



YOUR NORTH FLORIDA YARD & GARDEN

Flagler County Extension Service & UF/IFAS Florida
Master Gardeners

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From the MG Desk...

David Tibbetts, Newsletter Editor



Spring has pretty well sprung. The grass is being mowed on a regular basis, the leaves are returning to the trees and shrubs, if they're not already there, and many have already blossomed to boot.

After seeing so many crape myrtles mercilessly pruned in my neighborhood, I felt compelled to give some guidance on how it should be done next year.

Gardenias should be blossoming, so if you're interested in growing them, guidance on how it should be done is included in this issue. And, there has been a mini-plague in some parts of the county regarding the lubber grasshopper, practically unrecognizable in its youthful appearance, so information is included here about them.

Enjoy this most beautiful of seasons in Florida!

Q: What are the little black and yellow grasshoppers swarming all over my plants, and what should I do about them?

A: These are the eastern lubber grasshopper. They are black and yellow and small when they are young, but will turn into the colorful lubbers we all know after they've had more time to mature. This issue's "buggly" article deals with them in de-

(Continued on page 16)



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Upcoming Programs at the Flagler County Extension Service:

Saturday 4/28/12 “Spring Fling” Open House at the Flagler County Extension Service 10 am-2 pm

Come walk through the gardens, speak to the Master Gardeners, attend the educational programs and purchase some great spring plants for your garden!

Educational Program topics include Gardens for Small Spaces, Building and Painting Rain Barrels and Spring Vegetable Gardening.

There is no cost to attend these programs, however, due to popular demand, we ask that you pre-register!

Please call or e-mail one week prior to program.

Contact Ruth Micieli 386-437-7464 or e-mail rmicieli@flaglercounty.org to pre-register. Program details posted on website flaglercounty.org.

Other upcoming programs:

EarthDay Celebration at Washington Oaks State Park April 21 & 22 10 am-4 pm

City of Palm Coast Arbor Day May 5th Central Park at Town Center 9 am-2 pm



The Good...

From UF/IFAS Publication #CIR1098

Growing Gardenias

Gardenias are one of the first plants many new arrivals to Florida are drawn to. Its flowers range in color from creamy white to yellow with faint purple mottling. The shrub varies in height, depending on the cultivar, from two to fifteen feet, with shiny green foliage. However, perhaps the most striking thing about the gardenia plant is the scent of its flowers. Gardenias are used in many ways in the landscape, from screens and hedges to borders and groundcovers, and in mass plantings or as individuals.

Background. Gardenias originated in China, and were cultivated there for over 1000 years. The English name for the plant was coined by an English naturalist by the name of John Ellis, who, having received an example from China 1761 named it for a friend, Dr. Alexander Gardner, of Charleston, SC.



Gardenia angusta (formerly jasminoides)



Veitchii Supreme

Due to its beauty and fragrance, the gardenia became popular throughout Europe and the American colonies.

Right place. As with any plant, gardenias benefit from the correct selection of a site with optimum soil and light characteristics. Gardenias like a pH of between 5.0 and 6.5, so they should never be sited near concrete driveways, patios or home foundations, where alkaline soil will make it difficult for a gardenia to thrive. An area with plenty of sun (full to light shade) is ideal. The plants are semi-tropical, so an area that is protected from the odd frost would also be helpful. To allow for maximum growth of the plant, high traffic areas should be avoided.

Planting. To plant a gardenia, a hole twice the diameter of the container it comes in should be dug with a depth equal to that of the root ball.

When placed in the hole, take care to avoid damaging the root ball, and ensure the top of the root ball is level with the surrounding ground or a little higher. Fill the hole halfway with soil, then fill the hole with water and allow it to drain before completely filling the remainder of the hole with soil. The remaining soil should be used to create a water dam around the plant to assist in watering. Finally, two to three inches of mulch should be placed around the plant being sure to keep it away from the base of the plant, to help the plant maintain a good moisture level. Watering should be done twice weekly until the plant is established.

Fertilizer. A granular landscape or acid-forming fertilizer should be applied three times per year for optimum health of a gardenia - March, June/July and October in Flagler County. Nitrogen values should be 30-20% water insoluble or slow-release. As always, follow label directions. Frequently plants will become yellow (chlorotic) due to a deficiency of one or more micronutrients, but typically iron is the limiting element. Foliar applications of iron are effective, following the directions on the product label. Yellowing leaves may also be due to a number of other causes, such as insufficient light, over-watering or poor drainage, soil temperature that is too low, nematode damage or disease. Some yellowing on older leaves is normal and may occur during the fall and winter months before new growth appears.

Pruning. Pruning keeps plants shapely and in scale with the landscape. Pruning should be done just after the plant finishes blooming. Research suggests that a combination of long nights, low temperatures, and age of wood aid in bud initiation and development. Pruning should be done early enough to



Gardenia radicans

The Good...(cont.)

allow new growth to be at least 4 - 6 inches long by October 1. Pruning after October 1st decreases next year's blooms. Young plants, growing vigorously during their first year, may be pinched once in June and again in August to encourage heavy branching.

Pest Insects. One of the biggest complaints gardeners have about gardenias is their propensity to attract certain insects. Mealybugs, aphids, scales and whiteflies are all problematic on gardenias. Mealybugs are one of the most prevalent gardenia pests and are easily identified as white, cottony masses found in the leaf axils and other protected areas of the plant. Aphids can also be challenging on gardenias; be on the lookout for a soft-bodied, tear-shaped insect, typically clustered around newer growth and/or on the underside of leaves. Another pest on gardenia is scale which appears as raised brown bumps on the stems and underside of leaves. Whiteflies are small winged insects which look more like moths than flies. Whiteflies can be prolific and seem to come out of nowhere in what appears to be an instant snow-storm of minute dust-like particles. Not only does whitefly feeding damage plants, whiteflies can also transmit plant viruses. Inspect your plants regularly and apply control measures when pests appear. Contact the UF/IFAS Extension office for current pest-management recommendations, and always read the label carefully and apply only as directed on the label. Remember, the label is the law.

Pest Diseases. "Sooty mold," an organism that looks like a fungus, often occurs on gardenia foliage, turning it black. This black, smut-like substance does not injure foliage, but prevents sunlight from reaching the leaf, thereby reducing photosynthesis. The organism is not parasitic, but lives on honeydew secreted by sucking insects, such as aphids, scales, mealybugs and whiteflies. Sooty mold can be managed best by controlling these insects. Probably the most serious gardenia disease is stem canker, which occurs on the main stem at the soil line. Fortunately, this disease is not common in Florida. Stem canker is distinguished by rough, cracked areas that form cankerous growths near the soil line. To prevent infection of other gardenias, destroy any plants infected with stem canker.

Bud Drop. One of the most difficult and frustrating problems in gardenia culture is bud drop or bloom failure. Causes of bud drop include root injury, insect damage, and unfavorable weather conditions. Insects, such as aphids and thrips, damage unopened buds, causing them to drop. Pear-shaped aphids are visible, but tiny thrips can go undetected until they have caused considerable damage. During excessively hot, dry weather, bud drop is prevalent because the plant cannot absorb water rapidly enough to compensate for water lost through its leaves. Gardenias may also experience bud drop following a rapid drop in temperature.

Nematodes. Nematodes are among the most serious gardenia pests in Florida. Nematodes are microscopic, parasitic roundworms that feed on gardenia roots. Although many kinds of nematodes may affect gardenias, root-knot nematodes (*Meloidogyne* species) are the most common. Fortunately, the symptoms they cause are readily recognized -- premature wilting, low vigor, thin canopy, and leaf and/or bloom loss under relatively mild stress. Roots infected by root-knot nematodes are swollen and gnarled (the overgrown tissues are usually called galls or knots). No chemical treatments are available for nematode control in landscape plantings. The best practices to minimize effects of root-knot nematodes are to apply organic matter liberally to the soil, encouraging natural enemies of the nematodes and providing the gardenia roots with a better physical and chemical environment.

Summary. Gardenias are a fragrant addition to a garden and can be utilized in many different ways, from potted plants to hedges to ground covers. Though they might succumb to our sometimes cold temperatures, they can be a bright alternative.



Gardenia hedge



The Bad...

By: David Tibbetts, Florida Master Gardener

Crape Murder!

It's already a little too late for this year, but I was struck by the sheer number of bad crape myrtle pruning jobs I've seen this year in my neighborhood. One neighbor has stopped doing this after her crape myrtles completely collapsed last year after being "murdered" for the sixth year running and then subjected to a series of hard rains with winds that knocked her poor tree into a weeping crape myrtle. But her experience was not noted by many folks who continue to prune for that "huge knuckle with spindly bits on top look." Perhaps these home owners will have similar enlightening experiences without killing their crape myrtles for good. With that hope in mind, this article is taken from the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Solutions for Your Life web site article "Stop Crape Murder!" (http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/hot_topics/lawn_and_garden/crape_murder.html).



Topped multiple times

Introduction. The crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*) is one of the most beautiful and popular flowering trees in Florida. Often called "the lilac of the South," this plant is tough, adaptable, and showy. Its blooms are large and long-lasting (up to one hundred days), and the tree has great fall color and attractive bark. It prefers a sunny, well-drained site and is relatively pest- and disease-free. Many crape myrtle cultivars are available, ranging in size from miniatures to trees that grow to twenty feet or more. The crape myrtle is available in a wide array of flower colors including white, red,

pink, and lavender. It is important to select a cultivar that will be an appropriate mature size for the spot where you intend to plant it. Most local nurseries will label their plants with this information, which is just as important as flower color and bark appearance. Late winter is the optimal time to prune crape myrtles. The purpose of pruning is to create a canopy in which air can circulate and all branches receive sunlight.

Consequences of Severe Pruning. Unfortunately, many homeowners and landscape professionals prune crape myrtle trees too severely. Topping--commonly called "crape murder"--can be very damaging and disfiguring to the tree. This practice results in a "witch's broom" appearance and a tree that is no longer in proportion. Topping causes profuse growth at the site of the pruning, basal sprouting, and increases susceptibility to disease and insects. It encourages new growth that is too dense to allow air movement and light to reach the inner branches. Large "knobs" appear where trees have been trimmed repeatedly, and the topped tree has an unsightly appearance until new growth appears. Although topping may result in larger blooms, those flowers will grow on thinner, weaker branches that will droop--



Large branch stubs caused by topping

especially after rain--and may even break. Topping may also shorten the life of your trees.



"Murdered" for the first time

The Bad...(cont.)



Crape myrtles that have been tip pruned

To properly prune crape myrtles, use the following techniques:

- ◆ Remove suckers from the bottom of the plant.
- ◆ Remove crossed, damaged, or diseased branches. For crossed branches, remove the weaker of the two limbs that are crossing or rubbing.
- ◆ Prune the tips of the branches to remove old flowers. If old blooms are removed, a second blooming may occur.
- ◆ Thin out small twiggy growth to allow air to better circulate in the canopy.

Rehabilitation. You have two options for rehabilitating a "murdered" crape myrtle.

- The first method is to choose the strongest two or three sprouts from each stub and remove all of the other sprouts. This will encourage the remaining sprouts to be stronger and the canopy of the tree to be airier. If you follow this procedure for a couple of seasons, the tree is sure to be much improved in health and appearance.
- The second--and more drastic--technique is to cut the tree back to within one to two inches of the ground while the tree is dormant. After two to three weeks of growth, select three to five of the most vigorous new shoots on each trunk and remove all others. Remove any new shoots that emerge later. Within three to five years, you will again have a natural-looking crape myrtle.

Summary. Please spread the word among your friends and neighbors and eliminate crape murder. Use proper pruning techniques on your own trees, or ask your yard maintenance professionals about their pruning techniques. Remember to choose the appropriate size plant for the correct site, and prune very sparingly for beautiful crape myrtles in your yard. So, please, don't be a Crape "murderer".



Crape myrtles form a round canopy when planted in full sun with room for plant growth.



Two "spared" crape myrtles



and the Bugglies

From UF/IFAS publication EENY-006

Eastern Lubber Grasshopper

As mentioned in the notes from the master gardener's desk, there has been a mini-plague in some parts of Flagler of the eastern lubber grasshopper (lubber). This article is from UF/IFAS publication EENY-006, which can be found at the following web site: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in132>.

Introduction. Periodically, grasshoppers have been of economic importance in Florida. A few species sometimes occur in large enough numbers to cause serious damage to citrus, vegetable crops and landscape ornamentals. One of the species most commonly causing damage is the lubber, *Romalea microptera*. Most authorities give it this scientific name, but sometimes it is known as *Romalea guttata* (Houttuyn).



Young Lubber, Nymph

Distribution. The lubber is limited to the southeastern and south central portion of the United States. The northern boundary is central North Carolina west through southern Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, to Texas. It occurs throughout Florida.

Description. The lubber is surely the most distinctive grasshopper species in the southeastern United States. It is well known both for its size and its unique coloration. The wings offer little help with mobility for they are rarely more than half the length of the abdomen. This species is incapable of flight and can jump only short distances. Mostly the lubber is quite clumsy and slow in movement and travels by walking and crawling fee-

bly over the substrate.

Nymphs. The immature lubber differs dramatically in appearance from the adults. Nymphs typically are completely black with one or more distinctive yellow, orange, or red stripes. The front legs and sides of the head are often red. Sometimes the nymph is brownish red, but also displays the colorful stripes

Adults. Adult males and females are usually 6.0 and 8.0 cm. (2½ - 3¼ inches) long, respectively. The body is quite robust while the legs remain relatively slender. The general color of adults is dull yellow with varying degrees of black spots and markings. The front pair of wings (tegmina) are yellow with numerous scattered black dots, while the hind wings when exposed reveal a



Adult Lubber, intermediate color

bright red/rose coloration with a black border. The color of adult lubbers also varies throughout most of the insect's range. One phase is nearly entirely black with a few marks of yellowish tawny. The adults of this phase seem to resemble the nymph. However, the different phases are indeed the same species.

Life Cycle. Adults of *Romalea microptera* exist nearly throughout the year in Florida with their numbers dwindling during the fall and winter period. They have one generation per year, with eggs beginning to hatch in February in South Florida while the rest of the state usually doesn't see this species until March. Lubbers, like all grasshoppers, grow through successive stages after molting. These stages (instars) are referred to as nymphs. Lubbers have a total of five instars before molting into the adult stage. The length of these instars vary slightly but average 15 to 20 days each. The highest number of adults can be observed during the months of July and August. Females will begin laying eggs during the summer months. After mating, females use the tip of the abdomen to dig a small hole into a suitable patch of soil. Usually at a depth of about two inches, she will deposit up to 50 eggs contained within a

"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.)

light foamy froth. Each female will lay from one to three egg masses. These eggs will remain in the soil through late fall and winter and then begin hatching in March. The young lubbers crawl up out of the soil upon hatching and seem to congregate near suitable food sources. Lubbers are often found in damp or wet habitats, but seek drier sites for egg-laying. Populations cycle up and down, possibly due to the action of parasites. The tachinid fly *Anisiaserotina* (Reinhard) attains high levels of parasitism, sometimes 60-90%.

Habitat. Lubbers seem to prefer open pine-woods, weedy fields and weedy vegetation along roadsides. Occasionally, on rural highways in the central portion of the state, enough flattened lubbers will accumulate on the road to cause a minor slick! The accumulation of weedy plant species along drainage ditches within citrus groves and vegetable fields will sometimes attract lubbers, which in turn end up feeding on the cultivated crops as well. Lubbers may often invade residential areas and feast on certain ornamental plants, especially amaryllis and related flowers.

Defensive Characteristics. Lubbers possess a variety of abilities to defend themselves. Their bright color pattern is a warning to predators that the lubber contains toxic substances. Indeed, there are several records attributing the demise of individual birds to failure to exercise caution when selecting prey items. Also small mammals such as opossums have been known to vomit violently after ingesting a lubber, and to remain ill for several hours. However, shrikes are reported to catch and kill lubbers. If the red, yellow, and black coloration fails to keep a predator at bay, then the lubber may secrete a foamy spray from the thoracic region (the portion of the body where the legs and wings are attached.) This spray consists of a number of compounds, some of which, are irritants. This bubbly froth is accompanied



Adult Lubber, dark color

by a relatively loud, frightful hissing sound. The insect contracts the abdomen to force air out of the spiracles along with the defensive secretion. The sound is produced as the spray is being forced out of these tiny holes in the thorax called spiracles. Lubbers, like most all grasshoppers, can also regurgitate recently consumed plant material. This regurgitant is mostly liquid and has a dark brown color. This is commonly referred to as 'tobacco spit.' The tobacco spit is partially digested food material along with some semi-toxic compounds from the insect's crop region. This substance can easily stain clothing.

Management of Lubbers. The size of the lubber is a little misleading when one considers they require far less food material than most of the more injurious species of grasshoppers that are only one-third as large or smaller. Grasshopper abundance can be regulated through management of the vegetation. If you deprive grasshoppers of their favored food, often they will leave or perish. Keeping the vegetation mowed is very helpful, as short vegetation does not often support grasshoppers. Lubbers will often develop initially in moist areas around ponds and irrigation ditches, then later migrate to homes, yards, and crops. Rather than waiting for the lubbers to come to you, it is often best to take the battle to them. So check potential breeding or feeding sites for signs of lubbers. Young lubbers remain clustered in groups, but as they get older they are more likely to be solitary. If you cannot control them through mowing, try hand-picking. You can throw them into a bucket of soapy water or a trash bag to kill them. If there are too many to control by hand-picking, insecticides can be applied. Lubbers are not easy to kill, even with insecticides, once they become large. Among the insecticides that will kill lubbers are carbaryl, bifenthrin, cyhalothrin, permethrin, and esfenvalerate (note: these are the technical names, which appear in the 'ingredients' section on the label). You likely will have to apply the insecticide directly to the insects; the small amount of insecticide residue remaining on sprayed plants may not be adequate to kill lubbers. If insecticides are to be used, be sure to apply them according to the directions on the label of the container. Especially if insecticides are applied to food crops or near water, it is important to heed the directions. Most of the insecticides listed above are toxic to fish.



Adult Lubber, light color



Fresh from Florida

Sharon Treen,
County Extension Director

Florida Blueberries

Florida blueberries are in season so you'll find them in stores and markets through June. Look for the "Fresh from Florida" label. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in 2009 Florida blueberry growers produced 13.5 million pounds of blueberries valued at \$70 million. Now is the time to add Florida blueberries to salads, baked goods and smoothies.

The health benefits of blueberries have been well publicized in recent years. Some of the reported benefits of eating blueberries include improved vision, clearing arteries, strengthening blood vessels, enhanced memory, stopping urinary tract infections and reversing age-related physical and mental declines.

Blueberries and other brightly colored berries contain vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber and phytochemicals that help protect against disease, including certain cancers and heart disease.

Phytochemicals are nonnutritive substances in plants that promote health and prevent chronic disease.

Antioxidants are phytochemicals that help neutralize harmful byproducts of metabolism called free radicals that contribute to heart disease and other diseases.

Blueberries are nature's number one source of antioxidants among fresh fruits and vegetables according to the USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston. Anthocyanins, the pigments giving blueberries their deep blue hue, act as antioxidants, which may provide many health benefits. In addition, blueberries are a low-calorie food – only 40 calories per 1/2 cup. Blueberries are also low in fat, sodium-free and a source of fiber, beta-carotene, vitamin C and potassium.

Blueberries also contain compounds that may help to prevent urinary tract infections (UTIs), according to a report from the Rutgers Blueberry Cranberry Research Center in Chatsworth, N.J. The compounds, called condensed tannins, can keep the bacteria responsible for UTIs from attaching to the linings of the urinary and digestive tracts.

When purchasing, choose berries that are firm, plump and dark blue. Store fresh blueberries in your refrigerator for up to two weeks, and wash them just before you use them. If you want to freeze blueberries, do not wash them before freezing. Washing results in a tougher skinned product. To freeze, remove stems and pack berries into containers, leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Berries can also be frozen first on a tray and then packed into containers as soon as they are frozen. Seal airtight and freeze.

When using frozen berries from the freezer, rinse in cold water and use immediately. There's no need to thaw them if you use them in baked products, except for pancakes. Pancakes may not cook thoroughly in the center if the berries are frozen. Microwave the amount you need for a few seconds to thaw.



Florida Blueberry

Smoothie

Yield 2 servings

2 cups fresh blueberries

1 cup low fat milk

2 cups vanilla frozen low fat yogurt

8 ice cubes

Rinse the blueberries under cool running water. Place the blueberries in the blender with half of the milk. Place lid on blender tightly. Blend the berries with milk on high speed until smooth. Add the frozen

yogurt, the remaining milk, and the ice cubes and continue to blend until smooth and creamy. Serve immediately. Pour any leftovers into an ice cube tray and freeze for later use.

Blueberry Crisp

Yield 8 servings

Ingredients

6 cups blueberries

2 tablespoons brown sugar

1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

2/3 cup all-purpose flour

1/2 cup brown sugar, packed

1/2 cup regular oats

3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

4 1/2 tablespoons chilled butter, cut into small pieces

Preparation

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

Combine first 4 ingredients in a medium bowl; spoon into an 11x7-inch baking dish. Lightly spoon flour into a dry measuring cup and level with a knife. Combine 2/3 cup flour, 1/2 cup brown sugar, oats, and cinnamon, and cut in the butter with a pastry blender or 2 knives until the mixture resembles coarse meal. Sprinkle over the blueberry mixture. Bake at 375 degrees F for 30 minutes or until bubbly.

Nutritional Value Per Serving

Calories 239, Calories From Fat 63 , Total Fat 7g, Saturated Fat 4g, Trans Fatty Acid 0.19g, Cholesterol 17mg, Total Carbohydrate 44, Protein 3g, Omega 3 Fatty Acid 0.09g



The Urban Forest

UF/IFAS EDIS publication
#ENH269

Red Bottlebrush

Introduction: The common name, “bottlebrush”, perfectly describes this evergreen plant’s bright red flower spikes. Hummingbirds love the flowers, and the plant is hardier than most Bottlebrushes. The flowers are followed by small, woody capsules that look like bead bracelets on the bark, and which last for years. Offered as a shrub, Bottlebrush can be trained as a tree to 15 feet or espaliered as a quick wall cover. It makes a nice screen or tall unclipped hedge. Pruning to develop several trunks and removing some lower branches can create a fine small specimen tree.

General Information

Family: *Myrtaceae*; **Scientific name:** *Callistemon citrinus* (pronounced kal-liss-STEE-mawn sih-TRY-nus); **Common names:** Red Bottlebrush, Lemon Bottlebrush;

USDA hardiness zones: 9A through 11;

Origin: not native to North America;

Uses: hedge; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; street without sidewalk; espalier; screen; specimen; container or planter; deck or patio; highway median; **Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree.

Description

Height: 10 to 15 feet; **Spread:** 10 to 15 feet; **Crown uniformity:** symmetrical. **Crown shape:** upright/erect, round; **Crown density:** moderate; **Growth rate:** moderate; **Texture:** fine.

Foliage: **Leaf arrangement:** alternate; **Leaf type:** simple; **Leaf margin:** entire; **Leaf shape:** lanceolate, linear; **Leaf venation:** pinnate; **Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen; **Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches, 2 to 4 inches; **Leaf color:** green; **Fall color:** no color change; **Fall characteristic:** not showy.

Flower: **Flower color:** red; **Flower characteristics:** very showy.

Fruit: **Fruit shape:** round; **Fruit length:** less than .5 inch; **Fruit covering:** dry or hard; **Fruit color:** brown; **Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem.

Trunk and Branches: **Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns; **Pruning requirement:** little required.

Culture

Light requirement: full sun; **Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; acidic; well-drained; **Drought tolerance:** high; **Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate.

Other

Roots: not a problem; **Winter interest:** no; **Outstanding tree:** no; **Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** resistant; **Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases.

Use and Management: A good choice for a spot offering full sun, it will adapt to a variety of soils. Very drought-tolerant once established, Bottlebrush tolerates any soil except very poor, alkaline, or poorly-drained. Fertilize regularly to maintain good flower color and dark green foliage. Suckers from the trunk need to be removed periodically to maintain tree form. Propagation is usually from cuttings as it is variable when grown from seed.

Pests: No particular insect pests are listed for *Callistemon*.

Diseases: If the soil is too moist, root and crown-attacking fungus diseases can be a problem. Prevention is your best hope--keep the plant on the dry side with low fertility and good air circulation. A twig gall, formed in response to a fungus (*Sphaeropsis tumefacens*), can disfigure the tree. Chlorosis, a systemic condition which causes new leaves to turn yellow, can be corrected with treatment of the soil using iron sulfate or iron chelate.



Red bottlebrush

Garden Calendar

Taken from Survival Guide to Gardening in Flagler County

April

General

If it does not rain, water twice per week, putting down approximately 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch of water each time. April is usually the start of our dry season.

Lawn

Mow weekly to ensure that no more than one third of the grass blade is cut at a time. Cut St. Augustine-grass to 3½ to 4 inches high. Do not bag grass. They recycle nutrients back to the lawn.

This is a good time to repair dead or damaged spots in the lawn. Fill uneven spots in the lawn with sand or topsoil. Repair dead areas with sod, plugs, or seeds. Keep the areas uniformly moist during the establishment period. Lightly water with 1/4 inch of water per day for the first 2 weeks. Once established and growing, switch to above recommended watering schedule.

After mid-April, most weed killers and feed products should not be applied to your lawn. Wait until cooler weather returns in the late fall.

Food Garden

Do not allow new seedlings to dry out. They should be kept moist, but not soaking wet. Vegetables that can be planted are cantaloupes, okra, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, watermelon, squash, pumpkin, and cucumber.

Fruit

Oklawaha, Brazos, and Florigold blackberries should be checked for ripeness by the end of the month.

Landscape

Prune spring flowering plants: camellias, azaleas, spirea, and Indian hawthorne after they have finished flowering. You can transplant these shrubs at this time if needed.

Fertilize azaleas and camellias with an acid forming fertilizer.

Monitor your azaleas for lace bugs. If present, treat them with insecticidal soap.

Annuals and perennials to be planted are celosia, coleus, coreopsis, dusty miller, gaillardia, gazania, geranium, impatiens, Marguerite daisy, marigold, nicotiana, pentas, phlox, portulaca, rudbeckia, Persian violet, salvia, verbena, periwinkle, and zinnia.

Potted poinsettias that you've been keeping indoors since the holidays can now be planted outdoors away from artificial light sources. Since they will get bushy, leave three feet around them for growth.

Fertilize roses with a slow release fertilizer. Watch for black spot on roses. Begin weekly spraying with a fungicide for black as necessary. Follow the instructions on the product label.



Blackberries

Garden Calendar (continued)

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Add mulch to flower beds, shrubs, and trees to a depth of 2 inches. Do not mulch around your citrus trees.

Check your oleanders for orange caterpillars with spiked black hairs. Use bacillus thurengensis (Bt) to treat them. Bt is a bacteria that is ingested by the caterpillars and stops them from eating. Apply late in the day or on a cloudy day for best results, since these bacteria are sensitive to strong sunlight. Bt is effective on most caterpillars and chewing worms. It is relatively safe, but should not be ingested or inhaled. Store in a cool, dry place.

May

General

If it does not rain, water no more than twice per week, putting 1/2 to 3/4 inch of water each time.

Lawn

Mow lawns weekly to ensure no more than a third of the grass blade is cut each time. This will also help to reduce the thatch buildup.

Food Garden

Vegetables to be planted are eggplant, okra, New Zealand spinach, sweet potatoes, and southern peas. For best results, plant these crops at the beginning of the month.

Fruit

Sharpblue blueberries should be checked for ripeness by the end of the month. Watch for the various blueberry festivals...enjoy!

Peaches, nectarines, and plums begin ripening by the end of the month.

Fertilize citrus trees with a citrus fertilizer and nutritional (mineral) spray.

Landscape

If no rain, water citrus regularly to reduce fruit splitting.

Mulch all flower beds to aid in water retention for the warm weather.

Fertilize poinsettias with a slow release fertilizer.

Fertilize palm trees with palm fertilizer and nutritional (mineral) spray.

Annuals and perennials to be planted this month include celosia, coleus, coreopsis, crossandras, gaillardias, gazanias, hollyhocks, impatiens, kalanchoe, marigolds, nicotianas, ornamental peppers, pentas, moss rose, salvia, thunbergia alata, torenias, verbenas, periwinkles, zinnias, purslane, portulaca, and wax begonias.



Impatiens

Garden Calendar (continued)

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June

General

Water no more than twice per week, if no rain, putting down 3/4 inch of water each time.

Lawn

Apply an iron product at beginning of the month

Due to spring/summer rapid growth, you may need to raise your mower height or cut more than often to ensure no more than a third of the grass blade is cut at a time. Make sure that the mower blade is sharp.

Food Garden

Tomatoes, lima beans, and cucumbers should be ready to harvest this month. Crops that should be planted are okra, southern peas, and sweet potatoes.

Fruit

Occasionally at this time of year, citrus trees may drop excess fruit they cannot support. This is a natural occurrence and not to worry.

Landscape

Check mulch levels around all landscape beds. If less than 2", add more being careful to pull it away from the stems of the plants.

If black spot is showing on your roses, avoid overhead irrigation and treat with a fungicide labeled for black spot fungus.

Annuals and perennials this month include celosia, coleus, crossandras, impatiens, kalanchoe, nico-tianas, ornamental peppers, moss rose, Persian violet, salvia, periwinkles, and zinnias.

June is the last month to prune azaleas and camellias. Pruning any later in the year may harm next year's flower production.



Mop-head hydrangea



Master Gardener Spotlight

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

Spring is a very busy time at the County Extension office, especially for our Master Gardener Volunteers. They've been cleaning up the demonstration gardens around our building, planting and harvesting the community garden and assisting the staff with our "Short & Sweet" Horticulture Program series.

The volunteers have already put in 1300 volunteer hours this last quarter and it shows! Just come by our office and see how colorful the gardens are and bring your gardening questions to ask the Master Gardener at the front desk.

Come join us for Spring Fling!

Annual Open House and Plant sale event on Saturday April 28, 2012 from 10 am—2 pm. We will have Master Gardener Volunteers at the garden areas to answer your plant questions and give you advice on what to do in your yard. We will have 3 educational programs starting at 11 am on Gardens for Small Spaces, Making and Decorating a Rain Barrel and Spring Vegetable Gardening. The volunteers will also have plants, the 'Guide to Successful Gardening' book for sale and awesome garden themed raffle items, too! As always, light refreshments will be available during the day as well.



Jeanne cleaning pond



Shade garden new plantings



Haidy tending herb garden



Mal pruning in memorial garden

(Continued from page 1)

tail. But, if you are wondering how to get rid of them, shake the plant to make them lose their grip and squash them! It's that easy.

Q: What is it that stings my hands when I yank up my weeds?

A: This is one of the varieties of what is called stinging nettle. The stinging is caused by very small "hairs" that line the stem and leaves of these weeds. When touched or pulled with the bare hand, the hairs inject histamines which cause a, usually, uncomfortable stinging sensation. Here in Flagler, the culprit is probably *Urtica chamaedryoides* (commonly known as fireweed, heartleaf nettle, weak nettle, or ortiguilla) which is a native species. This is not to be confused with what is known as stinging nettle or bull nettle in England - it is omnipresent in the English countryside, and there is a horror story of a visitor to England being stuck for "loo paper" while on a hike and choosing the wrong plant to do the job (now THAT would sting). Use gloves if you suspect stinging nettle has invaded your patch, and make sure you bag them up to prevent the stinging hairs from getting anywhere else. Mowing does not cause destruction of the plants, they just become smaller. In fact, mowing probably helps to scatter the seeds and ensure a larger population in the future.



Vegetable Bolting

If you're new to vegetable gardening, you may have heard the term "bolting." But what does it actually mean?

Bolting is another way to say that a vegetable plant has started to flower. It can happen in spring when cool-season crops respond to the warmer temperatures and longer days. Crops that often bolt include Brussels sprouts, broccoli, lettuce, collards, and other greens.

The trouble is that bolting can affect the quality of your harvest. As plants put more energy into flowering and setting seed, the vegetables will start to taste bitter.

Pinch off any flowers as they appear, and you may be able to extend your harvest season by a few weeks. And in the future, look for seed varieties that are labeled as "slow bolting."

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.