



“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

February 2008



It is time to plant your Spring vegetable garden. You will want to till your garden area and incorporate organic matter. This should be done at least two weeks prior to planting. Add about 25 pounds of some type of organic material per 100 square feet of garden. Cow manure, compost, peat moss, or any combination of materials are suitable. Almost any type of vegetables are suitable for the spring garden so check the local garden centers for their new spring shipment of vegetable seeds. Some nurseries have starter plants for tender crops now. Some vegetables you can plant now are bush beans, lima beans, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, sweet potatoes, summer squash, and tomatoes. *Vegetable Gardening in Florida* by James Stephens is a great reference book for growing vegetables.

Blossom-end rot is often a serious problem for tomatoes, peppers, squash, and cucumbers in the home vegetable garden. The bottom ends of your tomatoes or squash turning soft and dark, then it could be a calcium deficiency. Correct this deficiency by using lime in the garden or treating existing plants with calcium chloride, commonly sold as Stop Blossom-End Rot. Fluctuating water can also contribute to blossom-end rot so be sure to water your garden properly.

Watch for the blooms on your **avocado** and **mango** trees. It is often a good idea to spray the blooms with a fungicide to keep disease from causing them to abort. Fertilize your trees using an 8-3-9, 4-6-6, or 4-6-8 mixture. Also look for 1 -2 % Magnesium in the fertilizer.

Thatch is an intermingled layer of dead and living shoots, stems and roots that develop between the green grass shoots and the soil that leaves the lawn feeling spongy.

Thatch is seldom a problem in younger lawns, but can become a problem in older lawns, especially if they are over fertilized and over watered. Grass clippings do not cause thatch build-up when the lawn is properly mowed. The

most common method of removing thatch is by using a heavy duty vertical mower. This specialized piece of equipment has evenly spaced, knife-like blades, which revolve perpendicularly to the turf. They slice into the thatch and lift it. This method, which can be used on St. Augustine grass, Bermuda or Zoysia, removes both thatch and matting. Thatch removal allows water and fertilizer to reach the soil better. The best time to have the lawn verti-cut in our area is Mid-February through June. Rapid growth and quick recovery is important after thatch removal.

It is wise to hire a professional to do this thatch removal job. The cutting is strenuous and there may be truckload or more of thatch to haul away.

Many **weeds** that grow in the lawn are annuals. They start from seed in the early spring, grow, flower, and re-seed all in one season. Summer weeds will sprout soon after night temperatures get above 70 degrees. Applying a pre-emergent herbicide in early February will help prevent these seeds from growing. There are many pre-emergent herbicides available and some are used only on a particular grass. Check with your local garden center to find the one labeled safe on your type of lawn. Some common pre-emergent herbicides are Balan, Betasan, Atrazine, Surflan, Treflan, and Corn Gluten. Always read and follow directions. Even an herbicide that says it can be used on your particular grass may still cause injury if the lawn is under stress or during hot weather conditions.

Reading the pesticide label is very important. It lists the pests to be controlled, how to apply and how much, precautions to take while handling and mixing the product. There are also instructions of what to do in case of accidents. Taking time to read the label may save the life of your plant or even your own. Just because you can buy something over the counter does not mean that it can be used indiscriminately. Using more than recommended is NOT better! Following the label will also protect Florida's fragile environment.

There is still time to **transplant** that tree or shrub that is in the wrong place. Most plants are in a dormant or slow growth mode at this time of year. It is not necessary to prune plants when moving. However, if you need to prune, then do so before transplanting. Plants will drop leaves that cannot be supported once transplanted.

Be sure to choose and plant new shrubs at proper spacing intervals if they will eventually become a hedge or windbreak. When plants are small, proper spacing may look like you have under-planted or that the plants are placed too far apart. Keep in mind that they will grow and fill in when planting distances are correct and they are properly cared for. Over-planting can be a serious and costly mistake. Crowded plants are less likely to thrive and crowding can reduce air circulation and promote disease.

Now is the time to divide crowded **perennial** plants such as cannas, gerberas, daylilies, and Stokesia. Division involves cutting large clumps into smaller sections, making sure that each smaller clump has an adequate supply of stems, leaves, roots, and buds to survive transplanting. Ferns, orchids, daylilies, bulbous plants, nandina, and lirioppe are commonly propagated by division. This

is an excellent way to increase the area in the landscape covered with groundcover plants and decrease the amount of grass.

Each season dig plants from a portion or all of the groundcover area divide the clumps and then replant them in a larger area. Some plants can be pulled apart, but many must be cut. Transplant the separated clumps at the same depth they were growing originally. Do not divide plants when they are flowering, but any other time during the growing season is suitable as long as adequate care is provided after planting.

All newly planted trees, shrubs, and vegetables should be **mulched** to conserve moisture and keep down weeds. A two to three-inch layer should be sufficient. Keep mulch at least two inches away from the trunk or stems of plants. Mulch may help prevent slugs from eating your strawberries. Consider using Pinellas County Recycled yard Waste Mulch. Call the Pinellas County Recycling Hotline at 464-7500 for locations of free recycled yard waste mulch.

Rose pruning should be done during January or February in our area. Major yearly pruning consists of removing some healthy top growth as well as shortening main canes and lateral branches, completely removing small twigs and some of the oldest canes which will improve the plant's form. It also regulates height and produces better light and air circulation conditions within the plant. Leave at least half the length of each main cane that is one to three years old. The first flowers can be expected eight to nine weeks after pruning.

To avoid dieback and encourage rapid healing, pruning cuts should be made about ¼ inch above a dormant bud (eye) that faces out from the center of the plant. Make the cut at a 45 degree angle. Sterilize pruning equipment before each cut by dipping in alcohol or a one-part bleach and nine-parts water mixture. When an entire branch is removed, make a smooth cut at the point of juncture.

Check **needle-type evergreens** often for spider mites and spray with a miticide or Neem oil when necessary. Mites are very difficult to control on fine-needled junipers, so several treatments at seven to ten day intervals may be necessary.

Prune **camellias** after flowering. Cut branches just above the point where last year's growth ends. Remove most of the new growth. Rake up any fallen blooms to help avoid petal blight next year.

Prune **hibiscus** the end of this month or early March. Hibiscus can be pruned throughout the summer to keep it from becoming leggy however you will sacrifice a certain amount of blooms whenever you prune.

The variety of plants that can be used in **hanging baskets** is practically endless. Although trailing plants are most often used, a plant does not have to drape to look great. Some of the narrow-leaved bromeliads make a spectacular display. Ferns are excellent hanging basket plants, especially some of the novelty type such as rabbit-foot where the creeping rhizome resembles a furry foot. Plants that produce runners such as spider plant, strawberry begonia or even true strawberries also do great in a hanging basket. For color, try some annuals such

as petunias or ageratum or perennials such as vinca, begonias, impatiens and geranium. Of course we can't forget the many different orchids with their wonderful flowers.

Azaleas not only add a splash of color to the late winter landscape but serve as an evergreen border or low hedge the rest of the year. Azaleas will always perform better if they are planted in partial shade. They tend to become infested with lace bugs when they grow in full sun. Purchase azalea plants while they are blooming. The planting hole for containerized or balled and burlapped azalea plants should be twelve inches wider than the root mass but not quite as deep as the root ball or soil surface in the container. Fill the hole so that the azaleas are planted slightly above the depth they were in the container or nursery. Organic mulch applied to a depth of two to three inches will conserve water and reduce weed problems. Be sure to keep mulch two to three inches away from the base of the plant. November to February is the best season for transplanting; however, containerized azaleas may be transplanted any time if proper care is provided. Plants should be spaced according to mature size of the cultivar but generally three to five feet apart.

Select **ornamental shrubs** such as hibiscus and camellias while they are in bloom. This will insure that you get the color you want. Many varieties are available at nurseries and garden centers in small, medium, or large containers.

For garden color almost year-round, plant **marigolds**. Marigolds are heat and drought tolerant and will bloom in about six weeks after sowing seeds, continuing to bloom until the first frost. During extended hot periods, they may stop blooming but will quickly start again once temperatures cool. To encourage flowering, keep faded blossoms removed. Fertilize every three to six weeks with a bloom boosting fertilizer.

Continue to plant **pansies** and **petunias** this month for color into spring. Older plants can be pinched back to encourage new compact growth. Fertilize monthly.

Upcoming Events at County Extension / Florida Botanical Gardens

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

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.

Feb. 2, 2008 and continuing each Saturday in February. An Introduction to Flowering Plant Identification

9 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Pinellas County Extension & Florida Botanical Gardens

12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo, FL

Cost: \$50 (\$45 for Master Naturalists and FBG Members), Class size is limited
To register, please call 727-582-2581.

Join Extension and Florida Botanical Gardens experts and learn the first steps in properly identifying flowering plants. This four-part series is offered for the first time to the public, after being a part of the Master Gardener College at Pinellas County Extension.

During this course held on consecutive Saturday mornings in February, we will cover: identifying major groups of plants, what characteristics are necessary to notice when collecting information about an unknown specimen, how to use plant identification tools, and what resources are available to help. Textbook and all course materials provided.

Compost Happens Workshop

Feb. 2, 2008 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Pinellas County Extension

12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo, FL

Cost: Free, but registration is required. Please call 727-582-2673.

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 17.6 cubic feet plastic compost bin after completing a short survey.

Discovery Tour of the Florida Botanical Gardens

Feb. 10, 2008 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Pinellas County Extension Welcome Center

12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL

Cost: Free, but registration is required. Please call 727-582-2581.

General guided tour of the Florida Botanical Gardens. We will discover native Florida plants and amazing exotics suitable for the Florida Friendly Landscape. This tour is suitable for all ages and abilities. No pets, please.

Small Flowering Trees

Feb. 13, 2008 2:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m.

Crystal Beach Community Hall

517 Crystal Beach Ave., Crystal Beach (This is an interim location while the Palm Harbor Library is being renovated.)

Cost: Free, but registration is required. Please call 727-582-2673. Space is Limited.

Sometimes your yard needs a small tree – short enough to fit UNDER power lines and in that tiny spot, but big enough to give shade and block an unpleasant view. The good news is that you can select a tree that also produces gorgeous blooms, smells great, and even bears fruit!

Master Gardener, Sandy Huff's slide show on "Small Flowering Trees," will give you enough information that you can pick among the 20+ trees that thrive right here in the Tampa Bay area.

The February lecture is part of the Palm Harbor Library Garden Series presented by Pinellas County Master Gardeners.

Annual HerbFest

Feb. 16, 2008 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Pinellas County Extension

12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo, FL

Enjoy demonstrations, educational programs, and herb plant sales in conjunction with the weekly Market in the Park. Call (727)582-2673 for more information.

"The Wonderful World of Herbs"

Feb. 16, 2008 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Pinellas County Extension & Florida Botanical Gardens

12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo, FL

Cost: Free but registration required. Please call 727-582-2673.

[Family fun class](#) - Take a tour in the herb garden and discover these useful plants. Make a tasty treat.

Discovery Tour of the Florida Botanical Gardens

Feb. 24, 2008 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Pinellas County Extension Welcome Center

12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo 33774

Cost: Free but registration is required. Please call 727-582-2581.

General guided tour of the Florida Botanical Gardens. We will discover native Florida plants and amazing exotics suitable for the Florida Friendly Landscape. This tour is suitable for all ages and abilities. No pets, please.

[For more Extension 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.