The weather has taken a cool turn, the dreams of a fall garden are coming to life, and we are all taking a deep breath and leaving the heat of the summer behind us. Late summer and fall in Florida are great times to observe our native wildflowers, like the sneezeweed in our Featured Plant section. There is so much to do in the garden: planting cool season vegetables, choosing bedding plants that will give us some color through the winter, re-setting bulbs. And maybe this year we will actually get control of the winter weeds in the lawn before they take over! Take a look at the Garden Calendars for ideas on what to plant and what to do in the garden this fall. The critters also seem to be happy for a change in the weather. The horses I enjoy looking at on my way to work have been kicking up their heels in the mornings! See the Wildlife Calendars on pages 2, 3 and 4 for what to look for this fall. Wendy has written another excellent article for our What's Buggin’ You section on page 5. This time it’s on the Wheelbug, a beneficial insect in your garden. On pages 6 and 7 there are some interesting facts about fertilizing, the fourth of the nine Florida Friendly Landscaping principles. And on page 8, our favorite Ag Agent, Jim DeValerio, has written a piece on raised bed gardens. It’s beautiful outside! Let’s get gardening!

By: Laurie Compton

Native to the U.S., Sneezeweed (Helenium autumnale), is a 2.5 ft. erect perennial wildflower with many elongate leaves and numerous flower heads. Disk flowers form a conspicuous, greenish-yellow, ball-like structure at the center of the head. The flowers have raised centers and wedge-shaped, yellow petals which end in three teeth. As the species name implies, Sneezeweed flowers in late summer or fall and is a good butterfly attractant. Sneezeweed does not get its common name from the effects of the pollen, but is based on the former use of its dried leaves in making snuff. The story is that inhaling the snuff would cause one to sneeze, thereby ridding the body of evil spirits! Other Helenium species include Purple-head Sneezeweed (H. flexuosum) and Slender-leaved Sneezeweed (H. amarum).

This wildflower has adapted to Florida’s sandy soil and requires full sun. Propagation is by seeds. Leaves, flowers and seeds are poisonous, but toxic only if eaten in large quantities.

Source: http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=HEAU
**October In the Garden: What to Plant**

**Bedding Plants:** Digitalis (Foxglove), petunias, and Shasta Daisy are good plants for the fall garden.

**Bulbs:** Plant Agapanthus, Zephyranthes, and many varieties of lilies now for blooms next spring or summer. Add organic matter to the planting hole for best results.

**Herbs:** Some to try are dill, fennel, oregano, and sage.

**Vegetables:** Plant crops now that will grow and produce through the winter months. This includes beets, Brussels sprouts, carrots, and onions.

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

**October In the Garden: What to Do**

**Lawn weeds:** The time to control winter weeds in lawns is before they appear. Pre-emergent herbicides must be applied at the right time to be effective.

**Winter landscapes:** Evergreen hollies and their bright berries add color to the landscape when other plants have died back for the winter. Water well when planting and mulch to minimize weeds.

**Caladiums:** Dig caladium bulbs before the leaves disappear. Clean and store in dry peat moss or sand in a well-ventilated area with a minimum temperature of 70 degrees F.

**Strawberries:** Prepare beds and set strawberry plants this month. If there isn’t room for a bed, try planting them in large containers.

**Ryegrass:** For a green lawn all winter, overseed with annual ryegrass.

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

**October Wildlife Calendar**

- Look for migrating Peregrine falcons in natural areas, especially along the coast.
- Sandhill cranes that nested in more northern latitudes begin to move down to join our resident birds.
- Ducks begin to arrive for the winter.
- Grosbeaks, warblers, tanagers, orioles, and thrushes begin migrating south for the winter
- Flying squirrels will be moving into pecan groves as the nuts ripen.
- Black bears feeding heavily in preparation for winter.
- Monarch butterfly migration nears its peak along Florida’s Gulf coast. Many can be seen at St. Marks Wildlife Refuge.
- Redfish and trout move up creeks and rivers in north Florida.
- Plant trees and shrubs, like holly and dogwood, that produce berries to feed wildlife.
- Blazing star, summer farewell and other wildflowers bloom in pine uplands.

Source: [http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife_info/happenings/](http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife_info/happenings/)
November In the Garden: What to Plant

**Bedding Plants:** Create a display of fall colors with cool season plants. Some to try are pansies, ornamental cabbages, and chrysanthemums.

**Bulbs:** Many bulbs like to get their start in cool weather. Bulbs to plant this month include amaryllis, crinums, and daylilies.

**Herbs:** Cool weather herbs include basil, dill, fennel, parsley, sage, and thyme.

**Vegetables:** Continue planting cool season crops such as beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, kale, and lettuce.

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

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November In the Garden: What to Do

**Perennials:** Divide and replant overgrown perennials and bulbs now so that they establish before the coolest weather arrives.

**Fungal disease:** Watch for brown patch, a fungal disease that causes areas of grass to turn brown, then yellow. Since treatment is difficult, prevention is key.

**Scale on ornamental plants:** Now that temperatures are lower, use dormant oil sprays to control scale insects.

**Flowering Trees:** Dogwoods add fall color as well as spring blooms to the landscape.

**Camellias:** For bright spots of color in winter, camellias can’t be beat. Disbudding, or removing some buds now, will insure larger blooms later.

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

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November Wildlife Calendar

- Set up winter seed and suet feeders.
- Cedar waxwings come south for the winter. Look for them on cedars, hollies, cherry laurels, privet, and other fruit plants.
- Look for downy, hairy, red-bellied, and redheaded woodpeckers on suet feeders.
- Bald eagles begin their nesting season. Look for spectacular aerial courtship displays.
- Sandhill cranes return in full force from their breeding grounds up north.
- Many yellow-rumped warblers and palm warblers will be in neighborhoods, natural areas, and yards.
- Kinglets, phoebes, robins, and other northern songbirds have arrived for the winter.
- Peak of deer rutting in central and north Florida.
- As water temperatures lower, manatees begin to move to relatively warm waters at springs.

Source: http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife_info/happenings/
December In the Garden: What to Plant

**Bedding Plants:** For color in the winter garden, plant petunias, pansies, snapdragons, and Shasta daisy.

**Bulbs:** Amaryllis is a popular plant for the holiday season. They can be forced to bloom now or planted outdoors for spring blooms.

**Herbs:** Try parsley, thyme, sage, dill, fennel, garlic, comfrey, and coriander.

**Vegetables:** Reliable cool season vegetables to plant this month include English peas, radish, cabbage, beets and broccoli.

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

**December Bird Count**

The 111th Christmas Bird Count: Tuesday, December 14, 2010 to Wednesday, January 5, 2011

From December 14th through January 5th tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas take part in an adventure that has become a family tradition among generations. Families and students, birders and scientists, armed with binoculars, bird guides and checklists go out on an annual mission - often before dawn. Each of the citizen scientists who annually braves snow, wind, or rain, to take part in the Christmas Bird Count makes an enormous contribution to conservation. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this longest-running (over 100 years) wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations - and to help guide conservation action. This year's count will help scientists understand the impact of the Gulf oil spill on vulnerable species. From feeder-watchers and field observers to count compilers and regional editors, everyone who takes part in the Christmas Bird Count does it for love of birds and the excitement of friendly competition -- and with the knowledge that their efforts are making a difference for science and bird conservation.

For more information go to: [http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count](http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count)

December In the Garden: What to Do

**Poinsettias:** One of the most popular indoor holiday plants is poinsettia. With proper care, this colorful plant will give weeks of color.

**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.

**Houseplants:** Winter shifts the focus from outdoors to indoor plants. Temperature, light, and humidity are key to insuring that indoor plants thrive.

**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.

**Compost:** Composting is environmentally friendly and produces a beneficial soil amendment or mulch. Fallen leaves provide the carbon ingredient needed for successful composting.

**Pests:** While cooler weather generally means fewer pests, some populations actually increase at this time of year. Continue monitoring and treat as needed.

Source: [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/)
For this edition, I will discuss a beneficial insect you may find in your garden: the wheel bug. The wheel bug is relatively common in Florida and is a type of assassin bug that feeds on insects that are typically considered to be pests. Due to its predatory nature and stout “beak”, the wheel bug can deliver a nasty bite to people, so care should be taken to avoid handling these bugs when they are encountered.

The adult wheel bug is easy to identify due to the cogwheel-like “crest” present on its back. Wheel bugs are typically brown to gray in coloration and have long legs and antennae, along with a robust “beak”. The juveniles (i.e., nymphs) of the wheel bug often lack the crest found in adults, but they will still possess the thick “beak” and long legs and antennae. The eggs of this species are brown and white and are laid in groups, attached to objects such as tree trunks or shrubs.

Wheel bugs feed upon many different insects including caterpillars, beetles, stink bugs, and aphids. Although some of these organisms may be beneficial to gardeners, many of these prey items are typically considered to be pests. The wheel bug is able to paralyze its prey with a toxin in its saliva and can give a person a painful bite as well.

Overall, the wheel bug is an interesting-looking true bug that is more helpful than harmful to the gardener in controlling garden pests. So next time you see a wheel bug in your garden, look but don’t touch!

Sources:
It’s not always necessary to fertilize your plants or lawn, but if you choose to fertilize, it’s important that you do so properly. All plants need nutrients for growth and must obtain these nutrients from the soil or other medium in which they’re growing and all plants have varying nutrient needs, depending on the species, the age and the location of the plant. Too much fertilizer can weaken a plant, promote disease, invite pests, and harm the environment. It also means more pruning and mowing. So consider your plants’ needs before fertilizing, and always follow label directions. Here are some things to consider BEFORE you fertilize:

ARE FERTILIZERS NEEDED? Before you use fertilizer, you should always determine if it’s really needed. Keep in mind that certain plants are more prone to specific kinds of nutrient deficiencies (for example, ixora and palms tend to run low on manganese; see picture at right). VISUAL SIGNS: Your plants will indicate when they lack certain nutrients—you just have to know what to look for. Plant nutrient deficiency symptoms are often symmetrical (for example, yellowing areas that appear to be mirror images on a plant leaf), whereas fungal or bacterial problems tend to appear more randomly on the plant. Any time you’re not certain of what ails a plant, take a sample into your county Extension office for help. SOIL TESTING: A soil test can help you understand what nutrients are present in your soil. This is important for deciding what nutrients, if any, you should add. Your county Extension office can help you with this.

SELECTING A FERTILIZER: The key to selecting a fertilizer is understanding what nutrients your plants need. INORGANIC FERTILIZER: Inorganic fertilizers are materials that are mined or synthesized from non-living materials. If you use an inorganic fertilizer in your landscape, choose one with some or all of the nutrients in slow or controlled-release form, so that the plant will be able to take up the fertilizer as it is gradually released. ORGANIC FERTILIZER: Organic fertilizers are materials that are derived from plants and animals. Animal manure can come from chickens, cows, pigs, sheep, horses, or rabbits and should always be composted before use in vegetable gardens to reduce risk to food safety. Never use cat or dog manure or human waste—there is a greater risk of these sources transmitting disease. Homemade compost is another excellent source of organic matter. It usually contains small amounts of nitrogen and potassium, but very little phosphorus. Both composted manure and compost also contain micronutrients. The quick availability of nutrients, especially nitrogen, in inorganic fertilizers is very important in vegetable growing. If you’re growing vegetables, you may want to supplement any organic fertilizer you apply with some inorganic fertilizer for quick feeding.

READING THE LABEL: When selecting a fertilizer, look at the three numbers on the bag. They will read something like 15-0-15 or 16-2-8. The first number represents the percentage of nitrogen (N) in the bag, the second refers to phosphorus (P), and the third number is the amount of potassium (K).
For example, a 50-pound bag of 16-2-8 is 16 percent nitrogen (8 pounds total); 2 percent phosphorus (1 pound total); and 8 percent potassium (4 pounds total). The remaining weight is usually comprised of inert ingredients. Nitrogen and phosphorus cause the most problems with regard to water pollution.

**Fertilizing Landscape Plants:** If you’re happy with the color and appearance of your landscape plants (shrubs, flowers, trees, etc.), you don’t need to fertilize them. Remember that fertilizer applied to turf will reach the roots of plants nearby, so if you fertilize your lawn, your plants may already be getting all the nutrients they need. Even when plants show signs of nutrient deficiencies, keep in mind that fertilizer might not help—these plants may not be suited for their location or their roots may be damaged in some way. Consider removing high-maintenance plants from your landscape and substituting lower maintenance choices.

**Palms & Cycads:** The ideal fertilizer for palms and cycads has an analysis of 8-2-12-4 Mg (magnesium) all of its N, K, and Mg should be in slow- or controlled-release form. Since palms are prone to several potentially fatal micronutrient deficiencies, this fertilizer should also contain 1–2 percent iron (Fe) and manganese (Mn), plus trace amounts of zinc (Zn), copper (Cu), and boron (B). Using fertilizers with ratios other than the one given may cause or intensify nutrient deficiencies.

**Fertilizing the Lawn:** Grass that receives appropriate levels of fertilizer—not too little and not too much—might also require fewer cultural or chemical controls for weeds, insects, and diseases, since it grows more vigorously and is strong and healthy. On the other hand, fertilizing incorrectly can aggravate pest problems, stimulate excessive growth, and require frequent watering. In addition, when too much nitrogen fertilizer is used on lawns, it can leach through the ground, past the root zones of grass, plants, and trees, and into the aquifer, where almost all of the freshwater used in Florida comes from. It can also be washed off by rainfall directly into surface water or storm water systems. If using a quick release product, apply only up to 0.5 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. How much fertilizer that translates to depends on the percentage of nitrogen in your fertilizer and the size of your landscape your lawn, use the following table. If you spill fertilizer on the lawn, collect whatever you can. It might be tempting to just water extra fertilizer into the lawn, but the excess nutrients will leach (seep downwards) through the soil and into the groundwater. Never fertilize within 10 feet of any water body. Designate a 10-foot maintenance-free zone between your landscape and the riparian zone.

Source: http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/
Using raised beds allows the gardening enthusiast to grow vegetables and flowers in soil that has good aeration and is free of nematodes, plant diseases and weeds. There are up-front costs of framing materials and soil media but the advantages gained by growing in pest free fertile soil make it worth the effort. Raised beds are often designed to be semi-permanent, attractive structure that only need to soil changed out every few years.

Raised beds can be designed to enhance any setting or fit any space. Plants can be grown in old shoes, custom made planter boxes or just about anything that holds soil that drains excess water out of the bottom to keep plants from drowning! Perhaps you remember when using inverted tires was popular. Plans for Master Gardener Bill Schirrmacher’s raised bed system using pressure treated 4 x 4’s anchored with 1/2 inch rebar are listed below. Information on soil mixes can be found at in a UF publication by Jim Stephens entitled Minigardening (Growing Vegetables in Containers): http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh032

Materials
- 9 pressure treated 4’x 4’x 10’
- 8 pieces of 18‖ long ½‖ rebar
- 44 cubic feet of soil mix
- 200 square feet of cardboard

Methods
- Cut three 4x4’s in half
- Notch each 4x4 end 3 ½“ x 1 ¾” deep
- Drill and anchor frame with rebar. (Start with opposite corners, square and set the rest)
- Kill the weeds in the frame and line the bottom with 4 layers of cardboard
- Thoroughly mix soil components in each plant box and fill the box.