

Highlights in

Horticulture

Baker County

December 2014

Dear Extension Friends,

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Another year has passed, but as Charles Kettering said, "Every time you tear a leaf off a calendar, you present a new place for new ideas and progress". As always, if you need new landscaping ideas or need help making progress in your garden, we are here to assist you. From our family to yours, have a wonderful holiday season!

Best Regards,



Alicia R. Lamborn
Horticulture Extension Agent
Baker County Extension Service



Upcoming Gardening Classes & Events

- January 16 **Hydroponics and Alternative Gardening Workshop, 10:00am to 11:30am, Baker County Extension Office, Macclenny, FL.** Join us for a presentation and demonstrations on hydroponic and alternative growing methods. Class space is limited. \$5 registration fee due by January 13th and includes a small take-home floating water garden ready to use in your own 5- gallon bucket.
- January 23 **Hydroponics and Alternative Gardening Workshop, 2:00pm to 3:30pm, Baker County Extension Office, Macclenny, FL.** Join us for a presentation and demonstrations on hydroponic and alternative growing methods. Class space is limited. \$5 registration fee due by January 20th and includes a small take-home floating water garden ready to use in your own 5- gallon bucket.
- February 20 **Growing Backyard Blueberries & Blackberries, 10:00am to 12:00pm, Baker County Extension Office, Macclenny, FL.** Topics include variety selection, preparing to plant, care and maintenance, and pest management. \$2 registration fee due by January 30th includes materials and light refreshments.
- April 18 **Spring Garden Festival, 9:00am to 2:00pm, Baker County Extension Office, Macclenny, FL.** For vendor information, please contact our office at 904-259-3520.



Under the Mistletoe



Mistletoe has been used as a holiday decoration for centuries, giving us the custom of kissing under mistletoe bunches.

While the use of mistletoe dates back to ancient times, the traditions and beliefs associated with the plant have been varied. For some, it was believed to be a holy plant. For others, it symbolized the promise of spring's return and was even a symbol of peace in Scandinavian mythology. It was some time later that these traditions and beliefs were adapted by the English and French, giving us the holiday custom of kissing under the mistletoe.

Probably the most well known custom is for a couple who meet under the mistletoe to kiss, usually by catching an unsuspecting person who stands beneath it. But one of the original kissing customs involves plucking a berry from the sprig of mistletoe before the other person can be kissed. When all of the berries are gone, the privilege (or obligation depending on how you look at it) is also gone and there can be no more kissing.

Decorations:

Planning to cut some mistletoe out of the trees in your yard to make holiday decorations? Keeping the sprigs of mistletoe in the refrigerator will help keep them fresh until you are ready to decorate with them. Use thin florist wire to wrap the ends and add colorful ribbon before hanging over a doorway. Remember to mist the sprig daily to keep it looking fresh.

Use Caution:

When bringing any plant indoors for decoration, you should always consider its safety. Mistletoe is toxic when ingested. Between 1985 and 1992, U.S. poison control centers reported 1,754 cases of accidental poisoning of children or pets with mistletoe. With this mind, it may be best to skip the real thing and purchase a plastic version. At the very least, wash your hands thoroughly with hot, soapy water after handling mistletoe plants. And be sure the plants and decorations stay out of the reach of children and pets, keeping in mind that plant parts may fall to the floor as the plant dries out and deteriorates.

Did You Know?

Mistletoe's distinctive green leaves, stems, and white berries--each with a sticky seed inside--are easily recognizable. But did you know that this plant is actually a parasite!

As a small seedling, it roots into the bark and wood of a tree and makes a connection with the growing ring of the host. Although mistletoe makes its own food, it steals water and nutrients from its host tree.

Host trees typically include mature Laurel and Water Oak trees but can also include other hardwood trees. Although it can take many years, eventually the host tree becomes weakened and can decline in health.

By harvesting mistletoe, you combine a fun holiday decorating activity with keeping your trees healthy. Just be sure to keep it out of reach of children and pets—it is toxic when ingested.



2015 Master Gardener Volunteer Training

The rapid urban growth in many areas of the United States coupled with increased interest in the environment and home gardening, have prompted ever-increasing numbers of homeowner questions to County Extension Service Agents. Many of these questions are seasonal in nature and relatively easy to answer assuming that one has horticultural training.

Baker County Master Gardeners are professionally trained volunteers who help respond to many of the everyday homeowner questions, thereby improving the efficiency of the Extension Service and allowing the Horticulture Extension Agent to focus on more technical and difficult problems and develop proactive programs for the community.

What do Master Gardeners do?

- Volunteer at the Extension Office, answering homeowner's plant questions
- Create and maintain educational displays and demonstration gardens
- Write gardening articles for the newsletter
- Speak to local groups about home gardening and give group tours of the Arboretum
- Work with youth gardening programs
- Work to grow a crop in our greenhouse
- Continue their gardening education through advanced trainings and educational field trips
- Staff plant clinics and Master Gardener booths at various county events to educate visitors and promote the Master Gardener Program.

If you are interested in becoming a Baker County Master Gardener in 2015, we want to hear from you!

Training dates have not yet been set and our goal is to provide training at the most convenient time of year for our trainees. Visit our office or website (link below) to submit an interest form. Once we receive your information, a program representative will contact you.

http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu/Horticulture/master_gardener.html

We hope to hear from you soon!

Plants for the Holidays

Surprise people with a new twist on the traditional holiday poinsettia plant this year with something equally beautiful and sure to please.

Amaryllis

Amaryllis bulbs can be bought already sprouted, or you can sprout your own. If potting, place them in a container that allows two inches of space between the bulb and the pot—half of the bulb should be exposed. When you plant it, water it well, but then wait to water again until the bulb begins to sprout. Place the pot in direct sunlight, but move to bright, indirect light once the flowers open. When it has finished blooming, move it to light shade and continue to water and feed for new growth.

Desert Rose

Unlike its name, this exotic plant is not a rose—it's actually a succulent from Africa. It has thick gray-green stems, a swollen base, and tubular flared flowers in red, pink, and white shades. Desert roses should be grown in containers so that moisture and temperature can be controlled. If it is too cold or rainy outside, then bring the plant inside.



African Violet

These plants are good for the home because they prefer indirect light and warmth. Just be sure to use potting soil that provides adequate moisture and good drainage. With its diversity of colors and texture, there is a variety for everyone.



Norfolk Island Pine

This "mini Christmas tree" is an evergreen from the South Pacific having dark green, needle-like leaves. In North Florida, these pines make good potted plants that can be grown in full sun or a bright indoor space. Just be careful not to overwater, and be prepared to repot your plant every 2-3 years.

Rosemary Topiary

This herb makes a good smelling addition to the holiday plant list. Trim rosemary plants every few weeks to encourage new growth and to maintain the desired topiary shape. If you decide to take your plant out of the pot and put in an herb garden, make sure its planting site is in full sun with well-drained soil.

Source: *Solutionsforyourlife.com*; Adapted and excerpted from: R. Mitchell, "[Some Holiday Plants to Give and Receive](#)" UF/IFAS Charlotte County Extension.

December Gardening Calendar

What to Plant

Bedding plants: Masses of petunia, pansy, snapdragon, lobelia, alyssum, and viola add color in winter.
See: Gardening with Annuals in Florida (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg319>)

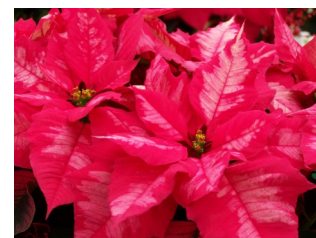
Bulbs: Amaryllis can be forced to bloom now or planted outdoors for spring blooms.
See: Amaryllis (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep060>)

Herbs: Some cool-weather herbs to try include parsley, thyme, sage, dill, fennel, garlic, comfrey, and cilantro.
See: Herbs in the Florida Garden (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh020>)

Vegetables: Reliable cool-season vegetables include English pea, radish, cabbage, beet, and broccoli.
See: Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH021>)

What to Do

Poinsettias: Enjoy one of the most popular indoor holiday plants. With proper care, this colorful plant gives weeks of color. See: Poinsettias at a Glance (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep349>)



Cold damage: Wait until warm weather returns to cut back cold-damaged plants.
See: Cold Protection of Ornamental Plants (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg025>)

Vegetable garden: Make sure that seeds and transplants are properly spaced for good development of tubers and vegetables. See: Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021>)

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. See: Managing Pests of Indoor Plantscapes (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ig110>)

Soil test: Consider performing a soil test if plants do not perform as desired or if new plantings are planned.
See: Soil Testing (http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/hot_topics/agriculture/soil_testing.html)

Compost/mulch: Use fallen leaves to provide the carbon ingredient needed for successful composting and also to make a good mulch. See: Compost Tips for the Home Gardener (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep323>)

Garden pests: Continue monitoring and treat as needed. While cooler weather generally means fewer pests, some populations actually increase at this time of year.
See: Insect Management in the Home Garden (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh036>)

Excerpt from: Park Brown, S. (2012). North Florida Gardening Calendar. University of Florida. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep451>



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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).