



“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 **January 2009**



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, with the continuing drought conditions, it is best to postpone planting until later in the spring or summer. The Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) tightened watering restrictions for Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Pasco counties. SWFWMD reports our water supplies are extremely low in storage facilities. We currently have a rainfall deficit of 16 inches over the past two years.

Two of the changes to the previous restrictions that most affect us are:

- No watering lawns, hand-watering or micro-irrigation for landscaping between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.
- Postpone lawn renovation, such as replacing grass and other planting to avoid an increase in lawn or landscape water use.

To access the whole press release from SWFWMD on the Internet, go to:

<http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/news/article/1090/>

A few strategies to help conserve water in the landscape include; calibrate your sprinkler system to deliver $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of water; use two to three inches of organic mulch to conserve moisture and prevent evaporation; skip a week of watering since most plants are dormant and don't fertilize for the same reason.

January can be one of our coldest months. Healthy plants can withstand **cold temperatures** much better than those that are neglected. Remember to water deeply during dry spells following the watering restrictions. By mulching tender plants you can help trap the heat in the soil. When there is a predicted frost, cover plants 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.

What if a freeze warning is issued? You can't do much to protect tropical plants in the landscape from being damaged or killed by a freeze. Covering only protects against frost. Some people erect tall, plastic covered structures and hang light bulbs 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.

You may be tempted to prune cold damaged plants, but severe pruning should be delayed until new growth appears in the spring. Herbaceous plants that tend to rot after a freeze can be cut back to the ground to try and save the root system.

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.

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.

There is still time to grow some of your own **vegetables**. 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. Consult the UF/IFAS Extension *Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide* for the vegetables that can be planted this month. Access it 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 as some are poisonous. 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. Another alternative is Iron Phosphate bait which also has the advantage of being safe for use around domestic animals and wildlife.

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 Consulting Rosarian's recommend covering cut surfaces larger than a lead pencil 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.

For more gardening information, please visit the Pinellas County Extension "Solutions for Your Life" web site at: <http://pinellascountyextension.org> or call us at 727 582-2100.

Possible Side Bar subjects:

Houseplants must have light to live. 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.

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.

Bulbs are nice additions to the landscape and now is the time to plant. Some you may want to try are agapanthus, amaryllis, caladium, 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. Bulbs planted in large masses produce the best color display.

Citrus spray schedule. January is often referred to as an optional month when spraying citrus trees. Several Citrus pests and nutritional deficiencies may 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>.

Upcoming Events at County Extension / Florida Botanical Gardens

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

Family Fun Learning - The Big Red Tomato

Location: Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo

Details: Jan. 10, 2009; 10 – 11am

Cost: \$2 per person

Learn how to get your garden ready for the spring and grow your own vegetables. Plant a tomato seed to take home.

Vegetable Gardening Class

Location: Palm Harbor Library

Details: January 14, 2009; 2pm and 6:30pm

Learn the basics and secrets to successful vegetable gardening here in Pinellas County.

Vegetable Gardening Class

Location: Weedon Island Preserve

Details: January 17, 2009; 10am

Learn the basics and secrets to successful vegetable gardening here in Pinellas County.

Florida Style Gardening - Nine Principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping

Location: Pinellas County Extension 12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo

Details: 5-part series starts January 22, 2009; 6 – 8:30pm

Cost: \$15 per class

Want to uncover the secrets to gardening the Florida-Friendly way in Pinellas County? Join us January

22nd, January 29th, February 5th, February 19th, and March 5th for a gardening series that will put success right at your fingertips. This useful information will help gardeners dig right into improving landscape design and maintenance.

Market in the Park

Location: UF/IFAS Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL

Details: Saturdays 9am – 1pm

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 1 - April 18, 2009.

For more events information / registration:

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.