

The Dirt Weed All About It!



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Contents

Title	Page
A Note from the Director.....	1
Extension Volunteers	2
Fall Blooms and Berries.....	2
Bluebird House Project	3
What to Plant	4
Upcoming Events.....	4
What's That? Answer.....	4



A Note from the Director

Lori Wiggins, County Extension Director

Hello and welcome to the very first issue of “The Dirt”! We are thrilled to have you join our very own Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent, Lisa Strange, as she informs and educates you on Ag adventures in our county and surrounding areas. As the County Extension Director, I would like to thank you for being part of the Taylor County Extension Service and want you to know that we are here to serve and help you in any way we can. UF/IFAS Extension partners with communities to provide quality, relevant education and research-based expertise to foster healthy people, a healthy environment, and a healthy economy. The Mission of UF/IFAS is to develop knowledge in agricultural, human, and natural resources, and to make that knowledge accessible to sustain and enhance the quality of human life. We are here to help and serve you in the areas of agriculture, natural resources, horticulture, nutrition, food safety, youth development and more and we look forward to working with you.

What's That???



Eggs



Larvae



Adult

Photo credit: beebetternaturally.com

Extension Volunteers by Lisa Strange, Ag and Natural Resource Agent



Several months ago, I asked our Master Gardeners to send in a brief statement of what volunteering means to them. To commemorate National Volunteer Appreciation Week, April 17 -23, I read their responses during the Volunteer Appreciation dinner hosted on April 22. One I remember well, by Lisa Wilder, "The reason I volunteered is, I want to plant some good seeds! My roots are here in Taylor County both my parents' families have lived on this good soil for over 200 years and in addition, volunteering is good for my soul. It's my turn to give back to our community and planet earth." Volunteering gives you an opportunity to change people's lives, including your own. Judy McMullen said, "Becoming a volunteer allows me the opportunity to freely serve others as well as the community".



And Jaya Milam said, "Deed forward, where I will be helping out on an occasion and in return whom ever I am helping will help someone in the future. Others helping others in this journey of life spreads the love and happiness throughout the land and goes a long way! Pass on the happiness ... keep it going to infinity and beyond." Research shows volunteering leads to better health, and happiness! If you are interested in attending the next Master Gardener Volunteer training call or stop by the Taylor County Extension office to pick up your application now. The 2023 class will start January 12, 2023. Cost of the course is \$125.

Fall Blooms and Berries by Alice Smith, Taylor County Master Gardener Volunteer

American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) is easy to grow, requiring no maintenance other than elective pruning. The light green deciduous native shrub grows 3-8 feet high and 4-8 feet wide in Florida's USDA Hardiness Zones 8A-10B. Plant in sandy and loamy soils in sun, partial sun, or dappled shade. It requires moderate-to-low moisture once established. Use as a specimen plant or in groups of 3-5 for an open, informal screen. Blends well with hardwoods, pines, and shrubs. Cut back bare branches by one-third or even down to one foot before spring flowering for a denser shrub. Clusters of lavender blossoms appear late spring until summer, attracting bees and other pollinators.

The last hurrah of summer is around us as we drive the highways and byways of North Florida. What are some of the native plants that we see? This is one shrub loaded with berries that you will see growing along roadsides and in fields. It will add biodiversity to your yard, coming back year after year, saving you time and money. (Continued on page 3)



Fall Blooms and Berries (Continued from page 2)

By late summer, its arching branches are covered with small, shiny purple fruits. Fruits may remain on branches after leaves fall and are a winter food source for local and migratory birds. Many Florida residents harvest the purple berries to make jam (recipes are available on the Internet). Native beautyberries with white fruits are also available and provide a striking contrast in your landscape. This one plant provides blooms with nectar for pollinators, is a host plant for the Spring Azure Butterfly and Snowberry Clearwing Moth (important insect protein for baby birds) and produces fall berries for birds and small mammals. [FPS90/FP090: *Callicarpa americana* American Beautyberry \(ufl.edu\)](https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/trees-and-shrubs/shrubs/beautyberry.html)
<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/trees-and-shrubs/shrubs/beautyberry.html>

Bluebird House Project by Lisa Strange

Ambassadors for the University of Florida, the Taylor County Master Gardener Volunteers, have adopted the Bluebird House Project as one of their contributions in promoting the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program (FFL). The (FFL) is designed to help homeowners have healthy and beautiful landscapes that protect Florida's natural resources, based on (9) researched science based principles:

- * Planting the right plant in the right place, * Fertilize appropriately, * Attract wildlife, * Recycle,
- * Water efficiently, * Mulch, * Manage yard pest wisely, * Reduce storm water runoffs,
- * and Protect waterfronts.

Principal #5 Attract Wildlife, encourages Floridians to make their yards attractive to birds, bees, butterflies, bats, and other creatures that are being displaced by rapid development. Provide bushes with berries, bird baths, or bat houses; increase vertical layering of plants to provide habitat; manage household pets and reduce insecticide use – these tricks can welcome wild visitors in need of refuge. Many will return the favor by eating pest insects and helping to pollinate your garden.

Attracting Bluebirds: Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) is a member of the thrush family and are one of many birds that are cavity-nesters. They eat insects and berries and love a treat of mealworms, especially during winter months when insects are scarce. The accommodations are specific in dimensions to suit the bluebird while making it undesirable for other species. Many birds migrate south for the winter, here in Taylor County they stay year-round. You can pickup a Bluebird house for a donation at any of our events or stop by the Extension office, 203 Forest Park Dr., Perry, FL 32348. We are always looking for old wood or fencing to help support the project. Please call if you see a pile of wood for trash that we can recycle! Thank you for supporting our community services. Half of the proceeds from your Bluebird House donation will go to a community charity the other half will go back to make more Bluebird Houses. Go to <https://floridabluebirdsociety.org/> for more information.



Upcoming Events

October/November/December

What to plant:

Annuals: Digitalis, petunia, pansy, viola, chrysanthemum, snapdragon, alyssum, and lobelia

Bulbs: Amaryllis, crinum, and daylily

Vegetables: Bulbing onions, salad crops (arugula, lettuce, spinach), cabbage, kale, broccoli, collards, and beets

Herbs: Dill, fennel, oregano, parsley, thyme, sage, cilantro, and thyme

Things to do:

October: Gather pine straw and use as mulch. Set strawberry plants in garden.

November: Plant an ornamental Taiwan cherry. Disbud your camellia for larger blooms later

December: Send in a soil test. Use fallen leaves in compost or crush and use as mulch.

- **Oct. 13:** Cold Hardy Citrus Workshop
- **Oct. 18-20:** Sunbelt Agricultural Expo, Moultrie, GA, North America's Premier Farm Show 10-15,000 visitors
- Month of October - Taylor County Peanut Butter Challenge
- **Oct. 22:** Florida Forest Festival, Free Fish Fry
- **Oct. 27:** Cold Hardy Citrus Field Day & Master Gardener Volunteer Field Trip, North Florida Research & Education Center, Quincy
- **Oct. 28:**

UF/IFAS Peanut Butter Challenge



UF/IFAS Peanut Butter Challenge has been accepted by Taylor County.

Bring in unopened, unexpired jars of any size or type of peanut butter to the Taylor County Extension office or Ragans ACE Hardware, during the month of October, to help combat hunger. The jars are counted, bragging rights are awarded to counties collecting the most peanut butter. Then the jars will go to our local Food Pantries and the School Backpack Program. We can do this Taylor County! Call us 850-858-3508 with questions or help with delivery.

What's That? Answer! by Lisa Strange

The Trash bug or Aphid lion looks like a vagabond if you look closely. Master Gardener, Martha Frostick spotted one in our demonstration garden. Underneath the heap are legs and a body that move around on stems and leaves, voraciously eating their favorite, aphids. Also, they will eat scales, whiteflies, thrips and other prey. This **beneficial** insect is the ugly larval stage of the delicate Green Lacewing. The heap on their back is the debris of eaten aphids and



Larva and egg photo by Tommy Murray on Springfield Plateau website at <http://springfieldmn.blogspot.com/2020/11/junk-bugs.html>

sometimes lichen or leaf particles that serve as a camouflage from birds and predatory ants. For this reason, they are used as a biological control. It is hard to imagine from the tiny little eggs, found hanging by a thread-like filament in groups mostly underneath leaves, transform into a little alligator looking insect with 6 legs and large mandibles, then to a delicate flying Lacewing. For more information go to <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN965> publication.