



More than Gardening

Newsletter of the Indian River Master Gardeners

August, 2007 Issue 2



In this issue:
Message from IRC Extension director

President's message

Welcome new horticulture agent

Activities

An MG Star

FYIs

Coming events

Recipe of the month

Officers:

Tanya Goldsmith, President

Kathy Wegel, V. President

Margie Davis, Sec.



Gifford Youth Activities Center Garden created by Carolyn Norton and John Beukers with the help of Master Gardener volunteers in association with Gifford students.

Congratulations to John Beukers for being selected "Volunteer of the Year" for the Gifford Youth Activities Center.

From the director: IRC Extension: Christine Kelly-Begazo

Summer is here. Our weekend lawn warriors will be out in full force now and there are a few things that you should remember when giving information out to our clients with regard to lawn care:

Never cut more than 1/3 of the grass blade at any one mowing. More than that will stress the plant out and reduce its ability to recover appropriately.

Do not mow St. Augustine grass to a height lower than 4-3.5". Mowing lower reduces drought tolerance and increases susceptibility to pests and diseases.

Before fertilizing, have a soil test done so that proper fertilizer recommendations can be made.

Irrigate according to WMD restrictions and only water before 10:00 am or after 4:00 pm.

I hope these few hints will help us give the most appropriate information available for our clients. For more hints and information, you might want to review certain chapters of "The Florida Lawn Handbook" by Laurie Trenholm and Bryan Unruh.

Christine



Violet Krochmalny and Tanya Goldsmith
STAFFING THE BOOTH

From the 2007 Master Gardener president:

Summer is here!!

Most of us know to halt our planting, as the scorching sun with its Hellish heat will soon be looking down upon our precious new plantings with evil eyes! Will it be another drought? Will monsoons flood our newly added soil amendments washing away our years of well rotted compost in one gushing summer afternoon? As we tend our beloved trees do we know if they

will withstand the hurricane season? Many gardeners have accepted all these possibilities in stride and yet somehow, shovel in hand, they continue on.

With Global Climate change threatening we cannot help but wonder how it will affect our gardens and lifestyle. Perhaps it will make it more tropical but then maybe the winter's chill will drop low enough to add some northern plants we had long ago given up on.

The summer with its crazy weather patterns should not be a time to give up a pastime we relish. It should be a continuation of learning, reevaluation and as always maintenance.

Our Master Gardening Program, too, is at its peak of a busy volunteer season. Festivals abound. We yearn for that slower pace of life just as the old farmers to the north of us yearn to sit back and enjoy their life after the harvest. But reality is that the farmer's time is spent planning for next season. Planning on what he will do differently.

As we enjoy the summer heat try to contemplate the accomplishments of the Master Gardener Program. Let us ponder the ones yet to come. Think of the people who have come to you for guidance and what might the outcome have been if not for you and the program. We need to think of the things we DO have and not the things we do NOT. To continue as a group or team we need to be concerned about one another, learn from each other and most importantly edify one another.

Tanya Goldsmith

2007 Master Gardener President



Events and Impressions: A woman came into the Sebastian Clinic expounding on how helpful the “**EEK! Ugh! I See a Bug!**” presentation was. She was so surprised when an MG followed up and helped her solve some of her bug problems. Thank you, **Pat Beckwith, Lois Schwartz and Martha Willoughby.**

A boy and his butterfly.

Welcome to our new Environmental Horticulture Agent, Holly Mixon

As a recent transplant from Tennessee, I have found Florida, and specifically Vero Beach, to be a beautiful and unique environment. I have also found that I have much to learn about my new home. There are more differences than I could have ever imagined, including the climate, the weather, the wildlife, and the plant life. As Indian River County Extension's new Environmental Horticulture agent and the new Master Gardener coordinator, I am so excited to begin serving our county. This career has offered me the opportunity to combine two of my passions: plants and helping others.

I first became interested in horticulture as a young child. My family had a vegetable garden every year, and I was forced to help plant, weed, and pick. Although I was not overly fond of the work, I loved the reward of a bright red, juicy tomato or a sweet cantaloupe. Over the years, I began to enjoy the work more and viewed it as part of the reward. Throughout high school I became very active in the school greenhouse and pursued floriculture judging through the Future Farmers of America program. Even though I loved plants and gardening, I never considered it as a career path when I started college.

Like most college students, when I entered the University of Tennessee in 2003, I had no idea what I wanted to do. Luckily, I had decided to take a botany class to fill a science requirement. After my second semester of college, I knew that I wanted to study Plant Science. While I was working on my degree, I worked as an estate gardener, volunteered at the U.T. Trial Gardens, and completed an internship at Mounts Botanical Garden in West Palm Beach. In May of 2007, I received a degree in Plant Science with a concentration in Public Horticulture.

Since I began with Extension in June, I have had so much fun learning about my new home. I am surrounded by a wealth of knowledge about Florida's agriculture and environment, so I learn so many new things every day. The Master Gardeners have been especially helpful with sharing their knowledge and experience! I invite you to please call or email with any questions, comments, or suggestions that you may have.

Holly Mixon

hmixon@ufl.edu

Master Gardeners at work:



The Water Lilly Festival coordinated by Lee Day.



Pictured are some of our hard working coordinators: L. to R. Violet Krochmalny, Tanya Goldsmith, Lee Day, Dedra McCallister, Pat Beckwith, and Kathy Wegel.

Education par excellence! Our goal is to educate so we have put up the Master Gardener's tent at events, built gardens with children, given informational lectures and staffed clinics ALL SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR 2007.

In January, we did the Frog Leg Festival in Fellsmere, coordinated by **Arzella Hatfield**. February found us at Gardenfest in Vero Beach, coordinator **Lois Schwartz**.

March was busy! **Colleen Audette** did the Pelican Island Festival in Sebastian. Of the 175 visitors to the MG tent many were from Brevard County. **Christine Kelly-Begazo** and 4-H'ers cooperated on the IRC Fire Fighters Fair. **Janet Bargar** presented at the EcoFest at ELC. The Busy Bee Customers Appreciation Day was coordinated by **Dedra McCallister**. MGs provided information for people who never want to work in their garden and to those who want to dive in and change the entire landscape and ecosystem. **Janet Bargar** worked the Goby Fest in Fellsmere.

Epcot trip was fun – as always. It POURED RAIN. Can you believe it? Four Master Gardeners made the trip April 19th. **Arzella Hatfield, Tanya Goldsmith, Martha Willoughby and Dan Sullivan** donned “lovely” blue uniforms and provided information.

Tanya Goldsmith reports that the Ag Literature days provided a fun way to interact with children. Also reading to the children that day were **John Beukers, Lucy Hope, and Dedra McCallister**. **Tanya, Dedra, and Violet** also showed up for the Hurricane Expo.

In April we didn't slouch. **Arzella Hatfield** was busy at Fellsmere Day. Several Earth Days were handled by **Kathy Wegel, Pat Beckwith, Tanya Goldsmith, Richard and Lucy Hope**. We had Arbor Day with **Pat Beckwith and Kathy Wegel**. **Violet Krochmalny**, our palm pruning expert, had a very hot day at Horizon – temperature wise.

Lee Day coordinated the Water Lilly Festival at McKee.

We kept going. **Lucy Hope** put together a tour of Bok Gardens.

Pat Beckwith coordinates our speaker's bureau. MG experts spoke on topics of concern to IRC residents in the “Home Owner Horticulture” programs, which are open to the public. Grass, bugs, butterflies and birds were areas of concern.

Yes, coordinators organize the activity but many MG volunteers gave time to educate any and all comers about garden, soil and water concerns. **Phil Erickson** was a tireless worker at many events. **Anne Dann** was our contributing expert on orchids and bromeliads. **Joan Benson** deserves a big thank you for her help. **Tom Orr, Sherry Shipley, Clare Kaelin and John Beukers** expertly answered all kinds of questions.

Many volunteers staff the clinics at the North County Library, ELC and McKee Garden. Coordinators are **Dan Sullivan, Arzella Hatfield, and Lee Day**. Many more master gardeners are busy educating gardeners about the special environment here in Indian River County – in formal and informal situations.

A special “thank you” to those that have been organizing and volunteering at the latest slew of festivals, meetings and fairs. I know that this work is time consuming but the community depends upon seeing our booth and the UF/IFAS information that we hand out. Keep up the good work!!

Christine

The FYI Page:

We get many questions from “snowbirds” and questions about strange bugs and afflictions. So here are a few plants, bugs, etc. for us to research.

Hydrangeas: A favorite plant. (Hydrangea sp.)

The name derives from: hydor, a Greek word for water and angeion or aggeion meaning a vessel, which refers to the shape of the fruit. European botanists first learned of these plants from the Cherokees in the 1730s.¹

When the pharmacy was the plants in the environment, hydrangeas were used to treat woman who had strange dreams during their menstrual period. Other uses: stop vomiting, antiseptic, to treat burns, tumors, high blood pressure and sprains.¹ (Don't try these as there are serious health risks.)

Hydrangeas are generally grown in zones 3 to 9. However cultivars are being produced to survive in warmer situations. Some gardeners are able to successfully grow hydrangeas in pots in this area. Acidic soil produces blue flowers and alkaline soil produces pink flowers in certain varieties. Other colors are white, pink, red and purple.²



© 2001 Floridata.com
Oakleaf hydrangea, *H. quercifolia*

Good type for zone 9

Mophead hydrangeas have ball-shaped flower clusters. Lacecap varieties have flat clusters of tiny, spidery flowers surrounded by a ring of prominent flowers. “Reflowering hydrangeas, or remontant cultivars, produce an initial flush of flowers followed by sporadic flowering of later flushes of flowers in the same growing season.”³
For more information see:

1. Austin, Daniel. Florida Ethnobotany. CRC Press, Boca Raton, Florida, 2004. p. 357.
2. Brown, Ellen. Growing Hydrangeas. www.thriftyfun.com
3. Knox, Gary. New Hydrangeas for North and Central Florida: Bigleaf and Mountain Hydrangeas. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP287>

An Invasive Plant: Air Potato. (*Dioscorea bulbifera*)

Yes, the vines produce attractive, shiny, heart shaped leaves up to eight inches long. Yes, they can form dense coverage climbing over EVERYTHING. I meant everything like trees, fences, houses and me if I stand still too long. The stems can reach 60 feet in length. It is illegal to plant air potatoes but it spreads like crazy on its own. The plant produces "potatoes" or bulbils. These are brown and roundish with small nubs. They can be pea-sized or five inches across. When bulbils drop to the ground they produce new plants. To rid your yard of these invasive plants pick up all bulbils in the winter when the plants are dormant. Cut or spray the vines in the spring or summer with an herbicide. Dispose of plant parts carefully so the problem plants cannot spread further.



Above photo:UFL publication SS-AGR-164
Natural Area Weeds: Air Potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*)



Photo by Linda Seals

A New Disease: Laurel Wilt

Red Bay trees diseased with laurel wilt will initially exhibit drooping foliage with a reddish or purplish discoloration. The sapwood will show a dark, blackish stain. The disease is caused by a fungus (*Raffaelea* sp.), which is vectored by an Asian wood-boring insect, the Red Bay Ambrosia Beetle (*Xyleborus glabratus*). As the tree dies from fungal infection and is colonized by more ambrosia beetles, toothpick-like tubes or piles of fine sawdust may be observed on the bark.¹ Most trees die from this infestation.

1. Mayfield, Albert III. "Laurel Wilt: A Serious Threat to Redbay and Other Related Native Plants" in The Palmetto, Journal of the Florida Native Plant Society, v. 24: #3, Summer, 2007. Or <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/enpp/ento/x.glabratus.html>

Alert: Citrus greening is becoming a serious problem in Florida. Let's learn about it. AND Holly Mixon sent us information about palm problems.

Coming Events:

Lucy Hope is thinking about a trip to Fairchild Garden in the fall. Interested? Let her know. MGs are looking for gardens to visit. How about yours?

Pat Beckwith is working on the speaker's bureau for next year. Would you please let Joan Benson know what area you might like to talk about?

Janet Bargar will be presenting another rain barrel workshop on August 25. Call her and make reservations. Call some friends to get them involved.

The new Master Gardener training course begins August 28. Sessions are on Tuesdays, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. Call Joan Benson 772-770-5031 for more information.

John Beukers will be working with children in the Gifford garden. Call him if you can help with the children or weed the garden. 563-0627.

FYI: This information comes from our water expert.

Irrigating during the summer

Janet Bargar

Summer is coming, which means heat and humidity. We aren't the only ones noticing the warmer temperatures and mugginess. Our plants and turfgrass are also feeling the change in the weather and require a different watering schedule than what was done during the cooler months. Plants and turfgrass need more water due to the heat and longer days, but too much water can cause problems.

Water flows off the surface or is washed out of the plant's root zone once the ground becomes saturated. Plants and turfgrass can become stressed because they are unable to use the excess water. Fungal diseases can occur due to the foliage being constantly wet, and root rot can also occur.

In order to keep this from happening, proper irrigation is necessary. University of Florida research has shown that three-fourths of an inch of water per application is enough to replenish the grass in established lawns, and the rate of application generally recommended is one to two times a week in the summer. By reducing the number of watering applications, the roots are encouraged to grow deeper into the soil and that will make your grass more drought tolerant. Water early in the morning before sunrise. This will help to reduce the loss of water to evaporation and gives the grass blades time to dry so fungi do not take up residence.

But you don't have to stick to a set irrigation schedule. You can adjust your irrigation schedule based on the amount of rainfall you receive. For example, if it rains half an inch twice in one week, there is no need to irrigate until the next week. A rain gauge is an easy and inexpensive tool for this practice. Watching the upcoming weather forecast can also assist you in adjusting your irrigation schedule. If rain is expected in the next two days, do not irrigate.

When over irrigation is practiced, our environment is negatively affected as well. The excess water picks up and carries pollutants, such as loose soil, fertilizers, and pesticides, to a water body. The pollutants then harm our water resources. Extra soil and unwanted sediment may clog fish gills, smother bottom dwelling organisms, and muddy the water, which decreases the amount of light reaching aquatic plants. Excess nutrients from fertilizers cause algal blooms, which blocks light to aquatic organisms and decreases the amount of dissolved oxygen available to fish. Toxins, such as pesticides and other chemicals, found in the runoff can result in fish kills and poison aquatic plants.

The summer heat and humidity can fool us into over irrigating the plants and turfgrass, but this way causes more problems than it solves. By performing proper irrigation practices, we can keep the landscape and water resources healthy.

Irrigation things to remember

- Irrigate 2 times per week (March to October); 1 - 2 times every 2 weeks (November to February).
- Apply ½ to ¾ inch of water during each irrigation.
- Wean the grass off a heavy watering schedule. If the irrigation system is scheduled to come on for more than 5 days a week, reduce it to 3 days a week for 2 weeks. Then reduce the irrigation schedule to 2 days a week.
- Inspect the irrigation system regularly to check for leaks in hoses, pipes, and fittings.
- Repair broken or clogged spray heads and emitters and adjust them to keep them from watering the pavement. Nothing grows on pavement, so water that lands on driveways and sidewalks is wasted.



Remember the great Christmas Party we had? **Joan Benson** brought a delicious salad. Here is the recipe:

Broccoli Slaw

Mix: 1 pkg. broccoli slaw
3 stalks celery, chopped
3 scallions, chopped

Mix and pour over above mixture:

½ cup sunflower oil
½ cup sugar
¼ cup white vinegar
2 tsp soy sauce

Add: 1 pkg. salted sunflower seeds (small bag, shelled)
1 pkg. crushed up Ramon noodles

Before serving cold, add ½ cup sliced almonds

Please send comments, questions and contributions to:

Carol Houck

CAHk@aol.com