

The Cutting Edge

Bradford County Extension Service Master Gardener Newsletter

Help Start a New Garden Club in Starke!



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If you have ever wished that Starke had a garden club, now is the time to act! Jackie Host, President of the Lakes Garden Club, will be helping us organize a garden club for Starke. “ Garden clubs have changed since our mothers day”, Jackie said. “ The image of garden clubs used to be women in hats and gloves sharing tea and flower arrangement tips , but is now women **and** men who enjoy being outdoors, are passionate not only about ornamental gardening, but also about vegetable gardening and who want to share their experience and knowledge with their community”. So men and women of all ages who love gardening are encouraged to attend an organizational meeting to start a new garden club in Starke on Thursday, June 18th at 7:00pm. The meeting will be held at the Bradford County Extension office located at 2266 N. Temple Ave. (SR 301) in Starke. Refreshments will be served. Please call Laurie at 904-966-6299 to register.

Some of the benefits garden club members experience include horticulture workshops on vegetables, flowers, landscape plants and other related topics. Members also enjoy field trips to botanical gardens and nurseries and the sharing of garden tips, plants and seeds. Garden clubs promote civic pride and social activities through gardening. “There is something really special about being one of the founding members of the club”! by Master Gardener Laurie Compton

Featured Plant: Okra

Love it or hate it, the history of okra is very interesting. Okra probably originated near Ethiopia, and is a member of the mallow family, related to cotton, hibiscus and hollyhock. It’s cultivation spread throughout North Africa and the Middle East and came to the U.S. in the 1700’s, probably brought by slaves from West Africa. The seed pods were eaten cooked and the seeds were toasted, ground and used as a coffee substitute (and still is). In Louisiana, the Creoles learned from the slaves the use of okra (gumbo) to thicken soups and it is now an essential in Creole Gumbo. Here in the South, we enjoy okra fried, sautéed, steamed pickled, boiled and stewed. It can grow to 6’ tall and is cultivated for it’s edible green seed pod. The seed pods are 3-10 inches long, tapering, usually with ribs down it’s length. These tender, unripe seed pods are used as a vegetable,



and have a unique texture and a sweet flavor. Okra grows rapidly, being ready for harvest in about 60 days when grown from seed. Pods should be picked when they are tender and immature and should be picked often– at least every other day. Mature okra is used to make rope and paper!

June and July in the Garden: What to Plant

Annuals: Annuals that can take full sun during the increasingly hot summer months include celosia, portulacas, vinca, torenia, ornamental peppers and some coleus.

Bulbs: Butterfly lily, gladiolas and society garlic are bulbs that can be planted during the middle of the summer.

Palms: Summers warm, rainy weather is the perfect time to plant palms. Support large palms with braces for 6-8 months after planting. Nails should not be driven directly into a palm trunk.

Herbs: Plant heat loving herbs, such as basil, Mexican tarragon and rosemary.

Vegetables: Vegetables to plant in June are okra, southern peas, lima beans and sweet potatoes. In July add watermelon, peppers, and eggplant as long as watering is provided during dry spells.

Source: UF/IFAS Gardening Calendar for North Florida

June and July in the Garden: What to Do

Pests on Ornamentals: Monitor the garden weekly for harmful insects. Small white dots on the leaves of azaleas may indicate lacebugs at work. Spraying forcefully with water helps control this pest.

Irrigation :June is normally the start of the rainy season, but if rainfall has been spotty, monitor lawns for drought stress and water as needed. An inexpensive rain shut off device can save money and water by overriding an irrigation system when it rains.

Propagation: Now is a good time to produce more plants by air-layering, grafting, division or cuttings.

Palms and cycads: Watch for nutrient deficiencies or environmental problems with palms and correct using appropriate treatment.

Pruning: Many summer flowering shrubs, like hibiscus, oleander and crepe myrtle benefit from frequent light pruning during the warmer months.

Lawn s: Lawn insects are very active during the warm months. Check frequently for damaged areas and keep insects in check with early treatment. For areas where grass doesn't grow well, try replacing with versatile ground covers

Peach and Nectarine Trees: Many of the new cultivars grow well in North Florida. Newly planted trees should be fertilized in July. Apply 1/2 pound per tree of 8-8-8 fertilizer. *UF/IFAS Gardening North Florida*

Wildlife Calendar for June and July

- Mockingbirds may attack pedestrians who wander too close to nesting sites.
- June is the height of Gopher Tortoise breeding season.
- Cicadas emerge from their underground growth period to begin making their classic summer sound
- Snook begin moving into inlets and passes.
- Indigo snakes lay their eggs, sometimes in gopher tortoise burrows.
- Tarflowers bloom in flatwoods
- Eighteen month old black bears separate from their mothers in June.
- Buck deer in new velvet may be spotted in July
- Baby raccoons, foxes, armadillos and bobcat leave their mothers.
- Mulch your garden to conserve water, but leave patches of soil exposed for dusting by birds.
- Bear breeding season starts in July

Source: UF/IFAS Florida Wildlife Extension

Mosquitoes!

They're ba-ack! Yes, after all the much-needed rain we've had in the past weeks, the mosquitoes are definitely back. Of the approximately 80 species in Florida, nearly 30 species have been documented in Bradford County. Only a few carry the diseases that can be transmitted to humans. Even so, we need to protect ourselves when and where we can. A good rule of thumb is to follow the five "D's".



Dusk to Dawn: Limit exposure during this time when mosquitoes are at their most active.

Dress for Them: Wear long pants, long sleeve shirts and socks to limit exposed skin

Deet: Whenever possible use a mosquito repellent containing the chemical Deet. Be sure to follow label instructions carefully.

Drainage: Remember to remove standing water around your home or business. Change outdoor water dishes frequently. Keep gutter and downspouts clear.

If you have standing water on your property, you may want to try using mosquito 'dunks'. Mosquito dunks float on water and will keep on working for 30 days or longer under typical environmental conditions. While floating, they slowly release a long-term, biological mosquito larvicide at the water's surface. This larvicide gradually settles in the water where it is eaten by mosquito larvae growing there. Mosquito dunks may be used in all types of standing water sites where mosquito larvae grow, and can be purchased online or from large 'box' stores and occasionally from your local hardware stores.

You may also want to consider joining the BuzzBusters mosquito program at the Bradford County Extension Office. This is a group of Bradford County residents who volunteer their time to trap adult and larval mosquitoes. The information obtained by them is used to aid in mosquito control spraying in the county.

For further information, contact your local Extension office for available publications. You can also contact Bradford County Mosquito Control at 904-368-3971.

by: Master Gardner and BuzzBuster volunteer Bill Schirmacher

Palm Trees in the Landscape

When planting palms in your landscape, look at the palms in your neighborhood to see which ones thrive in your area. Many of Florida's palms are susceptible to a disease called "Lethal Yellowing" which is transferred by the leafhopper *Myndus crudus*, so it is prudent to select resistant species. Native palms, such as Cabbage or Sabal palm, Royal palm, Paurotis palm, and Florida thatch palm are generally more resistant. When planting, look at the location and visualize the palm fully grown. Look up to insure there is clearance from building and power lines. Plant at the same height as grown **Except** when the roots are exposed. In this case, they should be planted with the soil level one half inch higher than the lower edge of the trunk. Use clean sand next to the trunk. Palms do well in sand and gravel-sand soils where water drains quickly. Blend in fertilizer at the time of planting to enrich the soil removed from the hole. The mixing rate of two ounces of palm fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter (measured at ground level) should be sufficient. After watering and settling in the tree, one additional ounce of slow release palm fertilizer per three inches of trunk on the ground will get the tree off to a good start. Water a newly planted palm at least twice a week for the first 6 months. Sandy soil requires more watering to maintain the moisture. **For established palms**, fertilize with a slow release palm fertilizer a minimum of twice per year; four applications are better. During dry periods, water at least once a month. Avoid pruning trees whenever possible, as palms recycle nutrients from the browning fronds to the heart of the palm. Frond removal deprives the tree of needed nutrients and weakens its defenses against invasive mold and fungi. Never pull or rip off fronds. Permanent wounds to the trunk can occur allowing for fungus or rot invasion and produces ever-enlarging holes in the trunk. Continued on Pg 4

The Compost Corner

If you started a compost pile in the fall or winter, you may have noticed it did not break down very quickly. Warm weather is the best time to get your compost “cooking”. When the weather is hot, the heat accelerates the cooking process and you will see a big difference from your winter compost pile. There are two types of materials needed for successful composting: “green” materials, which are rich in nitrogen, and “brown” materials, which are rich in carbon. This time of year there is so much to feed your compost pile: kitchen scraps, leaves, leftovers from harvesting your vegetable garden, twigs and small limbs that may have been brought down with the heavy rains, (branches greater than 1/4 inch in diameter and fibrous palm fronds should be processed in a shredder/ chipper before composting) Keep seed laden weeds, diseased plants and nematode infested roots out of the compost pile since it is difficult for most home composting units to reach the high temperatures (130-140 degrees F) needed to destroy these pests. If some of the material from your winter pile did not decay, mix it in. Now that the rainy season has started, you won’t have to water it so often. Material added to a compost pile that is not turned or watered will still break down, it will just take much longer. To make it break down faster, chop up large stems, etc, and turn it regularly, but it will thrive on neglect in the summer. Compost is ready to use when it is dark brown and crumbly. If the texture is not uniform, the compost can be sifted through a screen to remove larger pieces, which can then be returned to the pile for further “cooking”. For more information, refer to: University of Florida publication ENH 1065 “Compost Tips for the Home Garden” at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP323> by Master Gardner Pat Caren

Palms in the Landscapecontinued

Mulching: Palms benefit from a layer of mulch applied 6 inches away from the trunk and 2 to 6 inches deep. Use commercial sterilized mulch. Freshly ground tree mulch can contain disease organisms.

More Important stuff!

- Puncture wounds never heal!
- Do not use nails or screws to attach lights or signs to trees.
- Do not use climbing spikes to climb any tree.
- Do not use a machete to remove fronds— overstrikes will wound the trunk of the tree.
- Do not use string trimmers to trim grass from the trunk. Use mulch to keep grass away. Trimmers can slowly remove the bark from the base of the tree.
- Do not place sprinklers close to the trunk of a palm tree.
Source:http://www.broward.org/environment/pub_trees_2.pdf

Would You Like to Become a Master Gardener?

Do you have a passion for gardening? Would you like to learn more about plants and help your community at the same time? The Bradford County Master Gardener program may be for you. Every year we accept a limited number of applicants to join our Master Gardener program. Students complete an intensive 10 week course to become a certified Master Gardener. Call Laurie at 904.966.6299 for more information.

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