



“Solutions for Your Life”

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

www.pinellascountyextension.org



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

Things To Do in the Landscape

May 2009



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.

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 at the proper height for the variety to encourage deep roots that increase drought tolerance. Mow 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 which avoids leaf blade damage by tearing the grass tips. (see mowing height side bar at the end of this article)

If you choose to fertilize your **St. Augustine lawn** this month, please note that University of Florida research shows that repeatedly using large amounts of water soluble 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.

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>.

If large infestations of chinch bugs 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. If the insecticide you use needs to be watered in, remember to apply it just prior to your scheduled watering day. And, it is best not to apply before rain is expected. Heavy rain could wash the product away and also add to the pollution in storm water running off your property.

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, marigolds,

ornamental peppers, torenia and gaillardia. Consider planting some large containers that you can move around where color is needed. They are easier to water and can use less water than a planting bed in the landscape.

Chrysanthemums (*Chrysanthemum* spp.) do well in our summer heat, but they 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 drought tolerant edging plant or ground cover. It has dark green foliage and contrasting purple flowers. A variegated variety is available called Aztec grass. Liriope forms dense clumps which typically reach seven to twelve inches in height with the 'Evergreen giant' variety even taller. When you plant lily turf, be sure that the crown is slightly above the soil and then be careful that you keep 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 deeply or the mulch creeps in around the plant and keeps the crown too moist.

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, and stippling of leaves. When an 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.

Lubber grasshoppers have hatched and emerged from the ground. They can ruin lily plants by chewing the young stems to the ground. Young grasshoppers, black with either a red or yellow stripe, 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 is picking off the insects and dropping them into a bucket of soapy water or smashing them. They are slow, easy to catch and harmless to humans.

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.

SIDE BAR – Proper grass mowing heights

St Augustine (Floritam)	3 ½ - 4 inches
Dwarf St. Augustine (Seville, Captiva, Delmar)	2 ½ - 3 inches
Bahia	3 – 4 inches
Zoysia	1 – 3 inches
Bermuda	½ - 1 ½ inches
Seashore Paspalum	1 – 2- inches
Centipede	1 ½ - 2 inches

Source: *Mowing Your Florida Lawn* <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH028>

For Extension 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.