



“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

September 2009



September is a good month to rejuvenate your flower beds for the fall and winter growing seasons. Now is a good time to divide and plant **bulbs** and **perennials**. There are three reasons to divide perennials: to control the size of the plants, to help rejuvenate them so that they keep blooming, and to increase their number.

Dividing:

Gingers are among our finest perennial plants. During the summer months they have produced an abundance of growth. To assure good growth next year, dig up and divide rhizomes. **Shell ginger** (*Alpinia zerumbet*) is a vigorous grower that produces magnificent pinkish, shell-shaped flowers looking much like a cluster of grapes. Propagation of the ginger is easy. Dig up a rhizome and cut it leaving an immature sprout or two on each section. The rhizomes should be planted only about two to three inches deep. The gingers require little care other than moist soil, afternoon shade and occasional fertilization.

Daylilies (*Hemerocallis spp.*) which have grown prolifically during the summer months are now beginning a short period of dormancy. As daylilies age they produce a thick clump of growth over time which can result in weak plants that do not bloom well. Divide them by digging the entire clump up, separate each individual plant or fan and replant them a little higher than they were in the original clump. There will be a large tuber-like growths on the root system – do not remove these storage organs that help to promote further growth.

Stokes aster (*Stokesia laevis*) is another perennial that has a tendency to become too dense so it should be divided now. The long, large roots may be reduced to make transplanting easier. Like the daylilies, there are many plants within the clump. They should be separated and set slightly higher than their original depth.

This is also the time of year to dig **bulbs**. Separate and plant the small bulbs that form around the large central bulb, and then replant the older bulb. **Amaryllis** (*Hippeastrum*) has a tendency to draw its bulbs into the ground. When replanting, make sure that the top 1/3 of the bulb exposed to insure blooms. This applies to other bulbs in the Amaryllis family like **Spider lily** and/or **Alligator lily** (*Hymenocallis spp.*) and **Rain lily** (*Zephyranthes spp.*). The large native **Crinum** or **Swamp lily** (*Crinum americanum*) can also be divided now.

New palm diseases are proving deadly for a number of our landscape palms. Texas **Phoenix Palm Decline** is attacking palms in the date palm family (*Phoenix* spp.) as well as the Queen palm (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*) and our native state tree, the Sabal palm (*Sabal palmetto*). This disease can be treated with injections of an antibiotic called OTC if caught early. Untreated trees will eventually die. In addition, **Fusarium Decline** is attacking the Queen and Mexican fan palm (*Washingtonia robusta*). This disease is fatal for the infected trees since there is currently no treatment. You can find more information on the symptoms of these new diseases on the Internet at: <http://commercialconnection.blogspot.com/2008/07/palm-diseases-fact-sheet.html>

Pruning:

Pruning **bougainvillea** should be done before the middle of September to insure good blooms this winter. Fertilize lightly with 12-4-8 or 15-0-15 or other similar mixture labeled for acid-loving plants.

The beginning of September is the last chance to prune your **poinsettia**. The rule of thumb is not to prune after Labor Day. Keep your plants watered and fertilize lightly.

Pests:

Whiteflies can be very damaging. Check citrus, gardenias, camellias, your vegetable garden and other host plants. The nymphs feed on the underside of leaves. One sure sign of an infestation of whiteflies is the presence of black sooty mold on the top of the leaves. Adult whiteflies are attracted to yellow. Yellow sticky cards can be used as an alternative to chemical pesticides. Place the card near the plant so that as the adults mature they will fly to the cards and get stuck. If you use a chemical control, follow label directions carefully as some chemicals are not labeled for certain plants.

House plants cannot escape the attack of insects. Two of the most common insects associated with house plants are fungus gnats and spider mites.

The adult **fungus gnat** is very small and usually dark brown to black. The larvae live and feed in the potting soil. The adults do not feed, their only purpose is the continuation of the species and you will see them flying around. Larvae and adult fungus gnats are attracted to moist soil. Their presence usually indicates that the plants have been over-watered. Allowing the soil to dry out for a few days or a week may be the best control. The larvae rarely attacks healthy plant roots or stems.

Spider mites are very tiny and may be greenish, yellowish, reddish, or virtually colorless. Mites suck juices from plants through their needle-like mouthparts causing a speckled appearance called "stippling." They are usually found on the underside of leaves. When plants are heavily infested, fine webbing may be seen on the plant. Washing the plants gently with water periodically can help control spider mites as can increasing the humidity around the plant.

Be on the lookout for **fall armyworms** in all types of **lawns**. Armyworms are the larvae of moths. When full grown, the larvae are about 1 ½ inches long, yellowish brown to black with a wide, dark stripe on each side of a midstripe that ends in an upside-down (Y) on their head. Their feeding can cause circular bare areas in the lawn. Always follow label directions when applying pesticides.

Insects such as hornets, yellow jackets, mud daubers and cicada killers are all wasps. They are generally considered to be **beneficial** and not pests, because they attack and destroy many harmful insects found around homes and gardens. Hornets and yellow jackets kill such pests as houseflies, blowflies and various caterpillars. Though beneficial, wasps also attack people. They nest above and below ground and some are very aggressive. To control these pests, use a wasp and hornet spray for quick knockdown.

For Extension events information / registration
www.pinellascounty.org/events or call (727) 582-2100

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