

Highlights in

Horticulture

Baker County

April 2014

Dear Extension Friends,

Don't forget about the Spring Garden Festival on Saturday, April 5th from 9am to 2pm. We'll have all kinds of garden goodies from local plant vendors plus gardening information from the Master Gardener volunteers. On another note, I would like to announce that I will be out on maternity leave for several months starting in June. But not to worry, Dr. Kyle Brown will once again be working in the office to provide you with the assistance you need. We'll have more details on this change for you next month.

Best Regards,

Alicia

Alicia R. Lamborn
Horticulture Extension Agent

Spring
Garden Festival
Saturday, April 5th
9 am — 2pm

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UF IFAS Extension Baker County Garden Spot

Like us on Facebook and stay connected to the Baker County Extension Office!

You'll receive weekly gardening tips, timely reminders on what to do in your garden, plus notices on upcoming classes, workshops and events!

You'll also be able to comment on articles, ask questions, and test your knowledge with featured quiz questions!

<https://www.facebook.com/UFIFASBakerCountyGardenSpot>



EARTH DAY



IN THE ARBORETUM

April 22, 2014
6:00pm to 7:00pm
Baker County Extension Office

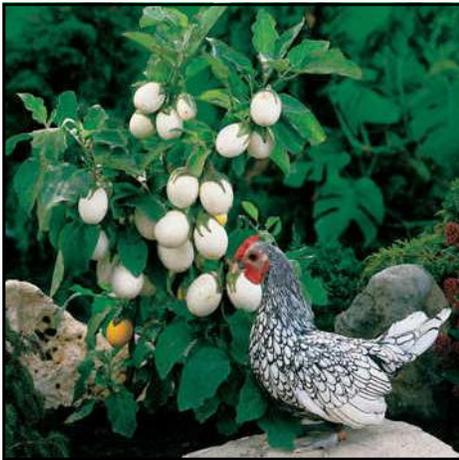
Celebrate Earth Day with a guided tour of Baker County's Arboretum (garden of trees). We'll also have a tree planting demonstration, tree give-away and scavenger hunt for youth to earn a 4-H summer camp voucher!



Easter Egg Plant

Amaze the kids with a summer visit
from the Easter Bunny!

The Easter Egg Plant (*Solanum ovigerum*) is an ornamental eggplant that is sure to be a conversation piece in your garden. The fruits, or “eggs,” are about the size of a hen’s egg, starting off pure white and then maturing to a light yellow or golden color.



The Easter Egg Plant
Photo credit: www.parkseed.com

The ‘Easter Egg’ Eggplant is reportedly an edible ornamental eggplant that looks very similar to the Easter Egg Plant, having small, egg-sized white fruit that turns yellow when mature.

As fruits mature at different times, both types will have a variety of “egg” colors that contrast brilliantly with the green foliage. And both plants make a fun and interesting addition to a children’s (or adult’s) garden.

To eat or not to eat? It is important to note which type of eggplant you are purchasing since they closely resemble each other. The ornamental, inedible eggplant is a different species (*S. ovigerum*) than the culinary, edible eggplant (*S. melongena*).

Growing both types of white eggplant is very similar to growing the more common purple kinds. All may be started from seed and are well adapted to growing in containers. Eggplants should be grown during the warm season (eggplant is injured by frost but can be started anytime between February and July in north Florida) in rich, well-drained soil that has been amended with organic matter such as compost.

Steady growth and uniform moisture is important for quality fruit production. Normally eggplants are not staked, but a heavy fruit load may require some support later in the season.

Figs Love Florida Sun

By: Maggie Lyczak, Baker County Master Gardener

The fig tree is one of the easiest fruit trees to grow. They will produce crops of juicy sweet figs with little care. Be sure to buy only Southern varieties such as Celeste, Brown Turkey, Hunt, Green Ischia, Champagne and many others. Avoid California figs because they need a certain (tiny) wasp for pollination, that doesn’t live here.

Plant your fig tree in the warmest spot in your yard where it will be protected from north winds, and allow plenty of room for it to grow. Figs grow to 15 feet tall or higher and just as wide. And make sure it will receive plenty of sun, since figs will not produce well if they receive less than six hours of direct sunlight per day.

Figs prefer a soil pH of 6.0-6.5, which means a simple pH test can determine if lime is needed to make your fig happy. Light applications of fertilizer are recommended since excess can promote excessive vegetative growth and low yield. If the total amount of vegetative growth is less than one foot in length, then it is appropriate to apply fertilizer. If fertilizer is needed, three to five applications can be made during the growing season (March to August). For young trees, 1/2 pound (1 cup) of 10-10-10 with micronutrients can be applied; for large trees, 2 to 4 pounds (4-8 cups) of 10-10-10 with micronutrients can be applied.



Figs will not grow well in a wet area, but they will need water during the fruiting season, especially during a drought, to prevent fruit drop. Figs need minimal pruning. Freeze damaged wood should be removed when they start growing again in the spring. Pruning should be done in early summer after the fruit has ripened to allow for a crop next year.

For more information on figs and individual fig varieties, visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg214>. For information on selecting, preparing and canning figs, see <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/he228>.

Ask Alicia: Your Lawn Questions Answered

Q: When should I fertilize my lawn this spring?

A: In general, lawns should be fertilized in April, but there is no magic day on the calendar when it is now okay to fertilize because it is really dependent on the weather. A good rule of thumb is to wait until after you've had to mow your grass twice. Growing grass indicates warm enough weather for your lawn to completely come out of dormancy, meaning it will be able to take up and use the fertilizer that you put down.



Q: I'm planning to patch some areas of my lawn, either by seeding or using plugs. Can I go ahead and plant now, and when should I put down fertilizer?

A: Planting, whether with seed or plugs, can safely be done anytime from late April to July to permit a full growing season before the return of winter. However, it is proper water management, not fertilizer, that is crucial for establishing the lawn. For seeded areas, keep the seedbed continuously moist with light frequent sprinklings several times daily. As the seedlings or plugs take root and grow, decrease watering frequency and increase the amount applied each time. Fertilizer should not be applied for at least 30 to 60 days after planting to allow roots to establish to a point where they are able to take up the fertilizer.

Q: I have a lot of weed problems in my yard and would like to kill everything and start over from scratch. I'm thinking of planting either Centipede or Zoysia. Which would be a better choice?

A: I can understand your frustration with the weeds, but starting over from scratch isn't as easy as it sounds. In many cases, homeowners end up with even more weed problems when the current grass is removed and the soil is disturbed. Plus getting the new lawn established takes time and careful attention. Of course the choice is up to you, but if you still have a fair amount of turf left in the yard, I would recommend managing the weeds and focusing on making your lawn healthier (the Extension Office can give you advice tailored to your lawn on exactly how to manage weeds and make any necessary lawn care changes). As for those bare areas that are left, you'll need to fill them in with some type of grass or the weeds will just return. A soil test through the Extension Office can help you determine which grass type may be a better fit for your soil type, and can even tell you exactly how to fertilize.

Q: I got my soil test results back for my lawn, but I'm having trouble understanding them. It says I should apply 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 square feet, but only 1 pound of phosphorus and potassium per 1000 square feet. How do I know what type of fertilizer to buy and how much to apply to my lawn?

A: This is a loaded question, and not one that can be answered in only a few sentences. But I would like to say that it is perfectly normal for you to be confused when reading your soil test results. Unfortunately, it takes someone who is knowledgeable on fertilizer rules, practices, and fertilizer calculations/conversions to interpret the results into something the average person can use. Fortunately, you have me! As your Horticulture Extension Agent, I am available (by phone, in person, or email) to help you figure out what needs to be done. In other words, let me do the math and interpreting for you. I can convert those numbers, tell you what fertilizer analysis would be best to use, and give you a chart that makes it easy to determine how much fertilizer to apply based on the square footage of your yard. Please don't hesitate to contact me for assistance!



Fruit Tree Calendar: April



The following fruit trees require attention this month. All fertilizer recommendations are for optimum growth and production. Applying less fertilizer is also acceptable, but the total amount should not exceed these recommendations. When beginning a fertilizer regimen for mature, established plants, it is sometimes best to treat the plants as if they were just planted (starting at year 1 or 2).



Blueberries (Newly Planted): Fertilize using 1 ounce (2 TB) per plant of 12-4-8 with 2% magnesium (Mg). If plants are mulched heavily, use 1.5 ounces (3 TB) per plant per application rather than 1 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 low, preferably below 2%. Special formulations such as "blueberry special" and "camellia-azalea" fertilizers are available in Florida and meet these requirements.*



Photo Credit: James W. Olstead, UF/IFAS

Blueberries (Established): *Year 2:* Fertilize using 2 ounces (4 TB) 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 (6 TB) 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%. Special formulations such as "blueberry special" and "camellia-azalea" fertilizers are available in Florida and meet these requirements.*

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 (1/2 cup) 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.*



Baker County Extension Service

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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 ten (10) 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).