

YOUR NORTH FLORIDA YARD & GARDEN

Flagler County Extension Service & UF/IFAS Florida Master Gardeners



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In the News

New Rules for Greener Grass and Cleaner Water

Dan Culbert - Extension Horticulture Agent, Okeechobee County

While area homeowners are busy keeping up with landscape watering restrictions, lawn fertilization may be the farthest things on their mind. But a new law took effect this year [2008]. It will have considerable impact on the kinds of fertilizer products that are available for the home lawns.

By July 2009, all consumer fertilizers sold for Florida lawns will have to comply with new bag labeling guidelines. The law also limits the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus that can be contained in home lawn care products. The law calls for new label instructions that will help consumers keep their Florida yards green while limiting the chances that nutrients will escape to our lakes, rivers canals and ponds.



This new law came from efforts to limit the amount of nutrient runoff going into Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades. Regulators soon discovered that what works best in our backyard also will benefit all Floridians, so new state-wide regulations were approved last year. The rules are based on sound science, the same kind of backup that the University of Florida uses when offering recommendations through the Florida Yards & Neighborhood program.

New meanings for old words

New rules often re-define familiar terms to clarify how new regulations are to take effect.

* **“Urban Turf” or “Lawns”** – non-agricultural land planted in closely mowed, managed lawn grasses. These areas are different from **“Sports Turf”** – non-agricultural land planted exclusively for recreational uses, such as golf courses, parks and athletic fields.

* **“No Phosphate Fertilizer”** – fertilizer products with phosphate levels below 0.5% intended for *established* urban turf or lawns.

continued on page 16

Sharon A. Treen

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

Winter/Spring *The Good...*

Compiled by: Diane Cortés,
UF/IFAS Florida Master Gardener

Southern Larraflower - *Spermacoce verticillata*

What is Southern Larraflower?

The Southern Larraflower belongs to the coffee family (Rubiaceae) and is native to the tropical Americas. It ranges throughout Florida to Texas and south into Central and South America. The plant is shrub-like in appearance and produces small clusters of white flowers.

Flowering occurs all year in southern Florida, but flowering is restricted to the warmer months in the northern part of the plant's range. The leaves are opposite in arrangement except at the nodes where smaller leaves are in whorled arrangements.

Southern larraflower grows in most soils and must have at least partial light to survive. It requires disturbance to establish but will not survive when tall grasses and trees colonize. Constant mowing will keep the plant in the herbaceous stage and restricted to an area. Grazing animals commonly disperse seeds.

Why is Southern Larraflower important?

Outside of the U.S., Larraflower is considered a forage plant and is also used as an herbal medicine for skin treatments. In the U.S. and Puerto Rico, this plant is very important because the plant's nectar is preferred by the mole cricket hunting wasp, *Larra bicolor* [see article in The Bug-glys for more info]. Mole crickets are serious pests of pasture grasses and chemical control is too expensive and applications need to be limited. Establishing plots of Southern Larraflowers...attracts the Larra Wasp and establishes local wasp populations that will likely provide permanent, area-wide mole cricket control and reduce or even eliminate the use of chemical pesticides.

source: <http://ipm.ifas.ufl.edu>



Several views of the Larra Flower - http://plantes-rizieres-guyane.cirad.fr/dicotyledones/rubiaceae/spermacoce_verticillata

THE BAD . . .

Compiled by: Diane Cortés, UF/IFAS Florida Master Gardener

Australian Pine - *Casuarina spp*

Australian Pine, also known as Casuarina, was introduced in the late 1800's to be used as windbreaks, lumber, and shade. Today Australian Pine (60-70 ft.) is commonly found in natural areas towering over and dominating native plants. Dune habitats are particularly susceptible to this invader. Here, it is displacing native vegetation important in preventing dune erosion and also disruption sea turtle



nesting. Its shallow root system results in significant property damage during storms.

Though it resembles a pine, it is from a different plant group. Its so-called "needles" are jointed cylindrical branches arranged in whorls. The plant also produces a cone-like woody capsule 1/2 to 3/4 inches wide.

Seed dispersal is primarily by wind, water, and birds throughout the year. In addition, some Australian pines may rapidly increase their numbers by reproducing from root suckers.

A large amount of acidic litter accumulates underneath Australian pines, inhibiting growth of competing species. Additionally, the root system maintains a beneficial relationship with soil bacteria that allows nitrogen in the soil to become available for plant growth giving the plant a distinct competitive edge.

Use and Management

Highly salt- and drought-tolerant, Australian-Pine was widely used in seaside landscapes as a windbreak, screen, clipped hedge, and for topiary. Its ability to withstand heat and other adverse conditions made Australian Pine a favorite for street trees or specimen use. It is not planted now due to the problems it has created including the elimination of habitat for native plants. Injured trees com-

partmentalize wounds poorly and decay advances rapidly through the trunk. Old trees which have been topped and abused often become hazardous and they can fall over or drop large limbs.

Sources:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ST129>

<http://monroe.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn/>

lawn_invasiveguide_australianpine.shtml



The Larra Wasp Helping Keep Your Bahiagrass Green

What is one of the most serious insect pest of Bahiagrass? Mole crickets are the hungriest Bahia consumers in this area. The conventional wisdom has been that insecticides are the management tool of choice to keep this little hopper at bay. However, researchers have found that Mother Nature can now be used to keep these critters out of our pastures, sod farms and lawns. And a lowly little wildflower seems to be the missing ingredient in the quest to attract a Mole cricket parasite.

Three non-native species of mole crickets have entered Florida and have become significant pests of many plants, including Bahiagrass. Early control measures involved using chemical insecticides to kill these pests, but these products damaged non-target animals and good bugs or were too persistent in the environment.

The most commonly used method of managing mole crickets is to use insecticidal sprays or baits. To be successful, they must be perfectly timed with the appearance of mole cricket nymphs. In our area, this will be in May.



Larra Wasp (the black insect at right) feeding on Mole Cricket

UF Entomologist Dr. J. Howard Frank has been working with a Brazilian Digger wasp known as the **Larra Wasp** (*Larra bicolor*). He has successfully introduced this insect into Florida, however the successful establishment of this mole cricket hunter into our area, and its ability to attack mole cricket pests is limited by a lack of nectar sources. In order for the *Larra* wasp to find a mole cricket, scare it out of the ground, sting it, and lay an egg, it needs nectar from wildflowers as an energy source.



Larra wasp larva emerging from parasitized Mole Cricket

A wildflower known as the Southern Larraflower (*Spermacoce verticillata*) may be the answer to a year-round nectar source for this wasp [see accompanying article under "The Good"]. UF Entomologists suggested that the name **Southern Larraflower** because it has the right size and shape flower for the *Larra* wasp. It blooms throughout the year and can supply needed nectar to the *Larra* wasp. Providing patches of this

plant can bridge the gap and encourage the *Larra* wasp. Why not consider planting this wildflower, which brings the wasp that kills the cricket that eats the grass!

Citrus

Why are we talking about citrus in the herb section? All citrus are classified as herbs. Besides edible fruits all citrus blossoms are edible. The peel and leaves add color and scent to pot-pourri; and can be used in place of moth balls.

TYPES

Buy grafted trees from local nurseries. Hardier varieties like Satsuma orange, kumquat and limequat, calamondin, sour orange, mandarin, sweet orange and grapefruit are good choices for our northern location. Kumquat and Satsuma are the most cold hardy. Lemons and limes are very susceptible to cold temperatures.

PLANTING

Plant on the south side of the house. Most freezes and wind drift are from the north and northwest. The house will act as a wind break. If you happen to have a lake or other body of water on the south or southeast side of your lot, it will afford some cold protection.

Plant with the bud union slightly above soil level, in neutral to acidic soil. Water every two weeks, if there is no rain. Feed young trees 4 times a year, every six weeks from March to September. Older trees in mid February, June and early October.

The soil under and around a citrus tree should be completely free of weeds, grass or mulch. Grass or mulch on soil acts as an insulator, hence, solar heat is prevented from entering the soil during the day, and less heat is stored for release from the soil at night. Moist soil will absorb more heat than dry soil, so trees should be thoroughly watered 2-3 days before a bad freeze is predicted. Fertilization, spraying and pruning should end in August or September in order to allow trees to harden off completely before freezes are encountered. Prune only to remove dead or crossing branches.

Trees may be covered temporarily with blankets, quilts, or paper for protection against a hard freeze, but should be removed each morning to allow the trees to take advantage of incoming solar radiation. Trunk wraps are also available. Protect trunks above the graft juncture during cold weather with these wraps. Young citrus trees should be banked for the first 3-5 winters, but only during frost and until the tree is large enough to better withstand the cold. Banking is simply a technique in which clean, surrounding soil is pulled up in a mound around the tree to cover the bud union and lower trunk

RECIPE

If you are lucky enough to have a calamondin or kumquat tree, you can enjoy the fruit most of the year. Pick the fruit, cut it in half, remove the few pits then process, peel and all, in a food processor. Divide into 1½ cup portions and freeze. To make a delicious cake, defrost and let sit in wire strainer to defrost and get rid of excess water.

TROPICAL KUMQUAT CAKE from kumquatgrowers.com (calamondin fruit can be substituted)

- 3 eggs
- 1 cup oil
- 1½ cups chopped kumquats
- 1 20 oz. can crushed pineapple (well drained)
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 cup chopped nuts (optional)
- 3 cups flour
- 2 tsp. baking soda



In a bowl, beat eggs, sugar and oil. Fold in dry ingredients and mix well. Add chopped kumquats, nuts and pineapple. Pour into greased and floured tube pan. Bake 1 hour and 15 minutes in a 350 degree F oven. Cool upright on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a knife down the sides of the cake, then remove from the pan.

Sources: University of Florida extension fact sheets Mainly FC 36 and SL 204; Herbs and Spices for Florida Gardens by Monica Moran Brandies

Don't have a citrus tree in your landscape? Why not try a local farmers' market?

Florida Community Farmers' Markets

Community farmers' markets are a distinct part of our American culture and a unique feature of many Florida towns and cities. Each farmers' market reflects the area's charm with locally produced specialties for sale directly to the public. Fruits, vegetables, nursery stock and other commodities are available on a seasonal basis reminiscent of a bygone era when local markets were the heart of commercial districts. Please note that most community farmers' markets are open on a seasonal basis.

Flagler Beach Farmers' Market

111 South Central Avenue, Downtown Flagler Beach, Florida
Open-air / year-round, Friday and Saturday, from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Contact Information:

Bill Forehand, Market Manager
P.O. Box 1418
Flagler Beach, Florida 32136
Telephone: (386) 439-2881
Email: fbfarmersmarket@bellsouth.net
Web: www.flaglerbeachfarmersmarket.com

Old City Farmers' Market (St. John's County)

1340 A1A South, next to the Amphitheater
St. Augustine, Florida
Open year-round, Saturdays, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
WIC/FMNP coupons accepted at this market

Contact Information:

Lynn Wettach
530 Lindsey Lane
St. Augustine, FL 32086
(904) 797-9501
Email: Wettach@aol.com

Courtesy of http://www.florida-agriculture.com/consumers/farmers_markets.htm



Click logo to go to learn more

Tips for Success

By: Julia Wilson, UF/IFAS Florida Master Gardener

RAIN BARRELS

Water is a precious commodity necessary for all life, so we need to be conservative in our usage. More than 90% of the water we use comes from groundwater, water drawn from underground aquifers. Although we receive nearly 52 inches of rain on average each year, only 13 inches seep back into the aquifer. Since early times, man has been saving water for his needs when rainfall runs short. Now is a good time to reexamine the methods our forefathers used to conserve water.

A rain barrel collects and stores water. This old technique can supply 1,300 gallons of water during peak summer months. Just look at how much water runs off the average roof. During a typical rainstorm producing 1" of rain in a 24-hour period, over 700 gallons of water will run off the roof. Much of this water can be collected for future use and the water supply is replenished every time it rains. You could even install more than one rain barrel around the house or connect a series of rain barrels at the overflow drains. This collected water is free soft water with no added chemicals—no chlorine, lime or calcium. It is a warm water source for tender new transplants. Rain barrels save money and energy, too. In the summer about 40% of household water use goes for lawn and garden irrigation.

Rain barrels are inexpensive and easy to build and install. Rain barrels are available at the Flagler County Extension Office through the Master Gardener program or through garden centers, gardening catalogs or Internet sources.

To build your own, you need to obtain a plastic drum (a 55 gallon drum is best.) Do not use drums that have stored chemicals and always clean them first. Collected rain water is not for human consumption no matter what container is used. Rain barrels need a lower hole for a faucet and an upper hole if overflow is a concern. Cover the top with a screen to filter large debris and control mosquitoes. For a list of parts and instructions go to the University of Florida /Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) website at <http://solutionsforyourlife.com> and enter rain barrels in the search box.



Creatively painted rain barrel
- Julia Wilson

Rain barrels work on gravity flow so they must be raised to maintain or increase the water flow. You can fill the 55 gallon drum during a ½ inch rain by connecting to a downspout. The existing downspout is cut and the water directed into the barrel. With the possibility of longer rainfalls, you need to plan for overflow and direct it away from the foundation of your house. A filled rain barrel can weigh approximately 400 pounds. Make sure it is secured properly and not a hazard to small children and animals.

This collected water can be tapped for hand watering plants or connected to a soaker hose for 8 to 10 hours of irrigation. What about washing the car and cleaning garden tools? It can even be used to make 50 gallons of fertilizer at a time. Make a compost tea by putting some compost in an old pillowcase or pantyhose and put it in the barrel. This "tea" can be used at any time. If you plan to use it all at one time, then add a bag of water-soluble fertilizer.

Rain barrels may be painted or screened by foliage or a trellis to improve their looks. Be aware some communities have codes about their use and location. There are now paints that adhere to plastic without having to prime the surface first. They can make the barrel look like stone, stucco, or metal. You can finish it to complement or match the house. Painting designs makes the barrel a fun art object in the landscape. The design can be stenciled, sponged or drawn freestyle. Acrylic paints can be used when the surface is primed first. Use protective sprays or two coats of polyurethane to protect the design. This decorating also helps protect the surface from breaking down in the sun. Painted and decorated rain barrels may be viewed at the UF/IFAS website.

Now we are conserving water and reducing storm water runoff. Water that falls onto our property should stay on our property. Rain barrels help to achieve this goal. The information in this article is from UF/IFAS materials (<http://ifas.ufl.edu>) and the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Handbook.

January

For the most part, your garden is dormant and waiting for the warmer weather to start. Protect your tender plants by bringing them in during freezing weather, mulching them, or covering them with blankets or thermal covers. Be sure to take off the coverings when the temperature rises above freezing so the plant is exposed to sunlight.

You should not need to water at this time of year unless we do not get rain for an extended period. Check the soil to see when you should turn on the sprinklers and then only water every 10-14 days, putting down approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of water each time.

LAWN

Atrazine may be applied for **weed control** of St. Augustinegrass. Atrazine is both a pre-emergent and a post-emergent herbicide. It should be applied when the ambient temperature is below 85° F and no more than twice in one year. Atrazine is best applied before the soil temperature rises above 68° F, the temperature at which weed seeds start to germinate. This occurs towards the end of January in Flagler County. If you applied Atrazine in November or December, mid January is a good time to make the second application. If you haven't already applied Atrazine, apply in January and again in 60 days. Do not apply after March 31st. The grass is looking a little piqued (brown) now from the lack of nutrients and the freezing weather. Do not be in a big hurry to fertilize since the grasses are dormant and the fertilizer will help the weeds more than the grass. It is best to wait for the warmer weather in March to begin fertilizing. I usually fertilize after I have to start mowing regularly.



Petunias

FOOD GARDEN

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

FRUIT

Fertilize deciduous fruit bushes and trees, including peaches, all citrus, plums, figs, blackberries, grapes, persimmons, blueberries and pears. A slow-release citrus or palm fertilizer can be used on all except the blueberries. Use one ounce of a 16-4-8 fertilizer with at least two percent magnesium on blueberries. Blueberries respond best to frequent light fertilizations. January is a good time to spray these plants with a dormant horticultural oil to smother scale and other insects that might be over-wintering on the bark, branches and trunk.

LANDSCAPE

Cover sensitive plants on nights when the temperature is expected to drop below 35°F. Make sure you remove the covers in the morning. Do not cut back dead matter that got frost damaged. Leaving the dead branches on protects the lower parts and the roots of the shrub from freezing. Wait until early March or when new growth emerges to determine where to prune. **This is a good time for transplanting** (except palms) since the plants will be able to reestablish themselves before our hot summer weather. Keep the plants out of the ground for as short a time as possible and definitely prevent the roots from drying out. Keep the ground around the transplanted plants moist, but not soaking wet. Do not fertilize until the new growth starts in the spring and then provide monthly feedings. All the beautiful holiday poinsettias can be planted in the ground after the threat of frost is over in March. Keep in the house or cool area until then. Plant in a sunny area where the soil does not get overly wet or have standing water. Too much water will cause root rot causing the leaves droop and drop. Fertilize regularly since poinsettias are heavy feeders. Poinsettias, holiday cactus, and kalanchoe are short day plants: They need the short days in the fall to begin flowering. Any nighttime light from the middle of October on can stop or delay flowering.

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

February

Most of the cold weather is over, but we can still have freezing weather into the middle of March. Water, if no rain every 10 – 14 days. Put down approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of water each time. Calibrate your sprinkler system by putting down flat cans such as tuna or pet food cans and measuring the amount in various areas.

LAWN

Apply pre-emergent herbicides such as Balan/Treflan or Pendimethalin to prevent crabgrass and other annual weed seeds from germinating. Make sure you reapply in 10 to 12 weeks after this application to help prevent summer weeds from popping up. Atrazine can be applied to St. Augustinegrass only twice in any 12 month period and never after April 15th in Flagler County. Applying more than twice in a twelve-month period or applying after April 15th may seriously damage St. Augustine lawns. Atrazine can also be used as an herbicide for many local weeds also.

FOOD GARDEN

Prepare the spring garden areas by turning the soil. **Start warm weather vegetable seeds indoors** so they are ready to plant outdoors in March. Brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, Chinese cabbage, lettuce, mustard, green onions, and potatoes can be planted in February.

FRUIT

Prune grape and other leafless vines in February. Fertilize all fruit trees, shrubs and vines. Use a palm or citrus fertilizer for citrus and a general-purpose fertilizer with micronutrients on most other fruiting plants. A slow-release fertilizer is best, since it spreads the release of the fertilizer over a longer period. For blueberries use a fertilizer for acid loving plants, such as an azalea/camellia, citrus or palm fertilizer at half strength, and repeat again next month. Check lemon and lime trees for ripeness. Enjoy.

LANDSCAPE

Start flower seeds indoors to be ready for planting in March. Wait until the middle of March to prune freeze damaged plants. **Prune roses back** approximately one third this month. Remove any suckers from below the graft, any dead wood, and any crossing stems and branches. Our Nelson roses seem to send up a lot of suckers from below the graft. Remove all old leaves from on and under the plants and keep mulch away from the base of the plants to help reduce fungal diseases. Spray with a fungicide labeled for black spot disease for roses. Fertilize roses with a slow release or organic fertilizer by the end of the month.

Crape myrtle can be pruned this month. Do not cut more than 1/3 of the bush/tree, remove old seed heads, and remove any crossing branches.

February is still a good time to **transplant shrubs and trees**.

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



Green Onions - harvestwizard.com



Calendula - acgnursery.com

March

GENERAL

March is the beginning of the gardening season in Flagler County, the time to get out and plant your garden and enjoy the warmer weather. Azaleas, pansies, petunias, dianthus, snapdragons and many other plants will be blooming.

If no rain, **water approximately every 7 - 10 days**, putting down an inch of water each time. Do you have a rain monitor on your system to shut off the sprinklers automatically when it rains? I hate to see sprinklers on in the rain.

LAWN

Apply fertilizer (16-4-8) with approx. 50 % of the nitrogen as a slow release form (**not** weed-n-feed).



Photosearch.com

In preparation for the dryer months ahead, you should run your irrigation system manually and **check the sprinkler heads** to see if they are broken, misdirected, blocked by the grass, or plugged with dirt. Replace broken heads, adjust any misdirected sprinklers, clean up the grass that may have grown over and blocked your popup sprinklers, raise them if they are not high enough (mine seem to sink low enough so that the grass blocks the spray) and clean them with a piece of wire if they are plugged. If your popup sprinkler heads are over five years old, check to see if they are leaking between the shaft and the housing. Replace if the leakage is excessive. Leakage will reduce the water available to the rest of the zone, making coverage less effective since there will be less pressure. The leakage will also flood the surrounding area and encourage fungal infection. During the dry weather in April and May, malfunctioning sprinklers will be readily apparent by the brown grass in areas that don't get good watering. A little bit of diligence now can keep your lawn looking good during this April and May and more importantly keep the weeds at bay by keeping your lawn healthy.

FOOD GARDEN

Most gardens will produce better by amending soils with compost (organic matter). Do a soil pH test to determine acid/alkaline level. **Warm season vegetables** can be planted: snap beans, pole beans, cantaloupe, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, squash, tomatoes, and watermelons. Plant the seeds you started indoors in January and February.

FRUIT

Most West Indian and Guatemalan avocado varieties should be checked for ripeness now through June. Citrus will be blooming. Treat citrus that has **scab or melanose** with copper sulfate solution 2 – 3 weeks after petal drop and again after 2 weeks.

LANDSCAPE

Annuals that can be planted are ageratum, alyssum, amaranthus, asters, baby's breath, balsam, begonia, browallia, calendula, celosia, calliopsis, cosmos, dusty miller, exacum, gaillardia, gazania, geranium, hollyhock, impatiens, lobelia, Marguerite daisy, marigold, pentas, phlox, rudbeckia, salvia, strawflower, strepocarpus, Sweet William, thunbergia, torenia, verbena, vinca, and zinnia.

Fertilize palm trees with a palm or citrus fertilizer containing 4% magnesium. Magnesium sulfate will give most plants a deeper green color and much richer colors in the flowers. Fertilize hibiscus, azaleas, roses, and poinsettias with a citrus, palm or azalea fertilizer containing the minor elements with a ratio of 3:1:2 (Nitrogen – Phosphorous - Potassium). Approximately 40 % of the nitrogen should be slow release. Two to three percent magnesium sulfate is also beneficial.

Prune back poinsettias once colored bracts begin to wilt. Cut back to approx. 12"- 18" above the soil. Plant in the ground in a well-drained sunny area. Since they will freeze in winter, plant in a protected southern location if you plan to leave them outside. Poinsettias are heavy feeders, so fertilize often or use a slow release fertilizer.

Finally, it is time to **prune back the plants that have freeze damage**. If in doubt, wait for new growth to see where the live plant is, although it can be quite a while until new growth starts on damaged plants. One quick way to determine if a stem or branch is alive is to cut the limb and see if green is present. If all the leaves have fallen off, the branch is probably alive. If the leaves have stayed on the branch, it is a sign that the branch is dead.

FruitScapes

Fruits for North Florida

Compiled by: Audrey Tennant, UF/IFAS Master Gardener

Peach trees in North East Florida?

Yes, it's true!!!

We can now grow peach trees in our back yards here in North Central Florida. It's a dream come true especially for us immigrants from the North Country.

Selection of the Cultivar/Chill Requirement

The proper cultivar selection will be the singularly most important decision you make to determine the success or failure of your peach tree. Peach trees, like many other tree crops, are grafted or budded into a rootstock. At this time "Floraguard" is the only recommended rootstock for peach trees.

Peach cultivars require unique accumulated exposure to cool temperatures during winter dormancy in order to resume normal bud growth the following spring. This is called the Chill Requirement. North Central Florida's temperature zone is 300 to 400 Chill Units (Chill Units are the hours of exposure to the optimum chilling temperature of about 43 degrees F). This is somewhat tempered by Flagler County's proximity to the coast.

The University of Florida has developed several high quality peach cultivars that will flourish in our unique climate zone. These cultivars include the FlordaBest, FlordaCrest, UFBeauty, UFBlaze, Topic Beauty, Flordaprince, FlordaStar and Floraglo.



Flordaprince - UF/IFAS



UFBeauty-UF/IFAS

Selection of the Cultivar/Fruit

In addition to selecting a cultivar that meets your chill requirement, you may want to add the following criteria to select your peach tree: the fruit's size, color, taste, firmness of the flesh and time of harvest. You can learn more about these qualities at the website: <http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/> in the article, "Florida Subtropical Peaches: General Concepts and Cultivars Recommended for Grower Trials, UF/IFAS Extension HS1125."

Planting your Peach Tree

Where?

The location that you chose for your tree is critical. Plant in sunny locations. Select soil that has good internal drainage in the upper 4-6 feet. Deep sandy soils are ideal. Avoid hardpan or flood prone locations.

Avoid low areas which are subject to late spring frosts and flooding. **Avoid** forested areas that provide habitat for fruit loving animals. **Avoid** areas that have wild plum or pecan trees as they carry diseases that infest peach cultivars.

Good news: The peach tree cultivars listed are self pollinating. You only need one tree.

How?

Contrary to usual planting recommendations of planting above the soil line, in well drained soils, plant peach trees slightly deeper than the nursery. In flatwood soils, plant about the same depth as in the nursery. Back fill and water the planting hole to maximize root contact with the soil and to prevent air pockets. Keep an area of 3-4 feet around the base of the tree free of weeds.

Spacing?

Give your tree 15 to 20 feet free from other trees.

When?

Bare root plants should be planted during the dormant season in December or soon afterwards so that new root growth can develop before spring shoot growth begins. Containerized plants can be planted year around.

Maintaining Your Peach Tree**Irrigation**

Young dormant bare root plants set in during dormancy need little water except in sandy soil. Containerized plants should be irrigated at planting. All trees should be irrigated weekly in the growing season. In case of a late freeze use covering to protect buds and flowers. Watering is especially essential during fruit bearing season (which tends to be our dry season) to maximize the quality of the fruit. 1" per week is recommended.

Fertilization

Apply about 1 lb of 10-10-10 fertilizer in May of the first season. Each February thereafter apply about 1.5 lbs of 10-10-10 for each year of the age of the tree up to a maximum of 10-15 lbs per tree. Excessive nitrogen will result in vigorous growth and excessive pruning. It will drastically reduce the number of fruit buds as well. Fertilizer should be spread evenly around the tree, covering all the area under the branches.



Peach Tree with open center
- UF/IFAS

Pruning and Trimming

Pruning is necessary to form a well shaped, strong tree and maximize production of healthy fruit. The goal of pruning of your peach tree is to create an open center system and low, wide-spreading branches. In the first winter cut back the main scaffold branches to approximately 1/3 so that the lateral branches growing on the outside will encourage spreading. Remove water sprouts and limbs that are too low. For thorough trimming and pruning details see the University of Florida articles, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/HS348> and <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/HS365>.

Pest and Disease Management

The primary pest of peach fruit in North central Florida is the plum curculio. Occasional pests include scarab beetles, trips and nitidulid sap beetles. The trunk and root pests are clearwing borers, the peach tree borer, white peach scale and San Jose scale. The curculio comes from wild plum plantings and is most aggressive in March and April. Sprays applied early to after mid-March are generally effective.

Borers can be removed by hand digging under gum spots in late summer and fall. Remove small white grubs which are the immature stages of the borer.

White peach scale and San Jose scales should be controlled during dormancy by applying two applications of dormant oil prior to bud swell. Wet down the limbs and the trunk surfaces with the solutions. Chemicals used to control curculio and stink bugs may help manage scales.

Scab affects peaches causing small brown spots with a green halo on the skin of fruit. Sulfur sprays 4-6 weeks after full bloom are essential for control. Bacterial spot can be serious on "Flordaprince" and "Tropicbeauty" but is difficult to control. Alternative cultivars have better resistance. Good fertilization reduces the tree's susceptibility to bacterial spot.

Mushroom root rot is a fungal disease found in newly cleared woodlands containing oak and hickory trees. No practical control is available. Peach trees wilt suddenly starting in their third year. Cutting through the bark at and just below the ground line discloses a thin white fungus growth between the bark and wood.

Additional and more detailed information on pest and disease control is available at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/HS348>.

Lawn Care Tips

Compiled by: Diane Cortés, UF/IFAS Florida Master Gardener



“I want a lush, green Florida lawn. Isn’t there just a simple chart to tell me how to care for my lawngrass?” Indeed, the Florida lawn can be one of the most confusing and frustrating landscape features to care for. In this article, we will try to summarize the Best Management Practices (BMPs) as outlined by the University of Florida/IFAS. These practices cover fertilizing, watering and weed control.

Proper management practices that encourage a dense, thriving turf are the best method of weed control. Healthy turf shades the soil so sunlight can't reach weed seeds ready to germinate. A thick turf also minimizes the physical space available for weeds to become established.

Proper Turfgrass Selection Proper management begins with selection of the best turf species or variety for a particular area. For example, heavily shaded areas will support only a few turfgrass species. This results in thin, weak turf that is very susceptible to weed invasion. Good grass choices for shady conditions would be certain cultivars of St. Augustinegrass, zoysiagrass, and to a lesser degree, centipedegrass.

Proper fertilization, watering, mowing, and control of other pests are required to produce a dense turf that will prevent weed infestation. If turf is over-or under-watered, over-or under-fertilized, or mowed too low or too infrequently, the turf is weakened and cannot compete with weeds. Damaged areas resulting from using unsharpened mowers increase time needed for turf recovery, allowing for weed invasion. It is very important to understand that weeds don't create a void, they fill a void.

Sanitation is extremely important to prevent the introduction of weeds into lawn areas. A good practice is to wash off mowers and trimmers used in weed-infested areas before mowing or trimming in weed-free areas. Similarly, rototillers should be thoroughly cleaned prior to and after using to minimize dispersal of weed seeds found in the soil. Yard clippings that contain weeds should be properly disposed of or composted to reduce the possibility of unwanted contamination.

(source: <http://yourfloridalawn.ifas.ufl.edu/weedpropermgt.htm>)

Watering the Lawn:

Water your lawn only when it needs it. The amount of rainfall your area receives should dictate how often you water your lawn and how much water you apply. A hearty rain eliminates the need for watering for as long as two weeks. Overwatering your lawn results in shallow root systems, which means your lawn is less drought- and stress-tolerant. Overwatering also promotes weed growth, disease and fungus.



The most efficient way to irrigate your lawn is to irrigate when it shows signs of stress from lack of water. Signs of stress include the lawn turning a bluish-gray color and lingering tire tracks or footprints. Leaf blades folded in half lengthwise is another sign. The soil around the root zone may feel dry.

The St. Johns River Water Management District rule allows watering no more than two days a week, with a few exceptions. Less water will be needed when it rains. In the fall and winter lawns only need water once every 7-14 days.

(taken from: <http://www.sjrwmd.com/floridaswater/conservation/schedule.html>)

Lawn Fertilizing Schedule for Flagler County

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
St. Augustinegrass Mow at 3½-4 inches in height		Crabgrass preventer, if needed*	Complete Fertilizer‡		Crabgrass preventer, if needed*	Iron Treatment (optional)
Bahiagrass Mow at 3-4 inches in height		Crabgrass preventer, if needed*	Complete Fertilizer‡		Crabgrass preventer, if needed*	
Bermudagrass Mow at ½-1½ inches in height		Crabgrass preventer, if needed*	Complete Fertilizer‡		Nitrogen Fertilizer†	
Zoysiagrass Mow at 1-2 inches in height		Crabgrass preventer, if needed*	Complete Fertilizer‡			

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
St. Augustinegrass Mow at 3½-4 inches in height			Complete Fertilizer‡		Broadleaf Weed Control, if needed*	
Bahiagrass Mow at 3-4 inches in height			Complete Fertilizer‡		Broadleaf Weed Control, if needed*	
Bermudagrass Mow at ½-1½ inches in height			Complete Fertilizer‡		Nitrogen Fertilizer† Broadleaf Weed Control, if needed*	
Zoysiagrass Mow at 1-2 inches in height			Complete Fertilizer‡		Broadleaf Weed Control, if needed*	

‡Complete fertilizer: contains nitrogen (N) of which at least 50% is slow-release, phosphorus (P), potassium (K) and micronutrients

†Nitrogen fertilizer: contains high percentage of soluble nitrogen (N) in addition to phosphorus (P) and potassium (K)

***Weed Management in Flagler County Lawns**

The key to weed management in your lawn is proper cultural practices, including proper watering and mowing. However, if you do develop a weed problem, spot treating is the best option. Rarely is a broadcasting of a weed preventer/killer on the entire lawn necessary.

Products that can be safely used in the home lawn as determined by grass type:

St. Augustine: atrazine (broadleaf weeds), benefin (crabgrass preventer)

Bahia: benefin (crabgrass preventer), 2,4-D (broadleaf weeds), MSMA (post-emergent broadleaf)

Bermuda: benefin (crabgrass preventer), 2,4-D (broadleaf weeds), MSMA (post-emergent broadleaf)

Zoysia: atrazine (broadleaf weeds), benefin (crabgrass preventer), 2,4-D (broadleaf weeds)

Note: Always follow label directions on all products!

Kidz Korner

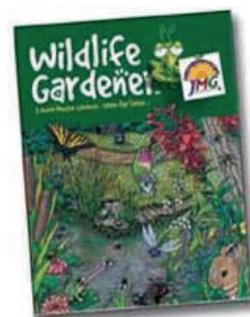
By: Ruth A. Micieli,
Horticulture Program Assistant,
Master Gardener Coordinator



Wadsworth Elementary Panther Planter Garden Club is in full swing with 27 members! This year their focus is on Wildlife Gardening and they are using the Jr. Master Gardener Wildlife Gardener curriculum. Lisa Tilton is the teacher responsible for the successful program at the school. Here's what they've been doing so far:

The members imagined and designed their own "bird house" if they were a building one for a bird. The imagined word is used very strongly here! They included bird bathrooms, seed kitchens, nesting rooms, game/TV rooms. . . Lovely homes that all birds would definitely want to buy if they were in the market for a home.

The second activity that we discussed for homework is to create a menu for an animal that would live in a garden. The animals they listed were squirrels, snakes, bunnies, caterpillars, butterflies, birds, hummingbird, turtle, frogs, lizards, bees, and wasps. Their task is to choose one of those animals, research exactly what it eats and create a delicious menu for a garden restaurant where their animal would love to dine. They need to include pictures of their food ingredients. i.e. milkweed leaves, flowers for nectar, mosquitoes. . . These can be hand drawn, internet pictures, or magazine pictures. Make it interesting and fun. The important part of this project is to find out what animals that live in gardens eat by doing some research.



Wish list for our garden: thistle socks for goldfinch, sunflower seeds, fruit and nut mixed seed, other bird seed, bird houses, plants such as parsley, fennel, dill, winter flowers, and 4 trellises. If you know of a business that would love to sponsor our group and donate some items, we would greatly appreciate it!



We learned a lot about the mammal bats. We watched a video that showed numerous species of bats, what they eat, and how they live. We could not believe that the smallest bat, the bumblebee bat, weighs about the same as a penny!

As part of their service learning project, the Wadsworth Elementary Panther Planters have set up a "Touch and Learn" Christmas tree about the life cycles of the butterflies in this area. The members of the club have worked very hard making special ornaments that show the egg, larva, pupa, and adult of many species. You can flip the ornaments around to see which species is on it.

Also, congratulations to Emily Kuleski, Emily Ung, Will Naughton, and Annmarie Sanfilippo for earning their bird watching certificate and Audubon pin. Great job!



Wadsworth Elementary
Panther Planters in action

continued from page 1

- * **“Low Phosphate Fertilizer”** – fertilizer products intended for new or established urban turf or lawns. However when the phosphate levels are equal to or above 0.5%, these products shall have use directions so that they do not exceed 0.25lbs of P₂O₅ (Phosphorus) per 1000 sq. ft. of lawns.
- * **“Starter Fertilizer”** – these are fertilizers formulated for a one-time application at planting time (or near that time). They are used to encourage initial root growth and help grasses or other landscape plants get established.
- * **“New Urban Turf”** – turf established less than 12 months. **“Established Urban Turf”** – is urban turf older than 12 months.

How much can I use?

The rule requires that specific guidelines for N and P application rates be followed. Any retail fertilizer sold for urban lawn use will have directions for use in the bag that will state these requirements. The rates allowed follow University of Florida guidelines for maintenance of healthy lawns.

If a fertilizer is being sold as a **“slow-release nitrogen”** fertilizer, then it can be applied at 1 pound of N per 1,000 square feet of lawn. If there is no slow-release N in the fertilizer, then it can only be applied at 0.7 pounds of N per 1,000 square feet. Most of the retail fertilizers sold for use on urban lawns have slow-release N in them. Ask your Extension Service for annual nitrogen fertilizer rates for locally used turfgrasses.

Application of phosphorus is now limited to 0.25 pounds of P₂O₅ per 1,000 square feet for any single application. No more than 0.50 pounds of P₂O₅ per 1,000 square feet can be applied in a year. This means that you may see more “no-phosphate” or “low-phosphate” fertilizers in garden centers. Fertilizers that have a high ratio of P to N may not be able to be used more than twice a year in order to not exceed these rates.

A couple of exceptions

Newly planted lawns may use a starter fertilizer that contains higher P for up to one year after planting to encourage establishment. The directions for use of these fertilizers will limit P applications to no more than 1.0 pound of P₂O₅ per 1,000 square feet and are intended for one time use only.

If your soil tests low for plant-available P, it is permissible to apply more P. Note that most Florida soils have ample plant-available P and the majority of lawns will not be adversely affected by this limitation. Check with our Extension office if you need a soil test.

There will also be some other changes to the labels of urban turf fertilizers. The front of the bag will tell the area to be covered by that fertilizer bag. Other statements will also remind users to apply the product with care: “Do not apply near water, storm drains, or drainage ditches. Do not apply if heavy rain is expected. Apply this product only to your lawn or garden, and sweep any product that lands on the driveway, sidewalk, or street back onto your lawn or garden.”

Read the Label

Fertilizer manufacturers are stepping up to the plate with new formulations and labels that will meet these requirements. It will be up to the homeowner to carefully read and follow these labeled directions.

This is much like the ways that consumer pesticides are regulated – the label is the law. However, pesticide laws are mandated by US laws, but the new Florida Fertilizer Law is established by our own state to insure that nutrients intended for lawns stay on the grass.

The old bags of fertilizer are still in the streams of commerce, and will gradually be replaced to reflect these new regulations. If you have concerns about how to use any lawn and garden product, feel free to contact the Extension Service for assistance.



New Form!
New Form!



We are pleased to bring you the ‘Your North Florida Yard & Garden’ Newsletter, written and produced by the UF/IFAS Flagler County Master Gardeners and the Flagler County Extension Service. It is a quarterly newsletter containing lots of information and helpful hints about gardening in our area. The following sections are featured in the newsletter for your information and enjoyment:

“The Good, The Bad and The Bugglys”- highlights plant selection, weeds and insects.

Monthly Calendar- What to do at that certain time of year in the yard.

Kidz Korner- covers school and 4-H gardening projects.

Specialty sections - includes interesting articles on gardening and other areas of interest.

Herbs & Recipes- discusses featured herbs and how to use them.

Upcoming events – Know what is happening at your Extension office!

We also include “how-to” sections, current horticulture findings and much more!

Cut Here ✂

Newsletter Subscription/Renewal Form

I (we) wish to receive the new, **free** electronic version of “Your North Florida Yard & Garden” for one calendar year. Please send to:

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OR

I (we) wish to subscribe to the paper copy of “Your North Florida Yard & Garden” Newsletter. I understand this is a quarterly newsletter that expires December 31st each calendar year. Enclosed is \$6.00 for one calendar year’s subscription.

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Please make check payable to Flagler County Master Gardener Club.

Mail Completed form to:
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Suggestions for upcoming newsletters:

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SERVICE & UF/IFAS FLORIDA
MASTER GARDENERS



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EXTENSION WEBSITE AT
WWW.FLAGLERCOUNTY.ORG
OR
WWW.SOLUTIONSFORYOURLIFE.COM

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Upcoming Events:

Joy of Bonsai - January 16-18, 2009 for more information contact Louise Leister at mysecretbonsai@bellsouth.net

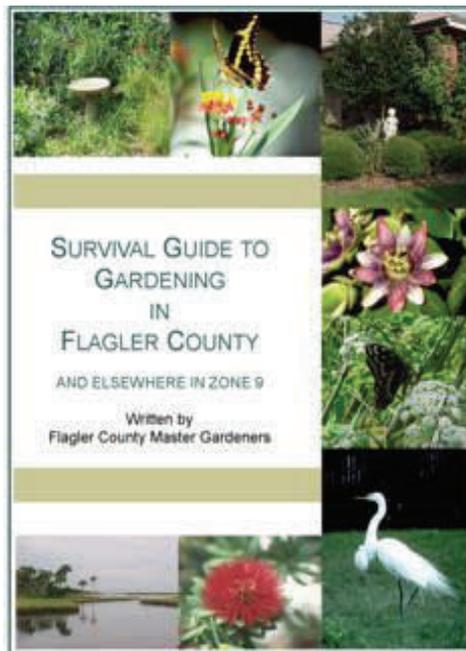
Flagler County & Lifestyle Show - January 31 - February 1, 2009 at the Flagler Palm Coast High School.

Free Short & Sweet Series - Mondays, starting February 2 through March 30, 2009, 10 am - noon. Featuring a 9-week series of lawn, garden and landscaping programs for newcomers and garden enthusiasts alike. Programs held at the Flagler County Extension Service. Call 386-437-7464 for a complete schedule.

Irrigation Seminar - February 28, 2009 at the Flagler County Extension Service. For information contact Louise Leister at mysecretbonsai@bellsouth.net.

Ready, Set, Grow! - March 7, 2009 from 10 am - 3 pm. Get your garden ready for Spring! Fee, includes lunch: \$15 per person at the Flagler County Extension Service.

Cracker Day - March 28, 2009 from "sun-up til we're done!" Flagler County Fairgrounds.



"The Survival Guide to Gardening in Flagler County and Elsewhere in Zone 9" is currently available at the Flagler County Extension Service, local Ace Hardware stores, VerdeGo, Big Value Garden Center, Hammock Gardens Nursery and various local book shops.

Get your copy now, while supplies last!