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Timely Gardening Tips for MARION COUNTY

by David Y. Goodman,
UF/IFAS Marion County
Master Gardener, In-Training

It's vegetable gardening time again!

Here in our marvelous Marion County, we can redeem our spring failures – or add to our successes – by starting fall vegetable garden. As the summer heat starts to dissipate and the freezes of winter are still months away, getting some fresh produce going is a great idea. Some plants will even carry through the cold and into the spring, such as collards and peas. September is the time to roll out your plans before the chill slows growth. Lettuce, cabbage, beets, chard, carrots and turnips are all good choices. If the weather is exceptionally hot, be sure to keep everything watered. Just remember – most cool-season veggies are Yankees and can't take the heat.

One thing to remember about the fall: the bugs are out in force. Grasshoppers, leaf-chewing beetles and other herbivorous arthropods are storing up energy for breeding and riding out the winter. Keep your eyes open, and

September 2012

August in my Florida-Friendly Garden

by Kathleen Patterson, FYN Program Coordinator

Baby, it's hot outside. And rainy. And humid. Boy am I ready for summer to be over and so are my plants. This past week I was giving a presentation to the residents of Stonecreek and at the last minute I decided to take some problem plants with me. So armed with my faithful Felco pruners I ventured out into the dark recesses of my many gardens. What I found didn't surprise me but it really surprised the program participants.

I gathered many samples of fungus on many of the plants in my landscape. The knock-out roses that are labeled as maintenance free were loaded with fungal spots, as were the drift roses, the many varieties of hydrangea, the dogwood, the feijoa, the zinnias and on and on... I think you get the idea. Then came the insects...leaf rollers on the canna lilies, mealybugs on the hydrangea, spittlebugs on the zinnias and of course the ever present aphids on the milkweed.

Upon arrival at the Extension Service I took a stroll and what did I find? Cast iron plant with sun scorch, podocarpus with aphids, sago with cycad scale, oak tree with chewing damage and spittlebugs and ligustrum with a fungus. When it was all said and done I must have had over 50 specimens of problems.

So what's the big deal? To me, there is no big deal. I know that it's August, it's hot and humid and rainy and by the end of the summer everything is stressing—including me! We as gardeners expect to see these types of problems late in the year but what about those residents that don't know if its damage from the weather, from a bug or from something they have done?

Our goal is to educate them of what they are seeing and if it should be treated or not. Of all the problems that I shared with the community there were only a few that needed to be taken care of. The cycad scale needs to be treated or the plant removed (and I'm all for removing it), the mealy bugs were taken care of by pruning off the branches that were affected followed by a spray of insecticidal soap and the scale that was found was treated with horticultural oil. All done by using the least toxic methods, of course. Everything else was left alone. Why? Most of the problems will clear up as we move into fall, and certainly by spring there will be no sign that August was devastating on my gardens.

All said and done, I believe that I was able to advise those attendees to make notes, pay attention, keep a journal and to use good judgment before running out and buying everything on the shelf at the local box store! Good advice of all of us don't you agree?

The cassias are blooming right now. I know you've seen their cheery yellow flowers and

Timely Gardening Tips for MARION COUNTY

by David Y. Goodman,
UF/IFAS Marion County
Master Gardener, In-Training
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If you can, put your garden beds near where you live and walk on a daily basis. This allows you to keep tabs on what's going on before problems reach biblical plague proportions.

It's still a good time to get in a round of fertilization. Turf, ornamentals, and fruit trees all benefit from a final feeding before fall closes in. If you wait too long, you risk encouraging a flush of growth just before frost. I've harped on this before since I've been there, done that, and hurt my trees with an ill-timed round of fertilization. The resulting tender growth was zapped by frost, setting their growth back by a year. Not worth it!

September through November is a good time to get many trees and shrubs into the ground. The nurseries are back in swing offering everything from palms to peaches. Thanks to the University of Florida's extensive breeding program, highly productive low-chill varieties of peaches and nectarines are widely available. Flordaking, Gulfkink and the wonderfully weird UFO peach fit our chill hours here – and on the nectarine front, Sunraycer is a well-tried favorite.

Have you been getting plenty of rain? Thought about mulching? I beat the mulch drum a lot because it's simply the best way to build good soil and keep in moisture. Mulch when the ground is already good and wet. That way you keep the dirt wet rather than dry. Consider it a way of creating a "water savings account."

Also – watch out for weeds and their pernicious seed heads. Pigweed and various grasses are constantly dropping thousands of potential new weeds across untended areas. Pull, chop and compost them before they produce seed and next year's garden will thank you.

Get out there as the days cool... get gardening... grow some healthy greens for your family and friends... and I'll see you next month.

Cassia Cousins

by Anne Lambrecht Master Gardener

The cassias are blooming right now. I know their cheery yellow flowers and leaves that pray. The genus Cassia is confusing, with a piece broken off called Senna, as well as another piece which we know as cinnamon. For now, we'll just call this flowering shrub "Cassia".

The Cassia cousins share certain characteristics. They have yellow tropical looking flowers that bloom late summer into fall. They have rounded compound leaves with opposite leaflets that in the evening or when stressed close up upon themselves. They are deciduous and their seed pods provide interesting architectural structures during the winter months. Cassias tolerate drought well although that's one of the triggers for their leaves to pray. They like full sun to part shade. A wonderful benefit of these plants is that they serve as a larval host plant for three types of Florida butterflies – cloudless sulphur, sleepy orange, and orange-barred sulphur. These plants hail from South America, Hawaii, and India.

Two forms of Cassia most popular in Florida gardens is "Candlestick" bush (*Senna alata*) and Christmas senna (*Cassia bicapsularis*). These grow best in Zones 9-11. They always freeze back but return unless the winter is harsh. The root system on these plants is weak and they can be moved around or removed easily. Candlestick actually looks like a candelabra with its yellow flowers stacked high like candles. I love this one because it's so unusual all year. It can grow from five to eight feet tall and three to four feet across.

The group of rain shower trees with their showy fall flowers are also Cassia cousins. These are sometimes considered invasive because their seeds "volunteer" in the spring. These trees can grow to 40 feet tall. You will begin to see them bloom and go to seed in the next few weeks.

There is a weed known as wild senna which is in the pea family that grows on the side off the road from Pennsylvania to Florida. They produce bright yellow flowers which turn into thick curved seed pods, 2-3" long. The tea made from the wild senna leaves has been taken as a laxative for centuries.

I would recommend getting one of the Cassias. They will not look the same all year long but they will make you happy all year long. You can buy them at better nursery centers and plant festivals. Be careful not to buy the plant *Senna pendula* var. *glabrata* which looks similar to the *bicapsularis* which is known to be a caution invasive in Central Florida.

The Husband has been busy repairing the ruts in the yard leading from the street to the back of the house created from dragging people off the street, some against their will, to come have a look at my garden. The Husband says, "Anne, not everyone likes gardens". But I think this is not true. Don't you agree?



What's Bugging You?

by Urban Horticulture Agent Norma Samuel

Find out what local residents are calling in about.

What's with all the mushrooms growing in my yard? Are they harmful?, should I pull them up?, There seems to be three kinds, one large dry one that open up to be an umbrella, one smaller white slimy one and one tiny tan one that looks like a violet.

Mushrooms are popping up in yards in my neighborhood also. This is due to the rains we've had in recent weeks. Mushrooms are fungi that feed on decaying organic matter, such as leaves and wood. Mushrooms are mostly considered beneficial as they aid in the decomposition process and release nutrients that can be utilized by plants.

In some cases, you may notice fungi growing in a circle, called a fairy ring. The grass inside the ring is usually dark green. However, a buildup of fungal mycelium from the mushroom can make it difficult for water to penetrate the soil and can lead to eventual death of the lawn in the area. As you correctly pointed out, mushrooms can be of different shapes, sizes, and colors.

Sometimes homeowners ask if the mushrooms growing in their yard are edible. My advice is always to be on the safe side and purchase your mushrooms at the grocery store. Consumption of a poisonous mushroom can be detrimental.

See this link for more information: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74100.html>



Photos courtesy of the University of Florida

I have clivia plants in the shade/part sun. There is a white fungus growing on some of the plants. Do you know what this fungus is? It has completely rotted the plants down to the roots. And as it grows up the stalk, it is feathery and white. It does not have a smell. I did find this bad (but pretty) snail on the ground near the clivia.

I must admit, I did not know what clivia were, but once I opened the attachment I knew that I was looking at southern blight disease. The white fungal mycelium is common to this disease and it usually attacks the plants at the base as it is a soil borne pathogen. The tan colored round structures in the photos are sclerotia, the overwintering structures of the pathogen.

Southern blight affects many plants including ornamentals and vegetables. To control, remove and destroy diseased plants.



Clivia with Southern Blight

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

MICRO-IRRIGATION:

- Eco-friendly
- Plants love it
- Saves time & money

Eco-Friendly
MULCH
AVAILABLE
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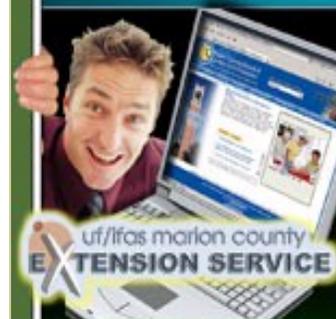


Cost-Saving,
Eco-Friendly
Rain Barrels
FOR SALE!



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

UPCOMING LECTURES/ EVENTS:

Educational seminars and events are presented by UF/IFAS Extension Agents and or Master Gardeners.

Unless otherwise indicated, to pre-register, please call 671-8400 or e-mail Donna.Redner@marioncountyfl.org

Vegetable Garden Expo

Series of educational sessions and Vendor booths on growing Vegetables, fruits and herbs
September 8, 9:00 am—1:00 pm
Marion County Extension
No Charge

Gardening for Dummies

Tips for the novice gardener and residents new to Marion County to garden successfully
September 24—28,
6:00 pm—8:30 pm
Marion County Extension Auditorium
Cost: \$25 per person / \$40 per couple
Please preregister by Sept. 14

UF/IFAS Master Gardener Fall Gathering

October 6,
8:00am—noon
Marion County Extension
No Charge



Foundation for the Gator Nation
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Common Gardening Mistakes

Norma Samuel, Urban Horticulture Agent
UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service

Warning! What I am about to say will scare you, but it's true. Gardening can be a difficult and expensive undertaking if it's not done right. Don't be alarmed, with a little knowledge gardening can be a pleasurable experience that provides a source of relaxation, food, and beautification of your surroundings. Here are some common mistakes to avoid when gardening.

1. **Putting plants in the 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.
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.

Visit the following websites for more information.

<http://georgiafaces.caes.uga.edu>
<http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/circleremoving.shtml> <http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id71/id71.htm>

The UF/IFAS Marion County Master Gardeners offer numerous gardening classes in the community and at the Extension office at 2232 NE Jacksonville Road in Ocala. See the calendar section of this newsletter for upcoming classes scheduled for this month.