Happy New Year! We are kicking off the new year with Bradford County's First Great Air Potato Roundup on January 16th. The air potato (Dioscorea bulbifera) takes over natural lands, displacing native plants and destroying animal habitats. Native to tropical Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, the air potato was introduced into Florida in 1905. The Great Air Potato Roundup is designed to educate residents and to help clean up sites of this invasive plant. Air potatoes can be collected from any location, including your yard. Guided roundups along Alligator Creek will begin at Ace Hardware of Starke on Saturday, January 16th at 10 am and 1 pm. One raffle ticket will be awarded for each plastic grocery bag of air potatoes turned in. Participants will also receive a free long leaf pine or cypress seedling. For more information, call 904-966-6299.

We are introducing a new series in The Cutting Edge this year called What's Buggin’ You (thanks to Kay Androlevich for suggesting the name!). Written by Master Gardener Wendy Helmy-Hartman, who is an entomology PhD student, it will feature a different insect in each issue. Her first article is on page 3 and I think you’ll agree it’s going to be a great feature! Also this year we will be focusing on the nine Florida-Friendly Landscaping principles. Read more about this on page 4. We’re off and running! By Master Gardener Laurie Compton

Bok Choy (Brassica campestris L) has been grown in Asia since the 5th century, but not in the United States until about a century ago. Bok choy, a nonheading form of Chinese cabbage, with thick, white leafstalks (petioles) and smooth, glossy, dark green, round leaves forming a celery-like cluster, is a cool season annual vegetable. It grows best with short days and moderate to cool temperatures (60 to 70°). Although cultivars will vary in their response to temperature, premature seedstalks may form when the temperature falls below 60° F and injury can occur during severe freeze. Plant during the fall through early spring, either by direct seeding or transplanting. Use soil preparation, and cultivation practices as for regular cabbage. Keep soil moist for best results. Major diseases are downy mildew, black speck, virus, and bacterial soft rot. Insect pests are cabbage worms and aphids. Bok choy is found in soups, stir-fries, appetizers and main dishes. It’s popularity comes from its light, sweet flavor, crisp texture and nutritional value. Not only is bok choy high in Vitamin A, Vitamin C and calcium, but it is low in calories. Excerpts from:UF/IFAS Publication #HS569
In the Garden: What to Plant in January

**Bedding Plants:** Plants that can be added to the garden during the coolest months include carnation, pansy, petunias, shasta daisy, and snapdragons.

**Bulbs:** Crinum, agapanthus, and gloriosa lily can be planted now. Provide a layer of mulch for protection from cold temperatures.

**Camellias:** Select and plant camellias this month. Visit local nurseries now for the best selection of colors and forms.

**Vegetables:** Continue planting cool season crops including beets, cabbage, turnips, lettuce, and broccoli.

Source: UF/IFAS Gardening Calendar

In the Garden: What to Do in January

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

**Cold protection:** Frost or freezes are likely this month and next. Be ready to cover tender plants to minimize damage.

**Irrigation:** Plants may need water if temperatures remain higher than normal and rainfall is scarce.

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

**Arbor Day:** Florida observes Arbor Day January 18th. To celebrate, plant a tree in your yard or community.

**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.

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

**What to do Every Month:**
Adjust irrigation based on rainfall.
Deadhead flowers to encourage new blooms.

Source: UF/IFAS Gardening Calendar

Wildlife Calendar for January

- Male cardinals begin territorial singing later in the month.
- Roseate spoonbill nesting activity is in full swing in Florida Bay.
- Other nesting activity can be seen by ospreys, sandhill cranes, hawks, and owls.
- 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 bears in North Florida are inactive or in dens.
- Black crappie start feeding heavily in central Florida.
- Striped bass and sunshine bass move into open water to feed on shad.
Green Lacewing

Have you ever wondered what that insect was that you saw in your garden? Each issue of this column will provide a description of a new insect. This will enable you to identify the insects that are beneficial, ones that are detrimental, and ones that are simply present in your garden.

This month’s insect is the green lacewing. The green lacewing is commonly found in the garden and is helpful to gardeners. The young (called larvae) are voracious predators that often feed on aphids, the enemy of many gardeners. In fact, the larvae are sometimes called “aphid lions”. The larvae are approximately ¼ inch in length with pincers on the head end; their bodies are grayish-brown in color. Some have a habit of attaching debris to themselves; these are often called “trashbugs”.

The adult green lacewing has large transparent wings and is green in color. Their eyes are gold- or copper-colored. While some of the adults may feed on other insects, the adults also feed on pollen.

One of the most unusual and recognizable characteristics of green lacewings is the manner in which their eggs are laid. Even if you don’t see the adults or larvae, you may see green lacewing eggs in your garden. The eggs are laid on the ends of silk stalks that resemble a thin piece of hair. Each stalk has one egg at its tip. This method of egg-laying prevents the eggs from falling prey to other insects and also protects them from each other as they hatch (the larvae are cannibalistic!).

So the next time you see the green lacewing in your garden, rejoice! This insect is on your side!

Sources: EDIS Publication #ENY-276, Beneficial Insects and Mites by T. Henn, R. Weinzierl, and P. G. Koehler. Retrieved from http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in078. IFAS Extension Publication SP130, Helpful, Harmful, or Harmless?

By Master Gardener Wendy Helmy-Hartman

During the Freeze

A hard freeze is considered 28 degrees for 4 hours or more and since this cold spell may be with us for awhile, here are some tips for protecting your plants: Ornamental plants, citrus and vegetable crops can be protected during a freeze by sprinkling the plants with water. Sprinkling for cold protection helps keep leaf surface temperatures near 32° F (0° C) because sprinkling utilizes latent heat released when water changes from a liquid to a solid state. Sprinkling must begin as freezing temperatures are reached and continue until thawing is completed. For citrus, protect young trees (under 5 years) whenever temperatures drop below 32 degrees. Take extra precaution by covering the area where the rootstock and scion were joined. Also, watering 48 hours prior to the freeze can provide protection. Cover trees, plant and crops whenever possible and remember that planting the right plant in the right place (and at the right time!) can make all the difference. For further information call the Bradford County Extension Service at 904.966.6299.
The natural beauty of Florida continues to attract many people—some to visit and some to stay as residents. From the sandy coasts that encircle our state to the inland forests and prairies that contain lakes, rivers and streams, we use and enjoy Florida’s natural resources for outdoor activities such as boating, fishing, hiking and camping.

Florida’s rapid population growth brings demanding challenges. Some of the natural environment that attracted us in the first place is damaged and dwindling at an unprecedented rate. As our communities have grown, there has been tremendous pressure placed upon water resources.

An amazing natural system of recharge areas and springs links the above and below ground water reservoirs (aquifers) that sustain Florida’s vital ecosystems—and provide us with water. In the past, we have taken our water supply for granted, but the good news is that we are learning from our past mistakes. Today we realize that we can take important steps to prevent further destruction of Florida's water supply and to recharge the state’s valuable aquifer system. Whether we take care of our own yard or contract professional service, we can play an important role in minimizing the potentially harmful effects of urbanization on our natural resources.

*Florida-Friendly Landscaping* is a public education and outreach program available through the Bradford County Extension office. In the coming year, the Cutting Edge will be exploring the nine Florida–Friendly Landscape principles, designed to help Florida residents learn to create and maintain attractive, healthy landscapes that protect Florida's natural resources.

The nine Florida Yards and Neighborhoods principals are: Right Plant, Right Place; Water Efficiently; Fertilize Appropriately; Mulch; Attract Wildlife; Manage Yard Pests Responsibly; Recycle; Reduce Storm Water Run-Off and Protect the Waterfront. In the coming year, we will address each one of these nine principles.