

Highlights in

# Horticulture

Baker County

January 2013

Dear Extension Friends,

Another year has flown by, but now is the time to look ahead. Start fresh in 2013 by making a new year's resolution to adopt a few Florida-Friendly Landscaping practices! Remove those invasive plants, identify pests before treating with pesticides, and add organic mulch in plant beds to conserve water, reduce fertilizer needs and keep weeds at bay. These are just a few ideas...the possibilities are endless!

Best Regards,

*Alicia*

Alicia R. Lamborn  
Horticulture Extension Agent  
Baker County Extension Service

Think your yard is Florida-Friendly?

Stop by the Extension Office to pick up the Official Florida-Friendly Yard Recognition Checklist and see how your yard measures up!

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## Master Gardener Volunteer Training

Being a Master Gardener Volunteer is more than just volunteering your time, it's about making a difference in your community!

There are many jobs available to volunteers and training is provided for all of them. So if you would like to make a difference in 2013, consider applying for the program.

**Applications are due on or before January 25th.**

For detailed information on the Master Gardener Program, please read the 2013 Master Gardener Application Packet, available on our website ([baker.ifas.ufl.edu](http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu)) or from the Baker County Extension Office.



***A special thanks to our Baker County Master Gardener Volunteers, who dedicated a total of 520 hours to the Extension Horticulture Program during 2012:***

**Jeanette & Kyle Brown, Pat Collier, Cindy Jenkins, Betty Ann Lewis-Alvarez, Maggie Lyczak, Mac McDaniel, Michelle Peacock, Mary Pregler, Sue Quinley, Mary Ann Ray, Billie Reeves and Karin Thomas!**

# Species Spotlight: Kumquats

*Kumquat trees produce small, orange fruit with a unique “sweet-tart” flavor. Generally considered part of the citrus family, this is the only citrus that is meant to be eaten whole, including the peel, like a grape.*

This evergreen tree is native to Southeast China and tropical Malaysia but is cultivated throughout the Gulf Coast region of the United States. Kumquats are very cold hardy, handling temperatures as low as 10°F, making them perfect for North Florida gardens. They grow best in full sun, eventually reaching heights of 15 feet, although they can tolerate some shade. Like other citrus, flowers are white and bloom in the spring, however blossoms are not as fragrant.

Kumquat fruits resemble miniature oranges that are generally not more than 2 inches in size. The fruit matures in October and the tree continues to produce fruits through March. Although both the pulp and rind are edible, some value these trees more for their ornamental quality since the bright orange fruit contrasts nicely with the dark green foliage. You can also grow them in containers when space is limited. And because kumquats generally require less care than other citrus trees, they make a good choice for gardeners with less time or experience who still desire an attractive and tasty citrus tree.

The two most popular varieties are 'Nagami' and 'Meiwa.' 'Nagami' produces oval fruit with fewer seeds (0-3), but is more acid than 'Meiwa'. 'Meiwa' produces round fruit with slightly more seeds (3-5), but has a nice spicy-sweet flavor. If you don't care for the taste when eaten fresh, the fruits can be made into preserves and jams. But a favorite of mine has to be Pat Collier's Kumquat Pie!



A 'Nagami' Kumquat tree, loaded with fruit.

## Citrus Q&A

### **Q: Which type of sweet citrus is most cold hardy?**

A: The Satsuma (also called 'Satsuma Mandarin' or 'Satsuma Tangerine') is the most cold hardy sweet citrus. Mature, dormant trees have survived temperatures of 14°F to 18°F in North Florida. For more information on the Satsuma, visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ch116>

### **Q: How should I protect my citrus from freezing temperatures?**

A: You will want to protect the graft union during a freeze to prevent damage, especially if you have young citrus. To do this, you can bank clean sand around the base of the tree, use a special tree wrap product, or use foam pipe insulators. Covering trees with blankets or plastic is generally not recommended unless you can keep the cover off the foliage, and the cover can still reach the ground to trap in heat.

### **Q: I heard that waiting to pick my oranges until after the first freeze makes them sweeter. Is this true?**

A: This is possible, but not a guarantee. Cold weather damage to an orange's skin can lead to water evaporation and therefore a higher concentration of sugar in the fruit. Just be sure to pick ripe fruit (fruit won't ripen once picked) prior to a hard freeze, since damage occurs when temperatures stay at 28°F or less from 4 hours.

### **Q: Why does my orange tree only produce sour fruit?**

A: Citrus trees grown from seed usually produce sour fruit. If your tree wasn't grown from seed, it perhaps got damaged by cold weather one year and has regrown shoots from below the graft union, resulting in sour fruit.

# Winter Pruning Tips

*The dormant season is usually the best time for pruning landscape plants...  
although there are a few exceptions.*

## Why Prune:

- ◆ Always have a reason for pruning and never randomly remove branches.
- ◆ Improve tree health by removing dead and diseased limbs.
- ◆ Improve tree structure by removing and/or reducing damaged or rubbing limbs and limbs with included bark.
- ◆ If severe pruning is needed, it should be carried out over several years.



## Before You Prune:

- ◆ Give your equipment a good cleaning to make sure you aren't transferring diseases from one plant to another.
- ◆ Allow pruners to sit in a disinfecting solution before or after use. If you are pruning a diseased plant, disinfect between each cut. You can use an extra pair while the other is soaking.
- ◆ Tools should be soaked for at least 5 minutes (or as directed on the product label) and rinsed with clean water or allowed to air dry before use. A longer soaking period may be needed for pruning tool surfaces that aren't smooth.
- ◆ Disinfecting solutions include a 25% solution of household bleach or pine oil cleaner (Pine-Sol), a 50% solution of rubbing alcohol (70% isopropyl) or denatured ethanol (95%), a 10% solution of trisodium phosphate, quaternary ammonium salts (use as directed), or full strength household disinfectants (Lysol, etc.).

When To Prune: In North Florida, pruning of landscape trees and shrubs is best done late January through February, just before new spring growth begins but while plants are still dormant.

## Exceptions:

- ◆ Plants that flower on the previous season's wood growth should be pruned just after flowering to prevent flower bud removal. These include fringetrees, redbuds, dogwoods, magnolias, pears, hollies, azaleas, anise, viburnum, Indian hawthorns, camellias, hydrangeas, banana shrub, sweetspire, forsythia, mockorange, honeysuckle, sweet shrub and quince.
- ◆ Perennials that die back during winter are often cut back early (because let's face it, they aren't very attractive), but cutting them back to the ground too early can leave them more vulnerable to freezing temperatures. If you must cut them back, cover the crowns with pine straw or fallen leaves to keep them insulated on cold nights. In general, perennials should be cut back once new growth begins in spring, after the danger of frost. One exception are Canna Lilies, which should be cut to the ground in late February to reduce populations of the Canna Leafroller caterpillar. Disposing of the cut material with the overwintering pupae will reduce the occurrence of this damaging insect in the spring.
- ◆ Sheared hedges should only be pruned (sheared) during the growing season, when plants are actively growing. Shearing them at any other time can result in dead patches, which can take a long time to fill back in.

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## *Pruning Paints, Sealants, and Wound Dressing*

As a general rule of thumb, most pruning cuts do not need to be coated with pruning paint.

There are many products marketed as wound dressings, but there is no scientific evidence that they help the tree close over the pruning wound. They do not prevent cracks, mushrooms, or wood rot either. In fact, evidence has shown that some actually slow the growth of callus over the wound (a bad thing) and can even stimulate or encourage rot by trapping moisture behind the paint.

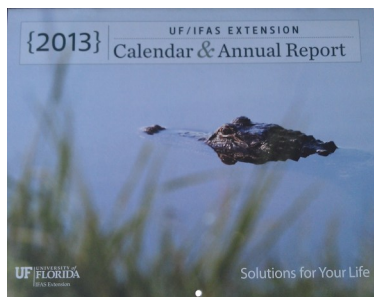
If a dressing is to be applied for cosmetic reasons, apply only a thin coat. And never apply an oil-based paint.

For trees that sprout from the base of the plant or from roots, such as crape myrtle, sprays and paints containing NAA (naphthaleneacetic acid) are sometimes used to help slow or minimize sprouting from a cut.



# Announcements & Notices

## Get Your 2013 UF/IFAS Extension Calendar



Stop by the Extension Office to pick up a free 2013 calendar filled with colorful photos and solutions for your life!

Available while supplies last.

## Baker County Extension Horticulture Program 2012 Statistics:

With the help of Master Gardener Volunteers, the Extension Horticulture Program assisted at least 16% of the county population during 2012! Please let us know how we can help you in 2013!

Phone Calls: 589

Office Visits: 519

Field Consultations: 459

Class/Workshop Participants: 939

Email Consultations: 54

Newsletter Recipients: 581

Website Visits: 164,788

Educational Materials Prepared: 75



## Soil Testing

*Consider having your soil tested before liming, fertilizing or installing new plants this spring.*



- ♦ Soil testing is available through the Baker County Extension Office and the University of Florida's Soil Testing Laboratory.
- ♦ A simple pH test will determine the pH of your soil and the amount of lime needed (if any) to adjust the soil's pH. The pH and lime requirement test is \$3.00.
- ♦ A soil fertility test will determine the pH and lime requirement of the soil, but will also tell you the amount of nutrients currently available to your plants. Based on the results, you will be given specific recommendations on how to fertilize for optimum plant growth. The soil fertility test is \$7.00.
- ♦ Of course, all recommendations are specific to your lawn, garden, or crop.
- ♦ You will also have the option of discussing your results with your county agent.



### 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).