



Highlights in

*Horticulture*

Baker County

April 2011

Dear Extension Friends,

**Inside this issue:**

Species Spotlight: The Easter Lily	2
Dress Up Your Garden Beds	2
Fruit Tree Calendar	3
Fertilizing Lawns	3
Ask Alicia: Your Gardening Questions Answered	4

We hope you'll join us this month for some gardening fun during our annual Spring Garden Festival and Arboretum Grand Opening!

We also want to acknowledge our new graduating class of Baker County Master Gardeners! These folks received extensive training and will soon be available to assist you with your plant problems and questions.

Best Regards,

*Alicia*

Alicia R. Lamborn  
Horticulture Extension Agent  
Baker County Extension Service

**Congratulations to our new graduating class of Master Gardeners!**



Jeanette Brown	Mac McDaniel
Betty Ann Lewis-Alvarez	Billie Reeves
Maggie Lyczak	Anne Taylor

***Upcoming Horticulture Programs & Events***

*All programs will be held at the Baker County Extension Office (Agricultural Center).*

**April 9 3rd Annual Spring Garden Fest** 8:00am to 2:00pm. There will be plants and rain barrels for sale, educational gardening exhibits, a rain barrel raffle and plant give-aways. The festival is free and open to the entire community.



**April 29 Baker County Arboretum Grand Opening** 10:00am to 12:00pm. Join us for the grand opening of our Arboretum and Teaching Garden, complete with garden tours and tree giveaway.



**May 16 Vegetable Gardening Series Part II: Pest Management** 6:00pm to 7:00pm. Dealing with pests in the vegetable garden is a gardener's toughest challenge. Come learn how to manage weeds, insects, diseases and nematodes in the vegetable garden to increase your harvest! You'll also learn about beneficial insects and how to attract them. Call (904) 259-3520 to register for this free class by Thursday, May 12th.



# Species Spotlight:

## The Easter Lily

Native to the Ryukyu Islands of southern Japan, the Easter lily (*Lilium longiflorum*) is the most desirable plant around the time of Easter. But how did a lily that naturally blooms in summer in most of this country, become such a symbol of Easter? In the late 1800s, these bulbs were brought to a local nurseryman in Philadelphia who began forcing them into spring bloom, and selling them to florists. Many began buying this flower for Easter, which has since become a tradition.



So how are Easter lilies forced or “tricked” into bloom in time for Easter? Once greenhouse growers receive bulbs in the late fall, the bulbs are potted and placed in non-freezing cool temperatures. The bulbs must receive about 1000 hours of moist cold conditions in order to bloom, although additional light after they sprout can substitute for some cold. Once the lily bulbs sprout, they are closely monitored by growers in order to time them for Easter. This can be difficult, as Easter can vary from March 22 to April 25. Temperature is used to speed up or slow down the crop. As each plant can respond a bit differently, many plants traditionally have been moved back and forth between warm and cold greenhouse.

When buying a lily, look for a plant with flowers in various stages of bloom from buds to open or partially opened flowers. Foliage should be dense, rich green in color, and extend all the way down to the soil line. You also should check the flowers, foliage, and buds for signs of yellowing and disease.

At home, keep your lily in bright, indirect light, away from drafts and heat sources. Water the plant only when the soil feels dry to the touch. To prolong the life of the blossoms, remove the yellow anthers (pollen-bearing pods) found in the center of each flower (if the nursery hasn't already removed them). If you get this staining pollen on fabrics, don't rub it off, but remove it with sticky tape. Also, keep these plants away from cats. Any part of this lily, as many of its relatives, can cause kidney failure and can be fatal. If you think a cat has eaten a leaf, call a veterinarian immediately as prompt treatment may be successful.

# Dress Up Your Garden Beds with Mulch

## Benefits of Mulching

- ◆ Prevents water loss (and therefore prevents you from watering as often)
- ◆ Suppresses weeds
- ◆ Cools the soil and plant roots
- ◆ Organic mulches add nutrients to the soil
- ◆ Adds texture to the landscape & complements plants

## How To Apply Mulch

- ◆ Apply a 2-3 inch layer (after settling) of mulch around trees, shrubs and bedding plants. If there are drainage problems, use a thinner layer. If mulch is already present, check the depth. Do not add mulch if there is a sufficient layer in place (2”-3”).
- ◆ Keep mulch 1-2 inches away from the trunk or base of the plant and apply less mulch (1 inch or less) over the rootball of the plant. “Volcano mulching” or mulch applied too deeply, hinders oxygen exchange to the roots, which stresses the plant and causes root rot.
- ◆ Thick blankets of fine mulch and even cypress mulch can become matted and may prevent water and air from seeping through. Rake old mulch to break up any matted layers and to refresh the appearance.

## How Much To Buy

- ◆ Bags of mulch are sold in cubic feet volumes. To calculate the amount of mulch you need, first measure the area to be mulched, in square feet (length x width). Example: 5 ft x 8 ft = 40 sq. ft.
- ◆ Next, multiply the area by 0.25 (depth) to determine cubic feet of mulch needed to apply a 3” layer of mulch. Example: 40 sq. ft x .25 = 10 cu. ft.
- ◆ To determine how many bags to purchase, divide cubic feet needed by cubic feet in the bag. Example: 10 cu. ft ÷ \_\_\_\_ = # of bags
- ◆ If you purchase mulch in bulk, it is sold in cubic yards. To convert cubic feet to cubic yards, divide cubic feet by 27.





## Fruit Tree Calendar: April



The following fruit trees require attention this month. All fertilizer recommendations are for optimum growth of fruit trees. It is important to remember that you always have the option of applying less fertilizer, but the amount of fertilizer should not exceed these recommendations.

**Blueberries (Newly Planted):** Fertilize using 1 ounce per plant of 12-4-8 with 2% magnesium (Mg). If plants are mulched heavily, use 1.5 ounces per plant per application rather than one ounce. Spread fertilizer evenly over a circle 2 feet in diameter with the plant in the center. *Note: Use ammoniacal nitrogen or nitrogen from urea or organic sources, rather than from nitrate sources. Chlorine levels should be as low as possible, preferably below 2%. A special formulation called "blueberry special" is available in Florida and meets these requirements. Another possibility is "camellia-azalea" fertilizers.*

**Blueberries (Established):** *Year 2:* Fertilize using 2 ounces per plant of 12-4-8 with 2% magnesium (Mg). Spread fertilizer evenly over a circle 3 feet in diameter with the plant in the center. *Year 3+:* Fertilize using 3 ounces per plant of 12-4-8 with 2% magnesium (Mg). Spread fertilizer evenly over a 4 foot diameter circle, or broadcast in a continuous band 3 to 4 feet wide, centered on the plant row. *Note: These are general guidelines and should be adjusted based on plant performance. Slightly more fertilizer may be required if plants are heavily mulched. However, more often than not, cultivated blueberries suffer more from over-fertilization than from lack of fertilization. Use ammoniacal nitrogen or nitrogen from urea or organic sources, rather than from nitrate sources. Chlorine levels should be as low as possible, preferably below 2%. A special formulation called "blueberry special" is available in Florida and meets these requirements. Another possibility is "camellia-azalea" fertilizers.*

**Loquats:** Fertilize this month using 6-6-6, only as needed.

**Muscadine Grapes (Year 1):** Fertilize this month after growth begins using 1/4 pound of 8-8-8 or 10-10-10; apply the fertilizer in bands about 1 foot to either side of the vine. *Note: It is sometimes beneficial to apply fertilizer that has micronutrients added.*

*To access our Month to Month Calendar: Fruits and Nuts, visit our website and look under 'Gardening Information'.*

## Fertilizing Lawns

Lawns should be fertilized early this month. If you haven't had your soil tested, then you can follow these general guidelines for fertilizing. If you did test the soil, but aren't sure how to interpret the results, we can help! Just give us a call or set up an appointment for personal assistance.

- ◆ When purchasing a fertilizer for your lawn, look for a 15-0-15, 10-0-10, or similar fertilizer analysis.
- ◆ Consider using a controlled or slow-release fertilizer which releases some nitrogen right away and some slowly over time. This will give longer lasting results and help reduce nutrient pollution.
- ◆ The amount of fertilizer to apply depends on the % of nitrogen (first number on the fertilizer bag), whether or not nitrogen is in slow-release form, and the square footage of your lawn.
- ◆ Once you've purchased your fertilizer and measured the square footage of your lawn, the rest is simple if you use the handy fertilizer chart, located on our website [http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu/Horticulture/documents/FertilizerRatesforLawnsandLandscapes\\_000.pdf](http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu/Horticulture/documents/FertilizerRatesforLawnsandLandscapes_000.pdf), which is also available at no cost from our office.

*Fertilizing the lawn is not as easy as it once was, due to environmental concerns. But we are here to help with any questions you may have.*

## **Baker County Extension Service**

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## ***Ask Alicia: Your Gardening Questions Answered***

*The warm weather has welcomed gardeners back out into their yards once again!  
(And the questions coming into our office have been non-stop.) If you have a question or problem in  
your garden, don't be afraid to ask. We are here to help!*

### **Q: Should I fertilize my azaleas now, or wait until after they bloom?**

A: Waiting to fertilize azaleas is best since fertilizing plants while they are blooming could cause them to drop their flowers. Acid-forming fertilizers are necessary for azaleas. Fertilize after flowering with a 12-4-8 or 15-5-15 with micronutrients, approximately 1/4 pound to a mature plant or 3/4 to 1.5 pounds per 100 square feet of landscaped azalea beds.

### **Q: Some of the leaves on my camellia are thick and swollen. What could be the problem?**

A: Camellia growers may notice new leaves that become thick and swollen this time of year. This strange sight is caused by the *Exobasidium* fungus. But not to worry, this fungus is only observed in spring on new leaves, and does not cause damage to older leaves or new summer growth. It can also be observed on azaleas but will not spread to other plants in the yard, therefore fungicide sprays are not recommended. If ignored, the galls will generally dry up in a matter of weeks, although they may be cut off if you can't stand the site.



For Extension Programs offered around the state, see the IFAS Extension Web Calendar at <http://calendar.ifas.ufl.edu/calendar/index.htm>.

**Extension programs are open to all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, handicap, or national origin. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person needing a special accommodation to participate in any activity, should contact the Baker County Cooperative Extension Service at 1025 West Macclenny Avenue, Macclenny, FL 32063 or telephone (904) 259-3520 no later than five (5) days prior to the event. Hearing impaired persons can access the foregoing telephone by contacting the Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8770 (voice) or 1-800-955-8771 (TDD).**