

Highlights in

Horticulture

Baker County

November 2010

Dear Extension Friends,

Many people have expressed their frustrations with their vegetable gardens this year. Next year, I plan to host a series of workshops on vegetable gardening, designed to help everyone from the beginner to the expert. Until then, I encourage everyone to give it another try by planting a fall/winter garden. It has been my experience that the bugs and diseases are better behaved this time of year. If you would like advice on planting a fall garden, please give me a call or stop by for a visit.

Best Regards,

Alicia

Alicia R. Lamborn
Horticulture Extension Agent
Baker County Extension Service



Hobby Beekeeping Short Course Coming Soon!

The Baker County Extension Office would like to offer a hands-on beekeeping short course, where participants are involved with working an active hive on Extension Center property. At the end of the course we will demonstrate how honey is “robbed” from the bees and all participants will take home a jar of local honey. This course will allow participants to receive a complete perspective of the process/expense involved with keeping honey bees as a hobby. For others, it offers an excellent opportunity to learn about this interesting/useful, often misunderstood insect so important to our food supply.

TENTATIVE DATE:**Saturday, March 26, 2011 - 9:00 am to 5:00 pm**

There is a \$10 registration fee (\$15 per couple) for the course to cover the purchase of materials.

Please visit our website (<http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu>) for further details and registration form. We must have at least 15 participants registered to hold the course, so sign up today!



November Gardening Tips

- The time changes early this month and that means our watering schedule changes also! Homes with odd numbered addresses may water only on Saturday and even numbered addresses may water only on Sunday. Please conserve, watering only as needed and not between 10am and 4pm.
- Recycle those falling leaves and pine needles in the garden by using them as mulch. Leaves and pine needles work great as mulch, helping to hold moisture and prevent weeds, plus they break down quickly, adding organic matter to the soil. Mulch should be maintained at 2-3 inches around all landscape plants and recycling these materials will allow you to top off any existing mulch that may have gotten depleted over the year.
- Keep an eye out for tree wraps this month, which are usually available during fall at gardening supply stores. Begin wrapping tree trunks at the first threat of cold weather to protect young trees and graft unions of young fruit trees and guard against winter cracking and damage. Foam pipe insulation can also be used as a substitute. Remember to remove wraps in early spring before buds begin to swell.
- Don't rush to cut back your crape myrtles! Wait until January or February and only remove seed heads and dead, diseased or rubbing branches. Severe pruning is unhealthy for plants and can result in poor form and spindly growth.
- Want to grow fruit trees? Winter is the best time to plant, but you should start planning now by soil testing the site and preparing the soil to plant. Soil testing is available through our office and will determine if changes in soil pH are needed to make your fruit trees happy and healthy.

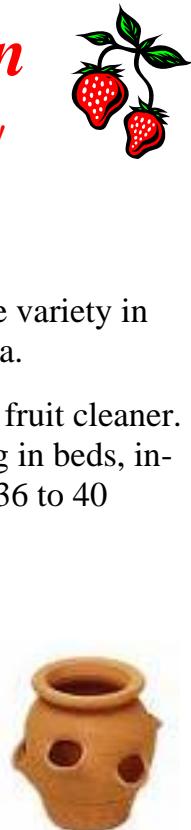


Growing Strawberries in the Home Garden

*Strawberries are sometimes not the easiest fruit to grow, but they are fun to eat!
Here are some helpful tips to get you started...*

- Plant your strawberries between October 1st and November 15th.
- Choose a variety recommended for Florida: the variety Camarosa has been the most productive variety in North Florida; other varieties include Festival, Sweet Charlie, Chandler, Oso Grande, and Selva.
- Planting in raised beds, grow boxes or barrels makes harvesting easier and mulching keeps the fruit cleaner. Fertilize using slow release 10-5-10 or similar garden fertilizer with micronutrients. If planting in beds, incorporate two pounds of fertilizer into the bed per 10 feet of row before planting. Space rows 36 to 40 inches apart and space plants 10-14 inches apart.
- During planting, be careful not to set the plant too deep (covering the crown) or too shallow (leaving roots exposed), spreading roots out in a fan shape.
- The leaves will withstand the cold weather, but if plants lose their flowers and early fruit due to a frost or freeze, a later crop will develop. The fruit is ready for harvest about a month after flowers are formed, and protecting early blossoms will provide early fruit.

For more information, visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs403> or stop by our office.



The Staghorn Fern

Selection, Care and Culture

Varieties

Most species of staghorn ferns grow readily in Florida although beginners are advised to start with the “easy-to-grow” species, which are readily available at local nurseries. For a list of species with specific cultural information and notes on their ease or difficulty in growing, please visit the website found below.

Mounting

Because of their relatively large size (shown right), staghorn ferns are rarely grown in pots except when produced as small specimens for sale at nurseries. Their natural, epiphytic growth habit makes them well suited for mounting on slabs of wood, tree fern fiber or wire baskets. To mount a fern on a piece of wood or tree fern fiber, place a few handfuls of organic growing medium such as peat, compost or rich potting soil on the wood slightly below center. Shape it in a circular mound and place the fern on it so that the basal fronds are in contact with the mounting material. Use wire (not copper), plastic strips or nylon hose to secure the fern tightly to its mount. When a wire basket is used, pack it with an organic medium and mount and secure the fern “face-up” on the medium. Hang the basket sideways. Pups (small plants) will eventually emerge from the back and sides of the basket and completely cover it.



Watering

In general, allow the medium to dry completely between watering. This may be difficult to judge since the outer medium may appear dry, but the inner layers and the basal fronds will be saturated. It may be best to wait until the fern slightly wilts before watering. Once watered, it will quickly recover, whereas an over-watered fern will rot and die. Generally, water once a week during dry, hot times of the year, and less during winter and rainy seasons. Older plants, those with spongy layers of old shield fronds, tolerate drought better than less mature plants.

Fertilization

A water-soluble fertilizer with a 1:1:1 ratio (i.e., 10-10-10, 20-20-20) is recommended. Staghorn ferns can be fertilized monthly during the warm, growing months of the year and every other month when growth slows down. Frequent fertilization is only necessary when you want vigorous growth. Large or mature staghorns will survive and thrive with one or two applications a year of controlled-release fertilizer.

Light

Most staghorn ferns thrive best under partially shaded conditions. The dappled light of a shade tree or indirect light on an outdoor porch is ideal. Very low light conditions produce slow growing ferns that are likely to develop disease and insect problems.



Temperature

Most staghorn ferns are considered tender or semi-tender to cold and will not tolerate cold temperatures. There are exceptions, such as *P. bifurcatum* and *P. veitchii*, which can withstand temperatures as low as 25°F. However, north Florida growers should be prepared to bring ferns into a heated garage, greenhouse or home when extremely cold temperatures are predicted.

Propagation

Propagating staghorn ferns from spores (shown bottom right) is slow and difficult and is not practical for most gardeners. Pups (with their root systems) can be carefully removed from large ferns and re-established. Wrap the roots in damp sphagnum and then tie the root ball to a mount. Eventually the sterile frond will expand and grip the mount.

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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).

The Master Gardener Daffodil Bulb Sale Continues!

Create a striking display of color this winter by planting several varieties now before winter arrives (October is best but November is also acceptable) for blooms from January to March!

While some bulbs require digging and cold storage to bloom from year to year, these daffodil bulbs (selected by the Florida Daffodil Society) will return on their own if provided a dry, sunny location where annuals or other plants can shade them during summer dormancy.

Several varieties of daffodils are still available and all proceeds will be used for educational purposes, including youth gardening programs.

Discounts will begin in late November but hurry in today for the best selection and ample availability!

Full color order forms available on our website.