



YOUR NORTH FLORIDA YARD & GARDEN

Flagler County Extension Service & UF/IFAS Florida
Master Gardeners

ISSUE XXXVI

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From the MG Desk...

David Tibbetts, Newsletter Editor



2011 is done and 2012 is here with all the added excitement of a general election year. It'll be hard to concentrate on gardening! But, that's what we're here for so we'll do our best. Keep those questions coming to the Flagler County UF/IFAS Extension Office. If you'd like to do your own research, use the University of Florida's 'Solutions For Your Life' website - it is THE resource for the articles in this and every newsletter (<http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/>). Happy gardening!

Q: How can I diagnose and treat my various citrus problems - e.g., orange tree leaves stressed, wind burn, leaf fall/no fruit, foliage sparse/yellowing?

A: You may be able to determine your problem with a visit to the following web site, entitled Citrus Problems In The Home Landscape, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs141>. There you will find topics such as dead wood and twig dieback, fruit drop, sunburn, fruit splitting, premature fruit drying (granulation), yellow vein chlorosis, alternaria brown spot, citrus scab, greasy spot, foot rot, sooty mold, aphids, and citrus leafminer, among others. In the case of leaf fall and lack of fruit, there may be multi-

(Continued on page 19)



FLAGLER COUNTY EXTENSION SERVICE &
UF/IFAS FLORIDA MASTER GARDENERS

Flagler County Master Gardeners
Flagler County Extension Service
150 Sawgrass Road

Phone: (386) 437-7464

Fax: (386) 586-2102

E-mail:

mgardener@flaglercounty.org

BE SURE TO VISIT THE FLAGLER COUNTY
EXTENSION WEBSITE AT

WWW.FLAGLERCOUNTY.ORG

OR

WWW.SOLUTIONSFORYOURLIFE.COM

UF/IFAS Florida Master Gardener Newsletter Writers:

David Tibbetts, Master Gardener
Nicky Makruski, Master Gardener

Newsletter Advisors:

Ruth Micieli, Horticulture Program Assistant and
Master Gardener Coordinator

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

Watering schedule for established landscapes:

Once per week from now until 3/11/12

Odd # addresses- Saturdays,

Even # addresses- Sundays

Non-residential- Tuesdays.

For more information on Palm Coast water restric-
tions go to [http://palmcoastgov.com/resident/
pccparadise/irrigation.htm#water](http://palmcoastgov.com/resident/pccparadise/irrigation.htm#water)

Upcoming Programs at the Flagler County Extension Service:

Joy of Bonsai– January 13-15, 2012 Sponsored by Kawa Bonsai Society

For program schedule, fees and registration information go to <http://bonsai-bsf.com>

Irrigation Workshop- Saturday, February 25, 2012 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.

Spring Horticulture Program Series—Tuesdays March 6th thru April 28th, 10 am-12 pm.

3/6/12 From Frost to Flower

3/13/12 Spring Lawn Care

3/20/12 Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Principles

3/27/12 Adopting a Florida Friendly Landscape

No fee for attending programs but **pre-registration required**. Contact the Flagler County Extension Service 386-437-7464 or e-mail rmicieli@flaglercounty.org to pre-register.

The Flagler County Extension Service is located next to the Flagler County Recreation Area and Fairgrounds at 150 Sawgrass Road, Bunnell.



The Good...

By David Tibbetts,
UF/IFAS Master Gardener

Christmas Plants - Holiday's Over, What Now?

Many of us have received plants for gifts at Christmas time. I recently received my fourth poinsettia, in seven years. They make a great burst of color in the house. But when the season's over, I haven't always made the best choices in finding permanent places for these plants. So, what should be done to find a permanent place for the various types of plants you may have received during the holidays?



12/11/11 Poinsettia,
D. Tibbetts

Poinsettia. I think I erred in planting my gift poinsettia just outside my front door in early 2008 (photo at right). Though it has flourished, it's crammed into too small an area with a cardboard fern on one side, sidewalk on the other and lawn and hedge on the other two sides. So, it would be even larger if not confined to such small quarters. Additionally, it is too close to the front door and artificial light at night.



12/7/11 Planted poinsettia.
D. Tibbetts

The best potted plants for establishing in the landscape are ones that have been in good light while indoors and have remained green and healthy.

Red varieties usually establish better than other colors. (I had a white variety that failed to thrive.) Purchase plants that are blooming in mid-November because these early flowering varieties are ones that will also bloom earliest in the landscape.

1. Choose a sunny spot that will not receive any artificial light at night. Delay or disruption of flowering will occur if fall temperatures are too warm or too cold or if the required dark period is interrupted.
2. Plant as soon as danger of frost is past.
3. Cut off the fading bracts, leaving 4–6 inches of the stem on each branch.
4. Fertilize with a balanced fertilizer monthly from May to September in north Florida.
5. Poinsettias prefer moist, well drained soils with a soil pH between 5.5 and 6.5.
6. Place the plant in the soil at the same depth it was growing in the container. Gently firm the soil around the plant and water well.
7. Keep the plant mulched and well watered until established.
8. Prune in early spring when the floral display is over and the danger of frost has passed. Cut back to within 12 to 18 inches of the ground or to living tissue if the plant was damaged by cold. Poinsettias may become "leggy" and unattractive if not pruned regularly during the growing season. Cut back once a month, if needed, leaving four leaves on each shoot. Discontinue pruning after September 10th. Flower buds will begin to develop in October.



'Merry Christmas'
amaryllis.

Amaryllis. These showy plants, aka "Christmas lily," can be grown in the landscape here. Amaryllis bulbs make a great gift that can be enjoyed during the holiday season, as they rapidly grow and flower.

1. Plant amaryllis bulbs anytime between September and January.
2. Amaryllis does best in light shade such as under pine trees. In heavy shade, they will be thin and spindly and flower poorly.
3. Amaryllis requires well-drained soils. If the site does not drain properly, create a

The Good...(cont.)

raised bed to provide improved drainage. Till the soil and amend with a 3- to 4-inch layer of organic matter such as peat or compost and 2 to 3 pounds of 6-6-6, or an equivalent amount of other complete fertilizer per 100 square feet of bed. Slow-release forms of mineral or organic fertilizer are best to minimize leaching of nutrients into water resources. The amended soil should be leveled and moistened.

4. Once the site has been prepared, place the bulbs over the bed area in neat rows or in naturalistic drifts for an informal garden effect. Plant 12 to 15 inches apart with the neck of the bulb protruding above the ground. Water newly planted amaryllis and keep them moist (not waterlogged) until the plants are well-established.
5. The bulbs may be left in the ground for several years or dug and reset every September or October. It is not necessary to dig, separate, and replant each year, but doing so will encourage uniform flowering and larger blooms. Digging also provides an opportunity to discard unhealthy bulbs, to remove young offsets (bulblets) and to amend the bed with organic matter.
6. Control weeds by spreading a 2-inch layer of mulch over the bed at planting time and remove any that appear.
7. Apply two or three light applications of fertilizer during the growing season (March through September). Use a low-nitrogen, general, slow-release garden fertilizer and follow label directions.
8. Keep soil moist during times of growth and flowering. Frequency of watering will depend greatly on soil type, time of year and weather conditions.
9. Remove dead blooms before seeds are produced. If not, flowering the following season will be greatly reduced. Removing dead blooms also helps to maintain the aesthetic value of the planting and may prevent disease problems.

Rosemary Christmas Trees. Rosemary is a great gift. It is something that continues to give long after the holiday season with its aromatic leaves that are used for many purposes. Additionally, for the gardener, rosemary is a dream plant - it needs very little in the way of care, is very drought tolerant, and can withstand the extreme temperatures we have in Flagler County. Rosemary pruned to look like a small Christmas tree can be found in garden centers when the season is upon us.



Pruned Rosemary tree



Formerly pruned rosemary tree??

The fact that rosemary is drought tolerant can be either a positive or negative characteristic (negative because it doesn't give any indication when it is drying out until it is so dry that it is dead). This is the reason that so many of the potted rosemary Christmas trees that are purchased end up dying fairly soon. Rosemary plants put out tiny, shallow, hair-like roots which insist on good drainage. On the flip side though, the plant cannot tolerate drying out because of a lack of water. Many plants have leaves that wilt so that you know you need to water them but the leaves of rosemary don't ever wilt so you don't get that very important warning. When a potted rosemary Christmas tree is purchased it is usually a large plant in a small container. This means that there is probably a pretty good size root mass with not much soil to hold onto the water. The more soil a container holds the longer the plant can go between watering. Here are some hints to help your potted plant survive for years.

1. Replant your tree into a larger, preferably, clay pot.
2. Add a lightweight, fast-draining potting mix and plant your new plant so that the top of the root ball is at the same level as the surrounding potting mix.
3. Water the plant every week or two and make sure that a saucer is below to catch the water that

drains out.

4. Keep the container near a bright window or outside in full sun.
5. If you want to keep it in the original pot for awhile, put a saucer underneath it and give it a thorough watering every few days but only let it sit in the saucer of excess water for a couple of hours. Then pour out the excess water.
6. Keep it near a sunny window or outside in full sun.

Another option would be to plant your rosemary tree outside in full sun either immediately after you receive it or after the holidays.

1. Before planting, place the container in a bowl and water it well so that the plant is sitting in the bowl of water for a half an hour or so. This will make sure that the root ball is totally saturated before being planted into the sandy soil.
2. Loosen the rootball if pot-bound and plant in a sunny location. Place mulch around the root zone of the plant.
3. Water in the newly planted rosemary. If it is planted in sandy, well-draining soil and you have an irrigation system, the rosemary should do fine.



Christmas cactus



Another Christmas cactus

Christmas cactus. Christmas cactus is a popular gift plant during the holiday season because of its colorful blooms and easy-care reputation. Plus, these plants are widely available at garden centers and supermarkets. Like poinsettias, Christmas cacti start the flowering process when the days become shorter and the nights become cooler. In order to flower, Christmas cactus typically need at least twelve hours of darkness. Christmas cactus are most often treated as houseplants, though they can be grown outdoors if they're protected from freezing temperatures.

Planting and care:

1. Grow best in bright, indirect light. Try placing them within six feet of a south-, east-, or west-facing window.
2. Fertilize every one to two months during the growing season (April to September).
3. Use a well-drained potting medium and only water the plants when the upper inch of soil feels dry.
4. Prefers to be a bit root-bound, so be sure not to choose a pot too large for your plant.
5. Pruning the plants will encourage branching and flowering, but don't prune beyond mid-summer. You can use the trimmings to propagate new plants.
6. Place cuttings that have two or three jointed sections in a well-drained sterile media. Keep them moist and in bright indirect light until roots form and new growth appears.



Christmas cacti

Preventing problems:

1. Christmas cactus can be prone to bud drop, so avoid extreme environmental changes. Keep them away from drafts or heat sources (vents, fireplaces, or televisions).
2. Avoid letting the plants get too dry between waterings. The stems and roots can rot if the soil stays wet, so be sure to use a well-drained potting medium and water only when it begins to dry out.
3. Be sure to keep your Christmas cactus away from artificial light during the night from October through December if you want it to bloom during the holiday season.



The Bad...

By: David Tibbetts, UF/IFAS Master Gardener

Squirrels!

An ubiquitous sight in most Flagler County yards is the gray squirrel. Though not the only possible type of squirrel to be found in the county, it seems to be the sole squirrel occupant of my neighborhood. Other types of squirrels that might be found here are the fox and southern flying squirrels. Depending on your fondness (or lack thereof) for these furry, bushy-tailed critters, you may enjoy their playful antics and even encourage them with food handouts, but there is a dark side.



Gray squirrel
(*Sciurus carolinensis*)

Squirrels are highly adaptable creatures that will accept whatever comes their way with regard to food or housing, and even take advantage of their sometimes astonishing athleticism to help themselves to food and housing not meant for them. Squirrels can cause a wide variety of problems in the home landscape. They can disturb your plants, often digging up seeds or consuming flowers. They are also reported to have damaged or killed trees by eating bark.

Here are some basics some facts about squirrel biology:

- ◆ Fox and gray squirrels breed when they are 1 year old in mid-December or early January and again in June.
- ◆ Young squirrels may breed only once in their first year. The gestation period is 42 to 45 days. During the breeding season, noisy mating chases take place when one or more males pursue a female through the trees.
- ◆ They nest in tree cavities, human-made squirrel boxes, or in leaf nests. Leaf nests are constructed with a frame of sticks filled with dry leaves and lined with leaves, strips of bark, corn husks, or other materials. Survival of young in cavities is higher than in leaf nests, and cavities are the preferred nest sites. About 3 young comprise a litter. At birth they are hairless, blind, and their ears are closed. Newborns weigh about 1/2 ounce (14 g) at birth and 3 to 4 ounces (84 to 112 g) at 5 weeks. Squirrel young begin to explore outside the nest about the time they are weaned at 10 to 12 weeks. At weaning they are about half of their adult weight.
- ◆ Home range size depends on the season and availability of food and may vary from 1 to 100 acres (0.4 to 40 ha). Squirrels move within their range according to the availability of food, seeking mast-bearing (fruits and nuts) forests in fall and favoring tender buds in the spring.
- ◆ During fall, squirrels may travel 50 miles (80 km) or more in search of better habitat.
- ◆ Fox and gray squirrels are vulnerable to numerous parasites and diseases. Ticks, mange mites, fleas, and internal parasites are common.
- ◆ Squirrel hunters often notice bot fly larvae (called “wolves” or “warbles”) protruding from the skin. These fly larvae do not impair the quality of the meat for eating.
- ◆ Squirrels are a food source for hawks, owls, snakes, and several mammalian predators. Predation seems to have little effect on squirrel populations. Typically about half the squirrels in a population die each year. In the wild, squirrels over 4 years old are rare, while in captivity individuals may live 10 years or more.
- ◆ Flying squirrels are unique in that they are active at night. All other species are only active during the day.

The Bad...(cont.)



It is not recommended that squirrels be fed, at least not deliberately. An overabundance of food will lead to a larger number of squirrels than can be supported by the natural habitat. If the source of the additional food gets cut off (e.g., extended vacation, move, loss of interest), the squirrels will turn their attention to other potential food sources to survive. This has led to the death of trees due to squirrels girdling them, after eating other more easily obtainable garden food sources. A fat gray

squirrel is a better neighbor than a hungry one. If you like them, plant something that will feed and shelter them. Anything that produces fruits or nuts will do, and most of us live in close proximity to oak trees, pines, or other large tree varieties that provide plenty in the way of food and housing options.

Q. How does one get rid of squirrels if they are a problem?

A. This is not a very straight-forward proposition. Trapping them and releasing them elsewhere is legal as long as you have written permission from the property owner where you are releasing them. They cannot be released to public lands legally, but trap and release really doesn't work well. Some homeowners report capturing 100 or more squirrels in their yard and still seem to have just as many as before as those from the surrounding area quickly came in to fill the void that had been created. Poisons cannot be legally used to control squirrels. Visual and odor repellents typically don't work to rid them from an area, but taste repellents can sometimes be effective. Try hot pepper sprays. Blood meal and garlic also seems to repel squirrels. Landscape cloth or poultry wire can be laid over garden areas to prevent digging by squirrels, but by all means stop the intentional feeding of them by your neighbors – it has to be a community effort if the squirrel population is to be reduced.

Q. What does one do if squirrels make a home in your attic?

A. This is a slightly tricky situation. The obvious solution is to ensure the eaves of the house are squirrel-tight, but this must be done after the squirrels have exited the attic for the day. Squirrels are daytime workers, so it's a pretty safe bet that they will not be "home" during the day. However, trapping one or more in attic is definitely bad. Squirrels can chew through just about anything, so it's important to ensure they're all out before sealing their entrance.

Squirrels are here to stay, so it's probably best to learn to live with them. But not literally - it's not a good idea to adopt wild squirrels, and may be illegal. So, the best tactic may be to "live and let live." Just not in the attic!



and the Bugglies

by: David Tibbetts, UF/IFAS Master Gardener

Dragonflies

Dragonflies are some of the most interesting insects. Their giant eyes, slim bodies, and flying prowess set them apart from average bugs. And, they are voracious pest eaters, in particular feasting on mosquitoes and flies. Dragonflies are close relatives of damselflies, which look very similar but typically are much smaller, don't fly far from water bodies, and have eyes that do not touch in the middle.

Together, they make up the insect order Odonata. Odonates are popular with both the amateur and professional because they are large, colorful, easily observable and have exceptionally charismatic behaviors. In recent years dragonflies in particular have been popular with birders as many dragonflies rival birds in wingspan, color, gregariousness, and predictability. As a result of their popularity with the public, they have become the focus of many conservation efforts in North America, Europe, and Asia.



Dragonfly adult

Odonata comprises two suborders: Anisoptera, commonly known as dragonflies; and Zygoptera, damselflies. While Flagler is home to various species of damselflies, this article will concentrate on the more easily noticed and identified dragonflies. There are six families of dragonflies found in Florida, each of which is easily identifiable.

In as buggy an environment as ours, dragonflies may be our best insect friends. These elegant insects are excellent hunters and their prey is mostly flies and mosquitoes; according to one source, they can eat their weight in pest bugs in a half-hour. Add in their attractive appearance and that's one beneficial insect that lives up to the description. Dragonflies can fly at speeds up to 30 miles per hour to avoid predators like birds and frogs. Their huge compound eyes help them see their prey, which they catch in mid-air. And contrary to some stories, dragonflies do not sting or bite people.

Most dragonfly females lay their eggs in mud or water. The nymphs hatch within a few weeks and then live in the water for up to two years. Dragonflies tend to live in areas near ponds, rivers, wetlands, or lakes. Having a garden pond will attract them, and using few or no pesticides will ensure they stick around.



Dragonfly adult

Odonates are found on every continent except for Antarctica. They lay eggs in three ways: endophytic (within plants), epiphytic (on the surface of plants), and exophytic (on water or land). Clutch sizes can be as large as 1500, with some females depositing several thousand eggs in a lifetime. Generally, eggs hatch in seven to eight days.

Immature odonates are sometimes referred to as larvae or nymphs, but because they are wholly

"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.)

aquatic, they also are referred to as naiads. Naiads live in most aquatic habitats. Some can even survive in salt water. All naiads are voracious predators feeding on everything from small invertebrates such as mosquito larvae to smaller vertebrates such as fish and frogs. Naiads will molt nine to 17 times before becoming an adult. The number of generations in a year depends on the species but in tropical habitats there may be multiple generations per year. When naiads are ready for their final molt they leave the water and crawl onto the bank or vegetation where they will molt into adults. Much like a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis, dragonflies need to pump up their wings and allow their bodies to harden before they can fly. A newly emerged dragonfly is soft, has glossy wings and the colors on the body are often pale. Several days after emerging and hardening completely, a dragonfly will have taken on the colors of an adult dragonfly. Normally, the male dragonfly is more colorful while the female will be a dull brown or gray.



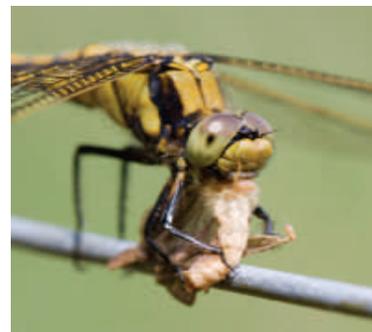
Dragonfly naiad

Dragonflies have extremely sharp vision due to their huge compound eyes. Each eye may have as many as 28,000 facets—seven times more than those of the house fly. Eighty percent of the dragonfly's brain is devoted to processing visual information, a great asset for hunting prey and avoiding predators. The adult has a voracious appetite for pest insects such as mosquitoes, black flies, horse flies, aphids and grasshoppers. Depending on species, a dragonfly's life cycle is about six months. Some of the larger dragonflies however, can live five years. As much as 95 percent of a dragonfly's life is spent in the water.



A face only a dragonfly could love

Because they are beneficial, no “pest management” recommendations exist for dragonflies. Because of their appetite for mosquitoes, they should be encouraged in our landscapes. To do this, add a water garden or pond to your landscape. Be sure to have clean, unpolluted water and shallow margins. Include native aquatic plants and retain sticks and rocks on the water's edge for larvae to emerge from the water. Avoid even small quantities of chemical sprays reaching your pond through wind drift. And although ponds do need to be cleaned occasionally, resist the temptation to remove the sediment from pond bottoms, as it provides habitat for both predators and prey.



A dragonfly eats

References: Dragonflies and Damselflies (Insecta: Odonata) <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in632>

"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 Eggplant *by Sharon Treen, County Extension Director and Family & Consumer Sciences Agent*

The eggplant was first grown some 4,000 years ago in India and Pakistan. Thomas Jefferson, who grew eggplant in his garden at Monticello, is thought to have originally introduced the plant to the United States.

A member of the nightshade family, eggplant is related to the tomato and potato. Though commonly thought of as a vegetable, it is actually a fruit, specifically a berry.

There are many varieties, ranging in color from deep purple to white, in length from 2 to 12 inches and in shape from oblong to round. In the United States, the most common is the large, pear-shaped variety with a smooth glossy dark purple skin.

Italian eggplants are similar to the large purple ones but are smaller, with a more delicate skin and finer flesh.

Oriental eggplants are slender and elongated with thinner skins and fewer seeds. They range in color from solid purple to striated shades. They are usually sweeter and smoother than the larger varieties. White eggplants are firmer and less moist. They are also closer grained, creamier and less bitter, with tougher skins than the purple variety.

Availability: Florida is one of the nation's leading producers of eggplant. Grown mostly in the central and southern parts of the state, Florida's harvest begins in late October and continues until June. Heaviest production is from December until May.

Nutritional Value: In eggplant skin, researchers have found 'nasunin,' a potent antioxidant and free radical scavenger that protects cell membranes from damage. Nasunin protects the lipids (fats) in brain cell membranes. (Source

Florida Eggplant

- ◆ Seeds are started eight to ten weeks prior to the anticipated frost-free date.
- ◆ Transplant into the garden after all danger of frost is passed.
- ◆ Eggplant is injured by frost and does best in warm seasons, including the summer in Florida.
- ◆ Usually six plants will produce all the fruits that can be used by a family of five.
- ◆ Flowers are self pollinated, but bees are helpful.
- ◆ Harvest fruits when glossy and shiny.
- ◆ Many pests and diseases which afflict tomato, pepper, and potato, can also affect eggplants. do not be plant in areas previously occupied by these close relatives.
- ◆ Common pests include the potato beetle, flea beetle, aphids, and spider mites. These can be controlled using *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), insecticidal soap or horticultural oil sprays.
- ◆ Good sanitation and crop-rotation practices are extremely important for controlling fungal disease, the most serious of which is Verticillium wilt, causing yellowing, wilting and death of plants.

USDA) Approximately 1 cup of raw eggplant contains 21 calories and small amounts of important vitamins and minerals such as B1, B6, Vitamin A, folate, copper, manganese, potassium and fiber.

Selection and care: When buying eggplant, look for a medium-sized eggplant that is fairly lightweight. Heavier, larger eggplants tend to have larger seeds which can be bitter. The eggplant skin should be smooth and relatively free of scarring. It should be firm to the touch without soft spots which indicates bruising. The cap should be green with little to no browning. Eggplant will keep up to five days in the refrigerator. Do not store in the coldest part of the refrigerator, as this will cause chilling injury which will later the texture and flavor.

Preparation and Use: Eggplant can be prepared with the skin off or intact. It is becoming more popular as a meatless, main dish adding bulk and fiber to meals with fewer calories and fat. It is also a popular side dish and can be baked, broiled, grilled, fried, stuffed, sautéed or boiled. Whichever method you choose to prepare an eggplant, cook it thoroughly. Since the flesh discolors rapidly, an eggplant should be cut just before using. The brown coloration will not affect the flavor when cooked.



Source: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Florida Spiced Eggplant Dip

Ingredients

- 2 large eggplants
- 2 large cloves garlic
- 1/2 cup low-fat mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 dash cumin
- kosher salt to taste
- fresh ground pepper to taste

Preparation

Spear the eggplants all around with a fork. Cut off the tops. Wrap in foil and bake for 1 hour at 350 degrees F or until very soft. Scoop the pulp out of the skins and mash until fine. Chill. Add minced garlic and other ingredients to taste. Best made one day before.

Yield 4 to 6 servings



Eggplant Matzo Mina

Eggplant Matzo Mina

Yield 8 to 10 servings

Ingredients

- 2 medium eggplants (about 2 lbs. total)
- 2 tbs. olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 15-oz. can low-fat tomato sauce
- 14-oz. can plum tomatoes, drained and chopped
- 2 to 3 tbs. fresh parsley, minced
- 1/2 tsp. dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp. dried basil
- 1/2 tsp. paprika
- salt and freshly ground pepper
- 6 matzos
- 1 lb. mozzarella-style cheese

Preparation

Preheat the broiler. Cut the eggplants into 1/2-inch slices and peel. Brush lightly with oil and broil on each side until tender. Heat the oil in a deep saucepan. Add the onion and garlic and sauté until golden. Add the tomato sauce, tomatoes, parsley, and seasonings. Bring to a simmer and cook over low heat, covered, for 15 minutes. Break each matzo into three strips. Fill a shallow casserole dish with lightly salted water. Place the matzo strips in it for 2 to 3 minutes until pliable but not mushy. Remove carefully to a plate.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly oil a large, shallow baking casserole and layer as follows: a thin layer of sauce, a layer of eggplant, a layer of matzo, and a layer of cheese. Repeat. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until the cheese is touched with brown spots.



The Urban Forest

Gardening in a Minute:
Saw Palmetto

The Saw Palmetto

Saw palmetto grows wild in Florida's natural areas, but it's also a great plant for home landscapes throughout the state. This native plant tolerates a range of conditions and makes a wonderful shrubby ground cover that can add textural interest beneath new or established trees. And it's highly salt-tolerant, making it ideal for coastal gardening.



Saw palmetto close-up

Saw palmetto is a slow-growing, clumping, multi-trunked shrub that typically grows four to six feet tall and equally as wide in home landscapes. It has stout stems that usually crawl across the ground and produce green, fan-shaped fronds.

For added interest, try growing the variety that has striking silver foliage and is sometimes sold under the cultivar name 'Cinerea.' It was

named a Florida Plant of the Year in 2000 and a Plant of the Decade by the Florida Nursery, Growers, & Landscape Association (FNGLA). This plant provides a beautiful backdrop for mixed borders and works well as a privacy hedge or foundation planting.



Saw palmetto bush

Saw palmetto is also great for wildlife. Not only is it a host plant for the larvae of the palmetto skipper and monk butterflies, many birds and other wildlife feed on the reddish-black fruits that ripen from August to November. Practitioners of alternative medicine maintain that the fruit can help treat urinary tract infections and increase prostate health. So, you may see folks out harvesting the fruit in the Autumn.



Saw palmetto "clump"

Known scientifically as *Serenoa repens*, saw palmetto is native to coastal areas of the Southeast and can be found growing as far north as South Carolina and as far west as Texas.

Planting and Care. It's important to pick the right spot for planting, since saw palmetto can be difficult to move once established. Choose an area that will allow the plant room to grow and that will be far enough from walkways and children's play areas that the sharp leaf stems won't cut anyone. Saw palmetto prefers full sun but will grow in almost any light conditions. It will benefit from regular waterings at first, but will be very drought tolerant once established. Plants can be purchased in pots at many nurseries and can be planted year-round in Florida. For more information on saw palmetto, contact your county extension office.

Garden Calendar

January

Taken from Survival Guide to Gardening in Flagler County (note, the soon to be published title is Survival Guide to Gardening in Florida's Zone 9A)

General

If it does not rain, irrigate landscape/lawn areas that need watering every ten to fourteen days. Put down approximately one quarter to one half 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 damaged. 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 one half inch of water each time. Calibrate water sprinkler distribution system with cans or other suitable containers to ensure that one half 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.



Camellia

March

General

If no rain, water areas that need it approximately every 7 - 10 days, putting down one quarter to one half 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

by: Nicky Makruski, Master Gardener Volunteer

Princess Place Preserve



Hunting Lodge— N. Makruski

If you are interested in experiencing a bit of Flagler County history, then Princess Place Preserve is definitely worth a visit. You may have to visit this preserve several times in order to discover all of the varied plant communities and cultural features. This 1505 acre offers over 10 miles of walking trails, 9.5 miles of equestrian trails through a variety of ecosystems, camping, 505 acres of submerged lands which are part of the Pellicer Creek Aquatic Preserve and several historical buildings rich in cultural history. The preserve has the distinction of being the oldest standing homestead in Flagler County.

The preserve is located on Old Kings Road, north of Palm Coast. From I-95 take exit 298 US1 south. From US 1 take the first left onto Old Kings Road. The park entrance is about

1.5 miles from the US 1 turn-off and is well marked. The preserve is open year round every day from 7 am to 6 pm except Thanksgiving and Christmas days. The original name for the preserve was Cherokee Grove when it was first purchased by Francisco Pellicer as part of a land grant from the King of Spain in 1791. The property was then developed into an orange grove (one of the first in Florida) and in 1886 was purchased by Henry Cutting, a New England sportsman. Henry constructed a hunting lodge on the property which was designed by William Wright in the Adirondack Camp Style. The lodge was designed to show an adaptation of the style using local materials. Local timber and foundation block were used in its construction. Several other buildings were constructed by Henry, but none more unique than the first in ground swimming pool in Florida.



Florida's first in-ground swimming pool
N. Makruski

Henry Cutting died in 1892. His widow, Angela returned to New York, met and married an exiled Russian Prince Boris Sherbatoff. The couple lived at the then named "Princess Place" up to 1954, when it was then sold to the Wadsworth's who maintained the estate as a retreat. Eventually the County was able to purchase the property through funding from the land acquisition funds and Preservation 2000 Grants.



Boat Launch— N. Makruski

The preserve also provides some really beautiful recreational areas for boating, fishing, camping or hiking. Some of the plant communities include pine flatwoods, hardwood hammocks, uplands and oak scrub. The hiking trail system is very impressive with 8 trails of various lengths and all very well marked. A couple of the trails are paved, providing access for limited mobility. They traverse the different plant habitats and provide uniqueness all to themselves. These various plant communities host typical Florida tree species such as Longleaf and Slash pine; Turkey, Water and Live Oaks; Sweetgum and Red Maples. If you are a quiet hiker, you may glimpse White Tailed Deer, Red Fox, Bobcat, Barred Owls and

Bald Eagles. At this time of year (December) there were very little blooming plants, at least not on the trails I walked. However this is a great time for bird-watching, as migrating birds love the food and shelter the different plant communities provide. While I was hiking there were huge flocks of robins were madly eating Sable Palm berries while they moved through the tree-tops.

However you plan to explore this county jewel, your experience will be rewarded regardless of how much time you spend here. The short drive is definitely worth the relaxing and educational afternoon. If you want to find out more about the Flagler park system, or camping information visit www.FlaglerParks.com.



Kidz Korner/ Master Gardener Spotlight

“Seeds for Change” Make a Difference

By

Cheryl Massaro, C-7 DJJ Board Chair

Woody Douge, a Flagler County Department of Juvenile Justice Probation Officer, coordinated having an event called “Seeds for Change”. Mr. Douge recruited volunteers to work at the Flagler County DJJ Community Garden, on Saturday, October 22nd, the United Ways-Make a Difference Day. While many were still sleeping, Mr. Douge lead 18 youth and 10 adult volunteers to literally “Make a Difference” at Flagler County’s Department of Juvenile Justice’s Community Garden.

Bright and early in the morning, with the ground still wet from the morning’s dew, Mr. Douge arrived, ready to work. Wearing his Black, United Way t-shirt, he met with the Community Garden’s Master Gardeners, and was given a list of things that needed to be accomplished by volunteers. Shortly after that meeting, work gloves were distributed the physical labor began. Loaded with garden tools, wheelbarrows, shovels, rakes, clippers, and saws, all work teams began tackling the lengthy To-Do list. Many volunteers took to taking down two dead trees, while sampling fresh grapefruits hanging on productive trees. Other event participants cleared raised garden box’s preparing them for fertilization, weeded active vegetable box’s, and raked and cleaned garden grounds, as another group cleared and watered the ground around young orchard trees. A second shift of volunteers emptied an ant infested storage unit, cleaned it out and re-organized it, while others pulled down large hanging vines strangling much of the property’s foliage.

At the conclusion of the one day event, it was unbelievable how much work had been accomplished. Woody Douge’s “Seeds for Change” not only impacted the garden, but truly helped compliment the real purpose of United Way’s “Make A Difference Day”, by successfully promoting the value of community service. As the Flagler County Community Garden begins its third year of operation, the entire property has never looked better.

Thanks to Mr. Douge and friends, Flagler County’s Department of Juvenile Justice’s Community Garden is primed to produce even more fruit and vegetables, in the Spring of 2012, to help continue to Feed Flagler’s Hungry.



(Continued from page 1)

ple causes, such as poor water management, bad location, poor soil, etc. Verify your watering regime (too much is sometimes worse than not enough), ensure your trees are located in a spot that allows adequate sunshine and test the soil to ensure it is not too alkaline or acidic. Perhaps, fertilizing with a good quality granular fertilizer may be needed.

Q• If I'm leaving my home for a period during the winter, what can I do to protect my roebellini palms, hibiscus, etc.?

A• The best bet would be to try to get a neighbor to lend a hand. It's not practical to cover these plants for an extended period of time for protection, because the solution may be worse than the original problem. The plants need sun and air circulation - covering them for many days or weeks could be lethal. Always use a breathable material (old sheets, blankets or even newspaper, not plastic.

Q• When is the time to (1) fertilizing lawn grass and (2) pruning plants damaged by cold weather.

A• (1) Now is not the time to fertilize the grass - it's dormant or at least in a very slow growth period.

Mid-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!

(2) Pruning should not be done until that last of the freezing temperatures has passed. Freeze-damaged plants are protected by damaged branches/leaves/etc. Prune damaged areas after new buds emerge.



The Path of the Sun

Have you noticed how different the light conditions in your landscape are from season to season?

During the winter, the days are shorter and the sun is low in the southern sky. After the winter solstice, around December 21st, the sun begins to climb higher, until six months later, when it's at its highest point. Then, it will begin to descend once again.

Understanding this cycle will help you take advantage of the conditions in your landscape throughout the year.

Because shadows are longer in the winter, keep sun-loving plants away from trees and buildings. You may need to have different sites for your spring and fall vegetable gardens to take advantage of the sunniest spots in each season.

Gardening in Florida is possible year-round, but you may have to follow the sun!

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.

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