



*“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* **January 2008**



Happy New Year to everyone from the staff at the Pinellas County Extension Office and the Florida Botanical Gardens!

Even though winter is a dormant period and a good time to plant hardy plants, they will still need to be handled properly to insure healthy growth in the spring. Many trees and large shrubs die before they even get a chance to leaf out because of improper planting. Until new roots have formed and the plants are anchored firmly in the ground, it may be necessary to use stakes for support. Even if the plant does not fall over, the constant shifting of the root system keeps the plant under stress.

Avoid extremes in watering new plants. Too little water may cause tender roots to dry up and die, while too much water can encourage rotting. New plants should be watered in well when placed in the ground during the winter. Water the new plants daily for several weeks adding the water directly to the root ball. Reduce watering to two days per week for several more weeks, and then weekly watering should be sufficient until new growth begins in the spring. The amount of water a plant needs is the amount that the soil can absorb. Stop watering when water is not longer seeping into the soil rapidly. Newly planted shrubs and trees should not require fertilization until after spring growth starts. Give them time to get settled and ready for growth.

The third Friday in January is **Arbor Day** in Florida. Planting of trees in backyards, and along city streets has taken place since colonial days. Now, as then, our investment in trees is returning an almost infinite number of sustainable benefits and services for man and our environment. To affix a price tag to an urban tree is virtually impossible. In fact, in benefits and services, the value of trees in densely populated areas far exceeds the price we pay for their establishment and maintenance. Trees provide much of the oxygen that we breathe and they consume large amounts of carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas) during photosynthesis.

**Houseplants** must have light to live. While some plants can exist on low light, most need a fair amount. Some plants will not survive, much less thrive, without bright light. It is important to find out about the light needs for your particular plant.

In general, foliage plants require less light than flowering plants. Plants not receiving sufficient light may become tall and weak-looking with pale leaves which may then drop off. Flowers may also fail to form if it is a flowering plant.

Don't wait too long to move your plant to an area with more light or it may never recover. On the other hand, don't make the mistake of thinking that placing your indoor plants out in the direct sun will help them recover more quickly. Your plant may end up with sunburned leaves which crinkle up and turn brown.

**Citrus spray schedule.** January is often referred to as an optional month when spraying citrus trees. Several Citrus pests and nutritional deficiencies will need correcting before they cause extensive damage. Spray neutral copper for Citrus scab and Fine horticultural oil for scales, whitefly, and mites. Micro-nutrients can be sprayed at the same time or added to the soil under the drip line of the tree. Micro-nutrients will be absorbed through the leaves and can correct the problem much faster than fertilizer added to the soil. Read and follow label directions for the correct amount to use. You can access the University of Florida/IFAS Extension publication: *Your Florida Dooryard Citrus Guide - Common Pests, Diseases, and Disorders of Dooryard Citrus* on the Internet at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/HS122>. Or you can call our Lawn and Garden phone line at 727 582-2110 to request a copy.

Watch for anthracnose on **mango** blooms this month. This disease appears as small, black, sunken areas on the flower spike. If left unchecked, it can kill the flowers, preventing the development of fruit. Begin treatment with copper fungicide when the bloom spikes first appear and continue spraying at weekly intervals until the fruit is fully formed, then spray monthly until June or July.

There is still time to grow some of your own **vegetables**. There are several things you can do to insure the greatest success. Have your soil pH tested and make any necessary adjustments. Our office will test your soil pH for a fee of \$5.00 per sample. The pH range for growing vegetables in sandy soil is from 5.8 to 6.8. The pH refers to the acidity or alkalinity (sourness or sweetness) of the soil and is an important factor in the production of quality vegetables. The following cool season crops can be planted from seed or small starter plants: beets, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, celery, kohlrabi, lettuce, onions, parsley, peas, radishes, spinach, collards, cauliflower, mustard, and turnips. You might also try tomatoes and peppers; just protect them if there is a forecast of frost. The UF/IFAS Extension *Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide* has a wealth of gardening information and can be accessed on the Internet at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH021>.

Night dampness brings out **snails and slugs**. Spread bait near tender plants, especially seedlings, and in moist, shady spots where creatures hide during the day. Read the label for instructions before using bait around vegetables and pets. An alternative to baits is diatomaceous earth. This powder contains tiny sharp projectiles that will puncture the snails and slugs. Sprinkle lightly around plants. This will not harm beneficial insects or pets.

Applying **water** to the root zone before a frost or freeze is helpful to plants, but make sure your sprinkler system is NOT on automatic during freezing weather. A lot of damage can be done to landscape plants when sprinklers come on in the early morning hours and ice forms on plants. The buildup of ice can cause limbs and plants to split or break.

Healthy plants can withstand **cold temperatures** much better than those neglected. Remember to water during dry spells. Mulch tender plants; this may prevent the stem and roots from being killed. January can be one of the coldest months in this area making it difficult to think about gardening. When there is a predicted frost, plants can be covered with sheets, blankets, newspapers, cardboard boxes or any other suitable materials. This covering should not be left on more than two or three days even if you have to re-cover them later. Should we get a light frost, hose the leaves of tender plants with water after the temperature raises above freezing, but before the sun hits the foliage.

**What to do SHOULD we get a freeze?** There is not much you can do to protect tropical plants in the landscape from being damaged or killed by a freeze. Covering only protects against frost. Some people erect an elaborate structure that is taller than the plant then cover it with plastic. Light bulbs are hung in an attempt to keep the area warm. Potted plants can be moved indoors, to a garage or shed for temporary protection. After potted plants are moved back out be sure to check the soil for dryness. The foliage could be transpiring (losing water vapor) on a sunny day after a freeze causing the soil in the container medium to become dry. Apply water to the soil as needed to provide available water for the plants.

While you may be tempted to prune damaged or wilted plants, severe pruning should be delayed until new growth appears in the spring. As you know, in Florida pruning often encourages new growth, especially if we have a week of warm weather. This new growth is tender and subject to further damage from subsequent frosts or freezes. When it is time to prune, cold injured wood can be identified by scraping a small section of bark and examining the cambium layer beneath the bark. Dead wood will have a brown or black discoloration while healthy wood will be green. Prune damaged branches back to a green area. Herbaceous plants that tend to rot after a freeze can be cut back to try and save the root system.

Many of you may have received a potted plant as a gift during the holidays and may wonder how to care for it. With proper care, a **poinsettia** plant used for the holidays can remain colorful and attractive throughout the winter. Keep your plant in a well-lit location but out of drafts. Water to keep the soil moist, but not soggy. Don't let your plant set in water. Once the colorful bracts fade and drop the plant can then be cut back and moved outdoors after danger of frost is past.

This is a great time for planting **bulbs**. Some bulb and bulb-type plants for this area are agapanthus, alstroemeria, amaryllis, caladiums, crinum lily, gloriosa lily, and zephyr lily. Work in a generous amount (twenty five pounds per one-hundred square feet) of organic matter such as compost, cow manure, sphagnum peat, or other types of peat moss. When possible, plant the bulbs in large masses for the best color display.

**Roses** should be pruned once each year during January or February in our area. This major yearly pruning consists of removing some healthy growth and all of the dead, injured, diseased, or unsightly branches. Leave at least half the length of each main cane that is one to three years old. The rose bush should bloom again in eight to nine weeks. Pruning cuts should be made just above an outward facing dormant bud, and cut surfaces larger than a lead pencil can be covered with white glue. When removing an entire branch, make a smooth cut at the trunk and paint with glue. Be sure to clean up clippings from around your plants after pruning to help prevent the spread of disease. Apply a layer of fresh mulch keeping it 2-3 inches away from the base of the plant.

Remove faded **camellia** flowers from your plants. Rake up any old blossoms that may have fallen to the ground. This helps prevent petal blight, which can become a serious problem.

Seeds from **papaya** can be started indoors this month. Clean the pulp off each seed and plant about ¼ inch deep in a container of potting soil. Fresh seeds usually germinate in ten to fifteen days. Under ideal growing conditions, fruit should be produced in eight to ten months. Seedlings planted in early March should produce edible fruit by November.

**Is Spanish moss helpful or harmful?** Although often accused of being a parasite, Spanish moss is really a native bromeliad epiphyte, receiving water and nutrients from the air, dust, and rain. The only obvious threat it poses to trees is by preventing air circulation through foliage, and limb breakage because of its weight when wet. Even this it will not kill a tree.

***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.

## **Jan 12**

### **"Veggie Tales"**

10 a.m. – 11 a.m.

### **Pinellas County Extension & Florida Botanical Gardens**

12520 Ulmerton Road

Largo, FL 33774

Cost: Free

Registration required 727-582-2673

Learn how to grow your own vegetables. Get you garden ready for the spring season. Plant a seed for your garden.

## **Jan 12**

### **Pruning Basics**

10: a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

### **Pinellas County Extension & Florida Botanical Gardens**

12520 Ulmerton Road

Largo, FL 33774

Cost: Free

Registration required 727-582-2673

January is a good time in Florida to prune many of our shrubs and trees. Join Extension Agent Pam Brown to learn the fine points of pruning to enhance the look and health of your landscape.

## **Jan 29**

### **Florida Style Gardening Series**

6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

### **Location: St. Catherine of Sienna Catholic Church**

1955 S. Belcher Road

Clearwater, FL 33764

Cost: \$60 for the series

Registration required 727-582-2673

January 29, February 5, 12, 19, & 26

Want to learn the secrets to successful gardening in Pinellas County? Have you been confused by the sandy soil, growing conditions, how to take care of your landscape, and the proper time to plant flowers, vegetables and herbs? We may have the answer for you. Pinellas County Extension is offering a five session gardening course that will meet on Tuesday evenings. The cost covers notebooks and materials. Class size is limited to 25 and will be filled on a first paid basis.

**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.*