



“Solutions for Your Life”

12520 Ulmerton Road
Largo, FL 33774-3602
(727) 582-2100

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

May 2008



Even though we have had some rain, water restrictions are still in effect over our whole region. Be sure to check with your county or municipality for the watering schedule for your area. You may want to access the University of Florida/IFAS Extension publication *Tips for Maintaining Landscapes During Drought* on the Internet at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP091> or call your county Extension office for a copy.

May is a great time to think about adding color to your landscape that can stand our summer heat and humidity. Some good annuals for summer include angelonia, narrow-leaf zinnia, vinca, ornamental peppers, torenia and gaillardia.

When **herbaceous perennials** are selected and used correctly they provide color in your landscape during every season of the year. Once established, these plants require less maintenance than annuals and have the advantage of becoming a more permanent part of the landscape. Some colorful perennials that can stand both the heat and sun are **Beach Sunflower** (*Helianthus debilis*), **Cigar Flower** (*Cuphea micropetala*), **Flax Lily** (*Dianella tasmanica* 'Variegata'), **Gaura** (*Gaura lindheimeri*), **Salvias**, **Sages** (*Salvia* species), and **Pentas** (*Pentas lanceolata*). Some perennials that like a little shade along with sun during the day are **Daylily** (*Hemerocallis* species), **African Bush Daisy** (*Euryops pectinatus*), **African Iris** (*Dietes species*), **Jacobinia** (*Justicia carnea*), **Lily of the Nile** (*Agapanthus* species), and **Wishbone Flower** (*Torenia* hybrids).

Chrysanthemums (*Chrysanthemum* spp.) can also do well in our summer heat, but they can become leggy if not properly pruned. Small flowered varieties should be pinched when they are six to eight inches high. Unless the growing tips are pinched, plants may develop tall, weak stems that produce few flowers. After you pinch, new branches will develop along the stems. Pinch all shoots every two weeks until June tenth for early varieties and July for later varieties. Flowers will not form if you continue to pinch any later than this.

Lilyturf, (*Liriope* spp.) is a good edging plant with its dark green foliage and contrasting purple flowers. *Liriope* forms dense clumps which typically reach seven to twelve inches

in height and with the “Evergreen giant” variety even taller. A variegated variety is available which tolerates full sun. One of the variegated types is called “Aztec grass”. When you plant lilyturf, be sure that the crown is slightly above the soil and then be careful that you keep any mulch at least two to three inches away from the base of the plant. Crown rot can be a problem if it is planted too deep or the mulch creeps in around the plant and keeps the crown too moist.

A good **lawn maintenance program** includes proper mowing, watering, and pest control. With our water restrictions, be sure that your sprinkling system is calibrated to deliver $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of water each time you water (How to Calibrate Your Sprinkler System: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH026> or call your UF/IFAS County Extension office). Your grass should be mowed often enough so that no more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the leaf surface is removed. A sharp-bladed mower is a necessity to insure a clean cut and avoid blade damage by tearing the grass tips.

If you choose to fertilize your **St. Augustine lawn** this month, please note that a recent study at the University of Florida suggests that repeatedly using large amounts of nitrogen fertilizer can ignite a population explosion of **Southern chinch bugs**. Chinch bugs are the number one insect pest of St. Augustinegrass, the state’s most popular lawn grass. “Everything in moderation,” said Eileen Buss, an associate professor of entomology with UF’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. “When we try to overly manage a natural system we get the balance out of whack.” In the study, Southern chinch bugs produced the most eggs on St. Augustinegrass fertilized with the equivalent of 2 pounds nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per month.

UF turfgrass experts advise homeowners to use no more than 1 pound of **slow-release nitrogen fertilizer** per 1,000 square feet of lawn, a recommendation found in the document “St. Augustinegrass for Florida Lawns,” available at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH010>.

As the temperatures rise outside check your lawn grasses for **chinch bugs**. If large infestations are found (20-25 per square foot), treat with an insecticide containing Bifenthrin, Cyfluthrin, Lambda-cyhalothrin, Permethrin or Neem Oil. Neem oil is a biorational treatment that has been shown to be effective. Always follow label directions carefully. Catching and treating an infestation early leads to greater success in controlling this pest. Remember to follow the label directions carefully.

When treating for **white grubs** and/or **billbugs** in your lawn, apply insecticides properly. Read and understand all directions on the container label regarding dosage rates, application information, and precautions. The adjustable hose end jar attachment is the suggested lawn sprayer for homeowners. Put the amount of insecticide in the jar as directed on the label for the number of square feet you wish to treat. Follow the directions that came with your sprayer and spray the contents over the selected area. To insure even coverage, carefully spray back and forth across the same area before moving on.

Immediately after spraying the insecticide, irrigate with about one-half inch of water to move the insecticide into the soil where the insects are feeding. Granular formulations of recommended insecticides may be substituted for sprays but still need to be irrigated with one-half inch of water immediately after applying. Insecticides to use include bifenthrin,

carbaryl and imidacloprid. Avoid applying when rain is expected. A heavy rain can wash the pesticide away before it can treat the pest. It could also add pollution to the water running off your yard.

Lubber grasshoppers can ruin lily plants by chewing the young stems to the ground. Young grasshoppers can be controlled by spraying or dusting Sevin according to label directions. Reapply as needed for best results. Once the grasshoppers are large, the best control may be picking off the insects and dropping them into a bucket of soapy water.

The **love bugs** are around again and, as every year, we can only offer our sympathy, especially to those who have to travel through the state during the daylight hours. The larval stage of the love bug feeds on leaf mold making them difficult, if not impossible, to control. Smashed bugs should not be left on your car because of the possibility of paint damage. You can use a strong detergent solution to remove dead love bugs from cars. They do not bite or sting and are active over a four to six week period.

There is still time to prune your **azaleas**. They will be fuller and produce more blooms if they are pruned. Renewing mulch occasionally is also helpful. Remember to keep the mulch about three inches away from the base of the plant.

When **gardenias** finish blooming, prune and shape your shrubs and replenish old mulch. Gardenias often bloom again on new growth.

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 and will use a lot of fertilizer while growing. Keep side-dressing every five to six weeks and keep plants well watered. There is still time to plant pole beans, black-eyed peas, lima beans, cantaloupes, okra, sweet potatoes, and summer spinach.

Spider mites are a big problem on many plants during dry, warm weather. Signs of mite infestation are chlorotic spots on leaves, rusty needles on junipers, stippling of leaves. When the infestation is heavy you may be able to see the fine webs. Spray with insecticidal soap or paraffin-based horticultural oil following directions on the label. Neem Oil is also an effective miticide.

Most Florida soils are low in **magnesium**. Magnesium deficiency is common on many ornamental and food plants. Symptoms occur on older leaves because Magnesium has the ability to move from older growth to new growth. The older leaves of the Canary island Date palm will become prematurely yellow from this deficiency. Grapefruit leaves adjacent to the fruit may be the first to become yellow or chlorotic. The use of magnesium sulfate or Epsom Salts will correct this problem.

Gardening equipment such as pruning shears, loppers, and saws should be cleaned and oiled after using. A medium grade steel wool can be used to remove gum, plant tissue, and rust. Dip in alcohol or a diluted bleach solution, dry, then add light oil such as machine oil, wiped over all metal parts before putting your tools away will prolong their life.

Upcoming Events at County Extension / Florida Botanical Gardens

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

Migratory Bird & Nature Tour

May 3, 2008

9 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Location: Florida Botanical Gardens Palm Pavilion

12520 Ulmerton Road

Largo, FL 33774

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

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 about 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 pets. Please wear closed-toed shoes. Binoculars and identification books recommended but not necessary.

Pinellas Living Green Expo

May 3, 2008 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Location: Harborview Center

300 Cleveland St.

Clearwater, FL 33755

Cost: Free and no registration is required.

Extension Educators will teach two classes at this event:

10:00 a.m. - Rain Barrel Presentation and demonstration of how to harvest water from your roof using a recycled plastic barrel.

11:00 a.m. - Compost Happens. In this presentation, learn how to create your own compost from recycled yard wastes.

For more information about the Living Green Expo go to

www.pinellaslivinggreenexpo.org

Pinellas Living Green Expo

May 4, 2008 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Location: Harborview Center

300 Cleveland St.

Clearwater, FL 33755

Cost: Free and no registration is required.

11:00 a.m. - Rain Barrel Presentation and demonstration of how to harvest water from your roof using a recycled plastic barrel.

2:00 p.m. - Compost Happens. In this presentation, learn how to create your own compost from recycled yard wastes.

For more information about the Living Green Expo go to

www.pinellaslivinggreenexpo.org

Master Gardener Plant Sale

May 10, 2008 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Location: Pinellas County Extension and Florida Botanical Gardens

12520 Ulmerton Rd.

Largo, FL 33774

Offering a good selection of many different plants and garden accessories. For the best selection, come early and bring your own wagon. For more information call Michael at (727) 582-2599. Early admission starts at 8:00 a.m. for Florida Botanical Garden members, County Extension staff, and Master Gardeners.

Discovery Tour of the Florida Botanical Gardens

May 11, 2008

1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Location: UF/IFAS 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.

Compost Happens Workshop

May 17, 2008

10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Location: Dunedin Community Center

1920 Pinehurst Rd.

Dunedin, FL 34698

Cost: Free, but registration is required. Please call 727-298-3215 ext.24

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.

Free Discovery Tour

May 25, 2008

1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Location: UF/IFAS 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.

Compost Happens Workshop

May 31, 2008

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Location: 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.

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.