



# YOUR NORTH FLORIDA YARD & GARDEN

Flagler County Extension Service & UF/IFAS Florida  
Master Gardeners

ISSUE 35

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## From the MG Desk...

*David Tibbetts, UF/IFAS Florida  
Master Gardener and Newsletter Editor*



**Here are some common problems our residents have been dealing with this season:**

**Q:** Why are moths flying out of my lawn when I mow or walk on it?

**A:** These moths are the adult version of the sod webworm. The moths are not the problem. The problem is their larvae, sod webworms or fall armyworms, that eat your grass. If there is no visible damage, it's not really an issue. The adult moths will lay eggs that will hatch next summer. Scout for leaf damage (chewed grass blades) in July, August and September. If present, treat to control the larvae with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) products such as Thuricide or Dipel. Follow the label instructions for application rate and frequency.



Sod webworm



Armyworm/Sod webworm damage

**Q:** Is it okay to dump pruned branches or removed trees and shrubs into empty lots?

**A:** No. Unless you have received permission

*(Continued on page 17)*



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

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS:

### Short & Sweet Horticulture Series at the Flagler County Extension Service

10/12– Caring for your Landscape Plants 10 am—12 pm

10/17– Fall and Holiday Color in the Landscape 10 am—12pm

10/24– Winter Citrus Care 10 am –12 pm

10/31– Irrigation—Introduction to New Technologies 10 am –12 pm

11/16– Holiday Gifts from the Garden 12noon to 3pm and costs \$5

All programs (except November 16) free of charge.

Pre-registration required. Contact Ruth Micieli at 437-7464 or via email at [rmicieli@flaglercounty.org](mailto:rmicieli@flaglercounty.org)

### Other Community Events-

10/8, 10/9– Princess Place Preserve Creekside Festival  
Sat. 10 am-6 pm, Sun. 10 am-4 pm



# The Good...

By David Tibbetts,  
UF/IFAS Florida Master Gardener

## Grass Alternatives

Last quarter, the newsletter was devoted to grass, its various types, and its care and maintenance. This quarter, I will write about a dream I have, a dream of a lawn, well, not a lawn really, that requires no effort at all—apart, perhaps, from some weeding. That’s right, imagine a natural lawn covering that doesn’t need watering, fertilizing or mowing! There are many suggestions for what can be done to wean one’s lawn off grass and onto something that requires much less effort and resources. Though most grass alternatives are not conducive to playing croquet or even walking on, much less having a picnic on, they can be very environmentally- and labor-friendly. If you’re like me, this sounds like very good news indeed!



Here is an example of a grass lawn that was replaced with ground cover, shrubs, trees and paths.

First off, let me confess a little. I am very lazy, and would like nothing better than having a lawn that I don’t have to do ANYTHING to. Since my original, fairly presentable lawn of St. Augustine grass died shortly after we moved into our house, even though I did what I thought I was supposed to (i.e., watering, weed and feed, etc.), I have a dislike for grass in general and St. Augustine grass in particular. These days I have a sometimes green lawn based primarily on common Bermudagrass, which had infiltrated long before the original St. Augustine grass died off. It seemed to want to be there so I let it be, and I don’t water, fertilize or treat for creatures. So, I still have grass for the most part (at least where it is not primarily doveweed or crabgrass), but have tinkered with replacing most if not all of the remaining grassy areas with something else.

Why go grassless? In my case, a lot of it is the apparent expense of keeping up the original grass that I had, not to mention the hours spent mowing and weeding and trying to figure out how much of and when to fertilize/weed-and-feed and what kind, how much and when pest control should be used. Going grassless should enable one to forget about much of the expense and headaches of lawn maintenance—the watering essentially goes away, fertilizing may be required somewhat depending on what is put in place of the grass but at significantly reduced amounts, and pest control also essentially goes away. And I haven’t mentioned mowing—many of the possibilities for grass replacement will mean that mowing is optional, or even frowned upon.

Why not go grassless if it’s so wonderful? Well, most ground covers are not particularly inviting if you like to walk barefoot in your grass. Some may not be too bad but others might not appreciate it, as well as not feeling too good on your feet. And, if walking in your grass is something you like, you may also like to play croquet, baseball/softball, football, soccer, or tennis on your lawn, not to mention have a picnic. None of these would be possible in virtually any ground cover you might choose, unless you do what a friend of mine did and replace your grass with mulch—having got fed up with trying to maintain

his grass, he killed it and replaced it with a layer of mulch. Another possible downside of going grassless is the various housing restrictive covenants—this is not a real problem thanks to the Florida Legislature. In 2009, laws were passed to prevent homeowner associations from proscribing homeowners from implementing Florida-friendly landscapes [FS 720.3075(4)(a) and 373.185(1)(b)]. Of course if your lawn is not grass, it might not fit in with the rest of the neighborhood, and there just might be some neighborly pressure.

Let's assume the decision has been made to replace grass with something else. What are the options? There are many, aside from mulching. To reduce the grassy area in the lawn, simply expand the beds—this would allow planting more ornamentals, and immediately reduce the amount of watering for the grass, as well as fertilizing and pest control. Plant trees, or as I have done, allow the 'volunteers' to take up permanent residence. I now have various trees that have appeared over the past few years, among them one crepe myrtle, two loquats, three pines and five live oaks. While none of these has taken up a lot of space yet, they will and the amount of grass I have will diminish along with my mowing. Other options include planting a ground cover or vine that will spread on its own and reduce the grassy areas. I have planted a perennial peanut alongside my house that has increased its area dramatically though I'd be happier if it was larger still. Besides perennial peanut, there are many other ground cover or vine possibilities (The Florida-Friendly Landscaping Guide to Plant Selection & Landscape Design - [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYN\\_Plant\\_Selection\\_Guide\\_v090110.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYN_Plant_Selection_Guide_v090110.pdf), lists 31 possibilities for Central Florida), including creeping juniper, railroad vine and confederate jasmine. Small trees and shrubs are other possible space-takers from the grassy landscape including gardenias, azaleas, oleanders and Indian hawthorn. Suffice it to say that there are many plants to choose from that will add color (other than various shades of green) and variety to a once grassy lawn area.



Creeping juniper



Confederate jasmine



Perennial peanut



Railroad vine

The basic steps to replacing grass with an alternative, are (1) make a landscape plan; (2) select an appropriate alternative plant for your soil, sun and environmental conditions; (3) either (a) remove the grass, or (b) kill it by covering it with a weed mat (newspaper works okay in small areas); (4) cover the weed mat with (a) soil (depending on the size of the area to be covered, one may use garden soil, or perhaps topsoil amended with compost), or (b) mulch; and (5) plant the chosen grass-alternative, depending on its size, through the weed mat into the soil beneath (for shrubs or small trees), or directly into the soil atop the weed mat (this will work fine for a ground cover like perennial peanut). Now, after watering as recommended to ensure your choice of cover survives its early days, sit back and watch as it takes over in your selected area.



# The Bad...

David Tibbetts, UF/IFAS Florida Master Gardener

## Air Potato

The air potato has been moving into my neighborhood in a big way. Before two years ago, I'd never seen one where I live in Palm Coast, but now these plants are into just about every vacant lot on the street. The air potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*) is an Asian native that was introduced into Florida in 1905, was designated as an exotic invasive in 1993, and included on Florida's noxious weed list in 1999.



Air potato on a pine tree

The air potato is a member of the yam family. The vine can grow to seventy feet in length at a rate of almost eight inches per day, and its tuber can reach six inches in diameter. A distinguishing characteristic is that its leaf veins extend from the base of the leaf outward, unlike many other vines. The plant does produce flowers, but these are rare in Florida, so its main method of spreading is via vegetative reproduction. This occurs through aerial tubers, or bulbils, that look like potatoes, thus the plant's common name.

Winged yam (*Dioscorea alata*) is sometimes mistaken for the air potato. The leaf patterns of the two plants are different; leaves on the air potato alternate while for the winged yam the leaves are opposing. Winged yam also has a characteristic winged internode that gives it its name; it grows to only thirty feet in length, less than half its more invasive cousin, and produces fewer bulbils, but it is also considered an invasive problem here in Florida. In other words, whether it's winged yam or air potato it doesn't belong here and should be removed, so don't get too hung up on identification.

As with most exotic invasives, the air potato crowds out native vegetation. Its aggressive growth rate means it can relatively quickly take over large patches of land, and its use of its bulbils to spread makes it very difficult to control. And, don't be fooled when it disappears in winter months—it WILL return.

As for controlling the air potato, the best action is to prevent its spread—it's not certain exactly how the bulbils get around, but it's possible they can be spread from mowing or cutting operations in areas with the plants, movement of contaminated plant matter, birds and other animals, and even moving water (rivers, streams, ditches, heavy rains). Some communities organize regular air potato harvests to try to mechanically remove plants, but this is very labor-intensive and may result in damage to other vegetation. Because most of the affected areas are empty lots (at least in my neighborhood), there is little concern for this pest, but as it continues to spread and grow, we may soon have to pay it more attention.

Reference: UF/IFAS, Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants, Air potato, <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/node/133>, accessed 27 Sep 2011.



Air potato leaf & bulbil



2 years ago, there was no air potato here



# and the Bugglies

David Tibbetts, UF/IFAS Florida Master Gardener

## Ants!

This is another topic that has literally bitten me on occasion. I seem to be something of an ant magnet—seems like whenever I garden, I come away with one or more bites. These are not as painful, to me at least, as some other garden insect stings, but they do leave a bump that itches for quite awhile.

Do ants bite or sting? Unfortunately, the answer is yes and yes. A fire ant bites to anchor itself to its intended victim, then stings and, if allowed to remain in place, will sting multiple times, sometimes resulting in a circle of stings around the bite location. Other ants bite.



Fire ant



Fire ant stings

Our most common ant species are fire ants, with native and imported varieties, also known as red ants. It seems that the imported version arrived in the USA for the first time in 1905 via a ship from South America that arrived in Mobile, AL. Now, they can be found throughout the southeast and southwest U.S. They may live for years undetected until something happens to disturb their homes, like our recent heavy rains. When we do know about them, usually we see a characteristic ant hill or mound, or we unknowingly blunder into a less conspicuous ant home with painful results. Other commonly found ants are the pharaoh, ghost, carpenter, crazy, thief, acrobat, and big-headed ants.

Ants can be recognized from other insects because they have a narrow waist with one or two joints (nodes) between the thorax and abdomen. Also, ants have elbowed antennae.

Winged reproductives have four wings with the first pair being much larger in size than the hind pair. Ants are frequently confused with termites. However, termites have a broad waist between the thorax and the abdomen, and termite reproductives have four wings of equal size.



Worker and male reproductives of the Tortugas carpenter ant

There are three basic types of ants in a mound—the male and female reproductives [the queen(s) which may live for years and lay many thousands of eggs, and the males that exist solely to mate and die within several days] and the workers, which are infertile females. The queen ants start life with wings, but usually lose these after mating, their sole purpose being to lay eggs. The male reproductives also have wings and their sole purpose is to mate with a female reproductive. Males are not usually present except in large colonies that have plenty of food. The ants we generally come across are workers whose job it is to construct and guard the nest, forage for food, and feed both the adult and larval ants in the nest.

Ants have an egg, larva, pupa, and adult stage. The eggs are almost microscopic in size and hatch into soft legless larvae. The larvae are fed by workers, usually on predigested, regurgitated food. Most larvae are fed liquids, although some older larvae are able to chew and digest solids. The pupa resembles the adult except that it is soft, uncolored and immobile. In many ant species, the pupa is in a cocoon spun by the larva. Six weeks to two months are required for an egg to develop into an adult in some species.

Ants establish new colonies by two main methods: flights of winged reproductives and ‘budding’. The most common method is for male and female reproductives to leave the nest on mating flights. The mated queen constructs a cavity or cell and rears a brood unaided by workers. The small first brood workers then

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

forage for food. The colony grows in size and numbers as more young are produced. ‘Budding’ occurs when one or more queens leave the nest accompanied by workers who aid in establishing and caring for the new colony. Some of the most difficult ant species to control spread colonies by budding. Pharaoh ants, some kinds of fire ants, and ghost ants spread colonies by budding.

Most ants eat a wide variety of foods, although some have specialized tastes. Fire ants feed on honeydew, sugars, proteins, oils, seeds, plants and insects; pharaoh ants feed on sugars, proteins, oils and insects; crazy ants like sugars, protein, and insects; and carpenter ants prefer sugars and insects. Ants use scouts to locate food. When a scouting ant finds promising food, she carries it or a piece of it back to the nest. Some ants leave scent trails that others can follow to the food source. Ants require water and will travel some distance for it if necessary. Workers are able to bring water to the colony in their guts.

Despite their name and where they are found, Florida carpenter ants do not eat wood (as is the case with termites) but excavate galleries in it to rear their young. They feed on honeydew from sucking insects and household food scraps and do not damage sound wood to any extent.

The best defense against ant colonization is prevention. In the home, block potential paths into the house like small openings under doors or around windows; the same precautions that one might take to improve energy efficiency in the home can also prevent an insect infestation. Keep the inside of the house clean; wipe up food spills promptly and keep food in tightly closed containers. Around the house, try to eliminate the sources of honeydew that attract ants, like aphids and whiteflies.

If, despite your efforts, an infestation of ants does occur, consult with the local extension office to come up with a plan to eradicate the problem. There are many products on the market for getting rid of ants, but it is important to know where they’re coming from and determine the best way of attacking them.

Finally, anyone who has a history of allergic reactions should get tested to determine their susceptibility to a severe reaction to ant bites or stings. Some common sense precautions if you are aware of ants in your garden:

- Don’t go barefoot in areas where they may be present on the ground
- Avoid mowing or gardening where they are collecting food.
- Keep sweet items covered (things like soda cans and ripe fruit), and dispose of rotting fruit promptly.

#### References

- UF Publication Number: ENY-203, Ants, P. G. Koehler, R. M. Pereira and F. M. Oi (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ig080>).
- The Fire Ant Sting, MSU Cares web site (<http://msucares.com/insects/fireants/sting.html>).



Ghost ant

Crazy ant

Big-headed ant

Pharaoh ant

Acrobat ant



# Fresh from Florida

## Fresh From Florida: Avocado

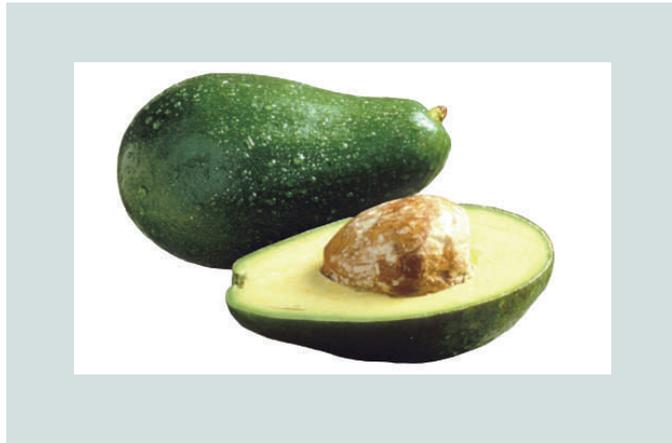
*Sharon A. Treen, County Extension Director and Family and Consumer Sciences Agent*

### **Nutrition Facts about Florida Avocados:**

One medium avocado contains around 17 grams of fiber, almost 7 grams of protein, 1067 mg of potassium, and more than 400 IU of Vitamin A. Due to their vitamin and mineral content, they are a guilt-free treat.

### **Florida Avocados:**

Creamy, buttery and full of flavor. With one bite you will understand why this fruit is so popular. Native to Mexico and Central and South America, the primary centers of production for Florida avocados are Miami-Dade and Collier counties. They are available from late May through March. With around 25 varieties grown in Florida, avocados are sure to be in a store near you. Most of the Florida varieties have half the oil of others, making them a viable alternative for those who love flavor but want to reduce the amount of fat in their diets.



### **Selecting and Storing Avocado:**

When selecting a Florida avocado, look for fruits that are heavy for their size and free of blemishes, with deep green skin. The flesh inside will range from pale to rich yellow with a green tinge. Ripe avocados yield to gentle pressure and have a creamy texture similar to butter or custard. Unripe avocados will ripen when placed in a paper bag on the counter for 2 or 3 days. Once ripened you may store avocados in the refrigerator for several days. Avocados are best when eaten fresh. From the main ingredient in guacamole, to a puree added to your favorite salad dressing or to slices added to sandwiches and salads, Florida avocados liven up any meal.

### **Did you know that:**

Avocados are native to Mexico and Central and South America. They are harvested in Florida from late-May through March. Typical size is 2 1/2 to 14 inches long. Allow to ripen at room temperature until soft. Flesh is yellow-green to yellow; and creamy with a slightly nutty flavor. Best eaten fresh, they may be refrigerated for 1-3 days. Low in fat, no cholesterol, good source of protein, potassium, iron, and vitamins C and B. Use fresh and in salads, guacamole and dips.



**Crusty peppered bacon  
and avocado sandwich  
with herbed mayo**

*Makes 2 sandwiches*

Source: *The Florida Chef*, <http://www.thefloridachef.com/>

**Ingredients:**

- 6 slices peppered bacon
- 5 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoons fresh garlic chives, chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill, chopped
- 1 firm, 8 to 10 ounce, ripe avocado
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 4 slices whole-grain bread, toasted
- 1/2 cup sprouts

**Preparation**

Stir together mayonnaise, garlic chives, dill, salt and pepper to taste in a small bowl. Cook peppered bacon in a 12-inch heavy bottom skillet over medium heat, turning occasionally, until crispy, then transfer to paper towels and allow to drain. Halve, pit, and peel avocado, then slice lengthwise onto a plate. Squeeze lemon juice over avocado slices to prevent browning. Assemble sandwiches with toast, herb mayonnaise, avocado, peppered bacon, and sprouts, seasoning with salt and pepper.

**Florida blue crab salad with  
avocado**

*Makes 2 servings.*

**Ingredients:**

- 1/3 cup red onion, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, finely chopped
- 3 teaspoons fresh squeezed lime juice
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon lime zest
- 8 ounces jumbo lump blue crabmeat, picked over for shells
- 1 large ripe avocado, halved, pitted, and peeled

**Preparation**

Mix together red onion, mayonnaise, cilantro, lime juice, cumin and lime zest in medium sized mixing bowl. Gently mix in crabmeat. Season salad with salt and pepper. Drizzle avocado halves with remaining 1 teaspoon lime juice to prevent discoloration and season with salt and pepper. Arrange avocado halves, cut side up, on plates. Fill tops of avocado with crab salad. Garnish salad with lime wedges.

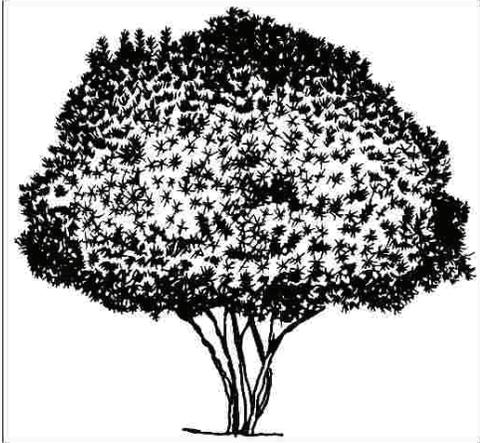


# The Urban Forest

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson, UF/IFAS Environmental Horticulture Dep't.

## Waxmyrtle *Myrica cerifera*

**Introduction.** Multiple, twisted trunks with smooth, light grey bark, aromatic, olive green leaves, and clusters of grey-blue, waxy berries on female plants which are attractive to wildlife are just some of the reasons Southern Waxmyrtle is such a popular landscape plant. Most specimens form a multi-stemmed, open, rounded canopy of weak trunks and branches. This rapidly-growing, small, evergreen native tree is capable of reaching a height of 25 feet with an equal spread but is usually seen in the 10 to 20-foot range.



Sometimes used as a large shrubby screen, the Waxmyrtle is ideal for use as a small tree, with the lower limbs removed to reveal its picturesque form. One, or several clustered together, provide pleasing dappled shade for terraces or patios.

**General Information.** The Waxmyrtle is a native to North America known also as the Southern Bayberry. It thrives in USDA hardiness zones 7B through 11 and can be used in the home landscape as a screen, on the deck or patio, as a hedge and in containers or planters.

**Description.** The Waxmyrtle can reach heights of 15 to 25 feet and a spread of 20 to 25 feet with an irregular crown of moderate density. It's a fast grower. Its fruit is small (less than 0.5 inch), round, bluish in color, and attracts birds. The waxmyrtle will grow in vari-

ous types of soil and sun conditions, making it viable in just about any landscape.

**Use and Management.** Very tough and easily-grown, Southern Waxmyrtle can tolerate a variety of landscape settings from full sun to partial shade, wet swamplands or high, dry and alkaline areas. Growth is thin in total shade. It is also very salt tolerant (soil and aerosol), making it suitable for seaside applications. Growth twice each year eliminates the tall, lanky branches and reduces the tendency for branches to droop. Some landscape managers hedge the crown into a multi-stemmed, dome-shaped topiary. Plants spaced 10 feet apart, maintained in this manner, can create a nice canopy of shade for pedestrian traffic. Plants should be watered well until established and will then require no further care. The only drawback to the plant is its tendency to sprout from the roots. This can be a nuisance as they need to be removed several times each year to keep the tree looking sharp. However, in a naturalized garden this thick growth could be an advantage, since it would provide good nesting cover for wildlife. Only female trees produce fruit provided there is a male nearby, but seeds do not appear to become a weed problem in the landscape. The cultivar 'Pumila' is a dwarf form, less than three feet high. *Myrica pensylvanica*, Northern Bayberry, is a more cold-hardy species and the source of wax for bayberry candles. Propagation is by seeds, which germinate easily and rapidly, tip cuttings, division of the stolons or transplanting wild plants.

**Pests and Diseases.** Caterpillars and mites may occasionally attack the foliage. Webworms are common in some landscapes; prune to remove infestation. Cankers may form on old branches and trunks and kill them. Also, a lethal wilt disease caused by the fungus *Fusarium oxysporum* and *Fusarium* spp. has been recently noted attacking Waxmyrtle plants in central and south Florida. The vascular tissue is irregularly stained purple but not decayed as a result of the disease. Root injury and nitrogen fertilization encourage the disease.

**Reference.** *Myrica cerifera*, Southern Waxmyrtle; Edward F. Gilman & Dennis G. Watson; <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/ST/ST41000.pdf>.

# Garden Calendar

*Jack Resser, Master Gardener*

## O ctober

### General

If it does not rain, water as needed every seven to ten days, putting down approximately one-half to three-fourths inch of water each time.

Do not use insecticides unless absolutely necessary. Many beneficial insects are active in the fall and if allowed to live will help reduce bug problems next spring.

### Lawn

Do not fertilize after mid-October. If you missed the September fertilization, do not compensate by fertilizing late this month.

Due to slower growth at this time of year, you can reduce your mowing frequency. Remember, only one third of the grass blade should be cut at a time.

If you need to over seed with ryegrass to fill in bare spots in the lawn, you may do so this month.

### Food Garden

Ornamental gourds are ready to harvest. Wait until dry on the vine to pick.

Plant this month: beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, collards, endive, rutabaga, kohlrabi, mustard, onions, radish, kale, spinach, strawberries, Swiss chard, and turnips.



Florida Strawberries – R Micieli

### Fruit

Navel, Hamlin, and Parson Brown oranges should be checked for ripeness starting this month. They may still be green—you will have to pick one and taste to determine ripeness. Do **not** wait until they turn yellow/orange to check for ripeness.

If you did not fertilize your citrus last month, then you can still do a final fertilization by the second week of this month.

### Landscape

Mulch flower and shrub beds for winter. Apply up to two inches of mulch.

Annuals to plant are bachelor buttons, calendula, dianthus, delphinium, hollyhocks, foxglove, larkspur, ornamental cabbage, poppies, pansy, petunia, Shasta daisy, snapdragon, and sweet alyssums.

Bulbs may be planted this month! Many reliable varieties include agapanthus, African iris, amaryllis, Aztec lily, calla, daylilies, hurricane lily, narcissus, spider lily, walking iris, and zephyr (rain) lily.

If you missed fertilizing your palm trees last month, you can do the final application no later than the second week of this month.

Poinsettia, Christmas cactus and kalanchoe require uninterrupted periods of decreasing light to bloom. If you have them indoors, put them in a closet each evening for four to six weeks to give them time to set blooms. Outside, ensure that they do not get unexpected light after it gets dark. If the dark period is interrupted, flowering will be delayed or not occur at all.

## November

### General

Water every ten to fourteen days or as needed, putting down one-half to three-fourths inch of water each time.

Potted houseplants that have been outdoors all summer and fall can be injured by temperatures as low as fifty-five degrees. Now is the time to bring them back in. Clean up and inspect plants for insects prior to bringing them back inside.

Black widow spiders are full grown and active by this time of year. Be careful when reaching into dark areas in the garden or garage.

### Lawn

Brown patch disease may begin rearing its ugly head this month if weather is rainy and soils stay wet. If an area begins to turn yellow and stolons begin to decay or rot, spot treat with a fungicide labeled for use on lawns as needed. Reduce watering frequency to the recommended rate and frequency to help culturally control this disease problem.

If you were plagued with dollarweed this summer, you can treat the lawn with a pre-emergent herbicide now. Follow the directions on the label.

### Food Garden

Early in the month you can plant arugula, parsley, sage, thyme, chives, and rosemary for fresh herbs for your recipes!

You can also plant beets, broccoli, cabbage, collards, endive, kohlrabi, mustard, onions, radish, spinach, and Swiss chard.

If no soil pH test has been done in over two years, have it checked at the Extension Office.

### Fruit

Many varieties of citrus are ripe by this month, check routinely.

### Landscape

Any trees and fully grown shrubs that need to be transplanted should be root pruned this month. Late fall and winter is a good time to transplant.

Annuals and perennials that can be planted are calendula, dianthus, delphinium, foxglove, larkspur, flowering cabbage, flowering kale, pansy, petunia, Shasta daisy, verbena, violas, snapdragon.

You can also plant agapanthus, African iris, amaryllis, aztec lily, calla lily, daylily, hurricane lily, kaffir lily, walking iris, narcissus, and zephyr (rain) lily.



Navel Oranges - J Resser

## D ecember

### General

If it does not rain, water every ten to fourteen days or as needed, putting down one half to three-fourths inch of water each time.

If you have not had a soil pH test in more than two years, you should have one done at the Extension Office.

### Lawn

The warm season grasses (St. Augustinegrass, Bahiagrass, Zoysiagrass, and Bermudagrass) should be going dormant at this time of year. It is perfectly fine to have a brown (dormant) lawn from now until February or March.

St. Augustinegrass weed control can be done at this time. Products such as Atrazine may be used during the cool season for controlling broadleaf weeds. Follow the label instructions for application rates and frequency.

Winter annual and broadleaf weeds in Bahiagrass lawns can be controlled with 2,4-D, which is a post-emergent herbicide. Follow the label instructions for application rates and frequency.

### Food Garden

Peppers, eggplant, and strawberries planted in September should be ready to enjoy.

Crops that can be planted: broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, collards, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mustard, onions, parsley, English peas and radish.

### Fruit

Many orange, grapefruit, and tangerine varieties will be ripe this month; check their progress.

### Landscape

Any cold sensitive plants should be covered on nights when the temperature is expected to drop below thirty-five degrees. Be sure to uncover them the next morning so they will be exposed to the sunlight.

Bedding plants to plant this month include: carnations, digitalis, pansies, petunias, shasta daisies, and snapdragons.

Happy Holidays!!



Poinsettia – R Micieli



# Discover Natural Florida

## Jungle Hut and Washington Oaks Beaches

Karen Suggs, UF/IFAS Florida Master Gardener



Sea oats

Whether you're new to Flagler County or have lived here for decades, chances are one of the first things you discovered was the beach. And like most people in their rush to get to the sand and surf, you probably overlooked the many plants that cover the dunes. These plants are some of the toughest in nature, able to withstand toxic salt, shifting sands, hurricanes, and whatever else Mother Nature throws at them. To appreciate their resilience and beauty, visit the beaches at Jungle Hut and Washington Oaks. The parks are located within a few miles of each other off highway A1A in northeast Flagler County.



Cordgrass

Dropseed

Probably the most recognized coastal plants are Sea Oats. The golden, oat-like seeds of these grasses mature during the summer, often reaching heights of six to seven feet. The plant's clumping habit traps and holds sand blown by the wind, which results in dune formation and erosion control. They are so important to the beach ecosystem that Florida Statutes prohibit the cutting, harvesting, removal, or eradication of sea oats on any public land.



Dune sunflowers

Other common coastal grasses include Saltmeadow Cordgrass and Seashore Dropseed. Cordgrass is a perennial plant that grows throughout the dune, including on the crest. Dropseed, also a perennial, inhabits the dune and may be found on the open beach as well.



Railroad vine



Blanket flower

Wildflowers also grace the beaches. Four of the most colorful plants you'll notice at both parks are Dune Sunflowers, Blanket Flowers, Railroad Vine and Beach Morning Glory. A relative of daisies, Dune Sunflowers are sprawling perennials that bloom from June to September; Blanket Flowers are annuals that bloom from May to October. Both flowers are typically found on the west side of the dune. Conversely, Railroad Vines and Beach Morning Glories grow on the dune crest and both sides of the dune face. They bloom spring through fall. Although sometimes the names are used interchangeably, Railroad Vines have purple/pink flowers with a vine that runs above ground, while Beach Morning Glories have white flowers with yellow centers and vines that are often buried in the sand.



Morning glory



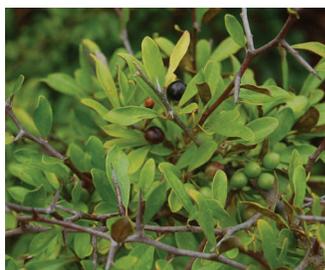
Painted leaf

Two other distinctive coastal wildflowers are Painted Leaf and Cowpea. Both can be found at Washington Oaks next to the boardwalk. Painted Leaf, also called wild poinsettia, is just like its holiday relative in that the plant's milky-looking sap may cause an allergic reaction when handled. Cowpea is a perennial, twining vine with one-inch, bright yellow flowers and long, bean-like seed pods.



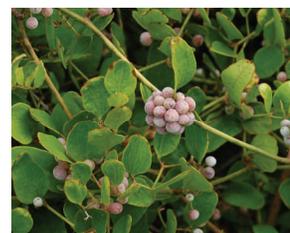
Cowpea

(Continued on page 15)



Tough buckthorn

The coastal dunes are also home to several interesting shrubs, shrub-like vines, and cacti. Next to the boardwalk at Jungle Hut beach are Tough Buckthorn and Earleaf Greenbrier. Tough Buckthorn is a thorny tree, roughly 10 feet high, with salt-pruned branches. The plant's dark berries mature in the summer and fall. Earleaf Greenbrier is a vine that grows in intertwined tangles resembling a shrub. As its berries ripen, they change from a light reddish color to purple and eventually black.



Earleaf greenbrier

On the ocean side of Jungle Hut beach, you can find Beach Elder and Silver-leaf Croton. Both Beach Elder and Silver-leaf Croton are perennial, shrub-like herbs with distinctive-looking fruit. They can be found on the dune crest and upper beach.



Beach elder

Finally, the Prickly-pear cactus is a common resident of Florida's coastal dunes. There is a nice example at Washington Oaks near the boardwalk. The cacti are a favorite of Gopher tortoises, who eat both the pads and fruits. The plant's large, yellow flowers appear in the spring.



Silver-leaf croton



Prickly-pear cactus



# Master Gardener Spotlight

## Master Gardeners Gardens

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

Ever wonder what a Master Gardener's yard looks like? Well, here are a few of our "Star" Gardeners with some of their favorite plants.

Carmen C's Garden-



**BANANA**



Allium  
Pink Sensation

Corky R's Garden-



**Before**



**After**

Bob T.'s Garden-



Cont. pg 18

(Continued from page 1)

from the property owner to put your refuse into his/her property, then it is illegal. Most areas of the county have one day per week when lawn refuse is collected. The items should be bagged or tied up to facilitate loading, or may be placed in trash bins. Extremely large items, like large trees or tree branches may also be removed by the weekly yard waste pick-up, but items should be cut into pieces so that they can be easily picked up by a person.

**Q:** My citrus fruit is splitting?

**A:** The cause of this is environmental, most likely poor irrigation. The solution is to check your irrigation system to ensure the plants are receiving even water throughout the year. The affected fruit should be picked and disposed of.

**Q:** My citrus/poinsettia/oak/etc. has black or white powder/mold/stuff/flies—what should I do?

**A:** Bring a sample of the affected plant to the Extension Office to get a solution properly targeted to the problem. The Extension Office staff can properly identify the culprit and recommend a solution.



## Creating a Flower Bed

Flower beds are a fun and colorful element of many gardens. For your flower gardens to thrive, follow a few simple rules.

Keep your beds small so that they're easy to change out with the seasons. Prepare the soil by adding at least six inches of rich organic matter to our normally sandy soils.

For the most impact, use only one or two types of flowers in each bed. Choose plants with similar water and light requirements, and mulch your beds to minimize weeds and conserve moisture.

To provide the finishing touch, try edging your beds with bricks, flat stones, or colorful broken crockery. There are flowers for every Florida season, so you can always have colorful flower beds to brighten your landscape.



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.*

Mary Ann S's Garden



Walking Iris

Doris B's Garden



Cardamom Flower

Chuck S's Garden

Eleanor F's Garden



Simpson's Stopper



They definitely practice what they preach!