



“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

February 2010



Landscapes

The freezes in January have left many of our landscape plants nearly dead or dead. Many of the woody plants will recover even if they must re-grow from the roots. Herbaceous plants like bananas, impatiens, gingers and begonias may look like they have melted. It is best to remove these plants as soon as possible. Bananas, gingers and some other herbaceous plants may sprout from the roots.

You can **prune** woody plants damaged by freezing temperatures near the end of February if you are seeing new growth emerging from the stems. Gently scrape the bark from the bare stems with a fingernail in a small area. If the cambium just under the bark is green, the stem is still alive and should start growing new leaves when the weather is warm enough. If the area under the bark is brown or black, then that part of the stem or branch is dead. Try an area closer to the base of the plant. Even if all of the branches have died, there is a good chance that the plant will sprout from the roots. Damaged shrubs can benefit from fertilization to encourage growth and recovery. For more information, see the University of Florida/IFAS publication “Fertilizer Recommendations for Landscape Plants” on the Internet at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/EP/EP11400.pdf>.

Many palms were also damaged by the freezing temperatures. By treating the growing point (bud) with a copper fungicide, you may be able to save the palm from extensive damage or death. Please review the University of Florida/IFAS publication “Treating Cold Damaged Palms” on the Internet at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/MG/MG31800.pdf> for complete information.

Veggies

It is time to plant your **spring vegetable garden**. Warm season vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, summer squash, and beans can be planted after the middle of February. You will want to spade up your garden area and incorporate organic matter. Add about 25 pounds of some type of organic material per 100 square feet of garden. Cow manure (allow four weeks before planting if it is not composted), compost, peat moss, or any combination of materials are great organic amendments. Some nurseries have starter plants for tender crops now. *Vegetable Gardening in Florida* by James Stephens is a great reference book for growing vegetables and the UF/IFAS Extension publication, *Florida Gardening Guide* is available on the Internet at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH021>.

Blossom-end rot can be a serious problem in the vegetable garden. The bottom ends of tomatoes, peppers, or squash turn soft and dark. It is important for the soil to contain adequate calcium and for irrigation to be consistent. Correct this deficiency by using lime in the garden or treating existing plants with calcium chloride, commonly sold as Stop Blossom-End Rot. Also, be sure to water your garden regularly so the plants do not wilt during this dry time of the year.

Lawns

It is time to treat for those annual **weeds** that grow in the lawn. Summer weeds start from seed in the early spring, grow, flower, and re-seed all in one season. These weeds will sprout soon after night temperatures rise above 70 degrees. Apply a pre-emergent herbicide before February 15th to help prevent these seeds from sprouting. There are many pre-emergent herbicides available and some are appropriate only on a particular type of grass. Check the label on products carefully to find the one labeled safe on your type of lawn. Always read and follow the label directions. Mowing your grass at the right height for the type can also discourage weeds by depriving the seeds the light they need to germinate. Wait until March to fertilize your lawn.

Reading the pesticide label is very important. It lists the pests to be controlled, how to apply and how much, precautions to take while handling and mixing the product. There are also instructions of what to do in case of accidents. Taking time to read the label may save the life of your plant or even your own. Just because you can buy something over the counter does not mean that it can be used indiscriminately. Using more than recommended is NOT better! Following the label directions will also protect Florida's fragile environment.

Flowering Perennials

Now is the time to divide crowded **perennial** plants such as cannas, gerberas, daylilies, and Stokesia. Division involves cutting large clumps into smaller sections, making sure that each smaller clump has an adequate supply of stems, leaves, roots, and buds to survive transplanting. Ferns, orchids, daylilies, bulbous plants, nandina, and liriope are commonly propagated by division. Some plants can be pulled apart, but many must be cut. Transplant the separated clumps at the same depth they were growing originally. Do not divide plants when they are flowering, but any other time during the growing season is suitable as long as adequate care is provided after planting.

Prune **camellias** after flowering. Cut branches just above the point where last year's growth ends. Remove most of the new growth to control the plant's size. Rake up any fallen blooms and leaves and put down a fresh layer of mulch to help avoid petal blight next year. As new growth begins, look for aphids which cause the new leaves to be curled and distorted. Spray with a light horticultural oil for control. Oil should also control scale insects that normally live on the backs of leaves. You will need to spray two to three times seven to ten days apart. For more information, access the UF/IFAS Extension publication at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP002>.

Hibiscus should be pruned at the end of this month or early March. This is one of those plants that might have died back due to the freeze. Watch for new leaves sprouting and prune back to this point. Hibiscus can be pruned throughout the summer to keep it from becoming leggy however you will sacrifice a certain amount of blooms whenever you prune. Provide a balanced fertilizer if there is evidence of nutrient deficiency on the leaves.

Azaleas will always perform better if they are planted in partial shade. They tend to become infested with lace bugs when grown in full sun. Purchase azalea plants while they are blooming. The planting hole for containerized or balled and burlapped azalea plants should be twelve inches wider than the root mass but not quite as deep as the root ball or soil surface in the container. Fill the hole so that the azaleas are planted slightly above the depth they were in the container or nursery. Organic mulch applied to a depth of two to

three inches will conserve water and reduce weed problems. Be sure to keep mulch two to three inches away from the base of the plant. November to February is the best season for transplanting; however, containerized azaleas may be transplanted any time if proper care is provided. Plants should be spaced according to mature size of the cultivar but generally three to five feet apart.

Roses should be pruned this month to remove damaged canes and improve the overall form. For this major yearly pruning you should shorten the main canes and lateral branches to an outward facing bud, and then remove small twigs and canes that are dead, diseased, injured, or spindly. Your objective is to regulate height and improve air circulation and light distribution within the plant. This will help with disease control. Leave about half the length of each main cane that is one to three years old. Remove any dead leaves and debris around the plant to reduce fungal spores and add a new layer of mulch. Fertilize with a slow release fertilizer formulated for roses. You should see new flowers in about eight to nine weeks.

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