We have had a relatively mild winter, but those of us who garden know that it’s not over yet! Although I have lorapetalum and bleeding heart plants waiting to be planted around my house foundation (finally!), I am holding off until the end of February to actually plant them. We have seen hard frosts at the end of February and occasionally into March, but I am willing to cover the tender bleeding hearts, if need be, for a week or two. Refer to the calendars on pages 2, 3 and 4 as guidelines for what to plant and what to do in the garden for January, February and March. Our Featured Plant this issue is the Pecan Many of you have them in your landscapes and they are the source of questions asked at the Extension office throughout the year. Because we get so many questions about them, I have expanded the article to page 8.

Wendy Helmey-Hartman has an excellent article on a bug you are likely to find in your garden this time of year: the predatory stink bug.

We have the 8th Florida Friendly Landscaping Principle, Reducing Stormwater Runoff on pages 6 and 7. This article has important information in helping you keep oil, fertilizer and pesticides out of our water sources.

Get ready to garden!

By: Laurie Compton

The pecan is an important tree crop grown in the South and makes a beautiful dooryard tree. It belongs to the Juglandaceae family, along with hickories and black walnuts, but is a separate genus (Carya). Pecans tend to bear heavy crops some years and light or no crops during others. There is also a tendency for many nuts to be poorly filled. Several factors enter into these two problems. The pecan requires large amounts of food, which is produced by the leaves, for kernel formation or "filling" in the late summer and early fall just prior to leaf drop. When crops are excessively heavy, there is not enough food to fill the nuts, the shell of which formed much earlier. Heavy crops also deplete the food reserve left to form flower buds in the following spring, so a light crop results the following year. Thus, it is highly important that leaf surfaces remain undamaged during the growing season and into the fall to produce the maximum amount of food for the maturing nuts and the following year's flowers. There are many diseases, insects, and mites that may damage the leaves sufficiently to cause poor filling and flowering.

Cont’d on pg 8
**The Cutting Edge**

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

**Bedding Plants:** Even though it’s cool outside, you can still plant carnations, pansies, Shasta daisies and snapdragons this month. **Bulbs** that can be planted in January include crinum, agapanthus, and gloriosa lily. Don’t forget to provide a layer of mulch for protection from cold temperatures. Now is the time to select and plant **Camellias.** Local nurseries should have a good selection of cultivars and colors. There are many **Vegetables** that can be planted in January, including beets, cabbage, turnips, lettuce, and broccoli.

*Source: http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/pdfs/January_North.pdf*

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

If you have considered growing **Deciduous Fruit,** now is the time to plant. This will give roots time to develop before the warm and dry spring months. Certain cultivars of peaches, nectarines and plums can be grown successfully in Florida. Other stone fruits, such as apricots, almonds, and cherries are not well-adapted to Florida and should not be planted here. **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. 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/pdfs/January_North.pdf*

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**Wildlife Calendar for January**

- Male cardinals begin territorial singing later in the month.
- Nesting activity can be seen by ospreys, sandhill cranes, hawks, and owls.
- Look for red-tailed hawks perched in trees along highways.
- Clouds of tree swallows should be visible near sunset roosting over large marsh areas.
- Now is a great time to watch our over-wintering populations of ducks and geese.
- Gray foxes, bobcats, and raccoons begin breeding this month.
- Deer reach the peak of the rutting season in north Florida.
- Striped bass and sunshine bass move into open water to feed on shad.

**Did You Know?** One of the most widely distributed hawks in North America, Red Tailed Hawks tend to have long bonds with their mates and will use the same hunting and nesting territory year after year.

*Source: http://www.peregrinefund.org/subsites/explore-raptors-2001/hawks/redtail.html*
**The Cutting Edge**

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

**Bedding Plants:** Temperatures can drop to freezing this month, so new additions to the garden must be able to withstand cold. Plants that can take a chill include dianthus, pansies, and Dusty Miller. Dahlia, crinum, and agapanthus **Bulbs** can be planted now. **Azaleas** should be in bloom this month. Now is a great time to select varieties to add to the landscape. You can 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/pdfs/January_North.pdf](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/pdfs/January_North.pdf)*

**In the Garden: What to Do 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. **Prune roses** 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. **Fertilize shrubs** this month. 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. If not done in January, **Fertilize Citrus** now. Frequency and amount of fertilization depends on the age of the tree. Call your Extension office for more information.

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

**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 start announcing territories by drumming on various objects including houses and telephone poles.
- Swallow-tailed kites begin returning to Florida from South America.
- Trilliums and dogtooth violets bloom in Panhandle Ravines.

**Did You Know?** Trilliums get their name from the fact they have three leaves, three sepals and three petals. Some trilliums bloom in the early spring, giving the **plant** the nickname of the wake-robin, as they come out even before robins return from their winter haunts. [http://www.ehow.com/facts_5780575_trillium-](http://www.ehow.com/facts_5780575_trillium-)
In the Garden: What to Plant in March

Replace declining winter annuals with varieties such as ageratum, alyssum, amaranthus and asters for color through July or August. Plant spring and summer flowering **Bulbs** now, in beds that have been amended with organic matter. Some to try: Walking iris, caladiums, agapanthus and blood lily. Provide stakes as needed to support growth. **Bedding plants** can be started from seed as soon as danger of frost is past. Warm season **Vegetables** should be planted now for late spring harvest. Try peppers, beans, Southern peas, and okra.

Source: [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/pdfs/January_North.pdf](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/pdfs/January_North.pdf)

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In the Garden: What to Do in March

If **Azaleas** need hard pruning to shape or produce a fuller plant, do it just after plants finish blooming. **Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs after blooming.** To guard next season’s blooms, begin pruning after the last flowers fade but before new buds set. **Fertilize lawns** with a a complete fertilizer after all danger of frost is past. Fertilizing too early can damage the lawn. **Fertilize** palms, azaleas, camellias, and ornamental shrubs. Choose a fertilizer based on each plant’s needs. Now that dry weather is here, check **Irrigation** systems for efficient use of water. **What to Do Every Month:** Adjust irrigation based on rainfall. Deadhead flowers to encourage new blooms. Monitor the garden for insects and disease. Plant trees, shrubs, and perennials and water until established. Mow lawns at recommended heights:

- St. Augustine & Bahia: 3-4”
- Centipede: 1.5-2.0”
- Dwarf St. Augustine: 2.5”

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

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Wildlife Calendar for March

- Mourning doves nest now through November.
- 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.
- Spring turkey hunters take to the field.
- Chickasaw plum and crabapples bloom in north Florida.

**Did You Know?** The wild turkey all but disappeared from the landscape in the early 20th Century, as decades of overhunting and habitat destruction took their toll. But the turkey began to make a comeback in mid-century, as wildlife officials began capturing small groups of turkeys in the wild and releasing them in habitats where they had vanished decades earlier.

Predatory Stink Bugs

In Florida, gardeners can find several species of predatory stink bugs. These are typically considered to be beneficial due to their feeding on plant-damaging insects including beetles and caterpillars. Some of the insects on which they feed are important crop pests. Predatory stink bugs can be found throughout the southeastern United States. Florida state records include predatory stink bugs collected during all months of the year, although numbers peak in the fall and spring.

The barrel-shaped eggs are laid in groups of 20 to 90 and take approximately 18 to 19 days to hatch. The immature individuals are called nymphs; they begin feeding on other insects not long after hatching and shedding their exoskeleton the first time. This insect has five stages as a nymph. This species is easy to recognize as it possesses iridescent blue-black and red coloration. Nymphs often remain in groups and attack larger prey as a group. Predatory stink bugs also have piercing-sucking mouthparts which they use to feed on their prey. Individuals spend about 58 days as nymphs before they become adults. The adults are approximately ½-inch in length and have reddish spots on a blue-black to purplish-brown background color.

Predatory stink bugs have been observed feeding on many plant pests including caterpillars, weevils, beetles, green stink bugs, and planthoppers. They use their piercing-sucking mouthparts to inject a toxin into their prey. This toxin immobilizes the prey and allows the predatory stink bug to feed on it. Due to this beneficial behavior, most gardeners should be excited to see this insect in their gardens!

By: Wendy Helmey-Hartman

Sources: http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/beneficial/e_floridanus.htm.
http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/beneficial/e_floridanus.htm.

Predatory stinkbug eggs
5th instar predatory stinkbug
Adult predatory stinkbug
A rainstorm can wash exposed soil, landscape debris, oil, fertilizers, and pesticides off your landscape—all of which then become a part of stormwater runoff. Ultimately, every yard and neighborhood is connected to water resources. This connection may be immediate and obvious, like in a waterfront community, or gradual and unnoticed, through the flow of storm drains, ditches, streams, rivers, and groundwater. Either way, the decisions you make in your lawn and garden actually directly influence the health of Florida’s waters.

HOW WATER WORKS No matter where you are in Florida, chances are there’s a river, lake, creek, or canal nearby. These surface waters are actually connected to Florida’s groundwater supplies through sinkholes, springs, drainage basins, and other pathways. Groundwater comes from the aquifer, an underground cave system made of porous limestone called karst. It is the source of almost all of the water we use in our daily lives, both in our homes and in our yards. Because Florida’s groundwater is so close to the surface, the health of our groundwater is directly linked to the health of our visible water bodies, and the ways we maintain our landscapes can have a powerful impact on both groundwater and surface waters. Pollutants can enter water bodies through stormwater runoff, which is rain that flows off roads, roofs, gutters, and yards into stormwater drains, retention ponds, and surface water bodies. As it travels to the nearest body of water, stormwater runoff can pick up contaminants from landscapes such as excess fertilizer and pesticides.

The nitrogen and phosphorus found in fertilizers fuel the excessive growth of algae, which smother natural vegetation, deplete oxygen, and kill fish. Nitrogen and phosphorus can also cause invasive weeds to flourish, changing Florida’s natural plant communities. Common household pesticides and fertilizers can also run off into our water supply, potentially damaging aquatic life and harming people. A healthy, properly maintained lawn and landscape can absorb and/or filter stormwater runoff, helping to protect Florida’s waters. Following Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ guidelines will reduce pollution coming from the landscape.

KEEP IT IN THE GROUND One of the basic concepts of a Florida-Friendly yard is that the rain that falls in your yard should soak into your yard. After all, rainfall is an excellent water source for your landscape, and reducing runoff reduces impacts to waterways. But retaining rainfall long enough for it to percolate through soil is challenging in neighborhoods built on compacted fill soils. Consider these ways to reduce the amount of rainfall that runs off your yard.

RAIN GARDENS Rain gardens are an easy and attractive way to reduce the amount of stormwater runoff that leaves your landscape. These shallow areas are planted with grasses and other plants to filter water before letting it flow.
naturally into the ground. Water kept within a landscape this way returns to the aquifer, helping to replenish Florida’s water supplies. Rain gardens work best when they’re placed at the bottom of downspouts or in places where water tends to puddle. They’re especially good for diverting runoff from paved surfaces but can also be placed in turf areas. They can be any size or shape, and can attract wildlife. The plants you choose for your rain garden should thrive in wet conditions, but also be drought tolerant for the times between rains.

**DOWNSPOUTS** If your roof has rain gutters, aim the downspouts at a porous surface so water can soak into soil. If the soil is compacted, you can improve drainage by periodically aerating it. To prevent water from pooling next to your home’s foundation, extend downspouts further out into the yard and create a depressed area to collect storm-water for infiltration.

**POROUS SURFACES** Whenever possible, use bricks, gravel, turf block, mulch, pervious (permeable) concrete, or other porous materials for walkways, driveways, and patios. These materials allow rainwater to seep into the ground, helping to recharge groundwater and filter pollutants and reducing the amount of runoff from your yard. In some cases these porous materials may even cost less to install than concrete or asphalt.

**EARTH SHAPING** Swales (small dips in the ground) and berms (raised earthen areas) located perpendicular to the slope can help capture or slow runoff that would otherwise rush from your yard, giving it time to soak into the ground. In a waterfront yard, use a berm-and-swale combination, placed above the high water line and parallel to the shoreline, to reduce stormwater runoff. Add a maintenance-free zone of native wetland plants to the swale to make your yard more waterfront-friendly. Minor alterations to the lay of the land won’t require permits or engineers, but any major earthwork should have a professional touch and will require regulatory review. Always check with your local Florida Department of Environmental Protection office and other local governmental agencies before making any changes to shorelines.

**RAIN BARRELS & CISTERNS** When it rains in Florida, it often pours. Wouldn’t it be great if you could save some of that rain and use it on a dry day to water your plants? Rain barrels are a great way to lessen your impact on our natural resources.

Rain barrels can capture a significant amount of water and can have a tangible effect on your water bill, especially when two or more rain barrels are connected together. Best of all, they’re fairly easy to find in stores and to make! Contact your county Extension office to see if they offer workshops on how to make a rain barrel.

*Source: http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/handbook/reduce_stormwater_

Consider using mulch or other porous materials for walkways.
The Pecan

A fall flush of new leaves is very damaging because this requires food that would otherwise be used for nut and flower formation. New leaves do not mature soon enough to produce sufficient food to compensate for the energy used in their formation. Damage to the green shuck of the pecan by such pests as shuck-worm or scab may result in poor filling even though a good leaf surface is present. Cultivars susceptible to scab should not be planted. Erratic or alternate bearing can be held to a minimum through proper pest control and other cultural programs. The pecan is somewhat unique in its production of female flowers on the tips of new shoots and male flowers or catkins on the old wood. If male flowers produce pollen at a time when female flowers are not mature, the failure to pollinate results in little or no crop. However, lack of pollination is seldom a problem in pecan areas because pollen from other cultivars (which mature their pollen at different times) is carried by wind to the female flowers of cultivars which do not yet have their own pollen available. While pecan trees can be grown rather easily, a good crop requires a well-fertilized soil and a carefully planned and executed program of pest control. This sort of program and site selection is often not possible for the producer of dooryard pecans; however, the erratic bearing can be tolerated because the beauty and shade produced justify the planting of dooryard pecan trees.

Highly Recommended Pecan Cultivars for North Florida:

‘Elliott’: The wood of ‘Elliott’ trees is strong and it is a moderate producer. Nut size is small, with a 54% kernel. Kernel color is bright and quality and flavor are excellent. Resistance to scab and leaf diseases is good. ‘Cape Fear’ and ‘Desirable’ are good pollinizers for ‘Elliott’.

‘Moreland’: ‘Moreland is a strong tree that has produced consistently high yields in North Florida. Nut size is medium with a 55% kernel. Color is somewhat bright and quality is high. It’s tolerance to scab and other leaf diseases ranks among the highest of any pecan cultivar. ‘Cape Fear’ and ‘Desirable’ are good pollinizers for ‘Elliott’.

‘Sumner’: Sumner is a largely overlooked pecan cultivar. It is a moderately strong tree with large nuts and a 54% kernel. Overall nut quality is good, although kernels can be somewhat dark. It has a high resistance to scab and other leaf diseases, but is susceptible to black pecan aphids. ‘Cape Fear’ and ‘Desirable’ are good pollinizers for ‘Sumner’.

‘Cape Fear’ and ‘Desirable’ are Conditionally Recommended cultivars for North Florida. ‘Cape Fear’ because it is susceptible to bacterial leaf scorch and ‘Desirable’ because it’s wood is weak and resistance to scab and leaf scorch is poor. However, consumer acceptance of ‘Desirable’ is high. For more information contact your Extension office or see: http://edis.ifas.edu/hs229

Sources: http://dixie.ifas.ufl.edu/pdfs/gardening/deciduous.pdf, http://edis.ifas.edu/hs229