



“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

March 2007



March is an excellent month to plant shrubs, trees, vines, and perennials. Both hardy and tropical plants can be installed this month.

Replace problem-prone plants with low maintenance, drought tolerant native or non-native species. Consider your site conditions of shade, sun, and soil type before you choose new plants. Also, pay close attention to the mature size of the plants so that you do not end up needing to prune excessively to keep the plant at the size you need for the location.

When planting from a container or transplanting from another location, it is best to plant at the same level or a bit higher than it was originally growing to allow for settling in the soil. Water every day the first week, every two days for the next four to six weeks, then once a week until the plant is established. Water should be adjusted for rain and soil types. Some plants may establish faster and need less watering. Wait about six weeks to two months before you add any fertilizer to give the roots time to establish in the soil. When you start to see lots of new growth, the roots are usually established.

Once azaleas, poinsettias, and camellias finish flowering they should be pruned. Pruning encourages new growth and produces a more compact, bushier plant. There is still time to prune out dead growth and crossing limbs on crape myrtles, but try not to remove the new sprouts since the flowers will be forming on this year's new growth. Pruning is not necessary for crape myrtles to flower. Prune lightly to maintain a natural form.

Heavy pruning of **hibiscus** is best done in the early spring (February or March). New growth should produce flowers in five to six weeks. Light maintenance pruning may be done any time of year to keep plants at desired heights.

Chrysanthemums make nice bedding plants but become leggy if not properly pruned. Small flowered varieties should be pinched when they are six to eight inches high. Unless these growing tips are pinched, plants may develop tall, weak stems that produce only a few flowers. After you pinch, new branches will develop along the stem. Pinch all

shoots every two weeks until June 10th for early varieties, and July 1st for later varieties. Flowers will not form if you continue to pinch later than this.

Christmas poinsettias can be removed from their container and planted outdoors as soon as any danger of frost has passed. Dig your planting hole twelve inches wider than the root ball. Your poinsettia should fit in the hole at the same depth as it was in the container. Place the plant in the hole and fill around the ball with soil. Water every other day the first week then once or twice a week thereafter or as needed to keep the soil moist but not soggy. Poinsettias have a tendency to get root rot when too wet or when growing in poorly drained soils.

After the flowering period, **Christmas cactus** will produce new growth. Next year's flowers are formed on this new growth. To produce healthy flower-bearing tissue, add a balanced slow release fertilizer every other month and begin regular watering when the soil is completely dry.

Select your **caladium tubers** as soon as they are available at the garden centers. Plant them in shade or partial sun. Some newer varieties with strap like leaves can handle full sun locations. Space tubers twelve to eighteen inches apart in a bed prepared with plenty of organic material. Cover the tops with about two inches of soil. Firm the soil around tubers to prevent the formation of air between the tuber and the soil. Caladiums grow best in a moist, well-drained soil. Fertilize with one tablespoon of a fertilizer such as 12-4-8, or 6-6-6 around each plant. Fertilize monthly during the growing season. Caladiums may also be grown in containers indoors. Some cultivars which tolerate indoor conditions are Lord Derby, Fire Chief, Red Flash, Whorton, Porcile Anglais, Sea Gull, Beauty, and Aaron.

One of the most common flowering trees in our area is the **weeping bottlebrush**, *Callistemon viminalis*. It produces bright red flowers that look like brushes used to clean bottles. The tree has a distinctly weeping habit and the leaves are narrow and willow-like. Its relatively small mature height of only 25 feet has been partly responsible for its wide popularity in landscapes.

Any discussion of spring flowering trees for our area must include the **jacaranda**, *Jacaranda mimosifolia*. This is the tree that the non-gardener may simply describe as "that purple tree". This native of Brazil and Argentina can grow to 45 feet tall. Its fernlike leaves drop for a period of time during the winter and usually the trees are leafless for the bloom period which occurs in April in most years. Flowers are sometimes also produced in the summer but usually not in the profusion of the spring bloom. A white-flowered jacaranda is known but it is not very commonly available. Jacaranda trees tend to be very brittle and may break in hurricane winds.

For the gardener who misses some of the spring-flowering trees and shrubs of northern areas, the **Chickasaw plum**, *Prunus angustifolia*, is worth considering. It produces a great profusion of tiny white flowers in late winter to early spring. It's small growing, often no more than 15 feet tall so it can be used in small yards. It does tend to sucker vigorously, forming shrubby colonies. It bears small, acidic plums which can be used to make jelly. Flatwoods plum, *Prunus umbellata*, is quite similar but does not have the same suckering tendency.

Another small flowering native tree is the **Sweet Acacia**, *Acacia farnesiana*, which has fern-like foliage and small yellow puff-ball blooms that are very fragrant. It is about 25 feet tall at maturity and is very drought tolerant.

Although it often does not come to mind when considering flowering trees, the **red maple** (*Acer rubrum*) is nonetheless one of our more colorful native trees. It does produce flowers but much of the color actually comes from the pink to reddish winged seeds or samaras. These seeds are as colorful as any flower. The downside of this display is that the seeds soon drop to the ground where they usually sprout in large numbers necessitating some hand pulling unless you want to live in a maple forest. Red maple does best where the soil remains moist most of the time and it is well suited to areas that may temporarily flood. Its deciduous leaves usually change to shades of red, yellow or orange before dropping in late fall or early winter.

Many different **bulbs** can be grown successfully in Florida. Amaryllis, canna, crinum, daylily, and spider lily are very common in our area. Some are true bulbs, others are rhizomes, tubers, and corms. We usually clump them all together as bulb plants. You may wish to try some different ones this year. Amazon lily (*Eucharis grandiflora*) can be planted from February through May and will bloom in late winter to early spring. They need partial shade and should be planted with the tip of bulb on the surface of the soil. Amazon lilies will grow in the ground, but in Florida they do best if grown in pots.

Things to **fertilize** this month are annuals, bahiagrass (if not fertilized in February), bananas, bromeliads, bulbs, cacti, crape myrtles, figs, hibiscus, hollies, ligustrum, papayas, and vegetables. If you are using a weed and feed lawn fertilizer, use care since herbicides can damage the lawn if the temperatures are above 85 degrees. Also, be sure the type of your grass is listed on the label and keep the product away from the roots of shrubs and trees when it is applied.

Vegetable gardening should be in full swing this month. Remember to keep a watch for insects and diseases and be prepared to treat at first sign of invasion. Vegetables are annual plants that require a lot of fertilizer while growing. Keep side-dressing every five to six weeks. There is still time to plant pole beans, lima bean, cantaloupes, collards, okra, sweet potatoes, and summer squash.

Most **citrus trees** purchased for placing in the home landscape are grown in containers and can be planted any time of the year. The preferred time, however, is late winter or early spring. All grasses and weeds should be removed from an area four feet in diameter where the tree is to be planted. Thoroughly spade the planting area to a depth of two to three feet. Remove the tree from the container and, if pot-bound (tightly woven roots), make several vertical cuts in the root ball to stimulate formation of new roots. Set the tree in the ground slightly (1 to 2 inches) higher than it was in the container. Refill the hole around the plant with about 1/3 of the soil, then water to remove any air pockets. Allow the water to settle, fill the hole 2/3 full of soil and re-water. Finish filling the hole and firm the soil around the tree. Build a water basin around the tree at least three inches high and thirty inches in diameter. Water three times a week for two weeks, and then drop off gradually to once every seven to ten days during periods of little or no rain. The young citrus tree will need some attention if it is to thrive and be productive. Water is very critical; too much water can damage the roots causing rot, too little water will cause

wilting, which is very hard on a young tree. Citrus trees (especially young ones) should have about one inch of water every seven to ten days.

Heavy infestations of **whitefly** may suddenly appear on citrus leaves. Check the underside of leaves for the pupae that looks like clear scale insects. Spray with a paraffin-based horticultural oil or Malathion, being sure to get under the leaves. **DO NOT** spray if trees are in bloom.

ALWAYS remove **suckers** below the bud or graft union on roses, gardenias, citrus, avocados, mangos, or any other grafted plant. These shoots will grow fast and rob needed strength from the upper portion of the plant and will not produce the desired flowers or fruit.

Continue spraying **roses** weekly for black spot. If the leaves take on a dusty appearance or show signs of yellowing without black or brown spotting, check for spider mites. Mites are a common problem on roses in the dry spring months. Several products, including insecticidal soaps and oils can be used to control mites.

Have you tried **bromeliads**? They are a great drought tolerant addition to the shady landscape with some protection from frost or freeze. The nearly two thousand species of bromeliads provide plant lovers with an unbelievable selection of form, color, size, and blooming characteristics.

Pineapples are a familiar plant in the bromeliad family, a family native to the American tropics. Did you know that another common member of this family is Spanish moss.

Many bromeliads are air plants or epiphytes. In nature they grow on trees. They attach themselves by special roots but are not a parasite like mistletoe.

Upcoming Events at County Extension / Florida Botanical Gardens

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

March 1 and continuing each 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.

Compost Happens Workshop
March 1, 2008 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.
Pinellas County Extension

12520 Ulmerton Road
Largo, FL 33774

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

March 9, 2008 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Pinellas County Extension Welcome Center

12520 Ulmerton Road
Largo, FL 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. Suitable for all ages and abilities. No pets, please.

“Flowers are Forever”

March 15, 2008 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Pinellas County Extension and Florida Botanical Garden

12520 Ulmerton Road
Largo, FL 33774

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

Discover the flowers in the gardens and make a tussie mussie. In conjunction with "Market in the Park".

Discovery Tour of the Florida Botanical Gardens

March 16, 2008 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Pinellas County Extension Welcome Center

12520 Ulmerton Road
Largo, FL 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. Suitable for all ages and abilities. No pets, please.

Rain Barrel Workshop

March 29, 2008 9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
Pinellas County Extension

12520 Ulmerton Road
Largo, FL 33774

Cost: Workshop is Free, Optional \$22.00 fee for a Barrel
Registration is required. Please call 727-582-2673

Learn how to set up a recycled plastic barrel to collect rain water from your roof. Use the water for your potted plants, vegetable and herb gardens, special plant collections, etc. Workshop includes set-up instructions and a reference booklet. Barrels are available for attendees to purchase, one per household at \$22 each.

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.