

Garden Scoop

UF/IFAS Extension, Lake County Office Master Gardener Volunteers

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UF IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



WELCOME

UF/IFAS Extension, Lake County Master Gardener Volunteers provide information for your home, lawn, and garden needs. We hope you enjoy the articles!

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Lake County MG Mission Statement

The mission of UF/IFAS Lake County Master Gardener Volunteers is to assist extension agents by providing horticultural education programs and current research-based information to the public through plant clinics, community outreach and Discovery Gardens.

Arbor Day 2020

In observation of 2020 Florida Arbor Day, The City of Tavares presents its third annual Arbor Day Celebration on January 18th 2020 at Wootton Park 100 E Ruby St, Tavares 32278 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.

A tree giveaway will kick off the event. Arrive at 10:00 am to receive free green ash, red maple, slash pines, white dogwood, and American elm for your home. Quantities are limited.

Don't miss our educational classes as Dr. Holly Ober will travel from the UF/IFAS North Florida Research station to present her favorite topic, Bats.

Educational talks include:

- 10:30 am Pruning Trees & Shrubs, Brooke Moffis UF/IFAS Extension, Lake
- 11:30 am Bats, Dr. Holly Ober, UF/IFAS Extension
- 12:30 pm Avian Reconditioning
- 1:30 pm Building Backyard Habitats, Master Gardener, UF/IFAS Extension



Participants of the 2019 Arbor Day learn about honey bees from the Lake County Beekeeper Association.

PLANT PROFILES:

Christmas Cactus

By Karen Kennen, Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV)

A Christmas cactus can be a gift that gives year-round. As a popular houseplant, most call it, "Christmas cactus" since it blooms from Nov. through Jan. Perhaps a more appropriate name would be the "Holiday cactus" since this includes the Thanksgiving, Christmas, & Easter cacti.

Commercially the plant most often sold is *Schlumbergera truncata* or the Thanksgiving cactus. The true Christmas cactus is a hybrid of *Schlumbergera truncata* and *ressellianca* that originated in England 150 years ago. Most holiday cacti are *Schlumbergera truncata*. To tell the different cacti apart, comparing the leaves help identify which holiday cactus you have. The Christmas cactus has smooth, scallop-edged leaves & red-purplish anthers; the Thanksgiving has pointed teeth along the leaf edges & yellow anthers; the Easter has thicker, upright leaves with hairs at the stem joints. They each are available in a variety of flower colors including white, pink, red, and orange.

Species of *Schlumbergera* grow wild in the trees or on the rocks in the coastal mountains of Brazil. The habitats are generally shady



with high humidity. Unlike other cacti, *Schlumbergera* do not do well in direct sunlight and the leaves will burn with too much sun. Sometimes foliage will develop a lot of red pigment to adapt to sun. The plant should be in growing media that drains well since overwatering can cause root rot or invite pests & disease. Water only when the top inch of soil is dry.

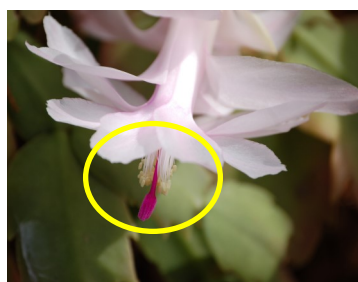
The plant prefers to be pot-bound and can be repotted about every three years. Feed with general purpose houseplant fertilizer from April until August.

In order to bloom, the plant requires cool temperatures and darkness for 12 hours a day for several weeks. When buds appear, any extreme change in environment (temperature, light, water) may cause the buds to drop. Plants can be pruned by removing the last segment at the joint. If you want to



propagate, take longer cuttings at the "Y". Allow cuttings to dry for two days then insert upright into damp planting medium at least 1 inch. Keep damp but not wet; may wilt at first; keep in indirect light; water sparingly. After 2-3 weeks, your cutting will show growth at its tips. These are usually red in color and a sign you can now transplant it into a bigger pot.

Hope you enjoy and have success growing your holiday cactus for many years since they can last a long time. The record is 115 years and still growing!!



White & Thanksgiving Red
NOTE: Yellow anthers

Photos: Reggie D, MGV



Image from: [World of Succulents](http://WorldofSucculents.com)

For more information, [Gardening Solutions](http://GardeningSolutions.com) | UF/IFAS | [Ill. Ext.](http://Ill.Ext.com) | [Clemson](http://Clemson.com) | [Holiday Cactus](http://HolidayCactus.com) | UF/IFAS [NW](http://NW.com)

Winterizing Your Landscape

Information compiled by MGTV, Reggie D.

Central Florida DOES have “winter” weather! This article condenses the information from various UF/IFAS resources (found at the end of this article).

In Lake County, our Hardiness Zone is 9a (north of Altoona) and 9b. That means we’re sub-tropical and our temps can reach as low as 20°F! Lake County’s average high is 80°F and [average rainfall](#) is 56” per year. As a matter of fact, Lake County has fallen below 32°F more than 75-100 times in a 20-year period. These temperatures are when your landscape plants might need some help surviving – especially if these temperatures last a few days or longer than 4 hours.

Temperatures to be aware of:

- * <40°F = Tropical plants get damaged
- * ≤32°F = turn OFF your irrigation & plants can get damaged
- * ≤30°F = time to cover your plants
- * ≤28°F = for ≥ 4 hours is known as a HARD Freeze
- * December 14th = first freeze can occur ([plant map](#))
- * February 28th = last freeze can occur
- * January = averages for both 1st & last freeze dates

How does freeze damage plants? Ice crystals form in & between cells. Once inside, they rupture the cells. Necrotic, dead, tissue forms along leaf.

Can plants acclimate to cold temps? Yes, if there is a gradual decrease in temps. They will de-acclimate as temps get warmer. However, fruits & roots have little ability to acclimate and newly planted subtropical plants can perish.

How can I protect my plants?

- * Bring in potted plants
- * Group potted plants next to each other
- * Cover plants in late afternoon, remove covers promptly as temperatures warm
 - * Materials: Cloth sheets, blankets, and cardboard boxes
 - * Make sure to extend the cover to the ground to reduce heat loss
 - * Secure all-around plant & anchor to ground to capture and keep heat from the ground at night.

- * Use stakes around plants, so foliage doesn’t touch the cover – otherwise moisture will penetrate and cause damage
- * Severe/Hard freezes, use an electric bulb under the covering for extra warmth
- * Can fill-up milk jugs with HOT water & put under fabric to help with heat.
- * Can use Christmas lights around plants to give off heat, but don’t cover. This does not work w/LED lights.

What do I do after a Freeze?

- * Check the plants’ water needs as sunny days can cause water-loss through the leaves
- * Wait and See – plants will bounce back in the spring
- * Do **NOT** prune until danger of frost is over
 - * Wait for new growth when pruning so as not to accidentally remove live wood (green color under outer bark layer)
- * Do **NOT** try to “Help” plants along with extra water or fertilizer



Photos: UF/IFAS



Read more about this topic: [EDIS ENH1](#) | more [EDIS Gardening Solutions](#) |

PLANT CLINIC: PINE SAWFLY & BAG WORMS

By Sandra Bryan, MGV

Just prior to Halloween, people were bringing wormy-things into the plant clinic. I thought we were in the midst of a zombie movie. A prelude to the invasion of the army of undead. Not that I watch those kinds of movies...Just sayin'.



We identified the worm (pictured to the left) as [Pine Sawfly](#) (*Neodiprion* spp) larvae and they are the most common defoliating insect of pine trees. Infestations can result in growth loss, severe defoliation and eventual mortality. All southern pines are susceptible to sawflies.

For more information see EDIS pub [EENY-317](#).

The second insect was a bag worm and this particular bag worm had the nerve to attach herself to MY crape myrtle. Late fall and spring is the season to spot and pick the casings as bagworm activity in the summer is hard to detect. Florida has several species of bag worms and an infestation can result in defoliation and mortality. WHAT? My crape myrtle better survive! Handpicking the casings is most effective as insecticides only impact the very young larvae. (See EDIS pub [EENY-548](#)).

This first image (bottom left) shows the very beautiful & creative casing made by twigs and yard debris held together with very fine silk and the feast the female adult had of my crape myrtle.

Now look at image two (bottom right). Compliments of the Halloween season, I picked that casing and cut it in half. You can see that adult female trussed up in her silky casing like a painted lady in a five-star Hilton. To the left are her little sprogs (eggs). She can lay up to 1000 eggs in her egg clutch.



**Bagworm
Casing**

Photos: Sandy B, MGV

When I cut it open, I accidentally cut into the adult. At most, you can call it's negligent homicide. For me, that is 1 less bagworm to munch on my shrubs!



**Female Bagworm
& her sprogs**

FLORIDA FABLES: NORFOLK ISLAND-PINE

By MGv, Reggie D

It's the time of year when those cute, potted Christmas trees are sold in all stores. We love to give or get them, but please don't plant them! These are actually not suitable for Central Florida nor actually a pine (it's a tropical plant)! *Araucaria heterophylla* or Norfolk Island-Pines will grow quite large in our sandy soil ($\geq 200'$) and serve as a lightening rod. Yes, lightening, a VERY common occurrence in Central Florida (we lead the [NATION](#) in strikes!)



It also doesn't do well in hurricane winds, so keep it in a pot indoors.

If you want a Christmas-looking conifer in your yard try the *Araucaria* [Araucana](#) or Monkey Puzzle Tree. It has similar leaves, growth habit and looks as though it were right out of a Dr. Seuss book.

Useful Links:

[EDIS](#), [Assessment](#), [Gardening Solutions](#),



Photos from MGv, Reggie D.

Plant Clinic Tips

By Sandra Bryan, MGv

Good Gall-y Miss Molly

This first image (top right) is that of a rose bush with a humongous gall. If you notice this three-inch gall manifests at the point of pruning. This bacterial infection is the result of unsanitary pruners. Cut the stem below the attached gall with pruners dipped in a bleach/water solution and continue to sanitize for each cut. See EDIS publication #[PP 343](#).



Woolly Bully

Woolly Aphids, that is. Notice the white flocculent wax covers an oak leaf (bottom left). To treat a tree with a large canopy use [Imidacloprid](#), as a systemic treatment. See EDIS pub. #[EENY 574](#).

So, as you stroll thru the flowers and tiptoe through the tulip near the lemon tree be vigilant in scouting and pruning or you'll wonder where have all the flowers gone.

Photos: Sandra Bryan, MGv

Muhly Grass

By Karen Kennen, MGV

Florida does not have the vibrant fall colors like the northern states but we do have native plants that have striking colors in the late fall. One such native is *Muhlenbergia capillaris* or Muhly Grass with its fluffy, pinkish purple flower stalks that can be seen shimmering in the afternoon sun.

The native habitat of the grass is pine flatwoods and coastal uplands of Florida but because of the plant's adaptability, it can be seen along highways, in business landscapes, and even in home landscapes.

The plant was named after amateur botanist and pastor, Gotthif Henry Ernest Muhlenberg (1735 – 1815). He collected and wrote about native plants in his region of southeastern Pennsylvania.

The grass is hardy in zones 5 -10 and is adaptable to a wide range of soil as long as there is good drainage. It likes to be planted in a sunny spot and should have frequent watering

until established and should not need any further watering once established. Muhly grass grows in three foot wide clumps and up to three foot high. Propagate, after three years, by dividing clumps in early spring and summer. Do not divide clumps during the flowering stage. You can cut back the plant in late winter after it has bloomed or you can thin the plant by removing only the dry stems. This will increase the air circulation and help prevent any fungal disease.

It is rare for the plant to have disease or pest problems but some have a fungal disease called Tar Spot as a result of hot and humid weather and poor circulation through the plant. The easiest treatment is to cut back the plant and dispose of the diseased plant material being sure to thoroughly clean your clippers.

A pest that could affect the plant is the native mealy bug (*Stemmatomerinx acircula*). You will notice a gray white filament on leave that signal the presence of the mealy bug. To treat, remove and destroy the plant or try treating with an oil spray if infestation is minimal.



Gardening Solutions

[USDA](#), [Gardening Solutions](#), [Univ. Of AR Ext.](#)



Beth Bolles UF/IFAS

WINTER TIPS

By Cathy Leavers, Master Gardener Volunteer

At this time of year we start thinking about winter weather and maybe we have even had some by now. Usually January and February are our coldest months, although in recent years some days during these months don't always feel like winter. However, we need to be ready in case we get some of those freezing temperatures ($\leq 32^{\circ}\text{F}$).



When it comes to our [lawns](#), the shorter days, cooler temperatures, and lower light intensity mean the grass grows at a much slower rate. The last recommended time to apply fertilizer to our lawns in Central Florida is by October. But if you missed the October deadline, it's best to wait until spring to fertilize again as doing it too late in the season could encourage grass to grow when cold weather comes - thus making it more cold sensitive. We should also be watering less than once a week during these cooler months and only if needed. The roots of lawns shrink during the winter and do not take up as much water & fertilizer as they do during the warmer growing season.

To protect tender and tropical plants from freezing temperatures, the best advice is to use frost blankets. The light weight fabric allows sunlight and rainfall or irrigation to penetrate. You can wrap them around plants for up to one week and keep the plants 1-3 degrees warmer than the outside temperature. It is important to keep the temperature above 32° Fahrenheit. You might want to stock-up on frost blankets when you hear that your garden center is carrying them as they will go fast once a freeze warning is issued. They're also reusable, so keep them from year to year. Never use plastic as that will allow cold air to penetrate through to the plants and cause damage. It is also a good idea to water well 2-3 days ahead of a freeze, but do not run irrigation during a freeze.

If you have cold-damaged plants, water them to help defrost the soil and give them a source of moisture if the soil is dry. Hold off on fertilizing before the threat of frost is over, as the new growth may be damaged. Also, as bad as the plants may look, it is best not to prune them until you are sure the freezing temperatures are past, as the dead vegetation will act as insulation against further [damage from cold weather](#). In the spring, scratch the bark to see what the wood looks like underneath. If it is black or brown - it's damaged, but wait for new growth to see where to prune. Herbaceous plants may collapse due to the cold weather. It's best to remove soft, wet leaves to prevent fungal or bacterial diseases as they rot.

Resources: [In Your Backyard](#), [Gardening Solutions](#), [Lake County Fertilizer Law](#), [Prepare for Cold Weather](#),

MILKWEED: DON'T RUB YOUR EYES!

By Teresa Watkins, MGV

The tremendous response of thousands of gardeners planting milkweed for monarch butterfly habitat is encouraging for the monarch's survival. But there needs to be a [certain caution](#) when planting and maintaining milkweed in your landscape or on your property. Monarch butterflies have few predators. If ingested, monarchs are toxic to insects, wildlife. Their specific food source, milkweed, contains cardiac glycosides and [galitoxin](#). These chemicals throw off the electrolyte balance in the heart, creating digitalis-like effects. This can cause death in animals and insects, but also small children, pets, and domestic animals, like horses, and cows. Much like collecting and cooking with raw chili peppers, diligent care needs to be taken when handling milkweed, because the sap is an irritant that can cause corneal endothelial toxicity to the eyes.

- ◆ Wear eye protection
- ◆ Use gloves
- ◆ Avoid rubbing eyes or wiping sweat from
- ◆ Always wash hands immediately
- ◆ Watch small children & infants in milkweed garden



Photo: Reggie D, MGV

SAW PALMETTO BERRY HARVESTING LAW

By MGV Trainee, Sandy Czekanski

We'd like to let homeowners know about state laws relevant to your Lake County community. This article is about the July 2018 addition of *Serenoa repens* or Saw palmetto to the state's [list of commercially exploited plants](#). According to Florida [law](#): "A landowner harvesting saw palmetto berries for sale or a contracted harvester working on either public or private land must obtain a [Native Plant Harvesting Permit](#) from the Division of Plant Industry.

Anyone who transports for sale, sells or offers to sell the berries must also secure a Native Plant Harvesting Permit. In all instances, a permit application must be submitted 14 days prior to the intended date of harvest."

So why the new law? According to Florida Dept of Agriculture & Consumer Services, "widespread gathering of these berries is depleting a wildlife food source and threatening the stability of some eco-systems." Berries are a primary food source for bears.

Sources: [UF/IFAS](#) | [SE AGNET article](#) | EDIS [SS-AGR-341](#) | EDIS [ENH1182](#) |

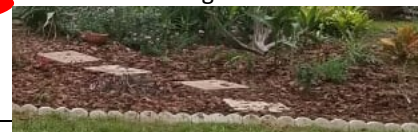


Did you know that some Communities/HOAs have pruning rules for Saw Palmettos?



DEC 2019

Mulching



Central Florida: [December](#) What to do calendar | [Edibles to plant](#), Dec. [Flowering Trees](#)

WHAT TO PLANT & DO:

VEGETABLES	Plant crops now that will grow and produce throughout the winter months. This includes broccoli, cauliflower, collards, kale, lettuce & other cole crops & crucifers : Cole Crop Production Vegetable Gardening
MULCH/ COMPOST	Use fallen leaves to provide the carbon ingredient needed for successful composting and also to make mulch . See page 29 of the FYN Handbook for more info on: Pine Straw, Fines, Nuggets, Bark

JAN 2020

[January](#) Edibles to Plant | January [Flowering Trees](#)

Central Florida: [January](#) What to do calendar | Arbor Day is the 18th in Wootton Park!

WHAT TO DO

FROST DATES	On average , Lake County: 1st frost dates are 12/1-12/10 Last frost dates are 2/11-2/20, however, frosts can be as late as March 10th!
PLANT	camelias, bulbs, Annuals like dianthus, pansy, petunia, viola, & snapdragon, deciduous fruit trees, Irish potatoes...
PRUNING TREES	Prune Deciduous & fruit trees when dormant, after last freeze date or after flowers produce fruit

DECEMBER

1. Transplant small trees and shrubs during their dormant phase.
2. Plant camellias for winter color.
3. Water plants heavily at least 24 hours before a freeze to help increase cold tolerance.
4. Group outdoor potted plants tightly to increase cold resistance.
5. Many bulbs can be planted now for spring and summer bloom in 2019.
6. Place holiday plants in good sunlight and cool temperatures for long-lasting blooms.
8. Harvest all citrus if a freeze below 28 degrees is expected to last for several hours.
9. **Have a Happy Holiday Season!**

JANUARY

1. Celebrate Florida Arbor Day on the 18th with **free tree seedlings**. Call 209-0430 for distribution locations.
2. Transplant hardy plants while they are dormant to prevent transplant shock.
3. Wait until spring to prune cold-damaged plants.
4. Order vegetable seed varieties recommended for north Florida.
5. To properly protect a plant from the cold, cover should be tent-like to the ground, not cinched around trunk.
6. Inspect holly, camellia and other evergreens for scale on the backs of leaves. Apply dormant oil if necessary.
7. Dormant lawns need less water. Irrigate every 10-14 days if needed.

[Central Florida Gardening](#)
[Calendar](#)

LAKE COUNTY EARNS TOP SCORE

Master Gardener Volunteers Nancy LaPointe, Cathy Leavers, and Andrea Reagan made Lake County proud as they earned the top team score for the University of Florida's Master Gardener Volunteer plant identification contest. The contest is held in conjunction with the UF/IFAS Master Gardener conference. To prepare, Nancy LaPointe taught plant identification & multiple hands-on classes to her peers. The studying and hard work paid off. Congratulations Nancy, Cathy and Andrea!



From left: Andrea Reagan, Nancy LaPointe, & Cathy Leavers

PLANT CLINIC: WEEDS

By Sandra Bryan, MGv

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said "What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered."

We see a lot of weeds in the Plant Clinic. But the weed I have in mind is *Bidens alba* or Spanish Needles or Common Beggar's Tick. Despite my amusement with the political entendre, my feelings for this weed are less than charitable. The small white flower is attractive enough, and I can somewhat ignore the leggy stalk, but the seed of the weed is dastardly. Yes, I know *Bidens alba* are irresistible to pollinators. They are also host plants for [Cloudless Sulphur](#) butterfly larvae.



Bidens alba seeds are those black/brown seeds that have a sharp tine on one end and two sharp tines on the opposite end. They stick to everything and pick at you. One day of weeding out this weed from your garden and you will not only find it in your soil seed bank, but in your underwear as well. The weed seed can exist in your soil seed bank for decades and a preemergent in the soil can help. As far as the unmentionables, you're on your own.

This plant is aggressive, but not an invasive and any native garden can benefit from a SMALL patch of diligently monitored *Bidens alba*. (See EDIS pub. [#ENH1308](#)). As for me... old Ralph has a lot to answer for.

Photo: Sandra B., MGv



Our Mobile Plant Clinic was in attendance at the Lake County Wildflower Festival in Clermont and the Mt. Dora Plant & Garden Fair. Look for our presence at the Lake County Fairgrounds Jan.—March.

Don't Miss These Events!

- ⇒ **12/21: Winterizing Your Garden:** 10-11am @ Lake County Ext., 1951 Woodlea Road, [Register](#) Registration is due by 12/19 at 5:00 pm.
- ⇒ **1/15: Landscape University - Palm Pests:** 8-12pm @ Sumter County Ext., 7375 Powell Road Wildwood, [Register](#)
- ⇒ **1/18: Arbor Day Celebration, City of Tavares:** 10am-3pm @ Wooton Park 100 E Ruby St, Tavares 32278 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.

MORE EVENTS: <http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/events/?location=lake>,
<https://lakegardeningprograms.eventbrite.com>

Subscribe to the Newsletter! Email, juwanda.rowell@ufl.edu

More Leu Gardens [Events](#) | More Sumter County [Events](#) |