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# The Cutting Edge

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Bradford County Extension Service Master Gardener Newsletter



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## Waiting for Fall

I have been waiting for fall to get here so I can get some work done in the yard, and to get my vegetable garden going again and I believe it is finally on the way! I am going to be adding some more native plants to my landscape this year and if you have thought of doing that too, consider planting firebush (see article below). Although it freezes back in the winter, it faithfully returns in the spring and is a good butterfly and hummingbird plant. For other ideas on what to grow this fall, check out the planting calendars on pages 2, 3 and 4. Read Wendy’s article on page 5 about Citrus mealybugs and then go and check your plants to make sure you don’t have them! In the past month or so, I’ve had many inquiries about growing fruit trees in the home landscape. Some grew fruit trees from seed and were wondering when they would bear fruit, others had citrus die back in the cold weather and they wondered if their trees will be ok. Read ‘Fruit Trees in the Landscape’ on pages 6 and 8 for some answers. We also have an article on page 7 about love bugs by Master Gardener Mary Bridgman. Mary writes a weekly column for the Bradford County Telegraph called ‘Across the Garden Fence’. If you aren’t already, be sure to read her column every week. Enjoy!

Laurie

## FireBush

This native plant blooms for months, attracting both birds and butterflies, and is practically bullet-proof once established. Firebush is a perennial or semi-woody shrub that is known scientifically as *Hamelia patens*. Gardeners love firebush because it produces flowers from late spring until the first frost, and the bright red flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies, including the zebra longwing (pictured) and gulf fritillary butterflies. Song birds also like to feed on the berries. In North Florida, it will die back after the first freeze but will re-grow in the spring, making it what some people call a "root-hardy perennial." It is also a great plant because it is heat and drought tolerant once established, can grow in a range of soils, and has no serious insect or disease problems. Firebush can be planted in late spring or summer in USDA Zones 8-11. It will grow and flower best if planted in full sun, but it can also be planted in partial shade.



Source: [http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/giam/plants\\_and\\_grasses/native\\_plants/firebush.html](http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/giam/plants_and_grasses/native_plants/firebush.html)

## In the Garden: What to Plant in October

**Bedding Plants:** Even though temperatures are still warm, begin planting for the cooler months ahead. Digitalis (foxglove), petunia, and shasta daisy are good plants for the fall garden. **Bulbs:** There are many daffodils that are suitable for Florida. Fragrant varieties include ‘Carlton’, ‘Fortune’, ‘Silver Chimes’, ‘Thallia’, and ‘Sweetness’. **Herbs:** A wide range of herbs can be planted from seeds or plants this month. Some to try are dill, fennel, oregano, and sage. **Vegetables:** Plant crops now that will grow and produce through the winter months. This includes beet, Brussels sprout, carrot, and onion.



Carlton daffodils

Source: [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn\\_and\\_garden/calendar/](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/)

## In the Garden: What to Do in October

**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. Apply when nighttime temps are 55-60°F for 4-5 days. Avoid weed and feed products. **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.

**Pine needles:** Gather pine needles that are dropping and use them for a natural mulch. **Strawberries:** Prepare beds and set strawberry plants this month. If there isn't room for a bed, try planting them in large containers.

Either way provide daily watering until plants are established. **Lawn disease:** Until May, watch for brown patch and large patch, fungal diseases that cause areas of grass to turn brown. Since treatment is difficult, prevention with proper cultural practices is key. The disease becomes active when the soil temp, measured 2-4" deep, is between 65-75°F.

Source: [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn\\_and\\_garden/calendar/](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/)



Holly berries

## Wildlife Calendar October

- Look for migrating Peregrine falcons in natural areas, especially along the coast as they follow shorebird prey.
- Sandhill cranes that nested in more northern latitudes begin to move down to join our resident birds.
- Blazing star, summer farewell and other wildflowers bloom in pine uplands

**Did You Know?** One of the reasons liatris are such popular cut flowers is their unusual mode of blooming. Unlike most plants they bloom from the top of their flower spikes down to the bottom. You can actually cut a portion off the top of the spike to



Blazing Star liatris

## In the Garden: What to Plant in November

**Bedding Plants:** Create a display of fall colors with cool season plants.

Some to try are pansy, viola, and chrysanthemum. **Bulbs** to plant this month include amaryllis, crinum, and daylily. Plant Lycoris (spider lily) in partial shade. Plants will produce foliage in winter and beautiful red flowers emerge in late summer. **Herbs:** Continue planting herbs from seeds or plants. A wide variety of herbs like cooler, dryer weather, including cilantro, dill, fennel, parsley, sage, and thyme. **Vegetables:** Continue planting cool season crops such as beet, broccoli, cabbage, carrot, kale, and lettuce.



Chinese cabbage

Source: [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn\\_and\\_garden/calendar/](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/)

## In the Garden: What to Do in November

**Citrus:** If freezing temperatures are predicted, protect small citrus trees by watering well at least a day before the freeze. You may also use covers that extend to the ground for protection. **Scale on ornamental plants:** Now that temperatures are lower, use dormant oil sprays to control scale insects on trees and shrubs. **Irrigation:** Plants need less supplemental watering in cooler weather. Turn off systems and water only if needed. **Flowering Trees:** Taiwan cherry is an ornamental cherry suitable for north Florida. Late winter will bring pink buds so consider planting one now. **Birds:** As you prune your plants during the cooler months, make a small brush pile in the back of the yard for birds. **Camellias:** Add some of the new cultivars for bright spots of color in winter. Disbudding, or removing some buds now, will insure larger blooms later.



Satsuma citrus

Source: [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn\\_and\\_garden/calendar/](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/)

## Wildlife Calendar November

- Set up winter seed and suet feeders
- Cedar waxwings can be seen on cedars, hollies, cherry laurels, privet, and other fruit plants.
- Sandhill cranes return in full force from their breeding grounds up north.
- Peak of deer rutting in central and north Florida.
- Cypress begin turning a rust color



Cedar waxwing

**Did You Know?** Cedar Waxwings are social birds that you're likely to see in flocks year-round. They sit in fruiting trees swallowing berries whole, or pluck them in mid-air with a brief fluttering hover and course over water for insects, flying like tubby, slightly clumsy swallows

Source: [http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/cedar\\_waxwing/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/cedar_waxwing/id)

## In the Garden: What to Plant in December

**Bedding Plants:** To add color to the winter garden, plant masses of petunia, pansy, snapdragon, lobelia, alyssum, and viola. **Bulbs:** Amaryllis is a popular plant for the holiday season. They can be forced to bloom now or planted outdoors for spring blooms. **Herbs:** Plant herbs that thrive in cool weather. Some to try are parsley, thyme, sage, dill, fennel, garlic, comfrey, and cilantro. **Vegetables:** Reliable cool season vegetables to plant this month include English pea, radish, cabbage, beet, and broccoli. *Source: [http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn\\_and\\_garden/calendar/](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/)*



Beets

## In the Garden: What to Do in December

**Cold protection:** Don't prune cold-damaged plants yet. Wait until warm weather returns to cut back plants. **Vegetable Garden:** Make sure that seeds and transplants are properly spaced to have good development of tubers and vegetables. **Houseplants:** Inspect regularly for pests on indoor plants. Keep in mind that plant specific temperature, light, and humidity are key to ensuring 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/Mulch:** Fallen leaves provide the carbon ingredient needed for successful composting and also make a good mulch.



Variety of houseplants

**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/>*

*[http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn\\_and\\_garden/calendar/](http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/calendar/)*

## Wildlife Calendar December

- Annual Christmas bird count begins mid-December.
- This is the best time for watching waterfowl on wetlands, lakes, and prairies.
- Great horned owls and barred owls courting.
- Look for Goldfinches at north Florida feeders.
- Yellow-rumped warblers will show-up at feeders if it is cold enough
- In north Florida, bald eagles start hatching about Christmas day.



American Goldfinch

•**Did You Know?** The American goldfinch's main natural habitats are weedy fields and floodplains, where plants such as thistles and asters are common. They're also found in cultivated areas, roadsides, orchards, and backyards. American Goldfinches can be found at feeders any time of year, but most abundantly during winter.

*Source: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw192>*

## What's Buggin' You

By Wendy Helmey-Hartman



Adult mealybug female. Photograph by [Lyle Buss](#), University of Florida.

Native to Asia, the citrus mealybug is an unwelcome pest in Florida. This bug is found most commonly on citrus plants in greenhouses, but it can also be found on at least 27 ornamental plant varieties. Citrus mealybugs can be found throughout the southeastern United States as well as other parts of the country.

Citrus mealybugs begin their lives within light yellow oval-shaped eggs that are deposited typically on the trunks and stems of citrus plants. A white, cotton-like mass is also found around the eggs, which are laid in clumps of five to twenty. Eggs require approximately one week to one

month to hatch. When the eggs hatch, the young nymphs emerge and are called “crawlers”. These juvenile mealybugs resemble their eggs as the juveniles are yellow and oval-shaped with red eyes. They are also covered with a white, waxy substance. These nymphs are most commonly found on the undersides of leaves, young twigs, and areas where leaves and/or fruits touch one another. Unusually, the juvenile males and females differ in their lifecycle: the females have four stages as nymphs while the males have three stages and then form a cocoon before becoming an adult.



Nymphs can also be found on fruit. Photograph by [Lyle Buss](#), University of Florida.

Adult citrus mealybugs are 3 to 4.5 mm in length. The adult females are covered in white wax and have a gray stripe. They are somewhat fuzzy in appearance. Adult males are not covered in white wax but they do have a pair of projecting wax threads projecting backwards from their bodies. Citrus mealybugs possess piercing mouthparts that they use to feed on plants. Their feeding causes wilting and distortion of leaves as well as leaf yellowing. They can also cause premature leaf drop and can contribute to the growth of sooty mold on plants as a result of the depositing of honeydew. Citrus mealybugs may be found throughout the year in Florida, but are most common in the

spring and summer. Parasitic fungi and predacious insects provide natural control for the citrus mealybug. Additionally, rain can cause mortality if the bugs are washed from the plants. If the mealybug population grows too large, then other measures may be taken to reduce its damage.

Sources:

EDIS Publication #EENY-537, Retrieved from [http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/CITRUS/Planococcus\\_citri.htm](http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/CITRUS/Planococcus_citri.htm).

## Fruit Trees in the Landscape

Fruit trees enhance the beauty and value of your landscape and provide healthy, fresh food to eat or share with friends, neighbors, and wildlife. They also provide shade and are aesthetically pleasing. But there are some questions you should ask yourself before planting fruit trees in the home landscape.

**Will it grow well where I live?** Certain types of fruit grow better in different areas of the state. There are some varieties of apples, figs, peaches, pears, persimmons, plums and citrus that have been bred to grow well in the mild winters of North Florida. The apples that come from more northern climates, such as Galas, and Red or Golden Delicious, will not do well in Florida, because they don't get enough chill hours.



Figs

**What are chill hours?** In order to bloom in spring, deciduous fruit trees like peaches, plums, and nectarines must go through the plant equivalent of a long winter's nap. They need a dormancy period with a certain number of hours when the temperature drops below 45 degrees Fahrenheit. Sparse foliage, few or no flowers and poor fruit production result from not enough chill hours. The exact number of chilling hours depends on the fruit tree variety, but here in Florida, gardeners should look for special "low chill" fruit tree varieties. Low-chill peaches, plums, and nectarines need just 100 to 525 chilling hours per year, making them better suited for our mild winters. Low-chill apples are also available,

though there are fewer varieties that work well in Florida. Here in Bradford County, we receive from 420 chill hours in the southern part of the county to 660 chill hours in the northern part of the county. So it's extremely important to know how many chill hours your fruit trees need in order to produce.

**Can I grow it from seed?** Many people mistakenly believe that if they plant seeds from a fruit tree, they will get a plant that is exactly the same as the one the seed came from. In reality, if you collect seed from a fruit grown on a plant these seeds will produce plants that will be a hybrid of two plants. The new plant will be the same kind of plant, but the leaves and the fruit may not look the same as the parent, and the fruit rarely tastes as good as the parent. Fruit trees should be vegetatively propagated by either grafting or budding methods. Citrus plants grown from seed will more than likely not look or taste like the parent, and will also take longer to begin producing fruit.

**What is a cultivar?** Cultivar is a term meaning **cultivated variety**. It is smart to do your homework and research which cultivars will do well in north Florida. Citrus, for example: Homeowners should consider

Continued on page 8



Mandarin citrus



'Gulferimson' peach—needs 400 chill hours

## Lovebugs

This article was taken from *Across the Garden Fence*, by Master Gardener Mary Bridgman, published weekly in the Bradford County Telegraph. *Across the Garden Fence* is sponsored by the Bradford County Extension Service. Readers who wish to pose gardening questions should forward them to Mary Bridgman at [jtd@ufl.edu](mailto:jtd@ufl.edu).

By the time this piece goes to press, we'll probably be rid of the biannual horde of lovebugs that invades Bradford County. I've swept up piles of the pesky insects, which managed to infiltrate my home on Hampton Lake. Our vehicles are plastered with them too. It made me wonder if there was anything we could do to stem the tide of the swarms we contend with year after year.

One thing I figured out on my own was that window screens help keep the critters out. We removed the screens from the lakeside windows on our home so that we could better enjoy the view, thinking it wouldn't be a problem since we never open them. It isn't, except during lovebug season. Because lovebug pairs fly across the wind and are blown against obstacles, the prevailing windward side of a building—like the lake-side of my home—is particularly vulnerable.

Lovebugs are swarms of little black flies with red thoraxes that fly as pairs of males and females in tandem. Although lovebugs have two distinct generations per year in Florida (spring into summer and summer into fall), adults can be found during most months. An adult female deposits an average of 350 eggs under decaying vegetation in a grassy or weedy area with adequate moisture. Eggs hatch within two to four days, producing larvae that live 120 days in the summer, or 240 days in the winter. The larvae feed on decomposing leaves and grass until they pupate. The pupal stage lasts only seven to nine days. The adults live just long enough to mate, feed, disperse and deposit a batch of eggs, about three to four days.

Due to their abundance and mobility, lovebugs cannot be controlled effectively with poisons or repellents. The flies do serve a beneficial purpose, helping to decompose dead plant material. And, we are lucky that they don't bite and don't carry any infectious diseases harmful to humans or livestock.

Lovebugs are poor fliers that can be kept out of a building by creating positive pressure with an air-conditioning fan. A fan can be used outside near work or recreational areas to keep lovebugs away.

More information about lovebugs is available at [edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in694](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in694). This publication debunks many myths about lovebugs that I've heard all my life, including the tale that they were introduced to Florida by University researchers. The truth is that this insect extended its range from Louisiana and Mississippi after 1940, reaching Florida in 1949. It became firmly established in North Florida in the late 1960s, and moved southward nearly to the end of peninsular Florida and northward to South Carolina in the 1970s. Its movement may have been accelerated by prevailing winds, vehicle traffic, sod transport, increased habitat along highways, and expansion of pastures.



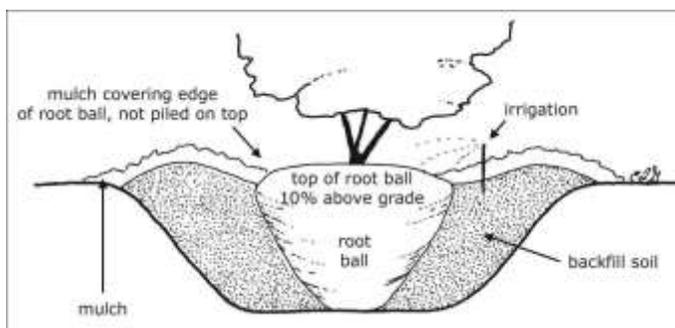
By Mary Bridgman

growing only a few of the many available citrus types. Of the three types of sweet citrus (mandarins, oranges and grapefruits) only mandarins have sufficient cold hardiness. Satsuma (*Citrus reticulata*) is the most popular mandarin in north Florida with cold-hardiness down to about 20F, although fruit damage can occur at 25F. Some cultivars of Satsuma to consider: 'Owari', 'Brown Select', 'Early St. Ann', 'Silverhill', and 'Kimbrough'. If you plant a cultivar that is not suited to north Florida temperatures, it most likely will not do well.

**My citrus died back last winter. Will it come back?** Citrus trees are grafted, meaning they are composed of two parts. A variety, called the scion, which produces the tasty fruit is grafted on top of a rootstock. Rootstock is selected for, among other things, hardiness, but fruit from rootstock normally is sour tasting. Often citrus trees will come back after a freeze. However, if the growth is coming from the rootstock, and not from above the graft, the chances are you will get growth only from the rootstock, and most rootstock fruit do not taste good.

**How do I plant it and care for my new tree?** Most fruit trees, and especially citrus, do not like standing in water, so be sure your site has well drained soil. The root ball should be positioned in the hole so the finished grade of the landscape soil is even with or slightly lower than the point where the topmost root emerges from the trunk (See drawing). Then apply soil or mulch so it covers the sides of the root ball.

**Never place any soil over the root ball.** Once the tree is planted, water it in **very well**. You will need to water every day that it doesn't rain, for at least one to two weeks. And then at least twice a week for the next month or two. Once you see some growth starting on the tree, you can fertilize the tree lightly. Be sure to apply a 3 inch layer of mulch around the tree to discourage weed growth and help hold in moisture.



If you wish to place mulch over the root ball, apply only a thin layer over the outer half of the root ball. This will keep the trunk dry and allow rainwater, irrigation, and air to easily enter the root ball. If you pile the mulch against the trunk or layer it too thickly, it can kill the plant by starving it of oxygen, killing the bark, causing stem and root decay, preventing hardening off, encouraging rodent damage to the trunk, keeping soil too wet, and repelling water.

Now, having said all this, let me say that you will always be able to find people who tell you that they grew fabulous fruit trees from seed, that they never watered or fertilized, that the apple tree they brought from New York is doing just fine, etc., and that's great. But they are the exception to the rule. Considering the time, money and labor involved in any kind of gardening, it is much better to do your homework before you plant and then you will be able to sit back and enjoy the 'fruits' of your labor!

By: Laurie Compton

Source: [http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/giam/plants\\_and\\_grasses/fruits\\_vegetables/fruit\\_trees\\_nfl.html](http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/giam/plants_and_grasses/fruits_vegetables/fruit_trees_nfl.html)

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