

## Things To Do in the Landscape

November 2007



In between the goblin' and turkey, it's time to give serious thought about your winter gardening chores.

Thin your **root crops** such as beets, carrots, turnips, and radishes when overcrowded. Unless these vegetables have room to spread, they will become hard and pithy. Radishes and carrots should be about three inches apart and turnips and beets four to six inches apart. Keep an eye out for caterpillars which can quickly devour tender leaves.

Scout your garden for insect pests. Many **caterpillars** enjoy feeding on the leaves of your fall vegetables. Cabbage loopers, tomato hornworms, cutworms and pickleworms can be controlled by applying *Bacillus thuringiensis* (*Bt*) formulations in products such as Dipel or Thuricide.

Also watch for beneficial insects like lady bugs, green lacewings, and minute priate bugs. These will help control common pests like aphids, whiteflies and mites.

If you use chemical pesticides in your vegetable garden, us caution. Read and follow the label carefully and pay close attention to the number of days you can spray before harvest.

Hibiscus and gardenia have premature flower **bud drop**. This can be caused by insects, aw well as cultural or environmental problems. Insects called **thrips and midges** can damage the unopened bud. These insects may go undetected until considerable damage has occurred and the buds drop. Thrips and midges are very small, but you can often see them if you open a bud that has dropped from the plant. Many times the best control is a systemic insecticide that contains imidacloprid or acephate. Follow the label directions very carefully.

Too much or not enough fertilizer or water can also stress the plant, resulting in bud drop. Nematodes can parasitize the root system, creating a water and nutritional stress on the plant, also resulting in bud drop.

Hibiscus, especially doubles, are characterized by premature bud drop. Some bloom well during one period of the year and consistently drop their buds at all other times.

Although peak **termite swarming** occurs in January through May in Florida, there may be some swarms seen this month. The appearance of winged termites in the home is an indication of possible infestation; however, they may come in from outside. Termite wings break off shortly after they swarm and since they are attracted to light at this stage, their discarded wings are often found on window sills. Termites are vital to the decomposition and recycling of plant cellulose. However, they also infest buildings, fence posts, furniture, and living trees. Typically, a termite infestation is not detected until damage is extensive. Signs of infestation are adult termites swarming at windows, wings near windows, mud tubes of subterranean termites, or small pellets of frass of the drywood termites. Roots, as well as above-ground parts of trees, are susceptible to termite infestation. When termites are suspected, contact a professional company to inspect your property. Replacing infested wood, treating the soil, or tenting the home may be required.

**Trees** are a large part of any landscape so should be selected carefully. Trees give a home its individuality as well as a restful quality. Shade trees should have moderate to dense foliage and should not have large or objectionable fruits, flowers, or seeds. They should have the ability to withstand high winds and be relatively free from insects and disease pests, and of a size suitable for the location. We have all seen the large oaks planted under utility lines and then severely pruned.

There are two types of shade trees, those with heavy, dense foliage that will shade the ground and those with small or widely spaced leaves and open branching so sunlight reaches the soil. Grasses, flowers, and shrubs usually grow best under the open-branched tree.

You may want to use both deciduous and evergreen trees in your landscape. Evergreens are useful when shade is desired year-round. Deciduous trees are best in areas where shade is needed during warm months and sun during cool weather. Some deciduous shade trees for our area are red maple, pecan, sweet gum, sycamore, water oak, and elm. Evergreen trees include live oaks, pines, magnolias, red cedar, and Texas wild olive.

**Lawn Problems:** We are often asked to diagnose what is wrong with a lawn. When bringing a sample of grass to be examined by our office, **please** be sure that it is approximately an 8 inch square which consists of half green and half damaged grass, along with the **entire** root system.

**Plant Identification:** If you would like to have one of your plants identified, please bring or send several healthy leaves attached to a stem, along with samples of buds, flowers, fruit, and seeds. When mailing, **please** describe the plant or send pictures.

**DO NOT** wrap specimens in plastic and/or wet paper towels, as they may decompose. Use dry paper towels or tissues.

**Pruning** should start when you plant your shrubs and vines and should be part of a regular maintenance program. You should prune to improve the health of your plants, control size and shape, increase the flower display, and remove overcrowded stems or branches.

To improve the health of your plants, cut out dead, diseased, or damaged wood, and remove old wood that interferes with new growth. Prune your shrubs so they keep their natural shape unless you use them as formal hedges. Vines need pruning to limit growth and remove old wood. When you prune, avoid damaging other shoots and branches.

Overgrown **vines** such as wisteria, ivy, flame, coral, honeysuckle and Confederate jasmine can be pruned now. Cut off excess, tangled growth. Prune back 1/3 to 1/2 and remove rooted suckers which are growing in undesirable areas.

A foliar disease caused by the rust fungus, *Oleosporium plumeriae*, is a common disease of **frangipani** (*Plumeria spp.*), especially as nights get cooler and humidity remains high. Small, yellow pustules on the underside of the leaves will rupture and release spores which then infect other leaves. Heavy infections may cause premature leaf drop. Fungicides are **NOT** approved for use on this specific disease. Keep the area under the frangipani cleared of infected leaves. Bag them in plastic and dispose of them.

Homeowners may find that their walls or crawl space in the ceiling are favorite nesting areas for **Florida carpenter ants**. These ants are large, reddish-brown insects about 1/4 to 1/2 inch long. They usually nest outdoors in stumps and logs where the wood contacts the soil and moisture is plentiful, but sometimes carpenter ants enter homes in search of food, water or nesting sites. They prefer to nest in wood that has been damaged by termites or decay. The ants **DO NOT** eat wood but excavate galleries in wood to rear their young. They feed on honeydew from sucking insects like aphids and household food scraps. Carpenter ants do not damage sound wood to any extent. They eject the wood in the form of a coarse sawdust as they construct their nest. Carpenter ant galleries are kept smooth and clean, and have a sand-papered appearance. They can also nest under insulation, behind the refrigerator, in boxes stored in closets or cabinets. The key to eliminating ants is locating and destroying the nest. Indoor sprays labeled to kill ants can be used for spot treatment only. For a fact sheet, send a self-addressed, long, stamped (\$.41) envelope to "Ants",

12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL 33774 or access it on the Internet at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG080>.

An insect called **twig girdler** is very seldom seen but often very damaging to young trees. The female lays her eggs in the twigs of maple, oak, pine, and pecan trees. She then chews around the twig so it will drop to the ground where the life cycle will be completed. The damage occurs when leaders of small trees are girdled. This changes the apical dominance and may result in a weakened tree. Larger trees are generally not damaged to any extent from the twig girdlers "pruning". The only control measure to take is clean up the fallen twigs and destroy them. This eliminates the next generation.

Many **annual weeds** grow in the cooler months and usually germinate from seed when night temperatures drop below 70 degrees F. In order to prevent annual weed growth, a pre-emergent herbicide (a weed killer that prevents weed seeds from growing) must be applied before the weeds emerge through the soil. Early November is a good time to apply a pre-emergent. You can obtain an herbicide separately or in combination with a fertilizer. If you fertilized your lawn last month, then it is best to apply the herbicide **only**. Be sure the herbicide you purchase is labeled as safe to apply to your type of lawn grass.

There is still time to spray your **citrus trees** for the fall. Use horticultural oil, fish oil, or neem oil for aphids, whitefly, and spider mites. You may use malathion for heavy infestations. Citrus leaves that are yellowing around the edge and distorted may be lacking a trace element. You can apply the minor elements to your citrus trees, either as a foliage spray or to the soil. To avoid burning plants, use only the recommended amount as stated on the product label. Minor elements will correct yellowing due to deficiencies of iron, magnesium and manganese, and will also supply copper, zinc, boron, and other needed elements.

**Fruit splitting and fruit drop** may be a problem during late summer and fall. This is a physiological problem of unknown origin. It may be more pronounced just after a period of moisture stress followed by heavy rains. Splitting and drop will usually not be a serious problem if the trees are well cared for and furnished with adequate nutrition and irrigation, but in years when we experience a prolonged drought followed by several heavy rains, there will be fruit loss.

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

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

**Nov. 3 and continuing every Saturday until April 19, 2008**

**"Market in the Park" 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

**Pinellas County Extension and Florida Botanical Gardens**

12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL 33774

More than just a farmer's market, Market in the Park will bring together healthy, farm fresh local produce, delicious gourmet foods, beautiful plants and much much more. County Extension experts and Master Gardener's will hold educational seminars on gardening, nutrition and cooking during market hours. Every Saturday, November 3 - April 19, 2008.

**Nov 3**

**In the Beginning - Butterflies**

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

**Pinellas County Extension & Florida Botanical Gardens,**  
12520 Ulmerton Road  
Largo, FL 33774

Understanding the Life cycle of the Butterfly. Grand opening of the new Butterfly Garden, Butterfly release and tour. In conjunction with "Market in the Park".

**Nov 4 & 18**

**Florida Botanical Gardens, General Garden Tour**

1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

**Pinellas County Extension & Florida Botanical Gardens Welcome Center**  
12520 Ulmerton Road  
Largo, FL 33774

Cost: Free

Registration: required 727-582-2581

With over 120 acres to explore, this tour will allow visitors to get an overview of all that the Florida Botanical Gardens and Pinellas County Extension has to offer. From the demonstration gardens to the formal gardens, sculpture gardens and natural areas, there will be something for everyone! Note: pets are not allowed on tours on in the Botanical Gardens.

**Nov 25**

**Gardens Seasonal Sensations- an Illuminated Garden**

6 p.m. – 10 p.m.

**Florida Botanical Gardens**

12520 Ulmerton Road  
Largo, FL 33774  
Cost: Free

Stroll through Florida Botanical Gardens Seasonal Sensations- an Illuminated Garden. 6 p.m. until 10 p.m. nightly through January 3, 2007. Pinellas County's premier holiday light event with over 425,000 lights.

**Autumn Activity for the whole Family - Be a Garden Explorer!**

**Florida Botanical Gardens and Pinellas County Extension Welcome Center**

Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
12520 Ulmerton Road  
Largo, FL 33774  
Cost : Free

The Florida Botanical Gardens is continuing its fun, family activity this autumn: the Garden Explorer's Discovery Backpack. Visitors are welcomed to check-out a backpack from the Visitor's Center, and use the discovery tools within to enhance their visit. Inside the backpack there are I-spy sheets featuring art, flowers, insects and birds that may be found throughout the gardens. A pair of binoculars helps visitors get a closer look from a respectful distance of some of the wildlife that makes the gardens home. There is a map of the gardens, featuring 10 stops that reveal some interesting facts about the plants found here. And there is plenty of room to add a water bottle, lunch bag, sunscreen, and anything else a family wishes to bring. Use of the backpack is free; only a driver's license is required to be held while the bag is out. For more information please phone 582-2581.

**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.*