On Being a Master Gardener

Our Master Gardener volunteers are a humble lot; they don’t spend a lot of time bragging about what they have done. So I want to take this opportunity to let everyone know how hard they have been working. During our Master Gardener Recognition dinner on January 18, we recognized Bill Schirrmacher and Barbara Searcy for ten years of service to the Master Gardener program. Bill donated over 400 volunteer hours in 2010! We also recognized our Master Gardeners for their work on demonstration gardens, school gardens, writing newsletter articles and volunteering in BuzzBusters. But, just as they are humble, they also don’t rest on their laurels. In 2011, we’ll be working on school gardens at Bradford Middle School and Starke Elementary School. We will take part in the annual orchard pruning at the research center in Live Oak in January, and in February will participate in Sante Fe Community Colleges Boots ‘N BBQ as well as 4-H County Events. In March we’ll hold our Horticulture Plant Show at the Bradford County Fair and will attend Advanced Master Gardener courses in hydroponic production. We have a new “crop” of Master Gardeners that graduated in November 2010, and they are raring to go. Our newest Master Gardeners are: Ellen Harrington, Jenny Lane, Lynn Miller, Terry Oglesby, Marshall Palmer, Dave Peace, Kim Sellers and Vern Wickline. See pg 8

Featured Plant: Invasive Chinese Tallow Tree

Chinese tallow, (*Triadica sebifera* (Syn. *Sapium sebiferum*), was introduced to the U.S. in the 1700’s, mostly for use as an ornamental. It has become naturalized in over half of Florida’s counties, and is well-established in Bradford County. Chinese tallow is on FLEPPC’s (Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council) List of Invasive species and the State of Florida Noxious Weed List. Paynes Prairie State Preserve southeast of Gainesville, and state protected lands throughout Florida are inundated with Chinese tallow. Normally growing to 20 feet tall, it can reach 40-50 feet. The flowers are borne in spikes roughly 8 inches long. The fruit is a three-lobed capsule and seeds are covered with a white waxy coating. Homeowners can help mitigate the problem of Chinese tallow trees in Florida's natural areas by removing them from their property. Seedlings should be pulled by hand before they reach seed-bearing maturity. Native or noninvasive non-native trees can be planted in areas previously occupied by Chinese tallow. Source:http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/node/399
**In the Garden: What to Plant in January**

**Bedding Plants** that can be added to the garden during the coolest months include carnation, pansy, petunias, shasta daisy and snapdragons. Crinum, agapanthus and gloriosa lily **Bulbs** can be planted now. Provide a layer of mulch for protection from cold temperatures. Select and plant **Camellias** this month. Visit local nurseries now for the best selection of colors and forms. Continue planting cool season **Vegetables**, including beets, cabbage, turnips, lettuce and broccoli.

*Source: [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/)*

**In the Garden: What to Do in January**

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

Prune non-spring flowering **Shrubs and Trees** this month to improve form. Florida observes **Arbor Day** January 18th. To celebrate, plant a tree in your yard or community.

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.

*Source: [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/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.

*Source: [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/)*

**Did You Know?**

Only a few female North American songbirds sing. The female Northern Cardinal does, and often while sitting on the nest. This may give the male information about when to bring food to the nest. A mated pair shares song phrases, but the female may sing a longer and slightly more complex song than the male.

**In the Garden: What to Do in February**

**Bedding Plants:** Plants that can take a chill include dianthus, pansies, and Dusty Miller. Many **Bulbs** can be planted now. Provide adequate water to establish and protect from cold weather with mulch. Some to try are dahlias, crinum, and agapanthus. With **Azaleas** in full bloom this month, now is a great time to select varieties to add to the landscape.

Begin planting warm season **Vegetables** this month. Cucumbers, peppers, and tomatoes can be started while temperatures are cool. Start as transplants indoors or provide protection outdoors.

*Source: [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/)*

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**In the Garden: What to Plant in February**

If cold weather has damaged **Palms**, proper care may prevent loss of the palm and encourage recovery. Now is a good time to check **Citrus** trees for scab disease. Apply a copper fungicide when new leaves appear and again when 2/3 of the flower blossoms have fallen. If not done in January, fertilize citrus now. Frequency and amount of fertilization depends on the age of the tree. Contact your Extension office for more information.

**Roses** should be pruned this month to remove damaged canes and improve the overall form. After pruning, fertilize and apply a fresh layer of mulch. Blooming will begin eight to nine weeks after pruning.

Now is the time to fertilize **Shrubs**. Spread fertilizer evenly over the soil surface and water in. Follow with a fresh layer of mulch, which will conserve moisture and reduce weeds. Apply a pre-emergent weed killer to **Lawns** this month to prevent germination of warm season weed seeds. Timing is important for good control.

*Source: [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/)*

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**Wildlife Calendar for February**

- Ospreys will begin nesting in north Florida near the end of the month.
- North Florida woodcocks begin courtship behavior. Listen at dusk for their "peenting" in open fields.
- Pileated Woodpeckers begin their mating season and will announce territories by drumming on various objects including houses and telephone poles.
- Pocket Gophers begin their spring breeding season.

*Source: [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/)*

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**Did You Know?**

The osprey, also known as the fish hawk, is found throughout Florida and the U.S. This large bird has a white head with a black area from the back of the head to the eye. Seen flying, the osprey's wings are bowed in the middle area; the tail has a black band.

Replace declining **Bedding Plants** now with varieties that provide color now and into the summer months. Try: ageratum, alyssum, asters, begonia and celosia.

Plant spring and summer flowering **Bulbs**, such as Amazon and Aztec lilies, blood lilies, caladiums and cannas.

Bedding plants can be started from **Seed** as soon as danger of frost is past. amaranthus, cosmos and marigold all start easily from seed.

Warm season **Vegetables** can be planted now for late spring harvest. Some to try are: bush, pole and lima beans, corn, cantaloupe and southern peas.  *Source: http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/*

If **azaleas** need hard pruning to shape or produce a fuller plant, do it just after plants finish blooming. Azaleas perform best in areas with filtered sunlight. Their shallow root system and low tolerance to poor soil drainage make placement and care important.

**Fertilize lawns.** Apply a complete fertilizer after all danger of frost is past since fertilizing too early can damage the lawn.

**Fertilize** palms, azaleas, camellias, and ornamental shrubs. Choose a fertilizer based on each plant’s needs.

**Irrigation:** Now that dry weather is here, check sprinkler systems for efficient use of water.

*Source: http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/*

**Wildlife Calendar for March**

- Mourning doves nest now through November.
- Carolina wrens are nesting now.
- Summer tanagers and great-crested flycatchers arrive to breed.
- Listen for newly-returned chuck-will's-widows calling after sunset.
- Plant columbine, coral bean, and other wildflowers to attract hummingbirds.
- Wild turkey and quail begin breeding in central and north Florida.
- Last chance to see manatee concentrations in the Caloosahatchee River this winter.
- Largemouth bass spawning throughout central and north Florida.
- Chickasaw plum and crabapples bloom in north Florida.

*Source: http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/*

**Did You Know?**

While many species of dove live in Florida, the mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*) is the only dove species native to the state.
For this issue, I will discuss a colorful, but harmful, insect you may find in your garden: the harlequin bug. This species can be active throughout the year in Florida. The harlequin bug is primarily a pest on cruciferous crops including cabbage, mustard, broccoli, turnips, cauliflower, and collards. However, they will also feed on plants such as tomato, bean, and asparagus.

The harlequin bug is easy to identify due to the bright coloration and patterns that all life stages possess. Both the nymphs and adults are bright orange, black, and white. The eggs of this species are also quite striking as they look like miniature black-and-white striped barrels; the eggs are typically laid in two adjoining rows of six eggs each. Harlequin bugs have a life span of approximately 50 to 80 days; life stages include egg, nymph, and adult.

Harlequin bugs possess piercing-sucking mouthparts which they use to probe a suitable plant. Once they have located a plant on which they will feed, harlequin bugs will pierce the plant and suck the plant’s juices. This can cause a plant to wilt, brown, and eventually die. Feeding marks from these bugs can often be observed on plants that have been previously fed upon.

Cultural control methods for these insects can be quite effective. If their numbers are low, hand-picking and destruction of eggs, nymphs, and adults can be accomplished fairly easily due to the bright coloration of this species. As a chemical control method, insecticides can be applied to the foliage of affected plants.

Although the harlequin bug is a beautiful inhabitant of many gardens, this is a species most gardeners would rather not see due to the damage it can cause.

Sources:
Retrieved from [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in152](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in152).
A mulch layer around trees, shrubs, and planted beds provides many benefits. In areas that are difficult to mow, irrigate, or otherwise maintain, use mulch to replace turf or groundcovers. Mulch is a wonderful addition to any landscape, because it:

- **Buffers soil temperature.** Mulch keeps soils and plant roots warmer in winter and cooler in summer.
- **Helps maintain soil moisture.** Mulch slows evaporation and reduces the water needs of plants.
- **Inhibits weed germination and growth.**
- **Adds beauty.** Mulch gives planting beds a neat and uniform appearance, and its color and texture can complement plantings.
- **Helps reduce soil erosion.**
- **Can improve soil.** As they decompose, organic materials like wood chips, pine needles, leaves, and grass clippings make soil more fertile and improve soil aeration, structure, and drainage.
- **Can protect plants.** Mulch can help prevent certain plant diseases, and when placed around shrubs and trees (at least 12 inches from the trunk), it reduces the likelihood of damage from trimmers and mowers.

There are many factors to consider when selecting mulch for your landscape:

**Cost, Color, Origins of the mulch, Durability, Nutrient content, Texture/Appearance**

All of the different kinds of mulch available in Florida have benefits and drawbacks. Cypress, melaleuca, and pine bark are the longest lasting types of mulch but don’t offer plants many nutrients when they break down. Soil pH may be reduced by pine bark and pine straw, which would be excellent for acid-loving plants like azaleas, but not plants that require high-pH soil. Here’s an overview of the most popular mulches:

- **Pine bark**, a byproduct of the forest industry, comes in ground and nugget forms and has a rich brown color.
- **Pine straw** (pine needles) comes from pine plantations, which produce paper and wood products, and is sold in bales. Unlike some mulches, pine needles are not likely to wash away, because they knit together.
- **Fallen leaves** (including grass clippings) can be raked up for free in your landscape. This type of mulch is high in nutrients, but decomposes quickly.
- **Melaleuca mulch** is made from the invasive exotic trees. It is cured at a high temperature to kill seeds.
- **Mixed hardwood mulch** is produced from scrap lumber, recycled pallets, or tree stems that are too small to be used for paper or wood production.
- **Eucalyptus mulch** typically comes from plantations in South and Central Florida where the trees are grown specifically for mulch. They grow quickly, so this mulch is considered renewable.
Utility mulch is sold or given away for free by many utility companies. This mulch comes from trimming trees and other plants that get in the way of power lines, but it can come with weed seeds.

Cypress mulch is composed of both wood and bark. It is often made from the waste wood generated from the lumber used in fencing, flooring, furniture and other wood products but it may also be produced from whole trees cut from wetlands. The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program does not recommend the use of cypress mulch, as its origins may be difficult to determine.

Gravel or pebbles can be used as mulch, but they won’t contribute to the soil’s nutrient and organic content or water-holding capacity. If you choose to use these products make sure to first install a woven ground cloth to keep them from sinking in sandy soils. These mulches last a long time, but will need to be cleared of debris to look their best.

Follow these tips when using mulch in your landscape:

- **Maintain a 2- to 3-inch layer** around established trees, shrubs, and bedding plants. Coarse materials, such as pine nuggets, may be applied to a depth of 4 inches, but don’t allow it to accumulate to a greater depth.

- **Avoid “volcano mulching.”** When mulch is piled against the base of a tree, it holds moisture, encouraging rot in the trunk. Mulch piled against the trunks of young trees may also create habitat for rodents that chew the tender bark and can ultimately kill the trees.

- **Mulch to the drip line or beyond.** The mulched area around the tree should be at least 8 feet in diameter. Remember that in a forest environment, a tree’s entire root system (which usually extends well beyond the drip line) would be naturally mulched.

- **Rake old mulch.** Some mulches can become matted, preventing water and air from seeping through. Rake it to benefit plantings and refresh the mulch’s appearance.

Source: http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/
Here are some facts that may surprise you:

- In 2010, Bradford County Master Gardeners donated 1,295 hours of their time and expertise to various projects.
- Labor statistics estimate the value of 1,295 hours of volunteer time to be $23,569.
- Bradford County Master Gardeners helped clients 10,229 times in 2010.
- The BuzzBuster mosquito population monitoring program contribution to the county has been estimated by professional mosquito control contractors to be $56,350 in 2010.
- The Cutting Edge newsletter, organized by yours truly, was downloaded 4,526 times in 2010.

By Master Gardener Laurie Compton

Paper Recycling by Jim DeValerio

Recycling! It is something I want to do but usually I just don’t make the time. Well, times have changed for me and perhaps I can persuade you to recycle with me. Recycling is a great way to conserve our natural resources and thanks to a new company in the area, recycling is also a way for some of our schools and the public library to make some extra money. You can participate by depositing your waste paper products in the collection bins at Starke Elementary, Bradford Middle School of the Bradford Public Library. Look for the big green and yellow containers and perhaps I’ll see you there!

Please Bring:
- Newspaper
- Magazines
- Office paper
- School papers
- Mail
- Catalogs

No Thanks:
- Plastic
- Glass
- Metal
- Trash

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