile variety be used.

# The Bad...(cont.)

Use the photo below to help identify plants when shopping as it is easy to mix the tags and send out mislabeled plants. The wider leaves and larger flowers on 'Purple Showers' will help distinguish it from similar types. Also, check for seed pod development and rip the plants out if they produce seed. Otherwise you may have to be on your hands and knees ripping out a vigorous overgrown thicket of Mexican petunia!



Mexican petunia flowers and leaves vary by cultivar, left to right: 'Purple Showers' (the only sterile cultivar); Wild type; and 'Morado Chi'. Photo, Sandra Wilson, IFAS, IRREC.



# and the Bugglies

by: Karen Durand, UF/IFAS Master Gardener

## Pink Hibiscus Mealybug (PHM)

The mental vision of a pink hibiscus is a beautiful one indeed. The Pink Hibiscus Mealybug is, however, just the opposite. It has the potential of creating an agricultural and horticultural nightmare. This pest has two common names (pink mealybug and hibiscus mealybug), but there is an effort to standardize the common name by calling the pest "pink hibiscus mealybug," even though it attacks many plant species, including citrus.

Pink Hibiscus Mealybug (referred to by the letters PHM) is an introduced species with no natural predators and we all know the problem that any exotic species of insects can cause. PHM was first discovered in Broward County, Florida on 13 June 2002, then in Dade County, and has continued to spread. It is believed that PHM may be able to establish itself in other southern continental U.S. states.

The PHM is expected to attack many Florida crops including citrus, avocado, fig, guava, mango, and sugarcane; vegetable crops; forest trees, and many species of ornamental plants including *Allamanda*, *Angelica*, *Anthurium*, *Bougainvillea*, *Croton*, ginger lily, *Heliconia*, *Ixora*, hibiscus, palm, and oleander. Worldwide, PHM has been recorded affecting over 300 host plant species, including citrus, ornamentals, and vegetables.

Freshly-laid eggs are orange, becoming pink before they hatch. Eggs are found in egg sacs. The nymphs (crawlers) disperse by walking (sometimes considerable distances!) and by wind. The life cycle takes about 23 to 30 days. The PHM has a high reproductive rate and produces up to 15 generations per year, so pest populations can become very large.



PHM eggs



Various PHM stages

Adult mealybugs are small (about 3 mm long) and pink in body color and covered with a waxy secretion. The waxy filaments are short and females are usually obscured by this white mealy wax. When adults are crushed their body fluids are also pink. Adult males are smaller than females, reddish brown and have one pair of wings. Males have two long waxy "tails."



Female PHM



Male PHM

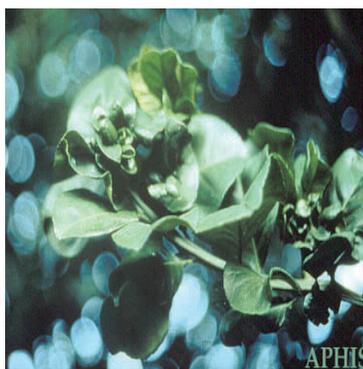
"Bugs are not going to inherit the earth. They own it now. So we might as well make peace with the landlord." ~ Thomas Eisner

## and the Bugglies (cont.)

PHM feeds on the soft tissues of many plant species and injects a toxic saliva that causes curling and contortion of leaves. The entire plant may be stunted and the shoot tips develop a bushy appearance. Buds may not flower and stems may twist. Fruit may also be deformed. The mealybug excretes honeydew which encourages the development of black sooty mold. Very high mealybug populations can kill plants.



PHM damage to hibiscus



PHM damage to citrus



Hibiscus damage

Biological Control measures have been conducted on several infested Caribbean Islands and have shown a 95% - 98% success rate after one year. Native natural enemies are expected to provide some control. It is also believe this pest can be suppressed by the importation, rearing, release and establishment of host-specific natural enemies (classical biological control). Such natural enemies are known to exist and can provide substantial control. For example, the ladybug (*Cryptolaemus montrouzieri*) is known to feed on all stages of the mealybug and several effective parasitoids are known. In Florida, efforts to control PHM infestations have primarily consisted of releasing parasitic, stingless wasps, one species of which is the encyrtid wasp (*Anagyrus kamali*), in order to maintain PHM populations below economically damaging levels. The release of biological control predators of PHM does not harm other insects or humans.



Ladybug, PHM predator



Ladybug larvae (look simi-



Encyrtid wasp



Parasitized PHM

There is no known chemical control for this pest. Chemical control is very difficult because the PHM has a waxy covering which protects the adults and the eggs from harm.

"Bugs are not going to inherit the earth. They own it now. So we might as well make peace with the landlord." ~ Thomas Eisner

# Fresh from Florida

## **Florida Squash** from UF/IFAS EDIS publication FCS8880

Florida squash varieties can grow for up to nine months of the year. Squash is a good source of vitamins A, B6 and C, potassium, folate (helps red blood cell production), and naturally low in sodium, fat and cholesterol. Generally, north central Florida produces significant quantities of zucchini squash, while yellow squash comes from south Florida.

One issue that affects the yield of squash plants is incomplete pollination. If this is a problem in your garden, you can help your squash plants by hand pollinating the flowers. Take a small paintbrush and transfer the yellow pollen from the male flower to the pistil inside the female flower. To be sure you have a female flower, look for a swollen structure at the base of the flower that looks like a mini-squash. Be sure to use freshly opened flowers and transfer the pollen during the morning hours. Within a few days, you should know whether you were successful.

If you use pesticides in your yard, you may be protecting your plants from pests but also hurting beneficial insects like honey bees. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- First and foremost, use pesticides only when necessary.
- Apply pesticides during late afternoon or evening, since bees typically are active during the morning hours.
- If the pesticide is available in both liquid and powder form, opt for the liquid. The powder is likely to stick to the hairs on the bee's body and possibly be transported back to the hive.



Summer squash



Winter squash

### **Florida Squash**

- ◆ Summer varieties usually grow on a bush
- ◆ Winter varieties grow on vines
- ◆ Both male and female flowers on same plant - bees are needed
- ◆ Common problem is fruit rot/drop caused by
  - ◆ Fungus
  - ◆ Incomplete pollination
- ◆ Available from September through June



## Curried Squash Bisque

Yield: 6 Servings / Time: 30 minutes

### Ingredients:

2 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 large Florida onion, coarsely chopped  
1 tablespoon garlic, minced  
1 tablespoon curry powder  
2 pounds Florida yellow squash or zucchini (or a combination of both), cut into 1-inch rounds

### Ingredients:

3 cups low-sodium vegetable broth  
1 1/2 cups low-fat buttermilk  
1 cup low-fat half-and-half  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  
1/4 cup finely chopped Florida cilantro

### Preparation:

1. Melt butter in a large saucepan.
2. Stir in the onion and garlic.

Downloaded from:

<http://freshfromflorida.wordpress.com/recipes-of-the-month-2/>

3. Cover and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 15 minutes.
4. Add the curry powder and stir over moderate heat for 1 minute.
5. Stir in squash, add vegetable broth and simmer over moderate heat until the squash is soft, about 25 minutes.
6. Purée the soup in batches in a blender or food processor.
7. Pour soup into a clean saucepan and stir in the buttermilk and half-and-half.
8. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper and simmer slowly until heated through.

Serve in shallow bowls and garnish with the cilantro.

## Squash and Tomato Gratin

Yield: 6 Servings / Time: 45 minutes

### Ingredients:

2 garlic cloves, chopped  
2 shallots, chopped  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh Florida basil, or 1 teaspoon dried  
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, or to taste  
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste  
2 medium Florida yellow squash, thinly sliced lengthwise  
2 medium Florida zucchini, thinly sliced lengthwise  
3 medium Florida tomatoes, thinly sliced lengthwise  
2 tablespoons fresh grated Parmesan cheese  
1/4 cup dry bread crumbs  
Olive oil for drizzling

### Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. Lightly oil an 8-inch square baking dish
3. Evenly spread the garlic, shallots and basil in the bottom of the prepared dish. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Angle the yellow squash, zucchini and tomatoes in upright alternating layers (like shingles on a roof), repeating until all the vegetables are used in the casserole.
5. Sprinkle the top with the cheese, then the bread crumbs.
6. Drizzle lightly with olive oil
7. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until the vegetables are tender. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving.

**Bon appetit!**



# The Urban Forest

UF/IFAS EDIS publication  
#ENH-166

## The Florida Maple

**Introduction.** The Florida Maple (*Acer saccharum* var. *floridum*) -- formerly *Acer barbatum* -- is no longer considered to be a separate species. It is also known by the common names of Florida or Southern Sugar Maple. The deciduous Florida Maple reaches 50 to 60 feet in height but is most often seen at 20 to 30 feet. Displaying muted yellow or orange fall leaf color, the Florida Maple is ideal for use as a specimen, park or street tree, or for use in woodland areas. The round to oval growth habit makes it an ideal shade or street tree. The edges of the leaves turn under slightly giving them a distinct appearance. The trunk on older specimens resembles that on the Northern Sugar Maple, which is an attractive gray with longitudinal ribs.

**Uses and Management.** Growing in full sun or partial shade, the Florida Maple will tolerate a wide variety of soil types but is not salt-tolerant. Established trees look better when given some irrigation during dry weather. While leaves will eventually fall, many remain in the central portion of the canopy for much of the winter giving the tree a somewhat unkempt appearance. The limbs of the Florida



Florida Maple (*Acer saccharum* var. *floridum*)  
Showing Autumnal colors

Maple are strong and not susceptible to wind damage. Roots are often shallow and reach the surface at an early age, even in sandy soil. Plant in an area where grass below it will not need to be mowed so the roots will not be damaged by the mower. Available cultivars include: 'Endowment Columnar', columnar form, red and yellow fall color; 'Goldspire', dense, compact, pyramidal form, gold fall color; 'Majesty', ovate form, resistant to frost cracking and sun scald, red-orange fall color; and 'Sweet Shadow Cutleaf', unusual vase-shaped growth form and variable yellow-orange fall color. Propagation is by seeds or cuttings.

**Pests and Diseases.** Cottony Maple scale, borers, aphids, and gall mites may be problems for the Florida Maple. The Florida Maple can be susceptible to a wilt disease.

# Garden Calendar

*Taken from Survival Guide to Gardening in Flagler County*

## January

### General

If it does not rain, irrigate landscape/lawn areas that need watering every ten to fourteen days. Put down approximately 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch of water each time.

### Lawn

Apply a weed control, if weeds are present. Refer to the lawn section of the Survival Guide to Gardening in Flagler County or contact the local extension office for specific recommendations and reference on weed control.

The grass is usually looking a little brown now from the lack of nutrients and the freezing weather. Do not be in a big hurry to fertilize. Lawn grasses are dormant and the fertilizer will help the weeds more than the grass. It is better to wait for the warmer weather in March to begin fertilizing, usually after you start mowing.

### Food Garden

Cold hardy vegetables to plant now include beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, Chinese cabbage, mustard, onions, English peas, potatoes, radishes, and turnips.



Paperwhites

### Fruit

This is a good time to spray deciduous fruit trees with horticultural oil to smother scale and other insects that might be over-wintering on the bark and twigs.

### Landscape

Cover sensitive plants during nights when the temperature is expected to drop below 35°. Be sure to take off coverings in the morning to ensure plants are exposed to sunlight.

Do not prune off dead branches that are frost damages. This dead matter acts as insulation during later freezes. Wait until early March or when new growth emerges to determine where to prune back.

This is a good time to transplant deciduous and evergreen plants in the landscape (not palms). Keep transplants out of the ground for as short a time as possible. Keep the roots moist, not soaking wet. Do not fertilize plants now—wait until March. Do not prune except to remove diseased or dead material.

Annuals to plant now include calendula, pansies, petunias, snapdragons, delphiniums, larkspur, dianthus, viola, and foxgloves.

Check your trees for mistletoe, a parasitic plant that will harm them. If you see mistletoe, cut off the entire affected branch.

Narcissus (Paperwhites) and Jonquils should be blooming now. Enjoy the winter colors!

## February

### General

If it doesn't rain, water dry areas every 10—14 days. Put down approximately 3/4 of an inch of water each time. Calibrate water sprinkler distribution system with cans or other suitable containers to ensure that 3/4 of an inch is distributed evenly over the whole lawn.

### Lawn

If weeds are present and you have not applied a weed control within the previous 12 months, you may do so at the beginning of this month. This is also a good time to apply crab-grass preventative. Make sure you reapply in 10 -12 weeks. Refer to the lawn section of the [Survival Guide to Gardening in Flagler County](#) or the local extension office for specific information regarding proper weed control methods.

### Food Garden

Prepare spring garden area by turning over soil and adding organic matter. Have a pH test done before planting.

Plant warm season vegetables indoors in flats so they are ready to plant outdoors in late March.

Vegetables that can be planted this month: beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, Chinese cabbage, collards, lettuce, mustard, green onions, and potatoes.

### Fruit

Prune grape plants and leafless vines this month.

Fertilize deciduous fruit trees and bushes including citrus, peaches, nectarines, plums, figs, blackberries, grapes, persimmons, blueberries, and pears. Use slow-release fertilizer on all of these except blueberries. For blueberries, use azalea/camellia fertilizer; apply at half the rate and repeat next month. Blueberries respond best to frequent, light fertilization.

Start checking lemon/lime trees for ripeness.

### Landscape

Spring flower seeds can be started in flats to ready for a late March planting outdoors.

Do not prune winter damaged plants yet. Wait until March when the chance of frost is essentially over.

Prune back roses this month. Roses can be cut back to the main canes. Refer to the section in Survival Guide... or your local extension office for more information on care and maintenance. Be sure to pull back mulch from the bases of each plant to prevent disease.

Crape Myrtle can be pruned this month. *Do not* "top" them. Prune off old seed heads and remove any crossing branches.

You can still transplant shrubs through the middle of the month.

Annuals to plant this month include baby's breath, calendulas, carnations, dianthus, dusty miller, Marguerite daisies, pansies, petunias, snapdragons, and statice.



Camelia

## March

### General

If no rain, water areas that need it approximately every 7 - 10 days, putting down 1/2 to 3/4 inch of water each time. Do you have a rain monitor on your irrigation system? Check system for broken, misdirected, blocked, and plugged heads. Our driest months, April and May, are ahead.

### Lawn

Apply fertilizer (15-0-15) with approximately 40% of the nitrogen in slow release form.

### Food Garden

Most gardens will produce better if the soil is amended with compost (organic matter). Have your soil pH tested at the Flagler County Extension Service to determine acid/alkaline level before you plant.

Warm season vegetables can be planted: snap beans, pole beans, cantaloupe, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, squash, tomatoes, and watermelons.

### Fruit

Most West Indian and Guatemalan avocado varieties should be checked for ripeness through June.

Valencia oranges should be checked for ripeness starting this month.

### Landscape

Annuals and perennials to be planted: ageratum, alyssum, amaranthus, balsam, begonia, browallia, celosia, cosmos, coreopsis, dusty miller, gaillardia, gazania, geranium, impatiens, Marguerite daisies, marigold, pentas, Persian violet, phlox, rudbeckia, salvia, sweet William, thunbergia, torenia, verbena, vinca, and zinnia.

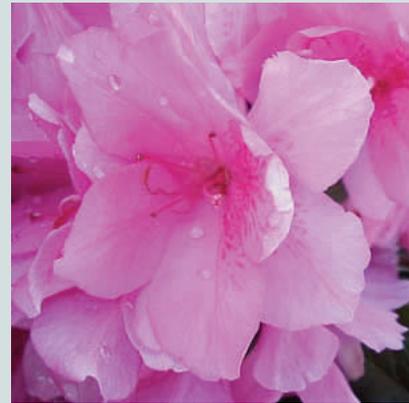
Fertilize palm trees with slow release palm fertilizer with 4% magnesium.

Fertilize hibiscus, azaleas, and poinsettias with complete fertilizer for acid-loving plants.

Many plants can be pruned back this month. After danger of frost is over, generally mid- to end of March, prune off any dead areas, old seedheads and spent flowers. As a general rule of thumb, trees and shrubs should not be trimmed more than one-third the total size of the plant to maintain desired size and shape.

Poinsettias can be pruned once colored bracts begin to wilt. Cut back to approximately 12 - 18 inches above the soil.

Azaleas can be pruned after blooming.



Azalea



# Discover Natural Florida

## Waterfront Park

Karen Suggs, UF/IFAS Florida Master Gardener (author and photographer)



Slash Pine



Cabbage Palm



Eastern Red Cedar

If you're looking for a great place to enjoy Flagler's mild winter temperatures, discover Palm Coast's new Waterfront Park. Located at 150 North Park Road, the park is between Daytona State College and the Grand Haven neighborhood on Colbert Lane. The park borders the Intracoastal Waterway and includes a pier, playground, bathroom facilities, trails/sidewalks perfect for walking or biking, and plenty of park benches to enjoy the view. The park also includes a Children's Memorial Garden dedicated to the remembrance of children who have died.

Opened in the fall of 2010, the park incorporates natural vegetation and landscaped areas using native plants and trees. Starting from the parking lot, head north on the sidewalk away from the pier. Some of the first trees you will see are Eastern Red Cedars on your right. Planted by the city, these trees are native to Florida and can also be found in the natural areas to your left. At one time, red cedar was the primary wood used to make pencils. Today, the heartwood is prized for its pleasant fragrance and insect-repellent properties.



Saw Palmetto

Live Oaks, Cabbage Palms and Slash Pines are also common along the walkway. Live Oaks are one of the most recognizable trees in the south. In our area, they are home to two common epiphytic plants: Spanish moss and resurrection fern. Cabbage palms (or Sabal palms) are Florida's official state trees. In the past, the tree trunks were used for cabin walls and dock pilings. Seminole Indians made homes roofed with Cabbage Palm fronds. Slash pines are the backbone of Florida's timber industry. Though they grow rapidly, it takes 30 years to become saw-timber size (greater than 9 inches in diameter).



Salt Bush



Dog Fennel

Stands of tall, beige, wispy plants can be found along the sidewalk near the walkway bridge. These plants are Dog Fennel, a perennial commonly found in flatwoods, marshes, and wet disturbed sites throughout Florida. In the spring, summer, and fall they are bright green. Also in the same area are vines of Muscadine Grape in hues of gold and brown. Prickly Pear cactus can also be found nearby. The cactus' showy yellow flowers bloom from May to July.



Prickly Pear Cactus



Beautyberry

As you follow along the sidewalk, to your right you will see Salt Bush (or Groundsel Bush) growing along the waterway rocks. Tolerant of brackish water, the plant's white flowers bloom in late fall and winter. Continuing along the walkway, you come to the Children's Memorial Garden on your left. The Garden is designed to be a peaceful sanctuary for contemplation. Distinctive bluestone pavers make up the Garden's pathway, many marked with dedications from families wishing to honor the memory of a child. The plants in the Garden include Saw Palmetto, with its thick, horizontal stems, and Coonties. Coonties were a dominant form of plant life during the dinosaur age.

Though they used to be commonly found in Florida hammocks and pinelands, commercial exploitation has reduced their numbers in the wild.



Coontie Fern



Muscadine Grape

Two plants with bright berries can be found several places along the walkway: Beautyberry and Yaupon Holly. Beautyberry is known for its distinctive, magenta-colored berries that appear from August to January. Yaupon Holly's clusters of red berries and dark green leaves make it a favorite Christmas decoration. Its tolerance of drought and sea salt make it a popular plant in the home landscape.

If you want to extend your journey past the Children's Memorial Garden, you can continue north on the walkway, eventually crossing the St. Joe Canal and merging with Linear Park at Canopy Walk. Otherwise, claim one of the park benches along the walkway, enjoy the sun, and watch the boats go by.



Yaupon Holly



# Kidz Korner/ Master Gardener Spotlight

## School Gardens Popping up Everywhere!

*Ruth A. Micieli, Horticulture Program Assistant, II and Master Gardener Coordinator*

It seems like gardening has exploded in Flagler County! 2011 will be a busy year for our Master Gardener Volunteers at many of our public schools. We have been asked to assist with several school garden projects in the New Year.

The Family Nutrition Program through Flagler County Extension Service has vegetable gardens in every Title 1 Elementary School in the County. They have led the way for others to have “Outdoor Classrooms” teaching children about eating healthy, growing their own food and where our food really comes from (not the supermarket)!

Flagler Palm Coast High School and Matanzas High School have grand plans for culinary herb and vegetable gardens.

Indian trails Middle School is planning a Zen garden, Butterfly garden, Arboretum, Agricultural area and outdoor bio-lab to study plants and insects. They have already received a grant to begin a composting/bio-fuels project! These middle school students will have opportunities unlike anyone else in the county, thanks to their two incredible teachers— Ed Heafy and Dana Hausen! They have encouraged and instructed their classes to come up with the gardens they want to have, draw out, to scale, a landscape design and create a plant list for each garden. They also came up with a list of materials and supplies needed to complete the projects, which will be over a 5 year period!

We are very excited for them to begin breaking ground in the spring!



**DJJ Community Garden Winter Crops**—Honor O'Reilly, MG

(Continued from page 1)

**A** • Actually, you don't need to prune that Crape Myrtle at all! Since there are so many new cultivars of Crape Myrtle available, from 2 feet to 20+ feet, you should be able to find one that will fit your location perfectly without the need for severe pruning.

If you do need to trim back a few branches, late Winter is the best time and only dead or damaged branches need be removed. If you must trim to control the size of your tree, trim back branches by only one-third of their length. This helps to prevent stressing the tree and inviting pest and disease problems later in the year.

**Q** • When should I cut back my winter-damaged perennials and shrubs?

**A** • Resist the urge to cut back and clean up dead plant material until the weather reliably warms up and new shoots start to emerge, usually by late March or early April. Just keep those sheets and blankets handy just in case Mother Nature has other ideas!

**Q** • When should I fertilize my lawn in the Spring and when should I use a pesticide for weed and bug problems?

**A** • March is the ideal time to put down lawn fertilizer since the lawn is just waking up from its winter dormancy. Use a 16-4-8, 15-0-15, 10-4-10 or similar formula fertilizer, **not** a "weed-n-feed" product. After applying, water in lightly if no rain is expected within a few hours. Just don't apply right before a heavy downpour is expected!

As for pesticide applications, it is best to treat only if there is a visible problem, i.e. weeds present or insects crawling about. Contact the Extension Service for specific treatments since the product used and the application timing varies according to the problem and product.



## Starting your Garden from Seed

◆ When planting vegetable gardens, many gardeners buy "starter" plants. But you can also start your garden from seed.

◆ Starting from seed allows you to select from a wide range of colors and the best varieties of vegetables for your area.

◆ You can direct-seed them or plant them in small containers until they're large enough to transplant in the garden.

◆ Different vegetables should be planted at different times of the year. Order fresh seed well in advance of planting or buy from local sources right before planting.

◆ Sow more than you think you'll need, and thin out the weaker plants. Consider starting seeds throughout the season for a continuous vegetable harvest.

◆ Don't be intimidated by starting from seed--it's a fun and easy project for the whole family.

### UF Resources For Gardeners

- Solutions For Your Life  
<http://solutionsforyourlife.com>
- UF/IFAS Publications (EDIS)  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods  
<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>
- UF Environmental Horticulture Dept.  
<http://hort.ufl.edu/>
- Florida Master Gardener Program  
<http://mastergardener.ifas.ufl.edu>
- Florida-friendly Landscaping  
<http://www.floridayards.org/>

For more information, contact your county Extension office or visit [GardeninginaMinute.com](http://GardeninginaMinute.com).

*Gardening in a Minute is a production of the University of Florida's Environmental Horticulture Department, IFAS Extension, and WUFT-FM.*