



"Solutions for Your Life"

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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 October 2007



I like to tell newcomers to Florida that October is somewhat like April in the north, minus the spring rains. We start to get some cooler breezes and that makes working outside in the garden more pleasant.

October is a good month to add bulbs to your landscape. **Amaryllis bulbs** (*Hippeastrum spp.*) could be called the Florida tulip. They make a striking bloom show in the spring when planted in groups of 10 or more in landscape beds. Remember when setting amaryllis bulbs in our area that the collar and the very top of the bulb should be above the soil line. Try not to bury them too deep with mulch as well.

Plant **Crinum** or **Swamp Lily bulbs** (*Crinum americanum*) now for spring and summer bloom. Well-suited to hot, dry locations, Crinum Lilies grow from what are among the largest true bulbs, some weighing over 40-pounds. Crinums will form large clumps and should be given plenty of growing room in full or partial sun on well-drained soils. Crinums will recover quickly from killing frosts in our area.

Agapanthus or **Lily of the Nile** (*Agapanthus orientalis*) is commonly called a bulb but really is grown from rhizomes. Agapanthus prefers moist, organic soil conditions but can endure drought once established. Plants spaced about 18 to 24 inches apart will produce a thick ground cover effect. Tall spikes of blue or white flowers are produced in the early summer.

Other bulbs to plant now are gladiolus, lycoris, daylilies and zephyr lilies. Prepare your planting bed with plenty of organic matter such as compost, black cow or peat moss. Daylilies, though not truly bulbs, can also be planted. More information is available on the Internet: *Bulbs for Florida* <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG029> or call 727/582-2110 and ask for a copy.

Winter annual **bedding plants** such as pansies and petunias are best planted near the end of October. With proper water, fertilizer, and mulch, these annuals can bloom from November until June. Additional winter annuals to plant now are snapdragons, sweet

peas, nasturtiums, impatiens, geraniums, calendula, phlox, and verbena. Impatiens and geraniums are more sensitive to frost and should be protected when cold winds blow.

Rose bushes will now be appearing in quantities in local nurseries. For most varieties, those that are grafted on *Rosa fortuniana* root stock will thrive best. This root stock is resistant to nematodes in the soil that can infect roots and cause the plant to decline. For roses already established in the garden, remove dead canes and diseased growth. Apply a fertilizer with trace elements according to the recommendation on the fertilizer label. Minor elements, particularly iron, may be lacking after the heavy summer rains. To learn more about roses, please send a long, self-addressed, stamped (\$.41) envelope to “**Roses**”, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL 33774.

Fertilize **citrus trees** this month using a special formulation of 8-8-8. Apply fertilizer to the entire rooting area which usually extends well beyond the drip of the tree. The amount of fertilizer varies according to the age of the tree. Fertilizer should be applied three times a year in February, June and October.

Several varieties of **Avocado** mature during the fall and winter months. Booth, Monroe, Hall, Lula, Taylor and Choquette avocados are harvested from October through February. Avocado fruits **DO 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 sixty to seventy degrees Fahrenheit. At higher temperatures, fruits ripen unevenly and develop an off-flavor. Cold storage delays ripening.

Many Banana trees have large stalks of fruit now. It takes from two and a half to six months for the bananas to mature depending upon temperatures, cultivar, and cultural practices. The individual fruit should be plump with no distinct ridges. Mature fruit will turn pale green. Harvest and allow to fully ripen before eating. Bananas need fertile conditions with plenty of water for best growth and fruit production. They require plenty of potassium. A fertilizer with a ratio of 3-1-6 is best.

The fall and winter months are good for growing **herbs** in our area. Many herbs that succumb to our hot steamy summers will thrive in the cooler winter months. If you don't have a lot of space, herbs grow well in containers. The containers can be attractively arranged outdoors along borders, drives, walks and patios or on porches and balconies. Hanging baskets are especially suitable for herbs. More information on growing herbs in Florida is available on the Internet: *Herbs in the Florida Garden* <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH020>

Vegetable gardens can be planted now. Soil should be amended with compost or other organic matter. Remember that vegetables need six to eight hours of full sun to thrive. Since our fall can be somewhat dry, remember to provide adequate water as well. Vegetables that can be planted now are broccoli, cabbage, collards, kale, lettuce, onions, and radishes. Wait a bit later to plant spinach which needs cool soil to germinate. A great book for Florida gardeners is *Vegetable Gardening in Florida* by James M. Stephens. You can also access the *Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide* on the Internet at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH021> or call 727/582-2110 and ask for a copy.

Organic Gardening is becoming very popular and insect control can be a challenge. Some caterpillars can be controlled by using Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) sold as

Thuricide, Dipel or Biotrol. Bt is bacteria that are toxic to caterpillars, but safe for pets and humans. Most organic gardeners also approve of using neem oil, pyrethrin, rotenone and ryania. These products contain natural materials derived from plant parts. They give some control to certain insects.

Roof rats thrive in attics, palm trees, ornamental shrubbery or any other convenient place. They are climbers and prefer to nest off the ground. Roof rats are also destructive to citrus. As the fruit begins to ripen, they will come out at night to feed. Roof rats are gray to lemon-colored with a pointed muzzle. The tail is longer than the body. Adult rats weight from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds and reach maturity at three to five months. They live about one year with the female producing up to six litters of five to six young each year. Roof rats can be destructive in attics by gnawing on electrical wires and rafters. Traps and baits are available for rat control. Roof rats also feed on vegetables, other fruits and grains. For more information you can access UF/IFAS publication *Control of Roof Rats in Fruit Trees* on the Internet at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw120> or call 727/582-2110 and ask for a copy.

Perfect circles around the edges of your rose leaves and other plant leaves are caused by **leaf-cutter bees**. These bees do not feed on the leaves. They roll pieces of leaves into a thimble-shape to line their nests. They do not do a lot of damage and chemical control is not practical.

Scale insects on camellias, holly, gardenia, magnolia, and other broad leaves evergreens can be controlled with sprays of light horticultural oil, fish oil (Organocide) or Neem oil. For heavy infestations, Orthene or malathion can be used. Always follow label directions as to application rates and treatment intervals.

Pre-emergence herbicides are most effective in killing germinating **weed seeds or seedlings** and commonly have little or no effect on established weeds. Winter annual weeds will be appearing soon, so this is a good time to apply your preemergence herbicide. Use Atrazine in St. Augustinegrasses and Balan or Betasan in Bahiagrass. Follow label directions when applying. Herbicides may injure turfgrass when applied improperly or when temperatures are above 85 degrees. Always check the label of any herbicide to be certain that it is labeled as safe for your lawn grass before you make your purchase.

Have you ever returned from a vacation to find your house infested with **small insects**? There are many different household pests that invade our food. One such insect is a member of the psocid family. These soft-bodied insects are less than 1/8 inch long and have chewing mouthparts. Psocids which are found indoors feed on molds, fungi, cereals, pollen, fragments of dead insects, or other similar materials. At times they may become extremely abundant and spread through an entire building. When this occurs, foods may become contaminated to the point that it must be discarded. Psocids may infest furniture, bedding or, if you have good eyesight, you may even spot them on the walls. Reduce moisture, clean and air furniture and bedding, and clean up any spilled food products. Check boxes of cereal and grain products for possible sources of infestation. If an insecticide is required, apply a spot treatment of pyrethrins. Be sure the product is labeled for indoor use and follow label directions when using any pesticides.

Upcoming Events of County Extension / Florida Botanical Gardens

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

Thursday, Oct. 4

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Lawn and Garden Help Desk

Brooker Creek Preserve, 3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs

Do you have a mysterious plant in your garden that you just can't identify? Would you like to know more about landscaping with native plants? A Pinellas County IFAS Extension horticulture agent will help you, at no charge, throughout the day. Stop by the Brooker Creek Education Center's Resource Center to ask questions about landscaping and gardening, diagnose a plant problem, identify insects and even drop off your soil pH test sample. For information, call (727) 453-6800.

Thursday, Oct.4

10 to 11 a.m.

Vegetable Gardening in Florida

Brooker Creek Preserve, 3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs

Join Cindy Peacock from Pinellas County Extension to learn about preparing the soil, what fertilizers to use, which vegetables are best to plant for our area and what insects might be a problem at this informative workshop best for adults. Free. To register, call (727) 453-6800.

Saturday, Oct. 6

9 a.m. to Noon

Master Gardener Plant Sale

Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo

Arrive early for this highly popular Master Gardener Plant Sale that offers a wide selection of plants at great prices. The variety of plants includes numerous native Florida plants, herbs, butterfly-friendly plants as well as shrubs, trees and seeds. Master Gardeners and horticulturists give tips about plant selection and planting guidance. For more information, call (727) 582-2599.

Saturday, Oct. 6

9 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Migratory Bird & Nature Tour

Florida Botanical Gardens at Palm Pavilion, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo

Did you hear that jovial trill? What was that little yellow and brown warbler? Who just flitted up the tree trunk eating insects as it climbed? Come learn our migratory and resident birds while identifying them with nature's clues like sound, sight and their behaviors. Take advantage of this great opportunity to learn some of our visiting and resident birds! Adults and Families Welcome. No Fee. Binoculars and identification books recommended but not necessary. For more information or sign up, call (727) 582-2673.

Tuesday, Oct. 16

10 a.m. and again at 6 p.m.

Growing Citrus in Your Yard

Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo

Join Horticulturist Allen Cordell to learn the proper care of citrus trees in your landscape along with which citrus varieties are best suited to our area. Fertilizers, pests and pruning will be discussed along with watering requirements and harvesting. For information or to register, call (727) 582-2673.

Saturday, Oct. 20

9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Garden Tours of Florida-Friendly Yards

Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo

Sign up for the semi-annual tour of Florida-Friendly Yards in the historic Kenwood Neighborhood courtesy of Pinellas County Extension. This is your chance to meet and speak with owners who created beautiful gardens while keeping the environment in mind. Participants drive to addresses that will be provided at registration. Florida Yards and Neighborhood staff and Master Gardeners will be on hand at several of the sites to answer gardening questions. . For more information or sign up, call (727) 582-2673.

Saturday, Oct 20

10 – 11:30 a.m.

Compost Happens Workshop

Pinellas County Extension

12520 Ulmerton Road

Largo, Florida

Think composting is a mystery? Have you been confused about what can or cannot be added to the compost bin? Join UF/IFAS Pinellas County Extension educators for this informative program to discover how easy it is to create compost to use in your garden and landscape. Pinellas County residents attending will receive a FREE 7.5 cubic feet plastic compost bin in return for a completed survey. Call (727)582-2673 to register.

Sunday, Oct. 28

A Batty Night with the Florida Bat Conservancy

6:30 PM to 8:00 PM

Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo

The night skies are noisier than you think! Join us for an evening of batty activities including a tour teaching you how to eavesdrop on bat echolocation calls. Enjoy an indoor bat program with live bats, learn about their amazing echolocation abilities and also discover the secrets about successfully creating bat houses. Following the activities, talk with the Florida Bat Conservancy experts while watching real bats nibble on their evening mealworms. Family Program with Limited Space Available; \$3/person. Registration and Pre-payment Requested—Call (727) 582-2673.

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.

