

Master Gardener Mission: *“to be the most trusted resource for horticultural education in Florida”*

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Happy New Year!

We welcome aboard our two newest Master Gardener graduates: Richard Solze and Tom Sutton. They successfully completed the 10 week course and have already started volunteering in the community. We recently had their graduation ceremony on the University of Florida campus, and Jim has written an excellent article on our **Two New Graduates** on **Page 8**. If you are looking for a fruit tree for your yard, read the article on **Apples** below. It will give you some information, including what cultivars of apples do well here in North Florida. The **Planting Calendars** on **Pages 2, 3 and 4** can help you decide what to plant in the coming months, and what to look for in the woods. In **What's Buggin You** on **Page 5**, Wendy has written a great article on a bug you might possibly find in your garden. Take the time to read **Florida's Most Unwanted** on **Pages 6 and 7**. According to one UF/IFAS publication, about one in seven of the 50,000 introduced plants and animals in the US become invasive, with damage and control costs estimated at more than \$138 billion each year (USDA/APHIS, 2001). Florida's hospitable climate, serving as point of entry for almost 3/4 of the plants and most of the reptiles imported into the U.S. make Florida a sweet home for invasive pests. All of Florida's native habitats (marine, freshwater and terrestrial) are threatened by invasive species. Please rid your yards and gardens of exotic, invasive species. If we can slow the spread of invasive species in Florida, it will truly be a **Happy New Year!**

By Laurie Compton

Apples

Apples were once only grown in the northern regions of the U.S., but with varieties like 'Anna,' 'Dorsett Golden,' and 'TropicSweet,' Florida gardeners can now successfully grow apples as well. To produce fruit, these varieties need about 300 to 400 hours below 45 degrees during the winter, so they'll do well in central or north Florida. Apple trees do best when planted in fertile, well-drained soil, between late December and February. Water and fertilize your trees on a regular basis, and they should bear fruit within a few years of establishment. Your apples will require cross-pollination to set fruit properly. The varieties 'TropicSweet', 'Anna', and 'Dorsett Golden' bloom at about the same time and can be planted together for cross-pollination. The fruit on these varieties tends to ripen in June or July.

Source: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LyraEDISServlet?command=getImageDetail&image_soid=FIGURE



“Dorsett Golden”

What to Plant in January

There are some **Bedding Plants** that can be added to the garden even during the coolest months. These include pansy, viola, petunia, and snapdragon. Now is a good time to plant Crinum, agapanthus, and gloriosa lily **Bulbs**. Provide a layer of mulch for protection from cold temperatures. January is the time to select and plant **Camellias**. Local nurseries should have the best selection of colors and forms in January. Beets, cabbage, turnips, lettuce, and broccoli are **Vegetables** that can be planted this month. Try sugar snap peas as well.



Sugar snap peas

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

In the Garden: What to Do in January

Planting **Deciduous Fruit** trees now gives their roots time to develop before the warm, dry spring months. This is also a good time to prune and fertilize existing trees. Frost or freezes are likely this month and next. Be ready to **Cold Protect** 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** on the third Friday of January. To celebrate, plant a tree in your yard or community. Consider a hurricane resistant tree such as live oak, bald cypress, cabbage palm, or crapemyrtle. While **Crapemyrtles** do not require pruning, removing seed pods, crossing branches and small twiggy growth improves the appearance and form of the plant. To control scale **Pests** on citrus, shrubs, camellias, and deciduous fruit trees, apply horticultural oil while plants are dormant.



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

Wildlife Calendar January

- Male cardinals begin territorial singing later in the month.
- 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.



Source: http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife_info/happenings/

If you have a live Christmas tree, put it to good use: use it to start a brush pile near your bird feeder. Not only will it provide good year-round cover for birds, but it will also take up a lot less space in your county landfill.

What to Plant in February

Temperatures can drop to freezing this month, so new **Bedding Plant** additions to the garden must be able to withstand cold. Some plants that can take a chill: dianthus, pansy, viola, 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. Many **Trees and Shrubs** will be in bloom including red maple, spirea, and star magnolia. February is the time to plant **Potatoes**. Buy healthy seed pieces from a local nursery and plant 3” deep. Do not add lime to the potato planting bed.



Dianthus

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

What to Do in February

Cold damage to Palms: Cold weather can damage palms, but proper care may prevent loss of the palm and encourage recovery. **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. Be sure that you know the height and spread of any **Shrubs** you plan to install. Not all shrubs are suitable for planting next to homes or under windows. **Lawn Weeds:** After temps rise to 65°F for 4-5 days, apply a pre-emergent weed killer (NOT a weed & feed fertilizer) to lawns this month to prevent warm season weeds. Timing is important for good control. **Fertilize Citrus and other Fruit Trees:** If not done in January, fertilize now. Frequency and amount of fertilization depends on the age of the tree.



Rose Bush

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

Wildlife Calendar February

- Early purple martin scouts will start to appear in Florida this month.
- Ospreys will begin nesting in north Florida near the end of the month.
- Swallow-tailed kites begin returning to Florida from South America.
- Pocket Gophers begin their spring breeding season.

Source: http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife_info/happenings/



Pocket Gopher mounds

- **Did You Know?** Pocket gophers are known to excavate extensive tunnel systems (some greater than 500 ft. in length). Research suggests that gopher tunnels serve as an important shelter for a variety of animal species. Typical burrow inhabitants include many insects (some are exceptionally rare), salamanders, frogs, lizards, snakes, and small mammals.

Source: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw285>

What to Plant in March

Although dianthus and other cool-season **Annuals** will continue to flourish, start planting warm season annuals such as angelonia, wax begonia and zinnia at the end of the month. Plant dahlia, canna, and gloriosa **Bulbs** in beds that have been amended with organic matter. Provide stakes as needed to support growth. **Herbs:** When temperatures warm, consider growing edible ginger. Plant a rhizome in well drained soil in full to part sun. Plant warm season **Vegetables**, such as bean, tomato, squash, and corn early in the month for late spring harvest. Protect from frost.



Ginger root

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 protect next season's blooms, begin pruning after the last flowers fade but before new buds set. **Prune shrubs and trees when new growth begins.** The end of the dormant season is a good time to prune many trees and shrubs. **Identify and conserve beneficial insects:** Some insects should be encouraged in your yard! **Fertilize palms, azaleas, camellias**, and other ornamental shrubs if needed. Choose a fertilizer that has at least 30% of its nitrogen as slow release. **Irrigation:** Now is the time to check sprinkler systems for issues such as broken heads or inefficient spray patterns.



Beneficial insect:
Lady Beetle larvae

Wildlife Calendar March

- 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.
- Snakes become active and move to favorite feeding areas.
- Largemouth bass spawning throughout central and north Florida.
- Spring turkey hunters take to the field.
- Chickasaw plum and crabapples bloom in north Florida.



Coral bean

Did You Know? Coral bean is a native plant with red tubular flowers that grow on tall stalks in the spring, drawing hummingbirds and butterflies. In the fall, as the rest of the summer garden fades, coral bean's seed pods begin to mature and the show begins. What once looked a bit like English pea pods turn dark, almost black, and split open to reveal shiny, scarlet red seeds inside. They're very pretty—and very poisonous, so be sure to keep them away from kids and pets. *Source:* <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/coral-bean.html>

What's Buggin' You

By: Wendy Helmey-Hartman

The brown stink bug is a common resident of Florida and can be found in gardens year-round during years with mild weather patterns. During cold winters, these bugs will become dormant and emerge again when the weather warms. Brown stink bugs feed on a variety of plants including shrubs, vines, legumes, corn, beans, peas, and cotton. They feed on the flowers, stems, leaves, seeds, nuts, and fruits of their host plants, therefore, they are important pests of many crop species.

Like all members of the true bug family, brown stink bugs feed by stabbing their mouthparts into their host plants. When they feed, they cause both mechanical damage with the piercing by their mouthparts and subsequent feeding and also chemical damage through their injection of toxic substances into plants. The amount of damage caused by the feeding of brown stink bugs varies depending upon the developmental stage of the plant.

Brown stink bugs have four to five generations per year in Florida. The adults are grayish-yellow and shaped like a shield. When the adult female lays her eggs, they are translucent yellow and laid in groups of around 60 eggs. After a few days, the eggs develop a slight pinkish color. After hatching, the nymphs molt through five stages taking approximately one month to develop into adults. The nymphs are greener than the adults and are also more round in body shape. Although adult brown stink bugs are strong fliers, the nymphs do not possess fully-developed wings and therefore do not fly.

Natural enemies of brown stink bugs include predators, parasites, and pathogens. Although insecticides can be used as a control method, brown stink bugs are often relatively resistant to many insecticides. Brown stink bugs can also be removed manually from plants when found in relatively small numbers. Alternatively, a trap crop such as sunflower can be grown on the borders of gardens and may result in fewer bugs feeding on the other plants in a garden.



Adult brown stink bug, *Euschistus servus* (Say).



Five-day-old egg mass of the brown-stink bug

Sources: EDIS Publication #EENY-433, brown stink bug, *Euschistus servus* (Say) (Insecta: Hemiptera: Pentatomidae) by Celina Gomez and Russell F. Mizell III. Retrieved from http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/veg/bean/brown_stink_bug.htm.



Florida is a wonderful place to live and attracts visitors from all over the world. However, we need to hide the welcome mat when some scary visitors come to call. Invasive, non-native species can act like criminals among Florida's native habitat. *Source: <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/florida/interactive-media-floridas-10-most-unwanted.xml>*

Hydrilla

Hydrilla is considered the states most problematic aquatic weed. Almost 80 percent of hydrilla's biomass is in the upper 2 feet of the water column, producing a dense canopy near the water surface. This exotic pest plant shades out native submersed plant species, reduces oxygen levels and degrades water quality. Hydrilla was introduced into Florida in the early 1950's as an ornamental plant. By the early 1990s, it occupied more than 140,000 acres of public lakes and rivers. Intensive interagency management has reduced the above ground portions of hydrilla to under 50,000 acres Originally from Asia, its thick mats can seriously curtail boating activity— a crime, indeed, in Florida.



Feral Hogs



Feral Hogs (*Sus scrofa*) whose population in Florida is second only to that of Texas, root like rototillers and steal over 800 million dollars a year from the agriculture industry in crop damage and livestock diseases. Feral hogs damage sensitive habitats, threatening the survival of many native plants and animals. With hard mast, including acorns, as their preferred food, hogs directly compete with many popular game animals, including deer, turkeys, and squirrels

Chinese Tallow



Not only has Chinese tallow become naturalized in the southern coastal plain from South Carolina south to Texas, it has become naturalized in over half of the counties in Florida. Displacement of native species through vigorous growth and spread are characteristics that helped place Chinese tallow on FLEPPC's List of Invasive species and the State of Florida Noxious Weed List. Natural areas including Paynes Prairie State Preserve south and east of Gainesville, and state protected lands throughout Florida are being inundated with Chinese tallow. Chinese tallow can be seen in landscapes around the state and until very recently, could be purchased in garden centers or nurseries, aiding its spread throughout Florida.



Japanese Climbing Fern

Japanese climbing fern can grow in sun or shade, damp, disturbed or undisturbed areas. It can grow so dense that it forms a living 'wall', leading to the elimination of seedlings and other native vegetation. It is also a major problem in pine plantations, causing contamination and harvesting problems for the pine straw industry.

Red Lion Fish

Red Lion fish (*Pterois volitans*), are native to the South Pacific and Indian Oceans. They are now attacking native fish along the coast of Florida after escaping an aquarium. Lion fish are seen as far north as Rhode Island and are all over the Caribbean. Vicious predators of juvenile reef fish, their spines are toxic to humans.



Burmese Pythons

Burmese pythons (*Python molurus*), at up to 20 feet, are one of the worlds largest snakes. Released by accident or by careless owners, they are now well established in the Everglades and breeding prolifically. The python eats endangered native wading birds and even mammals, such as deer.

Muscovy Ducks

Muscovies are often found in large numbers, particularly in Florida, and produce a large quantity of droppings, which can seriously degrade water quality. In addition, domestic ducks are often responsible for the spread of several serious diseases to native ducks, and may also interbreed with native ducks, "muddying" the gene pools of those species and potentially decreasing their capacity to adapt, resist disease, and persist. These large ducks are often aggressive, especially when accustomed to being fed, and may chase or attempt to bite children.



Congrats to 2013 Master Gardener Graduates

The Bradford County Extension Office welcomes two new Master Gardeners, Richard Solze and Tom Sutton. Tom and Richard completed the annual county based Master Gardener course that ended with their graduation ceremony on December 6th.

The event was attended by several family members and other Master Gardeners. The graduation ceremony was hosted by the University of Florida State Master Gardener Coordinator Tom Wichman and also included tours of the University poinsettia and coleus plant breeding facilities, the UF/IFAS Bookstore and the Florida Museum of Natural History Butterfly Rainforest Exhibit.

Typical of the University experience, the day was filled with learning by seeing cutting edge science in action. The learning started right after Tom Wichman's friendly welcome when he plunged in with facts documenting the terrific contributions Master Gardeners have made to the citizens of Florida.

In Bradford County alone, Master Gardeners donated 914 hours valued at over \$17,000 in 2013.

Not resting on his laurels, Tom shared the focused vision that has been crafted for the Master Gardener Program: *to be the most trusted resource for horticultural education in Florida*. After the program update Richard and Tom were awarded certificates and then the ceremony moved to the plant science greenhouse complex.

Did you know the nation's largest poinsettia breeding project resides in Gainesville at UF's Horticultural Science Department? The poinsettias that are bought and sold all over the United States were likely developed in breeding programs at the University of Florida. When varieties are developed by plant breeders across the nation they are eventually screened for attributes like how long they will live in a truck during transport or in a home after it is sold. These traits, in addition to color and flowering characteristics are important to marketers and consumers alike.

I am sure some readers are thinking, "I want to be a Master Gardener"! Our next class will start next August. Sign up today. If you are curious you are welcome to attend one of our monthly lunch meetings as a guest to see what this volunteer group is all about. Call the Bradford County Extension Office for more information.

By: Jim DeValerio



Back row, from left: Richard Solze, Tom Wichman, Tom Sutton, Jim DeValerio, Laurie Compton & John Pate. Front row: Donna Solze, Marge and Margie Sutton, Missy Burton, Eoline Underhill, Margie Stone, Cindy Picklesimer, Jenny Lane and Janet Pate.