



Monthly Newsletter

September 2011

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Published by Norma Samuel
University of Florida IFAS
Marion County Horticulture Agent

Timely Gardening Tip for MARION COUNTY

by Master Gardener, Jo Leyte-
Vidal

- Clean up debris under roses and add clean mulch. Trim any dead or diseased branches and leaves. Remember to clean your tools in alcohol or a bleach solution (2 tablespoons of bleach to one gallon of water) between trimming plants in order not to spread diseases. Look for black spot and treat with a fungicide.
- Treat hibiscus with oil spray if you notice snow scale. It looks like clusters of white specks.
- Begin preparing houseplants that have spent the summer outdoors for their trip inside. Check for insects, reduce watering and wash outside of pots with a bleach solution, same concentration as above.
- Remove spent summer annuals and prepare beds for winter annuals with compost & controlled release fertilizer.

Seeds-Tiny Parcels of Life

by Anne Lambrecht, UF/IFAS Marion County Master Gardener

I love seeds! They represent the promise of a living thing; a plant in waiting. I love to plant them; I love to collect them. For years I received seed catalogs and during the long, cold nights of my Connecticut winter, dreamed of my new spring garden – renewed and different each year. I still do this here in Florida.

Seeds come in an army of sizes from dust particles to coconuts; from the silky tailed seeds of the milkweed, striped or black elliptical seeds of sunflowers, round roofed seeds of oaks, nearly square seeds of corn, rock hard round pits of cherries.

There are good reasons for growing from seeds: bragging rights, saving money: you can pay \$5 for a flat of French marigolds or \$5 for a quarter ounce of seeds, enough to plant 25,000 seedlings! There’s a primeval feeling you get when you put the seeds in your bare hand and plant them in the spring soil. You have now become one with the earth.

There are a few requirements to grow from seed: first, quality seeds are essential, the fresher the better. Most seeds have two requirements for germination: suitable air temperatures and moisture. When should you grow? You need to know our climate’s last spring frost date (March 10) and first frost date (December 10) and back in or go out from there according to the information on the seed packet.

Growing from seed is not fool proof: even with good directions and perfect cultural practices there are lots of factors that can mess you up: disease, insects, animal pests, too much water, seeds drying out, growing medium imperfection. Sometimes seeds need a period of cold in order to germinate (nature’s way of making sure that seeds don’t germinate until the killing cold of winter has passed). I’ve got some butterfly peas that climb my light post whose seed pods I leave outside during the winter.

Some seeds need to be scratched open or “striated”. These seeds typically have thick walled protective coatings so that water cannot penetrate. This makes the gardener’s job a little tricky to prompt the seed to germinate. Some seeds won’t germinate until the protective coat has been roughed up a bit. Seeds of some plants can remain dormant for months or even years while the seeds of most species remain viable for only a few years. How do you know? You read the seed packet.

There’s a ton of information on these. I always was in awe about Thomas Jefferson’s bureau filled with seeds and how many would actually sprout year after year. I keep my unused seeds in a cool, dry, dark place and discovered that the percentage of germination declines each year. I admit – begrudgingly – that MY success with seed germination on *new seed* is about 75%, but it is so worth growing something unusual.

Seeds are the only way the home gardener has real access to the world’s available species and cultivars. Garden centers usually have the cheap and common choices but dozens, even hundreds more are available if you’re willing to start with seeds – and to shop by mail.



Timely Gardening Tips for MARION COUNTY

by Master Gardener, Jo Leyte-Vidal

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- Cut off spent canna lily blossoms to encourage re-blooming.
- Divide bulbs, especially daylily and rain lily.
- Cruise your turf and check for sod webworms, grubs and chinch bugs. Call the Master Gardeners at 671-8400 for symptoms and control information.
- Feed camellias and azaleas using a low nitrogen fertilizer or cottonseed meal. At the same time check for mites under the leaves. Tap a leaf over a piece of white paper. If present, mites will fall off and appear like small black spots. Treat with a miticide spray.
- Feed Bahia and St. Augustine grasses for the second time this year. A 15-0-15 or a 16-4-8 fertilizer is recommended.
- Plant new bulbs such as amaryllis, calla, iris, Easter lily, watsonia, zephyr lily and daffodils. Yes, we now have daffodils that will grow in Marion County.
- Check your irrigation system for leaks, broken/cracked lines, proper rotation, damaged sprinkler heads, obstacles, and water pressure.
- Plant the cool weather vegetable garden with squash, beets, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, collard, lettuce, mustard, onions, radish, strawberry, turnips, and beans.

Seeds-Tiny Parcels of Life

by Anne Lambrecht, UF/IFAS Marion County Master Gardener
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Heirloom cultivars, regional cultivars, rare stuff, etc. Fortunately, there are specialized seed farms and seed saving organizations to give us that unusual “what the heck is THAT”!

As the older generation passes away, unless other gardeners come forward to replant their seeds, outstanding varieties become extinct. Unique genetic heritage is lost forever. Home gardeners should know that heirloom vegetables and flowers are the best – the cream of the crop- each unique and irreplaceable. Thanks to several seed saving companies, there are seeds with rare and fascinating histories being rediscovered.

Some cool seed companies:

W.Atlee Burpee & Co, www.burpee.com
 D. V. Burrell Seed Growers Co, www.burrellseeds.us
 Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, www.rareseeds.com
 The Cook's Garden, www.cooksgarden.com
 Heirloom Seeds, www.heirloomseeds.com
 Hudson Valley Seed Library, www.seedlibrary.org
 Le Jardin du Gourmet, www.artisticgardens.com
 Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants, Monticello,
www.monticello.org/site/house-and-gardens
 Johnny's Select Seeds, www.johnnyseeds.com
 Seed Savers Exchange, www.seed savers.org
 Seeds of Change, www.seedsofchange.com
 The Pepper Gal, www.peppergal.com
 Select Seeds, www.selectseeds.com
 Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, www.southernexposure.com
 Territorial Seed Company, www.territorialseed.com
 Thompson & Morgan, www.tmseeds.com
 Tomato Growers Supply Co, www.tomatogrowers.com
 Wildseed Farms, www.wildseedfarms.com

What's Bugging You?

by Urban Horticulture Agent, Norma Samuel

Find out what local residents are calling in about

Maybe, it's more what's bugging me!

Many times the gardening advice we offer confirms or disputes a belief that someone holds dear. The big reveal is usually when the one person says to the other, “I told you so”. A resident said her son was set in his ways and did not want to follow her gardening advice so she has been spraying the vegetables unbeknownst to him to control various pest problems. I informed her that is not a good idea. Many pesticides have a pre-harvest interval which is the period of time that must elapse after treatment before you can harvest the produce. At the time the produce will be safe to eat. Please be advised if you use pesticides in your vegetable garden notify the other members of your family.

Invasive but Useful?

Kathleen Patterson, FYN Program Coordinator

What plant was introduced into Southern Florida over 100 years ago to help “dry up” the Everglades? What plant or plants have been imported or brought in by people or the nursery industry? The answer to the second question is actually hundreds or perhaps thousands. Some plants have become standard plants for the landscape but many have far exceeded the standard rate of growth and have become invasive. The answer to the first question is the Melaleuca tree (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*).

Several organizations including The Center for Exotic and Invasive Plants/University of Florida <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/> and Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council www.fleppc.org, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, FDACS (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services http://www.fl-dof.com/forest_management/fh_invasives_index.html) have joined together and compiled a complete list of invasive exotic plants. Several of the plants are prohibited, some are of special concern and may eventually show up as prohibited but these lists provide documented evidence that they are destroying our natural ecosystem, reducing our native plants and wildlife habitats and that control measures are expensive and often don't work. For a list of plants that include good choices, and plants to avoid, visit <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment.html> and choose scientific or common name lists.

Close to home, many of you should be familiar with the Mimosa tree (*Albizia julibrissin*). This plant falls into the Category I in north and central Florida. Category I states that these plants are “invasive exotics that are altering native plant communities by displacing native species, changing community structures or ecological functions, or hybridizing with native. This definition does not rely on the economic severity or geographic range of the problem, but on the documented ecological damage caused.”

Other plants within Marion County (Category I) include the Camphor tree, wild Taro, Cogon grass, Ligustrum (*lucidum* and *sinense*) and Chinese tallow tree. Category II “Invasive exotics that have increased in abundance or frequency but have not yet altered Florida plant communities to the extent shown by Category I species” in our area include thorny Eleagnus, Chinaberry, Wedelia and Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*).

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Why is this important to you? In Florida, approximately \$30 million taxpayer dollars are spent annually on invasive plant management on natural areas and waterways. Take a drive down CR484 between Belleview and I-75. What do you see? Literally thousands of Mimosa in all sizes and shapes, and if you take a closer look you will see the green “seed pods” that cover the entire tree. Each tree can release thousands of seeds that are then carried by wind, birds, and animals to other sites where they will germinate, grow and reproduce.

So what is the story on the Melaleuca tree? This tree is also known as the Punk Tree, Paperbark tree and white bottlebrush. It is a member of the eucalyptus family and can survive wet and dry sites. The leaves smell a bit like camphor when crushed. The Melaleuca tree is an aggressive invader that spreads rapidly, converting native plant communities such as sawgrass marshes, wet prairies, and aquatic sloughs into impenetrable thickets. In a single year, one tree can produce a dense island nearly 600 feet in diameter. Its greatest threat is the elimination of the ecosystem of south Florida including the rivers of grass and all native habitats and wildlife.



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



UPCOMING LECTURES/EVENTS:

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

2011 Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars for our upcoming events:

Plant ID Class

September 15, 2011
10:00 am—Noon

September 22, 2011
10:00 am—Noon

September 29, 2011
10:00 am—Noon

October 6, 2011
10:00 am—Noon

October 20, 2011
10:00 am—Noon

Fall Gathering

October 8, 2011
8:00am-12:00pm



Invasive but Useful?

Kathleen Patterson, FYN Program Coordinator

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More than 500,000 acres (2004) have been “taken over” by this nasty pest tree. Turning this tree into mulch helps rid the state of this terrible pest plant. This mulch has been processed according to state regulations and is Nematode Free and termite resistant.

In most garden supply stores you will find several types of mulch from Cypress to Pine Bark, stone and rubber. The use of mulch is strongly encouraged as it helps the plants and soil. If purchasing Cypress, check the label and only use one that states it is a by-product.



Camphor Tree (*Cinnamomum camphora*)
Photo by Phil Chiochio

Time to Prepare for Fall Planting

by Urban Horticulture Agent, Norma Samuel

One of the most rewarding experiences you can have is growing fresh vegetables for your family and friends to enjoy. Here are some questions to ask yourself to determine if planting a vegetable garden is right for you.

- **Do you have the space to plant a garden?** Vegetables need a minimum of six hours of full sun each day. So whether you have a large backyard or a small patio area, once this criterion is met you can begin to plan. A water source should be located close to the area where the garden is located.
- **Do you have the time to dedicate to a garden?** It takes time to do the initial land preparation and you will need to spend some time tending to the garden each day. Start small so that you do not become overwhelmed at first.

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?



uf/ifas marion county
EXTENSION SERVICE

We Have Answers

Time to Prepare for Fall Planting

by Urban Horticulture Agent, Norma Samuel
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- **Will it save me money?** According to Purdue Extension Service depending on the vegetables you decide to grow you can see big cost savings and on others you will about break even. Here's an example of the cost analysis they've provided. "Green beans from seed (bush beans, so you don't need a support for them to grow on):

Cost: Seed costs \$3 for 4 ounces.

Yield: About 25 pounds of beans.

Grocery store price: About \$1 per pound.

So, home-grown beans would cost \$3 for about 25 pounds. At the supermarket, the same 25 pounds of beans would cost about \$25".

Another rewarding experience for a gardener is having a beautiful landscape to enjoy that requires minimal maintenance and is attractive to wildlife such as butterflies and birds. However, many first time gardeners or even those who are experienced and new to the area may have difficulty accomplishing this. The question most times is "how do you get anything to grow here?" Well, the Extension Office offers many different programs to assist you in your venture to have a Florida-Friendly Landscape (FFL) that you can enjoy. Contact Donna at 352-671-8400 for more information on these programs.

