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**Timely Gardening Tips
for MARION COUNTY**
by Master Gardener, Jo Leyte-Vidal

November ushers in a dry season in North Central Florida. The dry season is the optimal time to install turf grass because the cool days require less water and there is less competition from new weeds. Once the turf is installed it needs to be watered daily with ½ inch of water each day for the first two weeks. After the two weeks, wean the turf to ¾ inch every 10 – 14 days.

The dry season also creates ideal conditions for spider mites to visit your garden. Look at your leaves for yellow spots and curling. Evergreens such as cedar or juniper will show browning of the needles.

Test for these pests by holding a paper under the distressed branch and tap the branch sharply with a stick.

I Like Lichens

by Anne Lambrecht, UF/IFAS Marion County Master Gardener

What is that hairy green stuff growing on my tree? The answer is lichens: a flaky, moss-like ancient subspecies of fungus. Lichens are rather pretty. They can be light green, gray, yellow, orange, and brown. They are most often found growing on rocks, gravestones, tortoise shells and on the bark and branches of our trees and shrubs. Lichens grow on every continent of the earth except Antarctica. Actually lichens consist of two organisms: fungus and algae that live and work together happily. This relationship is called symbiosis. The algae derives water and nutrients from the fungus and then the algae makes food (photosynthesis) for the fungus. Everybody’s happy.

Lichens are long lived and well adapted to extremes of heat, cold and drought. Huge amounts of reindeer moss (not a true moss, but a lichen) cover the northern Arctic and are food for many creatures living there.

There are mainly three kinds of lichen:

- Foliose lichens are leaf-like
- Crustose lichens are crusty (crustose lichens consist of 75% of all lichens on earth)
- Fruticose lichens are round (common fruticose lichens are called “powder puff” and model train people use them for mini trees and shrubs).



Fruticose Lichen (*Pseudocyphellaria rainierensis*)
Photo by Karen Dillman, U.S. Forest Service

“A rolling stone gathers no moss” describes why lichens and moss do not grow on young, healthy, actively growing trees. Stressed trees and shrubs grow very slowly and often have lichens and moss growing on them.

Lichens and moss are not pathogens; they don’t cause disease in plants. They use the plants as a surface to grow on. Plants covered with lichens look sick and the reason is that the plant or tree is sick, allowing sunlight in for the opportunist lichen. Upon further investigation, you will discover the cause of the plant’s decline: stress, drought, disease or insects, plant competition, over watering, poor nutrition,



Timely Gardening Tips for MARION COUNTY

by Master Gardener, Jo Leyte-Vidal
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Look for little specks that move on the paper. A miticide should take care of the problem. Read the label and follow the directions carefully. Now is the time to plant cool weather annuals like carnation, foxglove, pansy, petunia, Shasta daisy, and snapdragon. Plant beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, Chinese cabbage, collards, kohlrabi, mustard, onions, radish, and spinach.

I Like Lichens

by Anne Lambrecht, UF/IFAS Marion County Master Gardener
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improper soil pH or improper pruning. Lichens are not considered pests so there are no chemicals to spray to control lichens. You can pick them off, or as a neighbor of mine does, wash them off with detergent and scrub brush.

I think lichens are lovely. Lichens are often found growing on trees planted in small islands in parking lots. These trees are stressed by limited soil and root growth, compacted soils and heat stress due to paved surfaces.

Lichens serve an important role in the ecological community by monitoring the amount of pollutants in the environment.

Lichens also provide food and shelter for wildlife including some insects, deer, moose and elk, certain squirrels, mice and bats.

So if you can rule out lichens as the cause of killing your landscape plants and check for the other possibilities, you can like lichens, too.

You can reach Anne Lambrecht at annegarden@embarqmail.com

What's Bugging You?

by Urban Horticulture Agent, Norma Samuel

Find out what local residents are calling in about

I have mushrooms growing all over my lawn since we had the last set of heavy rains. What can I do to get rid of them?

Mushrooms are indeed commonly seen after heavy rains in lawns. They usually develop as a result of organic matter such as tree stumps and logs decaying under your lawn. They obtain their nourishment from the decomposing material. The mushrooms are fruiting stages of fungi. Sometimes you may see what we call a fairy ring where the mushrooms appear in a circle in the lawn and that area is darker green than the rest of the lawn. I would recommend just collecting and bagging the mushrooms and dispose of them.



Photo courtesy of floridanature.org

You can find more information on fairy rings and other lawn fungi at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh046>.

Got Questions?

What does 4-H have to offer my child? When is the best time to prune crepe myrtles? How can I make money off 10 acres of land? What is the difference between type 1 and type 2 diabetes?



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EXTENSION SERVICE

We Have Answers

Year Round Color

Kathleen Patterson, FYN Program Coordinator

I enjoy having color in my landscape twelve months a year but sometimes this is rather difficult. This article is devoted to creating a colorful landscape for each season.

Winter is right around the corner, so let's start there. *Cassia bicapsularis* is blooming now and will do so right through December and early January. This yellow blooming shrub/tree is also a host plant for the sulphur butterfly. Also yellow is the Carolina Jessamine that is beginning to bloom with yellow licorice scented flowers. This vine stays evergreen during the winter as well as the rest of the year. This will bloom until spring.

Some of the heartier roses such as the knock-out rose will give you blooms during the cold weather, many varieties of camellias are beginning to bloom and will bloom into January and February. The Florida flame vine (*Pyrostegia ignea*) which actually came from Brazil offers bright orange tubular flowers beginning now up until the first hard frost. Don't forget your poinsettias and Christmas cactus. Also blooming now until the first frost is the Mexican flame vine (*Senecio confuses*) with its beautiful orange daisy-like flowers.

Plumbago planted near my home continues to bloom almost year round as does my Mexican heather. Although I don't get many blooms on my golden dewdrop (*Duranta repens*), it still offers beautiful golden berries during the winter. Thryallis (*Galphimia gracilis*) offers yellow blooms most of the year in a good protected area. Tea olive (*Osmanthus fragrans*) is beginning to bloom now and will bloom right into the spring with beautiful white scented flowers. Beautiful cape honeysuckle is also blooming now with brilliant orange flowers in large clusters.

As you can see, we have many choices for color in the landscape during the winter months in Marion County. Other plants such as lantana and verbena will offer color until a hard frost. And don't forget the annuals such as pansies, snapdragons, petunias and chrysanthemums are very cold hardy and will last through the cold and frost. These plants have done well in my yard right up through May or when the warmer weather comes.

Or as a last resort, a trip to the craft store for some silk or plastic flowers. No, I'm just kidding about that!



Items below are available for purchase at the UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service. Please come to see these environmentally-friendly products.

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2011 Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars for our upcoming events:

In observance of the Thanksgiving Holiday, the Extension Office and Plant Clinic will be closed on Thursday, Nov. 24, 2011 and Friday, Nov. 25, 2011. Have a wonderful holiday!



Eight Ways To Stress A Plant

Norma Samuel, Urban Horticulture Agent

Plants, just like humans can become stressed. A stressed plant is more susceptible to insect and disease problems. Here are eight sure ways you can stress your plants.

1. **Wrong place.** Be familiar with the growing conditions that are necessary for your plants to thrive. Sun or shade, acid or alkaline soil, space requirements. Always remember: right plant, right place.
2. **Improper planting.** Plants should be placed in the ground at the original level of the container in which they are grown. Planting too deep or too shallow can create problems. Slice about an inch all the way around the root ball of root bound plants to prevent circling of roots before planting in the ground.
3. **Bark and wood damage.** Remove support stakes from trees, so they do not grow into the trunk. Avoid damaging trunks with weed trimmers or other equipment. Damage to the bark creates entry points for insects and disease organisms. Severe ring bark or removal of the bark can reduce the movement of water and nutrients and lead to decline and eventual death of the plant.
4. **Soil compaction.** Ideal soil for plant growth should be loose to allow movement of air and water. Compaction reduces the amount of space and makes it more difficult for roots to penetrate through the soil. Compaction can be a result of high foot traffic, and vehicles.
5. **Improper pruning.** Poor pruning practices will stress trees. Do not remove more than one-third of the plant at a time. Selectively prune out dead or crossing branches. Sterilize pruners to prevent spread of disease. The timing of pruning is also important. This is the month when many gardeners prune their crape myrtles. Once the weather warms up they will send out a flush of new growth that will die with the onset of cold weather as it did not get enough time to harden. Wait until mid-February to prune crape myrtles.
6. **Improper fertilization.** Excessive or too little fertilizers can stress plants or make them more susceptible to insect or disease problems. Be familiar with recommended fertility rates of your plants.
7. **Improper watering.** Plants that are overwatered will develop root rot problems. Drought stressed plants can result in roots becoming dehydrated.
8. **Herbicide use.** The use of herbicides such as Roundup can cause injury to nearby plants in which it comes into contact. Avoid spraying herbicides in high winds.

In order to have a happy, care-free garden, make every effort to prevent, reduce, or eliminate the source of stress. Remember, plants will not live forever, like every other living organism they too will eventually die.

Visit the following websites for more information on caring for or reducing plant stress. <http://georgiafaces.caes.uga.edu>, <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/circleremoving.shtml>, <http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id71/id71.htm>





Home Sweet Home Invasion: Protect your home from giant snails

Source: Florida Department of Plant Industry

September, 2011

As an agency which oversees Florida’s plant industry, our job is to detect, intercept and control plant and honey bee pests that threaten Florida’s native and commercially grown plants and agricultural resources. As a homeowner, you can help preserve and protect the area in which you live.

We are asking you to look out for an unlikely, strangely large intruder who will eat you out of house and home – literally.



[The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is on high alert](#), working to eradicate the giant African land snail (GALS) in South Florida.

This giant snail, which eats everything from peanuts to stucco, was found by a homeowner in Miami-Dade County. These snails are much larger than the normal Florida native snails, growing up to eight inches in length and more than four inches in diameter. The snails are dangerous to our home, health and natural resources as they can cause structural damage to plaster and stucco, carry a parasitic nematode that can lead to meningitis in humans and they consume at least 500 different types of plants.

Where are they?

Snails tend to dwell in cool, wet places. They can be found attached to the side of buildings and burrowed in the ground, camouflaged by leaves. Some have even been found lurking around cat food dispensers – attempting to steal a quick meal from the kitty. GALS could be anywhere because they will eat nearly anything. [Check out our photo album](#) to see some of the interesting places where we have found GALS thus far.

What can you do to protect your home?

Be aware. The first step in protecting yourself and your home is to be aware. Stay informed on the eradication process of GALS. Learn more about the snails’ dangers, habits and signs of their presence. For more information about the giant African land snail, visit [the department’s website](#).

Detect. Be on the lookout for this invasive pest. GALS are abnormally large creatures. However, all animals start out as babies. There are small GALS out there so don’t let its size fool you. The shape of the shell is what you want to look for. A giant African land snail has a brown, distinctively striped (almost Tiger-like) shell in the shape of a cone. It consists of seven to nine whorls, with a long and greatly swollen body whorl (see photo above). This is the most identifiable characteristic. However, variations are possible.

Report. If you think you may have seen a giant African land snail or evidence of its presence, please call the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services toll-free at 888-397-1517. You can also email in a photo for identification to DPIhelpline@freshfromflorida.com. If you are interested in preserving a snail sample for collection by FDACS, it is suggested that you use gloves to handle the snail and place it in a Ziploc bag. Seal the bag and place the snail in a bucket or plastic container. Do not release the snail. It is probable that this invasive pest, like many others, was introduced to Florida by an individual person. When you travel, please, [don’t pack a pest](#). Do your part in protecting your home, your health and all of our natural resources.



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