



**“Solutions for Your Life”**

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[www.pinellascounty.org/extension](http://www.pinellascounty.org/extension)

**UF** UNIVERSITY of  
**FLORIDA**  
IFAS Extension

Lawn & Garden | Commercial Horticulture | Families & Consumers | Florida Yards & Neighborhoods | 4-H Youth Development | Urban Wildlife

## Things To Do in the Landscape

**May 2007**



Going into May, we are still in drought conditions. Water restrictions are in effect over our whole region. Be sure to check with your county or municipality for the watering schedule for your area. You may want to access the University of Florida/IFAS Extension publication *Tips for Maintaining Landscapes During Drought* on the Internet at:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP091> or call your county Extension office for a copy.

May is a great time to think about adding color to your landscape that can stand our summer heat and humidity. Some good annuals for summer include angelonia, narrow-leaf zinnia, vinca, ornamental peppers, torenia and gaillardia.

When **herbaceous perennials** are selected and used correctly they provide color in your landscape during every season of the year. Once established, these plants require less maintenance than annuals and have the advantage of becoming a permanent part of the landscape. Some colorful perennials that can stand the heat are Blue daze, coreopsis, daylily, Jacobinia, Liatris, and pentas.

**Chrysanthemums** make nice bedding plants but become leggy if not properly pruned. Small flowered varieties should be pinched when they are six to eight inches high. Unless the growing tips are pinched, plants may develop tall, weak stems that produce few flowers. After you pinch, new branches will develop along the stems. Pinch all shoots every two weeks until June tenth for early varieties and July for later varieties. Flowers will not form if you continue to pinch any later than this.

**Lilyturf**, (*Liriope spp.*) is a good edging plant with its dark green foliage and contrasting purple flowers. Liriope forms dense clumps which typically reach seven to twelve inches in height and with the “Evergreen giant” variety even taller. A variegated variety is available which tolerates full sun. One of the variegated types is called “Aztec grass”. When you plant lilyturf, be sure that the crown is slightly above the soil and then be careful that you keep any mulch at least two to three inches away from the base of the plant. Crown rot can be a problem if it is planted to deep.

A good **lawn maintenance program** includes proper mowing, watering, and pest control. With our water restrictions, be sure that your sprinkling system is calibrated to deliver  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 inch of water each time you water (How to Calibrate Your Sprinkler System: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH026> or call your UF/IFAS County Extension office). Your grass should be mowed often enough so that no more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the leaf surface is removed. A sharp-bladed mower is a necessity to insure a clean cut and avoid blade damage by tearing the grass tips. If you choose to fertilize your St. Augustine lawn this month, use a natural organic such as sewage sludge or manure or a fertilizer with slow release nitrogen. This type of fertilizer makes the grass less susceptible to chinch bugs. Apply about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to one pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn. Proper fertilization, mowing, and irrigation can go a long way toward avoiding insects and disease problems in your lawn.

Be sure to check your lawn grass for **chinch bugs**. If large infestations are found (20-25 per square foot), treat with an insecticide containing Bifenthrin, Cyfluthrin, Lambda-cyhalothrin, Permethrin or Neem Oil. Neem oil is a biorational treatment that has been shown to be effective. Always follow label directions carefully.

When treating for **white grubs** and/or **billbugs** in your lawn, apply insecticides properly. Read and understand all directions on the container label regarding dosage rates, application information, and precautions. The adjustable hose end jar attachment is the suggested lawn sprayer for homeowners. Put the amount of insecticide in the jar as directed on the label for the number of square feet you wish to treat. Follow the directions that came with your sprayer and spray the contents over the selected area. To insure even coverage, carefully spray back and forth across the same area before moving on.

Immediately after spraying the insecticide, irrigate with about one-half inch of water to move the insecticide into the soil where the insects are feeding. Granular formulations of recommended insecticides may be substituted for sprays but still need to be irrigated with one-half inch of water immediately after applying. Insecticides to use include bifenthrin, carbaryl and imidacloprid.

**Lubber grasshoppers** can ruin lily plants by chewing the young stems to the ground. Young grasshoppers can be controlled by spraying or dusting Sevin according to label directions. Reapply as needed for best results. Once the grasshoppers are large, the best control may be picking off the insects and dropping them into a bucket of soapy water.

The **love bugs** are around again and, as every year, we can only offer our sympathy, especially to those who have to travel through the state during the daylight hours. The larval stage of the love bug feeds on leaf mold making them difficult, if not impossible, to control. Smashed bugs should not be left on your car because of the possibility of paint damage. You can use a strong detergent solution to remove dead love bugs from cars. They do not bite or sting and are active over a four to six week period.

There is still time to prune your **azaleas**. They will be fuller and produce more blooms if they are pruned. Renewing mulch occasionally is also helpful. Remember to keep the mulch about three inches away from the base of the plant.

For longer lasting **cut flowers**, cut in the late afternoon and place the stems in warm water in a draft-free place. When the water cools to room temperatures, the flowers are ready to use.

When **gardenias** finish blooming, prune and shape your shrubs and replenish old mulch. Gardenias often bloom again on new growth.

**Vegetable gardening** should be in full swing this month. Remember to keep a watch for insects and diseases and be prepared to treat at first sign of invasion. Vegetables are annual plants and will use a lot of fertilizer while growing. Keep side-dressing every five to six weeks and keep plants well watered. There is still time to plant pole beans, lima beans, cantaloupes, collards, okra, sweet potatoes, and summer spinach.

**Spider mites** are a big problem on many plants during dry, warm weather. Signs of mite infestation are chlorotic spots on leaves, rusty needles on junipers, stippling of leaves. When the infestation is heavy you may be able to see the fine webs. Spray with insecticidal soap or paraffin-based horticultural oil following directions on the label. Neem Oil is also an effective miticide.

Most Florida soils are low in **magnesium**. Magnesium deficiency is common on many ornamental and food plants. Symptoms occur on older leaves because Magnesium has the ability to move from older growth to new growth. The older leaves of the Canary island Date palm will become prematurely yellow from this deficiency. Grapefruit leaves adjacent to the fruit may be the first to become yellow or chlorotic. The use of magnesium sulfate or Epsom Salts will correct this problem.

**Gardening equipment** such as pruning shears, loppers, and saws should be cleaned and oiled after using. A medium grade steel wool can be used to remove gum, plant tissue, and rust. Dip in alcohol or a diluted bleach solution, dry, then add light oil such as machine oil, wiped over all metal parts before putting your tools away will prolong their life.

Every **citrus fruit** should reach its best maturity **before** it is picked. If oranges and grapefruit are removed from the tree before they are mature, the fruit will take on a light yellow color and an exterior appearance that may deceive you into believing they are ripe. They will never acquire the rich delicate flavor of fruit ripened on the tree. Unripe citrus generally has such a disagreeable bitter flavor that after the first bite, there is no desire to sample another. The only way to test whether an orange or grapefruit is ripe is to taste one. **DO NOT** remove all your fruit from the tree without doing a taste test.

## **Upcoming Events at County Extension / Florida Botanical Gardens**

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

**Saturday, May 5, 2007 – Rain Barrel Workshop at Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center, 3940 Keystone Rd., Tarpon Springs from 10:00 a.m. until 11:30 a.m.** Extension educators will show you how to collect rain water from your roof for use in your garden and landscape. Workshop is FREE. Barrels will be available for purchase at \$20.00 per barrel. Pre-registration is suggested; please call (727) 582-2673.

**Tuesday, May 15, 2007 – Lawn Insects & Weeds by Horticulturist, Cindy Peacock at Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo at 10:00 a.m. and again at 6:30 p.m. in the Gardenia Room.** Discover what's bugging your yard. Cindy will discuss the more common insects and weeds that you may encounter in your Florida lawn. Attendees may bring samples of grass, insects, or weeds that may be used in the class for illustrations. Pre-registration is appreciated; please call (727) 582-2673

**Saturday, May 19, 2007 – Compost Happens with Master Gardener, John Kingsbury at the Dunedin Recreation Center, 1920 Pinehurst Rd., Dunedin from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon.** Think composting is a mystery? Join us for this informative program to discover how easy it is to create compost. Pinellas County residents attending will receive a FREE 7.5 cubic feet plastic compost bin. Phone (727) 582-2673 for more information or to register.

**Saturday, May 19, 2007 – Fancy Fruit for Your Yard at the Pinellas County Extension from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m.** Take a tour of our tropical fruit garden and learn about fruit that can be grown in your own yard. Taste some fancy fruit! Appropriate for children and families. Pre-register is required by calling Horticulturist, Cindy Peacock at (727)582-2671.

### **For more events information:**

[www.pinellascounty.org/events](http://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.