



“Solutions for Your Life”

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Lawn & Garden | Commercial Horticulture | Families & Consumers | Florida Yards & Neighborhoods | 4-H Youth Development | Urban Sustainability

Things To Do in the Landscape

October 2008



I like to tell newcomers to Florida that October is somewhat like April in the north, minus the spring rains. Sometimes our October rains are frog chokers. We do start to get some cooler breezes and that makes working outside in the garden a little more pleasant.

Because October is somewhat like spring in other parts of the country, we can plant some of the same spring **annual flowers** now. Impatiens, geraniums, petunias, pansies and snapdragons can be planted as soon as they plants are available. Seeds of calendula and nasturtium can also be planted directly in the ground. Prepare the bed by spading in compost or other organic matter along with some slow release fertilizer just before planting. Mulch the bed well after planting to conserve moisture and keep down weeds. Remember to keep the mulch two to three inches away from the base of each plant.

October is a good month to add bulbs top your landscape. **Amaryllis bulbs** (*Hippeastrum spp.*) could be called the Florida tulip. They make a striking bloom show in the spring when planted in groups of 10 or more in landscape beds. Remember when setting amaryllis bulbs in our area that the collar and the very top of the bulb should be above the soil line. Keep the mulch away from the bulb and try not to bury them too deep with mulch as well.

Plant **Crinum** or **Swamp Lily bulbs** (*Crinum americanum*) now for spring and summer bloom. Well-suited to hot, dry locations, Crinum Lilies grow from what are among the largest true bulbs, some weighing over 40-pounds. Crinums will form large clumps and should be given plenty of growing room in full or partial sun on well-drained soils. Crinums will recover quickly from killing frosts in our area.

The tall spikes of blue or white flower heads of **Agapanthus** or **Lily of the Nile** (*Agapanthus orientalis*) are some of my favorite flowers. Agapanthus is commonly called a bulb but really is grown from rhizomes. These plants prefer moist, organic soil conditions but can endure drought once established. Plants spaced about 18 to 24 inches apart will produce a thick ground cover effect. You can expect flowers during the summer.

Other bulbs to plant now are gladiolus, lycoris, daylilies and zephyr lilies. For all of these “bulbs”, prepare your planting bed with plenty of organic matter such as compost, black cow or peat moss. More

information is available on the Internet: *Bulbs for Florida* <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG029> or call 727/582-2110 and ask for a copy.

Vegetable Gardening should be going full steam ahead this month. Soil should be amended with compost or other organic matter. Remember that vegetables need six to eight hours of full sun to thrive. Since our fall can be somewhat dry, remember to provide adequate water as well. It is time to start planting cool season crops such as broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, carrots, cabbage, and collards. Wait a bit later to plant spinach which needs cool soil to germinate. A great book for Florida gardeners is *Vegetable Gardening in Florida* by James M. Stephens. You can also access the *Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide* on the Internet at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH021> or call 727/582-2110 and ask for a copy.

If you missed attending the Vegetable Gardening Class on August 9th, or are looking for information on veggie gardening, you can now view the video version on your computer at <http://www.pinellascounty.org/tv/pinellasplanting.htm>. The link is in the right hand column titled "Vegetable Gardening Pinellas County Style". The program is two hours long. There is also a link to many University of Florida veggie gardening resources on this same web page just below the video link.

Organic Gardening is becoming very popular and insect control can be a challenge. Some caterpillars can be controlled by using Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) sold as Thuricide, Dipel or Biotrol. Bt is bacteria that are toxic to caterpillars, but safe for pets and humans. Most organic gardeners also approve of using neem oil, pyrethrin, rotenone, and ryania. These products contain natural materials derived from plant parts. They give some control to certain insects.

The fall and winter months are also good for growing **herbs** in our area. Many herbs that succumb to our hot steamy summers will thrive in the cooler winter months. If you don't have a lot of space, herbs grow well in containers. The containers can be attractively arranged outdoors along borders, drives, walks and patios or on porches and balconies. Hanging baskets are especially suitable for herbs. More information on growing herbs in Florida is available on the Internet: *Herbs in the Florida Garden* <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH020>

Fertilize **citrus trees** this month using a special formulation of 8-8-8. Apply fertilizer to the entire rooting area which usually extends well beyond the drip line of the tree. The amount of fertilizer varies according to the age of the tree. Fertilizer should be applied three times a year in February, June and October.

Several varieties of **Avocado** mature during the fall and winter months. Booth, Monroe, Hall, Lula, Taylor and Choquette avocados are harvested from October through February. Avocado fruits **DO NOT** ripen on the tree. A mature fruit ripens in three to eight days after it is picked. Florida avocados ripen best at temperatures of sixty to seventy degrees Fahrenheit. At higher temperatures, fruits ripen unevenly and develop an off-flavor. Cold storage delays ripening.

Many **Banana** trees have large stalks of fruit now. It takes from two and a half to six months for the bananas to mature depending upon temperatures, cultivar, and cultural practices. The individual fruit should be plump with no distinct ridges. Mature fruit will turn pale green. Harvest and allow to fully ripen before eating. Bananas need fertile conditions with plenty of water for best growth and fruit production. They require plenty of potassium. A fertilizer with a ratio of 3-1-6 is best.

Roof rats thrive in attics, palm trees, ornamental shrubbery or any other convenient place. They are climbers and prefer to nest off the ground. Roof rats are also destructive to citrus. As the fruit begins to ripen, they will come out at night to feed. Roof rats are gray to lemon-colored with a pointed muzzle. The tail is longer than the body. Adult rats weight from ½ to ¾ pounds and reach maturity at three to five months. They live about one year with the female producing up to six litters of five to six young each year.

Roof rats can be destructive in attics by gnawing on electrical wires and rafters. Traps and baits are available for rat control. Roof rats also feed on vegetables, other fruits and grains. For more information you can access UF/IFAS publication *Control of Roof Rats in Fruit Trees* on the Internet at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW120> or call 727/582-2110 and ask for a copy.

Perfect circles around the edges of your rose leaves and other plant leaves are caused by **leaf-cutter bees**. These bees do not feed on the leaves. They roll pieces of leaves into a thimble-shape to line their nests. These are harmless insects, they do not do a lot of damage and chemical control is not practical.

Scale insects on camellias, holly, gardenia, magnolia, and other broad leaves evergreens can be controlled with sprays of light horticultural oil, fish oil (Organocide) or Neem oil. For heavy infestations, a product containing acephate or malathion can be used. Always follow label directions as to application rates and treatment intervals.

Pre-emergence herbicides are most effective in killing germinating **weed seeds or seedlings** and commonly have little or no effect on established weeds. Winter annual weeds will be appearing soon, so this is a good time to apply your preemergence herbicide. Use Atrazine in St. Augustinegrasses and Balan or Betasan in Bahiagrass. Follow label directions carefully when applying. Herbicides may injure turfgrass when applied improperly or when temperatures are above 85 degrees. Always check the label of any herbicide to be certain that it is labeled as safe for your lawn grass before you make your purchase.

Have you ever returned from a vacation to find your house infested with **small insects**? There are many different household pests that invade our food. One such insect is a member of the psocid family. These soft-bodied insects are less than 1/8 inch long and have chewing mouthparts. **Psocids** can be found indoors feeding on molds, fungi, cereals, pollen, fragments of dead insects, or other similar materials. At times they may become extremely abundant and spread through an entire building. When this occurs, foods may become contaminated to the point that it must be discarded. Psocids may infest furniture, bedding or, if you have good eyesight, you may even spot them on the walls. Reduce moisture, clean and air furniture and bedding, and clean up any spilled food products. Check boxes of cereal and grain products for possible sources of infestation. If an insecticide is required, apply a spot treatment of pyrethrins. Be sure the product is labeled for indoor use and follow label directions when using any pesticides.

Upcoming Events at County Extension / Florida Botanical Gardens

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

Rain Barrel Workshop

Location: Pinellas County Extension

12520 Ulmerton Rd.

Largo, FL 33774

October 11, 2008

9:00 a.m.

Cost: FREE

Pre-register: (727) 582-2673

Pinellas County Extension Educators will teach you how to set up a recycled plastic barrel to collect rain water from your roof. Use the water for your landscape plants, potted plants, vegetable and herb gardens, special plant collections, etc. Workshop provides set-up instructions and a reference booklet is included. Barrels will be available for attendees to purchase, one per household.

Garden Tours of Florida-Friendly Yards

Location: To be announced

October 18, 2008

9: a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Cost: \$5.00 per group riding together

Pre-register: (727) 582-2673

Garden Tours of Florida-Friendly Yards in Mid-Pinellas County. This is your opportunity to meet and speak with the owners who created and maintain their beautiful gardens using sustainable practices. Tour participants self-drive to addresses provided at registration sites to be announced. Car pooling is encouraged.

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.