



Highlights in

Horticulture

Baker County

May 2016

Dear Extension Friends,

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Spring is a busy time for gardeners, but consider attending an Extension gardening class or stopping by for some Florida-Friendly Landscaping advice. The knowledge you gain just may save you time and money. And, if you'd like to learn how to help others, consider our Master Gardener Volunteer Program (see page 4 for more details). Happy gardening!

Best Regards,

Alicia

Alicia R. Lamborn,
Horticulture Extension Agent, UF/IFAS Extension Baker County

Lunch - n - Learn Gardening Series

Join the County Horticulture Agent during your lunch break to learn about gardening!

When: 4th Tuesday of April – May – June @ 12:15pm to 12:45pm

Where: Baker County Extension Office (Ag Center) Classroom,
1025 W. Macclenny Ave, Macclenny, FL



WHAT TO PLANT IN NORTH FLORIDA



MAY

FLOWERS

- Ageratum
- Amaranthus
- Angelonia
- Balsam
- Begonia, wax
- Coleus
- Crossandra
- Dahlberg Daisy*
- Dusty Miller
- Gaillardia
- Gomphrena
- Impatiens
- Marigold
- Moss Rose
- Melampodium
- New Guinea Impatiens
- Ornamental Pepper
- Pentas
- Rudbeckia
- Salvia
- Torenia
- Tropical Sage
- Verbena
- Vinca
- Zinnia

VEGETABLES

- Beans, lima
- Eggplant
- Okra
- Peas, southern
- Sweet Potato
- Swiss Chard

PLANTING & FERTILIZING TIPS

Most Florida soils benefit greatly from the addition of organic matter such as compost.

A good rule of thumb is to add 2-3 inches of organic matter such as compost, to the soil surface. Next sprinkle a controlled-release fertilizer and thoroughly mix it into the top 6 inches of soil.

Controlled-release fertilizers provide a continuous nutrient supply over an extended period of time. For best results, apply at the labeled rate or based on your soil test results.

*Indicates annual that typically begins declining in July as temperatures soar.

Are Milkweeds a threat to Monarchs?

Attracting butterflies to your yard can be as easy as planting attractive flowers, but providing host plants takes it a step further by giving female butterflies a place to deposit their eggs. These host plants provide growing larvae with the proper nutrition needed for growth and development.

Monarch butterflies will use most milkweeds for hosts (as will Queens and Soldiers). However, the most readily available milkweed species for purchase should come with a warning. *Asclepias curassavica* (shown right), also known as Mexican milkweed or Tropical milkweed, is a danger to Monarchs because the longer bloom period disrupts migration and keeps individuals here too long, making them susceptible to pathogens.



While the solution may appear simple, native milkweed plants are not readily available in the nursery trade unless you have access to a native nursery or you are willing to mail order plants. So if you aren't able to grow natives, or you just can't give up your Tropical Milkweed plants that perform so wonderfully, consider another option. Monarchs begin migrating in late summer and early fall, and so cutting back your Tropical Milkweed plants during this time will encourage their migration. You can still provide those beautiful flowers that will allow them to stop for lunch, but there will be less temptation for the butterflies to stick around and lay eggs.

Interested in native milkweeds? There are 21 native milkweed species in Florida. Here are a few to consider:

- Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)
- Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
- Whorled Milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*)
- Michaux's milkweed (*Asclepias michauxii*)
- Pinewoods milkweed (*Asclepias humistrata*)



Zoysia Lawns

Zoysia grasses were introduced into the United States from Asia and provide attractive turf throughout much of the United States. In recent years, dramatic improvements in zoysia grass have been made by turf breeders. These improvements include insect resistance, accelerated establishment, and overall performance.

Zoysia grasses are adapted to a variety of soil types and have good tolerance to shade, salt, and traffic. They provide an extremely dense sod that resists weed invasion, but certain pests can be problematic. Proper lawn maintenance practices (mowing, irrigation, fertilization) are the best means for avoiding pest problems and maintaining a healthy lawn.

Several species and varieties of zoysia grass are available, which vary widely in leaf color, texture, and establishment rate. For species and cultivar information, visit: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh011>. *Zoysia japonica* is the only species for which seed is commercially available. The seed, however, requires light for germination and cannot be covered with soil, as is normally recommended. All other types must be planted by sod, plugs, or sprigs. Proper site preparation before planting is critical to ensure successful establishment. Refer to *Preparing to Plant a Florida Lawn* (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh012>) and *Establishing Your Florida Lawn* (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh013>), for complete information. Proper fertilization is very important for sustaining a healthy lawn. Fertilization and other cultural practices influence the overall health and quality of the lawn and reduce its vulnerability to numerous stresses, including weeds, insects, and disease.

A soil test should be done to determine soil pH and what nutrients are available to the lawn. The local Extension office has instructions and supplies for taking soil samples and can assist with interpreting the results. Zoysia lawns respond better to a "spoon-feeding" fertilizer regimen (smaller quantities applied more frequently) rather than supplying larger quantities infrequently. In north Florida, 3 low dose applications are recommended. Potassium nutrition also is important and should be applied at rates equal to nitrogen. During excessively rainy periods, potassium may need to be applied more frequently due to its leaching ability. Avoid applying nitrogen in early spring and late fall as this significantly increases the risk of large (brown) patch disease and other injury.

Zoysia responds to drought by turning brown and going dormant (usually within a week), and stays dormant for extended periods of time. Once irrigation or rainfall resumes, zoysia grass will regain its green color. Irrigating on an "as-needed" basis is the best way to water any established, mature grass as long as the proper amount of water is applied when needed. Irrigation is needed when leaf blades begin to fold up, wilt, or turn a blue-gray color, or when footprints remain visible after walking on the grass. Apply $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of water per application. This applies water to roughly the top 8 inches of soil, where the majority of the roots are.

Prevent thatch by not over-fertilizing with nitrogen and mowing at the proper height (2–2.5 inches for medium- to coarse-textured types, down to 1 inch for fine-textured grasses). Dethatch the lawn with a vertical mower or core aerator as needed. Some have noted that scalping (during/shortly after spring green-up) helps reduce thatch buildup.

Like other lawn grasses, zoysiagrass lawns may encounter insect pest and disease problems which require periodic control. Other factors can also decrease the quality of a lawn including excessive shade, compacted soils, over- or under-watering, improper mowing, traffic, and high or low pH. It is important to recognize what the source of the problem is and to correct it if possible. The local county Extension office can help identify problems and provide current control or management recommendations.

Upcoming Classes, Events

Cold Hardy Citrus Workshop

May 17, 2016; Perry

More information and registration:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/commercial-citrus-for-n-florida-tickets-21641718964>

4-H Public Auction

May 21, 2016; Macclenny

Dinner and silent auction begin at 6pm; live auction begins at 6:30pm. \$8 dinner and free public auction, held in the Agricultural Center Auditorium. For more information, call 904-259-3520.

Tips for Maintaining a Healthy Landscape

May 24, 2016; Macclenny

See flyer on page 1 for details. RSVP: (904) 259-3520



Join Us On Facebook!

Stay connected to the Baker County Extension Office through Facebook to receive weekly gardening tips and notifications for upcoming classes and events!

UF/IFAS Baker County Garden Spot

[https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/UFIFASBakerCountyGardenSpot)

[UFIFASBakerCountyGardenSpot](https://www.facebook.com/UFIFASBakerCountyGardenSpot)

Baker County 4-H

<https://www.facebook.com/bakerco4h>

Master Gardener Volunteer Training Begins Soon!

If you live in Baker County and enjoy helping others, the Baker County Master Gardener Program could be for you.

The Extension Office provides extensive training for volunteers who provide service to the community in return.

Volunteer training classes will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 6 hours a day during a 5-week period starting July 26th.

The cost of the training covers class materials, reference books, and supplies; payment plans are available.

Download the application and program guide at:

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

Questions? Call Alicia at (904) 259-3520.

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UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



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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).