

Things To Do in the Landscape

July 2007



Everything grows like Jack's beanstalk during the summer, so check this list to keep your landscape looking good.

- Plant **summer annuals** such as celosia, marigolds, portulaca, vinca, and zinnias.
- Pinch off faded blossoms of **annual flowers** to keep the plants compact and prolong blooming. Fertilize monthly with any of the slow release mixtures for flowering plants.
- Prune **azaleas** – this is your last chance this year. They can be cut back one-third to one-half.
- Put down a layer of organic mulch two to three inches deep around the plants to help conserve moisture and keep down weeds. Be sure to keep mulch 2 inches away from the base of plants.
- Prune new growth on **poinsettias**. Cut new stems back when they reach twelve inches. Prune only the new growth back to four leaves.
- Many people are of the misconception that plants are **pruned** only once a year and that no matter what condition the limbs are in they are not to be removed. Prune dead parts from shrubs, trees, and herbaceous plants anytime it appears. Dead wood and stems are the perfect entryway for disease and wood eating insects.

Dividing Daylilies

Once your **daylilies** finish blooming, they can be divided. Overcrowding often cuts down on the amount of bloom. When dividing daylilies you can remove only parts of the clump to alleviate overcrowding, or perhaps you would like to rejuvenate the entire bed. When re-doing the total bed, remove all of the daylilies and place them in a shaded area. This is a good time to add organic matter to the bed to enrich the soil. Organic peat, compost, or composted animal (cow, horse, goat – not pets) manure are all good sources of organic material. Along with the twenty-five pounds of organic matter, use two and a half pounds 6-6-6 or similar slow release fertilizer for every one hundred square feet of bed. This should all be worked into the existing soil.

Divide the large clump of daylilies into one or two fan clumps using a knife or pruning shears to cut through the mass of roots. Re-plant, spacing so as not to crowd the roots. Make sure the crown is level with the soil line when planting. Watering is important at this time. Keep the bed moist for the first week by watering every other day unless there is rain. The second week water twice, then once a week or as needed.

Fruit Trees

Citrus trees sometimes have a **late bloom** this time of year. In fact, many fruit trees that failed to fruit in early spring are heavy with flowers, especially the navel orange tree. The new fruit will not interfere with the earlier fruit. Late bloom fruit are often dry and pithy; but there is always a chance they will be good, so most people choose to let them mature.

Leave **mangoes** on the tree to mature, otherwise, they won't ripen properly. To check for maturity, pick a large one growing in the sun and cut through it lengthwise. (Of course if you only have one or two pieces of fruit that could be a difficult decision). For those with lots of fruit, the piece removed from the tree should have flesh around the seed that is turning yellow. This means the fruit is maturing. The other mangoes that are the same size or larger are probably also mature and can be picked to take indoors to ripen. It will take several days for them to sweeten up. Trees can be pruned after the fruit is harvested.

Avocado varieties ripen at different times of the year. In fact, there are avocados every month of the year. However, the main season is July through February. Avocado fruit does not ripen on the tree. A mature fruit ripens in three to eight days after it is picked. Florida avocados ripen best at temperatures of 60 to 75 degrees F. At higher temperatures fruit ripen unevenly and may develop an off-flavor. Storing in the refrigerator delays ripening and allows you to keep fruit for a longer period of time. If you want to keep your trees at a manageable height, prune soon after harvest. Severe pruning does not injure the tree, if proper pruning cuts are made, but will reduce production for one or more seasons.

Check **fig** leaves for rust. Fig rust disease can cause your tree to lose all its leaves. Infected leaves develop small, yellowish spots which later enlarge and turn brown. Remove infected leaves before spores are produced, since the spread of spores will cause future infection. Rake any fallen leaves and destroy them. Spraying with Neen oil when rust is first found can offer some control. Follow directions on the label.

Pests and Pesticides

Avoid applying **pesticides** in the heat of the day, since the heat can combine with many pesticides and cause a burn on the treated plants. It is best to apply pesticides in the late afternoon to early evening on an overcast day when no rain is forecast. Wind is also a factor. Try to avoid breezy days. When it is breezy,

chemicals can blow around on the plants and on the person applying them. Most pesticides are absorbed readily through the skin and symptoms may be delayed for several hours. **Always read and follow label directions for your plants and your own safety.**

We occasionally get calls from homeowners who accidentally **spill a pesticide** in the garage or on the driveway. Pesticides, when used as the label directs are relatively safe; but concentrated chemical spills can pose a threat to people, animals and the environment. **Always read the label for correct disposal procedures.** The following items can be used to help clean up spills and should be kept near areas where pesticides are mixed; builders sand, sawdust, or kitty litter, shovel, sprinkler can or bucket. Contain the spill with a dike of soil to keep it from spreading. **NEVER** hose down spills, this will only spread the chemical. To absorb the chemical, cover with kitty litter and/or sawdust. If the spilled material is highly toxic, then the contaminated materials should be placed in a leak-proof container and disposed of as the label directs.

Those innocent looking small back grasshoppers seen earlier this year have now turned into the large, multi-color grasshopper called **lubbers**. They prefer to feed on plants of the lily family but will also feed on other plants in the landscape. The adults are yellowish with dark markings and have a red area on their wings. They may be over three inches long when fully grown. Once they reach this size chemical controls are of little value.

At certain times of the year during daylight hours, king and queen **drywood termites** emerge from colonies and swarm. The purpose of these flights is the establishment of new colonies. The appearance of winged termites in the home is an indication of probable infestation. The wings break off shortly after they swarm and are usually found near a light source, especially on windowsills. It is important to carefully inspect all wood work of the entire building, especially the ceiling, baseboards, windowsills, floor joists, and furniture. When drywood termites are present, you will find small piles of pellets that look like grains of sand. They may be light tan to dark brown depending on the wood they are feeding on. It is usually best to get professional help.

Are **rabbits, armadillos, and raccoons** in your garden? The only permanent solution is fencing. Explore poultry wire or woven wire fences. They are movable and cost relatively little. Chain link or wooden fencing can be used, but are more expensive. Fences must come all the way to the ground. In fact, animals may dig under a fence, so it is important to find a way to anchor them to the ground.

Black spot on roses can cause defoliation rapidly during hot humid weather. This disease, which is common in our area, can be controlled by spraying with a suitable fungicide and by removing and destroying all infected leaves including those on the ground.

Lawns

Mower blades should be set to 3 ½ to 4 inches when cutting **Bahiagrass and St. Augustinegrass**. No more than one-third of the leaf blade should be removed at one cutting. By increasing the grass leaf surface, more photosynthesis can occur. This results in more carbohydrate production for plant growth. By cutting your grass higher, you will have a deeper and more extensive root system. Keeping the mower blades sharp and properly balanced is also an important part of mowing practices. Grass cut by a sharp blade will heal over more quickly and lose less water than a leaf blade shredded by a dull mower blade.

Don't bag those clippings, let your clippings fall where they may. **Grass clippings** are a valuable resource that many homeowners throw away. Raking or frequent emptying of mower grass catchers into expensive (non-biodegradable) plastic bags is hard work! On the other hand, leaving the clippings on the lawn will reduce the amount of time and money you spend on lawn care. When maintained on a regular schedule, grass clippings do not contribute to thatch but return valuable nutrients to the soil. Each bag of grass clippings you throw away contains up to one-fourth of a pound of organic nitrogen that could be used by your lawn.

Chinch bugs are causing St. Augustine lawns to look like straw. These small insects can do a lot of damage because of the large number that are feeding. Damage usually begins near driveways or sidewalks where heat builds up. Use Bifenthrin, Lambda-cyhalothrin, or Permethrin according to label directions. Neem oil is a less toxic alternative that research has shown to be effective against chinch bugs. St. Augustine lawns may become more susceptible to chinch bugs from frequent applications of water soluble inorganic nitrogen fertilizers which results in rapid succulent growth. Use fertilizers with at least 30% slow release nitrogen to help deter chinch bugs. Fertilizing with iron sulfate during hot summer months will green up the lawn without this succulent growth.

Another commonly found lawn pest during the summer months is the tropical **sod webworm**. The adult, a dingy brown moth with a wingspread of three-quarter-inch, holds its wings tight over its body when at rest. These moths appear in the summer and can be seen at dusk, flying just above the lawn laying their eggs over the grassy area. In about one week, the eggs hatch out as small caterpillars. These are usually green in color and grow to three-quarter inch in length.

The caterpillars are the only damaging stage. They feed at night, frequently spinning a silken web over the grass surface. The grass may die in spots where the foliage is chewed off in hot weather. Monitor your lawn by looking for webs, brown areas of grass, greenish fecal pellets or the caterpillar. Control with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), or Carbaryl. Follow label directions carefully.

Upcoming Events at County Extension / Florida Botanical Gardens

(UF-IFAS / Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo 33774)

Saturday, July 7, 2007 – “Rain Barrel Workshop”, 9:00 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo, FL Learn how to set up a recycled plastic barrel to collect rain from your roof to water your garden and landscape plants. Workshop is FREE. Barrels will be available for attendees to purchase. For reservations or information please call (727) 582-2673.

Thursday, July 12, 2007 – “Lawn and Garden Help Desk”, 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center, 3940 Keystone Rd., Tarpon Springs. Do you have a mysterious plant in your garden that you just can't identify? Would you like to know about landscaping with native plants? A Pinellas County Extension horticulturist will be available to help you throughout the day. Stop by the Brooker Creek Preserve Resource Center to ask questions about landscaping and gardening, diagnose a plant problem, identify insects, and even drop off your soil test sample. Recommended for adults. Call (727) 453-6800 for more information.

Thursday, July 12, 2007 – “Integrated Pest Management (IPM)”, 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center, 3940 Keystone Rd., Tarpon Springs. Pinellas County Extension Horticulturist, Cindy Peacock will teach a class on using Integrated Pest Management techniques for insect and disease control in residential landscapes. Topics include: Identifying the “good guys” and the “bad guys”, determining what action, if any is necessary, and selecting environmental-friendly pest control products and services when possible. Register for this FREE class by calling (727) 453-6800.

Saturday, July 28, 2007 – “Identifying and Controlling Invasive Plants”, 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. Weedon Island Preserve Environmental Education Center, 1800 Weedon Dr. N.E., St. Petersburg. Learn why these non-native plants are so problematic to Florida's environment, how to identify species designated as invasive, and what control methods are available to you. Call (727) 453-6500 for more information or to register.

Monday, July 30, 2007 – “Bugs, Good & Bad” with Pam Brown at 2:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Palm Harbor Library 2330 Nebraska, Av, Palm Harbor. Join Pam Brown and explore the types of insects you might find in your landscape. Learn to distinguish the beneficial insects from those that may damage your plants. Two *Helpful, Harmful, Harmless??* ID card decks will be given away as door prizes.

For more events information:

www.pinellascounty.org/events or call (727) 582-2100

Pinellas County Extension is part of a nationwide network of land grant universities providing unbiased, research-based information to America's citizens. In our state, Extension's land grant link is the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS). Pinellas County Extension serves as a bridge between the research labs of the university and the local community by providing educational opportunities for adults and youth.