

Things To Do in the Landscape September 2007



September is a good month to rejuvenate your flower beds for the fall and winter growing seasons. Now is a good time to divide and plant **bulbs** and **perennials**. There are three reasons to divide perennials: to control the size of the plants, to help rejuvenate them, and to increase their number. Dividing can rejuvenate older plants, keeping them vigorous and blooming freely

Dividing:

Gingers are among our finest perennial plants. During the summer months they have produced an abundance of growth. To assure good growth next year, dig up and divide rhizomes. You will be amazed at how rapidly they will grow when given more room.

The **shell ginger** (*Alpinia zerumbet*) is a vigorous grower that produces magnificent pinkish, shell-shaped flowers looking much like a cluster of grapes. This variegated leaf ginger will survive in the hot sun, but prefers part shade for best growth. Propagation of the ginger is easy. You can dig up a rhizome and move it almost any time of the year, but September is an ideal time as we usually get frequent rain showers this month. The gingers require little care other than moist soil and occasional fertilization.

Daylilies (*Hemerocallis spp.*) which have grown prolifically during the summer months are now beginning a short period of dormancy. These perennial type plants produce a thick clump of growth which can result in weak plants that do not bloom well, so the clump should be divided. Dig the entire clump of growth out of the ground and separate each individual plant. There will be a large tuber-like growth on the root system – DO NOT remove it. This is a storage organ to promote further growth. Set daylilies a little bit higher than they were in the original clump. After you have them divided and planted, fertilize lightly.

Stokes aster (*Stokesia laevis*) is another perennial that has a tendency to become too dense so it should be divided now. The long, large roots may be

reduced to make transplanting easier. Like the daylilies, there are many plants within the clump. They should be separated and set slightly higher than their original depth.

This is the time of year to dig **bulbs**. Separate and plant the small bulbs that form around the large central bulb, and then replant the older bulb. **Amaryllis** (*Hippeastrum*) has a tendency to draw its bulbs into the ground so replant with the top 1/3 of the bulb exposed. When the bulb is too deep, it will not flower readily. This applies to other bulbs in the Amaryllis family like **Spider lily** and/or **Alligator lily** (*Hymenocallis spp.*) and **Rain lily** (*Zephyranthes spp*) which can also be divided and replanted this month along with the large **Crinum** or Swamp lily (*Crinum americanum*)

Pruning:

A **properly pruned shrub** is a work of art and beauty. Shrubs should look natural to fit in to the landscape. Plants sheared into various geometric shapes produce a formality not suitable for modern, natural landscapes.

The first step in **pruning a shrub** is to remove all dead, diseased, or injured branches. Pruning shears and saws should be dipped in a weak alcohol or bleach solution to prevent spread of disease. Remove branches that cross each other and those that look out of place. If the shrub is still too thick, remove older branches. Cut back excessively long growth to a bud or lateral branch that is four to six inches below the average branch length. The shrub can be further reduced in size by cutting back each branch four to six inches to a bud. Using hand pruners to cut each branch separately will maintain a neat, informal shrub that retains its natural shape.

Pruning **bougainvillea** should be done before the middle of September to insure good blooms this winter. Fertilize with 12-4-8 or 15-0-15 or other similar mixture labeled for acid-loving plants.

The beginning of September is the last chance to prune your **poinsettia**. The rule of thumb is not to prune after Labor Day. Keep your plants watered and fertilize lightly.

Fertilizing:

This is the month to fertilize lawns. Fertilizer applications are only effective when applied correctly. A complete fertilizer such as 16-4-8, 15-0-15 or any other comparable mixture may be used. Spreader calibrations are important not only to insure good coverage but also to avoid damage from over applications. To obtain a free fact sheet, send a self-addressed, stamped (\$.41) long, envelope to "**How to Calibrate Your Fertilizer Spreader**", 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL 33774-3602

Plants to fertilize this month include azaleas, gardenias, camellias, ixora, and ornamental trees with less than six-inch trunk diameter. Larger trees will get

plenty of fertilizer when you fertilize your lawn. Other plants to feed this month are avocados, bananas, bromeliads, grapes, papayas and early vegetables. This is the last fertilization of the year for many plants. Fertilizer is important to help maintain healthy conditions. It also prepares the plants for cold weather. A healthy plant can withstand adverse conditions much better than a weak neglected plant. Use a fertilizer with a lower nitrogen (first number) than potassium (last number) such as 8-4-12 for this fertilization. Palms should also be fertilized this month. Look for the 8-2-12 Palm and Landscape Blend that is recommended by the University of Florida to keep your palms healthy and free of nutrient deficiencies.

Pests:

Spider mites can still be causing damage to landscape plants. Foliage that is yellowing around the edges or along the veins should be checked closely for mites. Evergreens such as Italian cypress, junipers and arborvitae may have individual branches that yellow, then turn a rusty brown. Spray infested plants with Insecticidal soap, fine horticultural oil, or a miticide labeled for spider mites. Follow label directions and be sure the chemical you choose is labeled for use on your plants.

Whiteflies can be very damaging. Check citrus, gardenias, camellias, and other host plants. The nymphs feed on the underside of leaves. One sure sign of an infestation of whiteflies is the presence of sooty mold on the top of the leaves. Whitefly crawlers called nymphs are very flat, almost clear and less than 1/16 inch in diameter. Adult whiteflies are attracted to yellow. Yellow sticky cards can be used as an alternative to chemical pesticides. Place the card near the plant so that as the adults mature they will fly to the cards and get stuck. Several pesticides are labeled for whitefly control. Follow label directions carefully as some chemicals are not labeled for certain plants.

House plants cannot escape the attack of insects. Two of the most common insects associated with house plants are fungus gnats and springtails. The adult **fungus gnat** is very small and usually dark brown to black. Adults may first be noticed when plants are watered. They become disturbed and begin to fly around. The larvae live and feed in the potting soil. The adults do not feed, their only purpose is the continuation of the species.

Larvae and adult fungus gnats are attracted to moist soil. The presence of these flies usually indicates that the plants have been over-watered. Allowing the soil to dry out for a few days or a week may be the best control. The larvae rarely attacks healthy plant roots or stems.

Springtails are also very small, white in color and generally crawl or hop over the surface of potting soil. They do not fly. Springtails live in moist soil nearly everywhere in the world. They can infest potted plants if soil from the yard or garden is used. Springtails do not harm healthy plant roots. The adults and

young feed on soil debris. Again allowing the soil to dry out will help control springtails.

Be on the lookout for fall armyworms in all types of **lawns**. Armyworms are the larvae of moths. When full grown, the larvae are about 1 ½ inches long, yellowish brown to black with a wide, dark stripe on each side of a midstripe that ends in an upside-down (Y) on their head. Their feeding can cause circular bare areas in the lawn. Always follow label directions when applying pesticides.

Insects such as hornets, yellow jackets, mud daubers and cicada killers are all wasps. They are generally considered to be beneficial, because they attack and destroy many harmful insects found around homes and gardens. Hornets and yellow jackets kill such pests as houseflies, blowflies and various caterpillars. Though beneficial, wasps also attack people. They nest above and below ground and some are very aggressive. To control these pests, use a wasp and hornet spray for quick knockdown.

The second flight of the **lovebug** occurs during late August and September. These flights may last for four to five weeks. By traveling at night motorists can avoid the bugs; lovebugs do not become active until about 10:00am. Traveling at slower speeds will reduce the number of bugs that will be spattered. A large screen placed in the front of the grill will keep the radiator fins from clogging, and will protect the finish on the front of the car.

Spattered bugs should be washed off the car and soon as possible. They are more easily removed and the chance of damaging the car's finish is lessened if the car has been waxed recently. When the remains are left on an unwaxed car for several days, the finish will often be permanently damaged. Soaking them for several minutes with water aids in their removal. When lovebugs are numerous, some motorists spread a light film of baby oil or an anti-sticking compound used in cooking over the front of the hood, above the windshield and on the grill and bumper. This practice will make their removal a simpler task.

Upcoming Events at County Extension / Florida Botanical Gardens

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

10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. September 15: **"Gardening with Wildlife"** at Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center, 3940 Keystone Rd, Tarpon Springs. This FREE class will teach you the steps to create a garden area or an entire landscape that is friendly to Florida's wildlife and environment. For reservations or more information, call Brooker Creek Preserve at (727) 453-6800.

9:00 a.m. September 15: **"Rain Barrel Workshop"** at Pinellas County Extension.

Join Pinellas County Extension educators and 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

10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. September 22: **"Gardening with Wildlife"** at Weedon Island Preserve Environmental Education Center, 1800 Weedon Drive NE, St. Petersburg. This FREE class will teach you the steps to create a garden area or an entire landscape that is friendly to Florida's wildlife and environment. For reservations or more information, call Weedon Island Preserve at (727) 453-6500.

3:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. September 26: **"Garden Design Series I"** with Master Gardener, Jason Beck at Palm Harbor Library in the Palm Room. Learn the art of garden design in this first of a three part series of FREE classes. Space is limited, call for reservations or more information at (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.