

Extension Connection

In this Issue

| <u>Topic</u> | <u>Page</u> |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Springtime Bugs | 2 |
| Bahia Lawn Repair | 3-4 |
| Brunswickgrass | 5-6 |
| Meal Planning | 7 |
| 4-H: STEM Leads the Way | 8-10 |
| Classes/Seminars | 11-12 |
| Balance Class Graduates | 13 |
| Summer Camp Info | 14 |
| Gardening Seminar Schedule | 15 |
| Gardening Tips | 16-17 |

“UF IFAS Extension Citrus County”



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Extension Notes

BJ Jarvis, Extension Director

Unusual Times in Extension

These are strange times indeed due to the COVID-19 virus. Unfortunately, the County and the University of Florida have had to suspend all face-to-face public programming, face-to-face interactions, and visits to our facilities. This includes our monthly library gardening programs, farm visits, cooking classes, youth education, and more. All public activities at UF/IFAS facilities will reopen when the risk subsides.

We are committed to providing great information whenever possible. At this time, communicating that information will occur through articles in the newspaper, newsletters, blogs, phone calls and emails. Some programming will be held electronically as we become more proficient at it. Stay tuned for that. When the serious health risk declines, we will once again open our doors and resume a more normal operation. So check back with us on social media for updates.

In the meantime, try to get outdoors to garden, have a backyard picnic, observe the birds, pull a few weeds, or just enjoy a glass of iced tea on the porch as a form of ‘social distancing’.

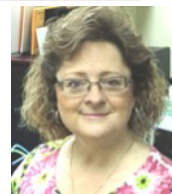
Thank you for your continued support of the UF/IFAS Extension Citrus program.

Sincerely, BJ



A Springtime Bug-pocalypse

BJ Jarvis, Director and Horticulture Agent



Each spring, large numbers of red bugs cause concern in communities throughout our county, as they congregate on fence posts, pool enclosures, even the car. Fascinating or creepy – you pick.

Jadera or scentless plant bugs are not harmful, fortunately. They don't sting or munch plant leaves, cause any problems for your pet nor harm to the lawn. However, clothes may get permanently stained from any squashed insect bodies.

The insects are hanging out with their numerous brothers and sisters, munching on their favorite food. The Jadera bug has a love affair with seeds from the Goldenrain tree (*Koelreuteria* spp.). They congregate at the all-you-can-eat buffet of spring seeds from this prolific producer. In fact, this favorite food source is invasive and should not be encouraged here in Citrus County.



Adult Jadera and young feeding on a Goldenrain tree seed

We should then thank these garish insects for helping to control the spread of this pest tree population.

Found throughout the southern Gulf Coast

and into Mexico, and interestingly in Hawaii, these insects sport their red and black tuxedos. Insect populations peak in May, although over the years, the Jadera has been spotted in small numbers during every other month of the year.

The younger they are, the more noticeable their red abdomen is. As juveniles age, their black wings grow out covering their conspicuous bright red abdomen, resulting in them becoming less noticeable.

No “control” measures are needed to keep this bug in check. If they are bothersome, then



Different age groups of Jadera on tree trunk

removal of the invasive tree (if it is in your yard, or under your control) is a sure-fire management strategy. After removal, consider a more Florida-friendly tree option for

your landscape, replacing the shade but without the problematic nature of Goldenrain trees. Hopefully I can convince you to tolerate these colorful insects and appreciate this natural phenomenon.

For other questions about all types of insects –beneficial or harmful – contact our Master Gardener volunteer plant clinic at 352-527-5700.



Various ages from tiny nymph to larger juveniles growing out their black wings

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™

Florida-Friendly Roadmap



Bahia grass repair ...seed or sod?

Steven Davis, FFL Program Coordinator



Like all lawn grasses in Florida, bahia grass is an introduced plant species, which originated in South America. Common bahia grass was introduced to Florida in 1913 through discarded ballast from trading ships, which escaped and established in Pensacola, Florida. In 1930, Argentine bahia was introduced as forage for southeastern cattle operations.

Bahia grass prefers full sun and well-drained soils. Soil pH is also a variable to consider with bahia preferring a pH range of 5.5 to 6.5, slightly acidic. Bahia is a clumping rather than running grass, leaving open areas for potential weed seed germination in exposed areas. Bahia grass also tolerates drought. Too much winter watering often results in decline of this warm season grass.

Voids in Bahia grass lawn



Renovation of weak turf areas is often a priority for homeowners as spring approaches. It is always beneficial to wait until the threat of frost has passed before planting. Immediate satisfaction is achieved with the successful installation of sod, but at a cost. Even for a small lawn renovation, the cost of removal, preparation and installation of sod can be high.

Lawn renovations of most warm season grasses often is accomplished using sod or plugs; bahia can be established from seed reducing renovation costs. Not so fast! Just because the cold winter temperatures have passed, bahia seed is not ready to germinate in early spring. When seeding with bahia, wait until daily temperatures average between 75-80°F degrees. Bahia grass seed is small and should be planted shallow, 1/4" to 1/2" and no deeper. Bahia seed germination rates are variable. Expect 50-60 % of the seeds to germinate in the first 30 days when cared for properly. Some seeds may germinate the following year.

Tiny Bahia grass seed



(Continued on page 4)

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™

Florida-Friendly Roadmap

(continued from page 3) Seed or Sod?

Bahia grass seed has an envelope or window, which opens and closes determined by soil temperature. The open seed window allows moisture to enter the seed, necessary for germination. Appropriate soil temperatures typically arrive in May nearing the arrival of regular summer rains ideal for seed germination of this grass.

Check the expiration date on the seed you purchase. Apply 5-10 lbs per 1,000 SF, making sure it is in contact with the soil and buried no more than ¼". Once germinated allow bahia to grow and establish prior to mowing. Bahia may take several months to fully establish. Keep the mowing height as high as possible. The tall leaf canopy will reduce potential for competitive weed seed germination, allow collection of sunlight for photosynthesis and will encourage deeper rooting into the cooler and moist soil horizon.

Excessive outdoor water use damages bahia lawns every winter. Limit outdoor watering during the winter. Timing is vital when renovating bahia lawns from seed. Proper seed application anticipates regular seasonal rainfall (mid to late May through August), warmer temperatures allow the seed window to open and seed germination to occur creating a happy and low cost drought tolerant lawn. Remember, once the seed has germinated and established a root system supplemental water use should be reduced. When using your automated irrigation system make sure you comply with current restrictions on water use when establishing or repairing a lawn from seed.

Citrus County Water Restrictions <https://www.citrusbocc.com/waterres/watering-restrictions.htm>

Preparation is key to successful establishment



Up to 30 days for bahia seed germination



Searching for Answers in Bahiagrass Seed Fields

Clay Cooper, Agriculture Agent

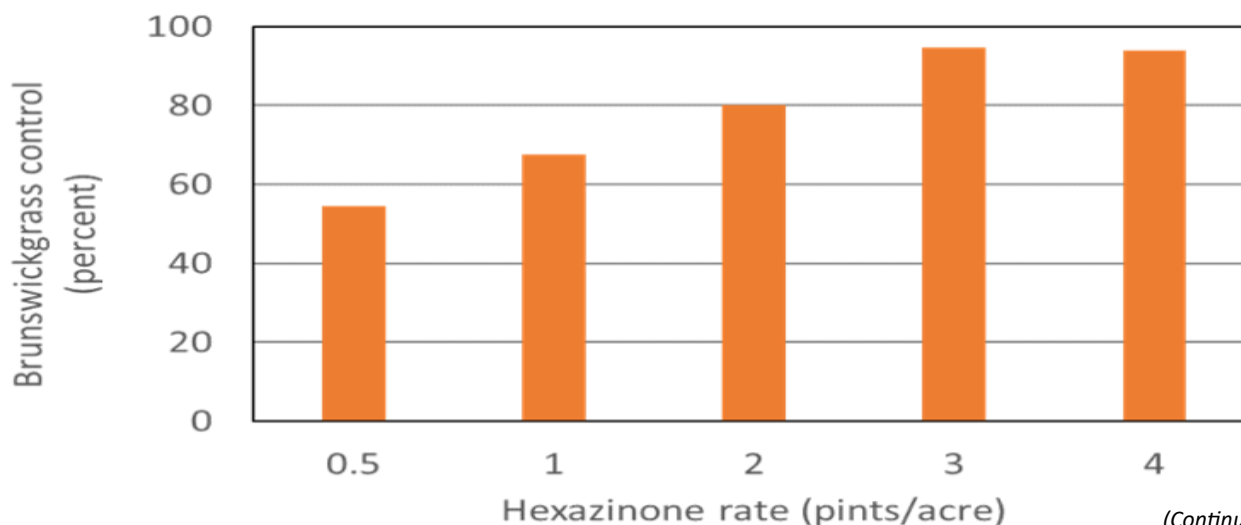


Brunswickgrass (*Paspalum nicorae* Parodi), sometimes referred to as “Brown seeded paspalum”, is becoming a problematic weed in summer perennial grass pastures in the southeast. This plant is native to southern Brazil, northern Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. It was introduced into the U.S. as a soil conservation plant for erosion control and as a potential forage crop. This plant has become naturalized and is contaminating bahiagrass seed production fields and pastures in Florida, Georgia and Alabama. The plant is competitive with bahiagrass and since it is less palatable, it can eventually dominate a perennial grass pasture. Brunswickgrass has reportedly contaminated bahiagrass seed fields and pastures in several Florida counties, including Alachua, Citrus, Gilchrist, Levy and Sumter.

Florida-grown bahiagrass seed is marketed throughout the southern US, as well as internationally. Bahiagrass seed contaminated with brunswickgrass has been denied distribution in Australia and other countries where bahiagrass seed has been imported from the U.S. This presents a major problem for the bahiagrass seed industry with an estimated \$18 million in annual seed sales.

At this time, control options are limited making this weed contaminate a major threat to both the livestock and seed industries. With brunswickgrass being in the same genus as bahiagrass, finding an herbicide to selectively remove it appeared to be unlikely. That was until a local producer observed activity on brunswickgrass after an application was made targeting smutgrass in a bahiagrass pasture. This provided hope, so in 2018 I along with Dr. Sellers, our Extension Weed Specialist initiated a research project here in Citrus County investigating the use of herbicides containing Hexazinone as the active ingredient to control brunswickgrass in bahiagrass fields.

In 2018, we initiated a study looking at applications of hexazinone at 0.5, 1, 2, 3 and 4 pints/acre in order to assess percent control. What we found was, 30 days after treatment brunswickgrass control was surprisingly exceptional. For example, 80% control was achieved following an application of 2 pints/acre. When the application rate was increased to at least 3 pints/acre, 94% control was observed.



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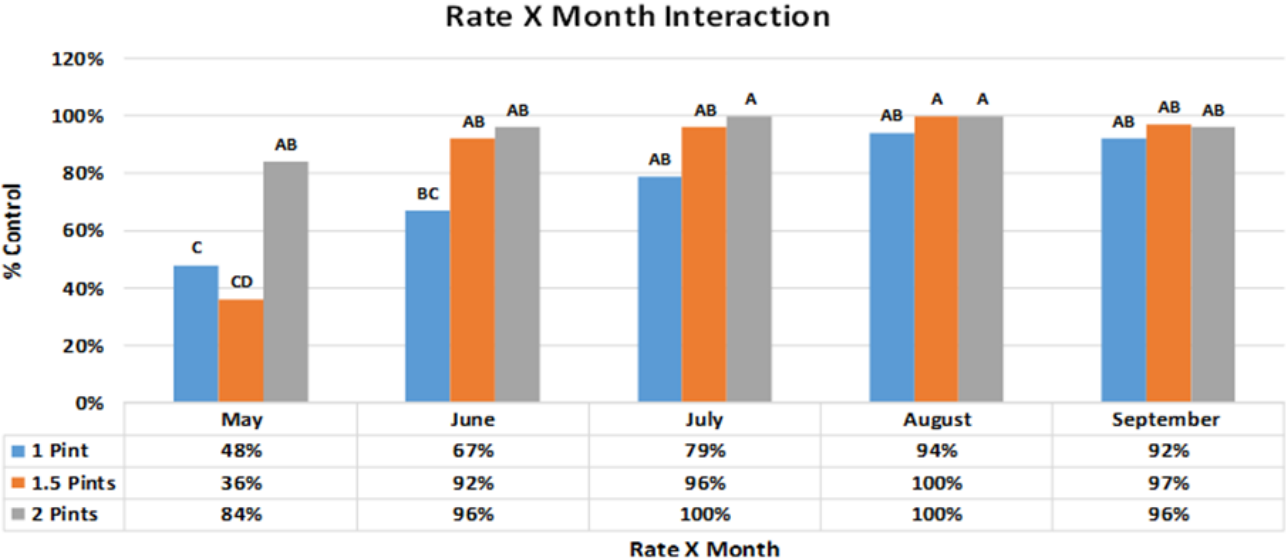
(continued from page 5) *Brunswickgrass*

**Hexazinone at 3 pints per acre 1WAT
(WAT= Week after treatment)**

Hexazinone at 3 pints per acre 3WAT



In 2019 to take this research a step further we initiated a timing study in which applications of 1, 1.5 and 2 pints/acre of hexazinone were applied starting in May and continued each month until September. The objective here was to see if application timing had any effect on overall control. What we found was delaying application timing actually increased overall control across all treatment rates. For example, in May a 64% control was achieved across all treatment rates but when the application was delayed until September, a 95% control was achieved across all rates.

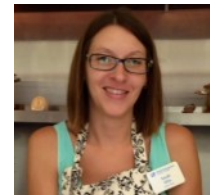


This project is still ongoing and much of the data is preliminary, but I wanted to share what has been discovered so far to help bring awareness to this potentially devastating weed contaminate. If you have any questions regarding brunswickgrass, please contact me.



Planning Meals Helps Your Food Budget

Sarah Ellis, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent



Individuals and families struggle to get dinner on the table, often choosing convenience foods over healthier options. But convenience foods are generally more expensive and high in sugar, fat, and sodium.

Instead of asking what's for dinner each night, take 30 minutes each week to plan your meals for the entire week. Planning what you and your family are going to eat each week is an easy way to take control of your food budget and health.

Here are some tips:



1. **Meal planning** The day before you go grocery shopping, plan your menu. This is what you and your family will eat for each meal during the week. Make a list of the ingredients you will need for each meal. Review your local grocery store sale flyer. Check for buy 1, get one deals and other sales to help build your menu. Consider planning ahead for nights that you may get home late.
2. **Shop your pantry** Check your pantry to see what ingredients you have on hand. Make a list of the ingredients you need to purchase.
3. **Go grocery shopping** Use the prepared shopping list to ensure you purchase all the ingredients you will need for your meals. Try to avoid purchasing extra items that are not on the list.
 - When choosing fruits and vegetables, consider using frozen or canned. Frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are processed when they are picked and are just as nutritious as fresh.
 - Consider bulk options. Single serving size containers of foods are convenient,

but are generally more expensive. Make your own by portioning foods yourself. Purchase snack size bags and containers to help.

- Always check the dates when purchasing dairy.
- Shop for whole grains the whole family enjoys such as brown rice. Choose foods labeled 100% whole grain. Consider freezing grains such as bread to extend the shelf life.

4. Use kitchen appliances wisely

- Electric pressure cooker – cooks food quickly and uses less electricity than traditional cooking methods. They are insulated to minimize radiant heat and frequently have multiple settings such as sauté and slow cook. Consider using this appliance when you don't have a lot of time to cook; bone-in chicken can be done in 20 minutes.
- Countertop oven – convenient for baking and reheating. It uses less electricity and does not heat up the house like traditional ovens.

5. Plan for leftovers

Leftovers can save you time and money. Store leftovers in covered containers in the fridge or freezer. If stored in the fridge, use within 2 to 3 days. These leftovers can be used for lunches during the week or dinner on the nights you don't have time to cook.

6. Pack lunches the night before

If you are currently working (or when you go back), make sandwiches or salads to get lunch ready the night before, instead of rushing first thing in the morning.



STEM Leads the Way

Dr. Marnie Ward, 4-H Agent

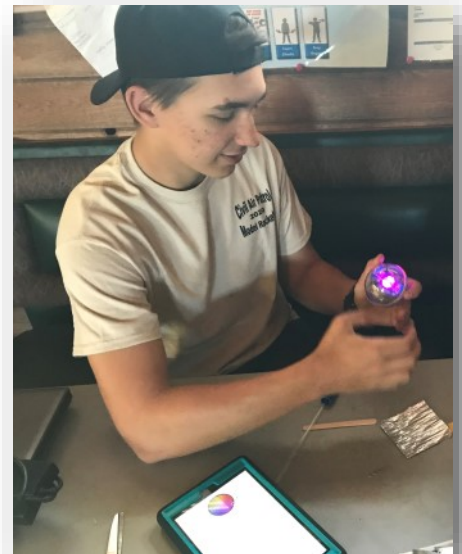


Did you know that in the United States, the fastest growing occupations focus on skills related to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)? Or that there is a shortage of scientists and skilled technology workers? The 4-H Youth Development program leads the way to engaging programs that open opportunities in STEM. As one of the fastest growing career classes, the need for STEM workers will increase by 13% in the next decade.

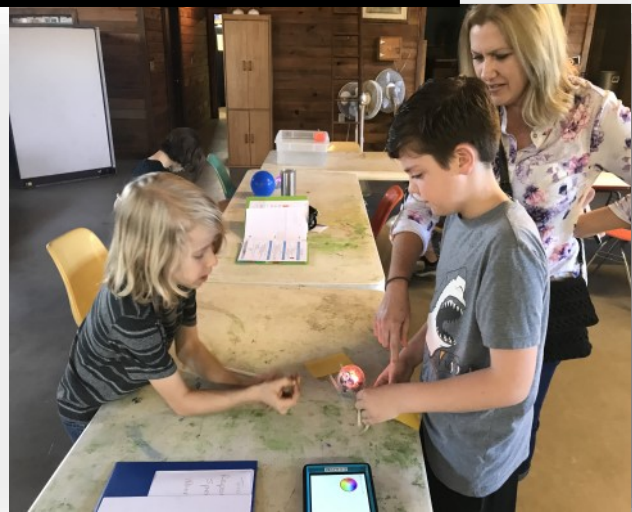
In Citrus County, 4-H increases accessibility to STEM with: 4-H Clubs, Day Camps and Workshops.

4-H Clubs

The American Eagles 4-H Club specializes in teaching hands-on STEM activities. Members are currently working with “Exploring STEM with Spheros!”, a curriculum developed by the Civil Air Patrol. The Sphero is a compact robot ball that is Bluetooth enabled, so it can connect to tablets and cellphones. Using a variety of educational apps, the students can program the robot with code to perform actions and tasks. The club members explore the underlying scientific concepts or the “why it works” and then put that knowledge to work with hands-on activities that encourage them to learn through trial and error. The club leader reported, “These 4-H members are engaged in learning more about science. They have practiced working with microgravity and can use it to predict the movement of the Sphero.”



Club members practice coding “Spheros”



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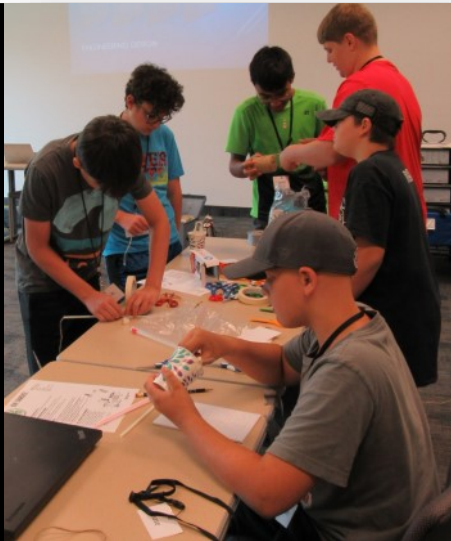
(continued from page 8) STEM

4-H Day Camps

At the 4-H LEGO Robotics STEM camps, youth exercise team building, and problem solving, while learning essential life skills. In a real-world scenario, campers practice their talents as engineers and designers. Teams design, build and test vehicles to transport an object “pay-load” and deliver it to a specific target. Campers modify paper cups to travel down fishing line and then remotely release a marble onto a paper target. Building supplies include a paper clip, a paper cup, a marble, tape, and an index card. Through the engineering design process, team members brainstorm potential designs and build prototypes of the vehicle. Prototype testing can reveal design flaws and inspire youth to revise and adapt their prototype designs. At first, the vehicles were basic and plain, with little attention to detail, but as the design challenge progressed the distance to the target decreased. Ultimately, teams construct a design to meet the criteria and deliver the “payload”.



Campers during the “transport” design challenge



Teams successfully used design criteria to reach their goal



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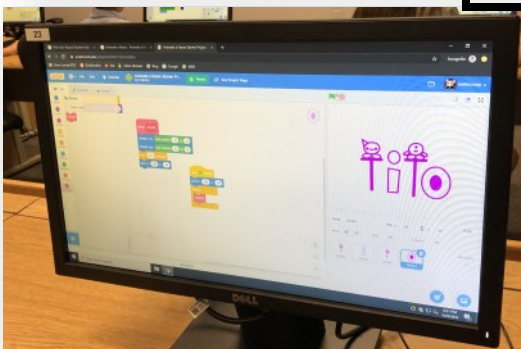
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4-H Workshops

The 4-H National Youth Science Day workshops invite kids to get involved in science, with hands-on STEM challenges. While providing access and opportunities for youth to learn more about STEM, the challenges also show the kids how to apply what they have learned to the world around them. Over 60 youth have attended the workshops on “Wearable Technology” and “Code Your World”. Youth attending the workshops use hands-on activities designed to instill curiosity and critical thinking, helping kids develop the skills to be successful in life.



**Citrus County
4-H members
take on the
STEM Challenge
at
National Youth
Science Days**



Communities benefit when their youth are prepared to become productive adults. According to research by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the skills most important to employers include, problem-solving, ability to work in a team, initiative, a strong work ethic, and communication skills.



Unless otherwise noted, all classes will be held at the Citrus County Extension Office classroom: 3650 W Sovereign Path, Lecanto, FL 34461

Gardening Seminars: Please call first to confirm seminars have not been cancelled.

Contact Steven Davis at 527-5708 to pre-register for these free classes or go to: <https://ccufflprogram.eventbrite.com>

April Seminars Cancelled

~~“Managing Pests Wisely”~~

~~Tuesday Apr 7
2:00 - 4:00 pm~~

~~“Right Plant, Right Place”~~

~~Tuesday Apr 21
2:00 - 4:00 pm~~

~~“Create a Florida-Friendly Landscape”~~

~~Tuesday May 5
2:00 - 4:00 pm~~

~~“Optimizing Irrigation Systems”~~

~~Thursday, May 14
6:00 - 8:00pm~~

~~“9 Florida-Friendly Principles”~~

~~Tuesday May 19
2:00 - 4:00 pm~~

Florida-Friendly Landscaping PROGRAM

“Turfgrass Management”

Tuesday Jun 9
2:00 - 4:00 pm

“Florida-Friendly Fertilizing”

Tuesday Jun 23
2:00 - 4:00 pm

~~**Postponed**
Earth Day Festival~~

~~Saturday, April 18 10 am - 2 pm~~

~~Co-hosted at Lakes Region Library~~

~~1511 Druid Rd, Inverness~~



~~Games Demos Activities Watershed mobile lab~~

My First Florida Home

HUD approved

Join us for this online class



Thinking about purchasing a home? In this free, online class you'll learn about

- How to get your finances in order
- How much home you can afford
- How to repair your credit
- How to work with housing professionals
- How to shop for a loan and a home
- How to make an offer
- Why you should get a home inspection
- Closing

This homebuyer workshop meets the education requirements for down payment assistance programs. UF/IFAS Extension Citrus County is a HUD approved housing counseling agency.

Thursdays
April 9-30, 2020
6 pm to 8 pm

Pre-Registration is required.

For more information:
ellissm@ufl.edu and/or
352-527-5700



To register: www.HomeBuyerCC.eventbrite.com

UF/IFAS Extension

Solutions for Your Life

A Matter of Balance Class Graduates



**A MATTER OF
BALANCE**
MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

**Participants in the
morning class
February/March program**



**A MATTER OF
BALANCE**
MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

**Participants in the
afternoon class
February/March program**



Summer Camps

For more information and to pre-register (required),
please contact Crysta or Stephanie at 352-527-5700



Sewing Day Camp Monday - Wednesday June 1-3 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Limited to 20 participants, ages 8-12

\$50 fee includes materials, snacks, and lunch on Wednesday

Participants will need to bring lunch on Monday and Tuesday

Campers should bring their own sewing machine if they have one

Make checks payable to "Citrus County 4-H Association"

Camp Location: Citrus County Canning Center, 3405 W Southern St, Lecanto



Camp Fit & Fun Monday - Thursday June 29 - July 2 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Youth learn the FUNdamentals of sports, explore healthy snacking, and discover the importance of exercise and staying hydrated.

Limited to 20 participants, ages 8-12

\$40 fee includes all materials, afternoon snack daily, and lunch on Thursday

Participants will need to bring lunch Monday through Wednesday

For more information contact Crysta or Stephanie at 352-527-5700

Camp Location: Citrus County Extension Building, 3650 W Sovereign Path, Lecanto

CHRISTMAS *in July*

"Christmas in July" Day Camp Monday July 6 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Ages 8-15

Join us to celebrate the season, while we make cards, create decorations, and craft gifts.

\$25 fee includes all materials and snack, participants will need to bring lunch.

Make checks payable to "Citrus County BOCC"

Camp Location: Citrus County Canning Center, 3405 W Southern St, Lecanto

APRIL, MAY, JUNE



Master Gardener volunteers share their knowledge at retail outlets, and seminars at local libraries.

Monthly Extension Master Gardener Seminars offer an opportunity to explore timely garden topics at these informative seminars offered at every Citrus County library. They last approximately 1 hour, are **free** and require no pre-registration.

Please call the library to make sure the seminars are scheduled before you head out:

Central Ridge: 746-6622

Coastal Region: 795-3716

Floral City: 726-3671

Homosassa: 628-5626

Lakes Region: 726-2357

Citrus Springs: 489-2313

~~April: Summer Annuals~~ **April Seminars Cancelled**

May: Helpful/Harmful Turf Insects

**June: Gardening with Youth:
(Where Does My Food Come From?)**

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------|------------------------|----------------|
| 2nd Wednesday | 1:30 p.m. | Central Ridge Library | Beverly Hills |
| 3rd Wednesday | 2:00 p.m. | Floral City Library | Floral City |
| 3rd Wednesday | 1:30 p.m. | Citrus Springs Library | Citrus Springs |
| 4th Monday | 1:30 p.m. | Coastal Region Library | Crystal River |
| 2nd Tuesday | 1:00 p.m. | Lakes Region Library | Inverness |
| 4th Tuesday | 2:00 p.m. | Homosassa Library | Homosassa |

Bring plant problems and questions for expert advice to the Extension office.

Trained Master Gardeners are available most days between 8am - 5pm.

Schedules can vary, so please call ahead (352-527-5700).

Additionally, challenges (pictures are helpful) can be emailed to:

MasterG2@citrusbocc.com

Spring Gardening Calendar

Gardening wise, this quarter is a mixed bag of wrapping up winter (if we had one!) and moving into summer, so note when a specific timeframe is referenced.

Colorful bedding plants: Breeders are introducing many new plants that are better able to tolerate lots of sun. Look for Suntunias[™]/Supertunia[®] (warm weather tolerant petunias), sun-tolerant Hosta and New Guinea Impatiens, and others. Notice I didn't say "sun-lover". Often these plants will perform better and retain their vivid coloring if given some protection from our hot Florida sun.

Vegetables: Warm spring temperatures shift the veggie garden to plants that love the heat, including tomatoes, peppers, squashes, cucumbers, peas (not the edible pod types that prefer winter's cool temperatures), sweet potatoes and eggplant. Around Easter there is often a late freeze which may require a few hours of protection.

UF's vegetable gardening guide can be found here:
<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/VH/VH02100.pdf>

Herbs: With at least 4 hours of sunlight, delicious herbs will perform well in spring's warm weather. Basil, oregano, chives, parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme. If you choose any of the mints such as spearmint or peppermint, grow them in a container as mints can be a bit aggressive.



Supertunia® Raspberry Rush™



(Continued on page 17)

(continued from page 16) SPRING GARDENING

Plant extra: Parsley, dill, and fennel are three plants that are sure to attract black swallowtail butterflies. So plant extra for all types of butterfly juveniles to eat.

Watchable wildlife: Early in this quarter, migrating hummingbirds will stop at feeders or nectar producing flowers for a rest and nourishment. Artificial nectars have little if any added nutritional value over homemade. Make your own with four (4) parts water to one (1) part sugar.

Beneficial Insects: Spring is the ideal time to identify and conserve beneficial insects. These critters should be encouraged in the landscape:

http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_beneficial_insects

Lawn maintenance: If turf is showing nutrient deficiencies, apply fertilizer after new growth begins. When spots are underperforming, positively identify the root cause (pun intended). Is it an insect, disease or a cultural problem. Check irrigation systems for even coverage, leaks, blockage from growing plants, etc. before responding with additional watering, or applying pesticides or other actions.

Mulch: Minimize weeds, conserve moisture, and moderate soil temperatures with a 2-3" layer of once-living mulch. Already have mulch in the beds? No need to remove it. Just add to the top if the layer is less than 2-3" deep. And don't go overboard as volcano mulching can kill plants, causes water retention around trunk leading to decay, and limits oxygen which can smother roots. Avoid cypress, but there are many other choices, including **FloriMulch®** (which is the melaleuca-derived product), eucalyptus, or even the free tree trimmings made into mulch at the county's landfill. Call for hours and availability (352-527-7670).

Mulch should not be piled against the trunk (photo 1) because roots may grow there and (photo 2) girdle the trunk.



Appropriate mulching (2"- 3" deep and none on root ball)



**For specific gardening information,
be sure to contact us -
352-527-5700**