Looking Back

What an exciting year! The Master Gardeners have been busy this year with advanced training, demonstration and school gardens, workshops and plant clinics. Advanced training included a workshop in January at the research center in Live Oak where we learned how to prune fruit trees and grape vines, a seminar in May on “Diseases in the Home Vegetable Garden” and working an “Ask a Master Gardener” booth at the Epcot International Flower Show in June. Our Vegetable Gardening Team continued working on the demonstration garden behind the Health Department in Starke and is working with Bradford Middle School on their garden plot. We held two Fall Plant Clinics in October (though it felt more like summer than fall!) where we gave away free lettuce plants and had hydroponic demonstrations. Check out the pictures of some of these events on page 3. We also have a new “crop” of Master Gardeners that successfully attended the 10 week course and graduated in November. Four of the graduates are from the Keystone Heights/Melrose area: Carol Coombs, Judy Rhame, Wendy Helmy-Hartman and Margie Stone. Our fifth graduate, Jason Major, is a life-long Lawtey resident. Each of them has their own strengths and gardening passions and we are looking forward to working with them.

Master Gardener Laurie Compton

Native to China, Japan and the Himalayas, Loropetalum chinensiss is an upright, vase-shaped plant capable of growing to ten feet tall or more. They are often maintained at heights of 5 to 6 feet with a rounded canopy, but new shorter varieties, have become popular. It has a moderate growth rate and can be used as a screening plant, hedge, or border. Fringe bushes prefer acid soil pH, but where the pH is high, nutrient deficiencies may be overcome with regular applications of minor elements and lots of mulch. This plant prefers well drained soils - wet conditions can cause problems. Cold is not going to be a problem in hardiness zones 8-10, which includes all of the Sunshine State. Choose mostly sunny locations, but partial shade with dappled light will also produce good results. Jacksonville/Duval County Agent Terry DelValle says to treat them like azaleas since they bloom in the spring on last year’s growth. So, the best time to prune would be just after spring bloom. Come by and see the Ruby Lorapetalum our Master Gardeners planted in front of the Extension office last spring. They have proved to be colorful, drought tolerant and low maintenance.

For more information go to :http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fp355
In the Garden: What to Plant in December and January

**Bedding Plants:** To add color to the winter garden, plant masses of petunias, pansies, snapdragons, and Shasta daisy.

**Herbs:** Plant herbs that thrive in cool weather. Some to try are parsley, thyme, sage, dill, fennel, garlic, comfrey, and coriander.

**Vegetables:** Reliable cool season vegetables to plant in December and January include English peas, radish, cabbage, beets and broccoli, turnips, lettuce,

**Camellias:** Select and plant camellias this month.

**Deciduous fruit:** January is the time to plant deciduous fruit trees. This will give roots time to develop before the warm and dry spring months.

Source: Solutionsforyourlife.com

In the Garden: What to Do in December and January

**Cold protection:** While warm weather is predicted this winter, prepare now to protect tender plants should cold weather threaten.

**Fungal disease:** Continue monitoring for brown patch fungal disease. Limiting the application of nitrogen and irrigating at the proper time of day are good preventive measures.

**Soil Test:** If plants did not perform as desired this year or new plantings are being planned, a soil test may be a good idea.

**Shrubs and Trees:** Prune non-spring flowering shrubs and trees this month to improve form.

**Pests:** To control scale on citrus, shrubs, camellias, and deciduous fruit trees, apply horticultural oil while plants are dormant.

**Crepe Myrtle:** While crepe myrtles do not require pruning, removing seed pods, crossing branches and small twiggy growth improves the appearance and form of the plant.

Source: Solutionsforyourlife.com

Wildlife Calendar for December and January

- Annual Christmas bird count begins mid-December.
- Listen for great horned owls and barred owls courting.
- Look for Goldfinches at north Florida feeders.
- Yellow-rumped warblers will show up at feeders if it is cold enough.
- In north Florida, bald eagles start hatching about Christmas day.
- Right whales appear off east coast north of Sebastian Inlet.
- Male cardinals begin territorial singing later in the month.
- Roseate spoonbill nesting activity is in full swing in Florida Bay.
- Look for red-tailed hawks perched in trees along highways.
- Huge clouds of tree swallows should be visible around sunset roosting over large marsh areas.
- Gray foxes, bobcats, and raccoons begin breeding this month.
- Deer reach the peak of the rutting season in north Florida.
- Black crappie start feeding heavily in central Florida.
- Striped bass and sunshine bass move into open water to feed on shad.

Source: Solutionsforyourlife.com
## Master Gardeners in 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Ag Agent Jim DeValerio pruning fruit trees at the Research Center in Live Oak.</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Vegetable Gardening Workshop at the Extension Office.</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Lexi Androlevichs’ prize winning entry at the 2009 Bradford County Fair Plant Show.</td>
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<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>The Master Gardeners vegetable garden behind the health department.</td>
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<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>The Vegetable Garden Team helped work on the Bradford Middle School garden.</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Master Gardeners at Epcot. Left to right: Jim DeValerio, Bob Lawry, Sarah Lawry and Barbara Searcy.</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Master Gardeners at St. Johns County Extension Office. Left to right: Barbara Searcy, Karen Adams, Sarah Lawry, Juanita Hall, Pat Caren.</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image8.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Class of 2009 Left to right: Judy Rhame, Wendy Helmey-Hartman, Jason Major, Carol Coombs, Margie Stone and Ag Agent Jim DeValerio.</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image9.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>The Starke High School FFA taste testing strawberries.</td>
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I hope you will join me in practicing the three R’s (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) during the Christmas holidays and for the days afterward. Here are some simple ideas:

First, reusable tote bags can be used to bring goods home from the store. This is something you can do ALL year long. It takes 12 million barrels of oil to make 88 billion plastic bags a year with less than 20% being recycled. This is perhaps the simplest thing that can be recycled that saves the environment of waste. By the way, all local major retailers have a bin to recycle plastic bags.

The most obvious type of waste at this time of year is paper waste. Surprisingly, 25% more paper waste is generated at Christmas than at any time of the year. Consider using reusable gift bags to “wrap” those gifts. Also, think outside the box by using newspaper (comic section is great-especially for kids), brown paper bags, scraps of material, or even a reusable blanket. Instead of bows, decorate with pinecones, painted twigs, string, or a pretty ornament. Cut left over Christmas cards up for Christmas tags for next year. Buy cards made from recycled paper or, if you have a computer, send e-cards. Reuse tissue paper for gifting, packaging, etc. Remember to recycle all those cardboard boxes that gifts come in! Bradford County has a good cardboard recycling program and will accept most types of cardboard at their collection sites.

Another easy way to reduce waste during the holidays is to give personal services instead of a “thingamajig” for gifts. Instead of something that may be discarded, try a gift certificate for a facial, massage or manicure/pedicure. If that is out of your price range, make a gift certificate for babysitting, a special meal, or any number of services that family and friends can share. On the same idea, those “thingamajigs” that you don’t want—donate to a charity. Remember: “One man’s (or woman’s) trash is another one’s treasure“. We have several good thrift stores in the Starke area that are run by charities that use the money generated to fund very worthy causes.

Last, consider using a live tree instead of a cut tree. It can be planted later and provide habitat for birds and animals. Look for live Christmas tree farms in the area. If the traditional tree is your thing-, recycle it after the holidays. Check for local recycling programs, or discard in a corner of the yard for birds and small animals.

Please try these SIMPLE ways to “Green” your holidays!!


By Master Gardener Eoline Underhill

I have yet to meet a Master Gardener who did not enjoy volunteering their time in their community. Usually, they are reluctant to take credit for all the hours they volunteer, but the work they do and the monetary worth of it deserve reporting.

Our Bradford County Master Gardeners donated 417 hours of their time to our community in 2009. Using the University of Florida's scale of payment for a volunteer, that amounts to over $7,414!.

We also have a BuzzBusters Mosquito Control program whose volunteers donated 327 hours of service to the community in 2009. That’s another $5,814.00!

Volunteers Rock!