

Extension Connection

In this Issue

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page</u>
A Curfew for Poinsettias	2
Rain Harvesting & Distribution	3-4
Natural Resources	5-6
Florida Cottage Food: A Recipe	7-8
4-H:	10-11
Nature Naturally	13-14
Gardening Seminar Schedule	15
Classes/Seminars	16
Welcome	17
Gardening Tips	18-19

"UF IFAS Extension Citrus County"



Like us on
Facebook



Extension Notes

Fall-in to Fall

Love-it or hate-it, 'pumpkin-spiced-everything' season is here, and speaking of love-hate relationships, a few secrets of the sometimes-temperamental poinsettia (p. 2), are featured in this issue. If you're one of the many looking for opportunities to put your pumpkin-spice prowess to work, our cottage-food article (pp. 7-8) reviews how to turn this passion into a profit.

In addition to pumpkin-spice, Fall also ushers in a brand new 4-H year. The program in Citrus County has been ongoing for more than 100 years, providing positive youth development learning opportunities for all youth. (pp.10-11).

Putting rainwater to good use is always a good idea, and the Florida-Friendly Landscaping article (pp. 3-4) provides great recommendations, including installing rain-barrels and rain gardens. And as the weather cools down, consider adding a walk-on-the-wild-side to your leisure-time list. Some of our favorite Citrus County wild spots (e.g. Three Sister Springs) are highlighted in this issue (pp. 5-6). Also on the wild side, our Nature Naturally article (pp.13-14) features interesting creatures such as 'land crustaceans' and mosquito-eating dragonflies!

Be sure to check out our Fall Gardening tips (pp. 18-19), and our upcoming events and classes featured on (pp.15-16): Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Seminars, Master Gardner Library Series, Living Well FCS Seminars, our annual Plant Sale on Oct. 21, and the 4-H Rodeo fundraiser on Nov. 17 & 18.

Also in this issue, we welcome our newest addition to the team – Toni Noaker, 4-H Program Assistant (p.17).

As always, thanks for your continued support of the UF/IFAS Extension mission in Citrus County. We're here to help you find *"solutions for your life"*.

Your Citrus County Extension Team!



For more information contact: UF/IFAS Extension Citrus County
(352) 527-5700 • FAX (352) 527-5748 SolutionsForYourLife.com

UF/IFAS Extension

Solutions for Your Life

URBAN HORTICULTURE

A CURFEW FOR POINSETTIAS

Dr. Marguerite Beckford — Director & Horticulture Agent



Let's talk poinsettias (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*): for some, they can be a love-it/hate-it type of plant. Some people love their cheery colors, while others hate that the plants can be temperamental, dropping all their leaves if given too much water.

When is a flower *not* a flower?

Love-it or hate-it, the fascinating thing about the poinsettia is that those cheery red 'flowers' are not flowers. Rather, they are bracts.



Credit: UF/IFAS, Tyler Jones

A bract is a botanical term for colorful, modified, accessory leaves which surround flowers. The poinsettia's true flowers are actually the tiny yellow buds and petals hidden among the large red, white, or variegated bracts which make the plant a popular holiday decoration. The bougainvillea is another common plant that is more popular for its bracts rather than its true flowers, which are the tiny cream-colored buds and petals at the center of the plant's colorful bracts; but I digress.

Lights out!

Another fascinating thing about poinsettias is that they must receive 12-14 hours of low-light/darkness every day, starting in late summer, or they won't turn red!

This means that from summer onward, poinsettia growers gradually impose a daylight curfew on their plants by blanketing their grow-houses in black shade cloth. This process is called "flower initiation," and it provides poinsettias with the required amount of daylight hours for their bracts to turn from the usual green to the many poinsettia colors available at the garden center.



Credit: UF/IFAS

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™

Florida-Friendly Roadmap

Rain Harvesting and Distribution

Steven Davis — FFL Program Coordinator



Simple ways of rainwater collection and run-off distribution in the residential landscape can aid in conserving and efficiently utilizing this valuable resource. Water conservation practices in Florida are considered a true water source in our state, but millions of gallons are still unwisely used in Florida landscapes. Two Florida Friendly Landscaping™ practices to consider are the collection and reuse of rainwater in rain barrels and the efficient distribution of water runoff from residential roofs directed toward created rain gardens in the landscape.

Rain barrels are a common sight in Florida residential landscapes. Rain barrels should be placed in locations enabling easy collection of water running off residential roofs typically near gutter down spouts. Many barrels have been previously used to ship food products or beverages making them safe to use for water collection and water's safe reuse. Do not use barrels, which have previously contained toxic or chemical materials.

Rain barrels fill up quickly. Be prepared to utilize the water collected for gardening purposes, cleaning outdoor furniture, bathing pets or any practical use you can imagine. A 55 gallon barrel will quickly fill from roof runoff and several barrels can be utilized to collect an even larger volume of water for its reuse. Collected water comes in handy during power outages caused by tropical storms or hurricanes for essential activities like cleaning or flushing toilets, when other potable water sources are unavailable. Additionally, covering the exposed rain barrel with screen netting prevents the establishment of another unwanted visitor to humid Florida, the mosquito.



(Continued on page 4)

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™

Florida-Friendly Roadmap



(continued from page 3) RAIN HARVESTING AND DISTRIBUTION

Another way to use water run-off is to create a rain garden, by directing runoff to a landscape area for short-term collection and use by landscape plants placed in a low-lying rain garden area. Unique garden spaces are created in this way. The run-off is going to go somewhere. Creating a destination for its collection and use in the landscape reduces the potential for erosion or contaminants moving off your property. Excessive runoff from residential roofs disturbs garden spaces or erodes soil, causing injury to lawn and garden areas. Swales can be constructed to distribute the excess water to a planned rain garden collection area providing water for plants prior to leaching through the soil profile, leaving no permanent surface water behind. Additionally, run off can quickly move through underground piping to a rain garden destination. Either way, the creation of a rain garden can be a unique feature in the landscape supplying water naturally to a specific area for the establishment of garden plants tolerant of both wet and dry conditions.

We all know rainfall happens. When and how much is often the question. As the potential for summer storms and concentrated rainfall increases during the summer season, planning to collect and distribute this resource seems wise. Collection of water in a rain barrel was a wise decision during the last hurricane season when power was unavailable at my residence. Quick and efficient movement of water away from a structure to a designated collection point on the property enables gardeners to utilize the resource naturally, reduce damage from erosion, while establishing an attractive garden space minimizing the damaging effects of storm water runoff. Always make sure that landscape improvements and addition of garden amenities like these are acceptable in your community, if landscape restrictions apply to your HOA or municipality.



Natural Resources



Crysta Reaves — Family and Consumer Sciences Program Assistant

Our beautiful county is nestled in the Nature Coast, which is abundant in natural resources, including a variety of habitats and recreational activities.

Some of Citrus county's most important natural resources are listed below:

1. Waterways:

The county is home to several rivers, springs, and lakes. These resources provide ideal spots for boating, kayaking, fishing, and wildlife observation.

2. Springs:

Numerous freshwater springs, including Three Sisters Springs, Homosassa Springs, and Chassahowitzka Springs, may be found throughout the county. In addition to being sources of pristine water, these springs also offer chances for diving and snorkeling as well as crucial habitats for numerous aquatic animals.

3. Wildlife:

Large natural woods and habitats for wildlife may be found across the county. A sizable portion of Citrus County is covered by the Withlacoochee State Forest, which offers chances for riding, hiking, bird watching, and hunting in approved areas. The county's woodlands and wetlands are home to deer, turkey, alligators, and a large variety of bird species, while the coastal waters are home to manatees, dolphins, sea turtles, and various fish.



Figure 1 UF/IFAS File Photo



Figure 2 UF/IFAS File Photo

(Continued on page 6)



(continued from page 5) NATURAL RESOURCES

4. Nature Tourism:

Ecotourism and nature-based tourism are supported by the county's natural resources. Citrus County attracts visitors who want to take advantage of the untamed scenery, wildlife, and outdoor pursuits.

Scenic Beauty: Citrus County is a gorgeous paradise for locals and visitors due to its abundance of forests, winding canals, and breathtaking sunsets along the Gulf coast.



Figure 3 Photo Credit: Crysta Reaves

It is important to continue efforts to conserve and safeguard these natural treasures so that present and future generations can appreciate and benefit from them. These assets not only offer recreational activities but also improve the local economy and standard of living for locals.



Florida Cottage Food: A Recipe

Stephanie McMinds — Family & Consumer Sciences Agent



The success stories of Florida's cottage food sector may be found all around the state. Passionate entrepreneurs are turning their culinary skills into profitable companies, from homemade jams and jellies to delicious cakes and pastries. In this newsletter, we'll look at the thriving world of Florida cottage food, and the legislation that allow it.

The Cottage Food Law, established in 2011, allows home-based food entrepreneurs to lawfully sell some handcrafted items. These regulations allow people to turn personal kitchens into small-scale food businesses without the requirement for a commercial kitchen or costly permits. Here are some of the most important components of Florida's cottage food regulations:

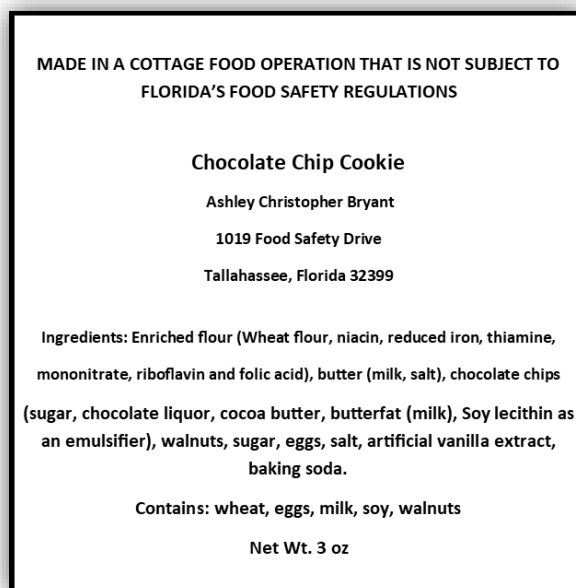
Approved Products: Florida allows the sale of various cottage food items, including baked goods, jams, jellies, candies, and more. The full list of permitted products is available on the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) website:

<https://www.fdacs.gov/Business-Services/Food/Food-Establishments/Cottage-Foods>

Annual Revenue Limit: Cottage food producers are allowed to generate up to \$250,000 in gross annual sales, accommodating growth while maintaining a manageable scale.

Labeling Requirements: Proper labeling is crucial in cottage food production. Labels must include specific information such as product name, producer's name and address, allergen information, and net weight or volume.

Sales Venues: Cottage food entrepreneurs can sell their products directly to consumers through various avenues like farmers' markets, online platforms, and even face-to-face transactions.



(Continued on page 8)



(continued from page 7) *FLORIDA COTTAGE FOOD: A RECIPE FOR A SUCCESS*

Tips for Aspiring Cottage Food Entrepreneurs

If you're considering joining the cottage food movement in Florida, here are some tips to help you get started:

Research and Compliance: Before selling your products, familiarize yourself with Florida's cottage food legislation and ensure you meet all legal criteria.

Food Safety: Maintain excellent food safety and hygiene standards in your kitchen to produce safe and delicious items.

Market Wisely: Utilize social media, local events, and online platforms to promote your products and build a loyal customer base.

Creativity and Quality: Experiment with unique flavors and recipes to set yourself apart from the competition. High-quality ingredients and attention to detail can make a significant difference.

Those who are passionate about sharing their homemade goods with the world will find success in Florida's cottage food business. You may transform your culinary skills into a flourishing cottage food business right from your kitchen with the correct combination of perseverance, inventiveness, and adherence to rules. Florida's cottage food rules allow you to make your culinary aspirations a reality. So put on your apron, turn on the oven, and begin creating your own success story in the Sunshine State!



UF/IFAS File Photo

Citrus County Family & Consumer Sciences

Upcoming Programs

- **October 10th - Water Conservation Presentation at Floral City Public Library (10:30 AM)**
Join Extension experts to discuss simple ways to save water, both indoors and out without sacrifices. Simple strategies to save time, money and water will be discussed.
- **October 19th - Water Bath Canning: Pickled Bell Peppers at Canning Center (10:00 AM)**
Learn the process of water bath canning safely by making pickled bell peppers at this hands-on class. Cost: \$15.00 all supplies included
- **October 20th - Growing and Cooking with Herbs at Homosassa Public Library (10:30 AM)**
Through this free program discover flavorful culinary herbs well-suited for Citrus County gardens and how to incorporate them to create tasty meals.
- **October 31st - Cooking for 1 or 2 at Central Ridge Library (10:30 AM)**
Through this free program can show how easy it is to plan, shop for, and prepare meals for one or two. There will also be a cooking demonstration to show how easy it can be.
- **November 2nd - Water Bath Canning: Harvest Jam at Canning Center (10:00 AM)**
Learn the process of water bath canning safely by making harvest jam at this hands-on class. Cost: \$15.00 all supplies included
- **December 4th - Growing and Cooking with Herbs at Coastal Region Library (10:30 AM)**
Through this free program discover flavorful culinary herbs well-suited for Citrus County gardens and how to incorporate them to create tasty meals.
- **December 6th - Cooking Under Pressure at Citrus County Extension Office (5:00-7:00 PM)**
This HANDS-ON class will cover: different electric pressure cooker and air fryer models, appliance features, safety tips, additional equipment you can purchase, and tricks to make cooking a breeze. Participants will make holiday themed recipes in an electric pressure cooker or air fryer and enjoy a meal together. Cost: \$15.00
- **December 15th - Introduction to Water Bath Canning at Lakes Region Library (10:30 AM)**
Learn the basics of how to safely use the water bath canning method at this free educational program.

For more information or to register for one of the programs above visit: <https://tinyurl.com/bdfpjt6v> or call (352) 527-5700





Florida 4-H Youth Development

Head • Heart • Hands • Health



Making A Difference Everyday!! 4-H is for ALL

Dr. Marnie Ward — 4-H Agent



September marks the beginning of a new 4-H year. Growing, learning, exploring, so many things to do. Here in Citrus County, we are blessed with a rich history of 4-H. The work of Elizabeth Moore, home demonstration agent, was the beginning of 4-H in Citrus County. She came to Citrus County in the 1920's and taught cooking, home arts, and canning.

4-H has come a long way since those early roots, but the commitment to a learn-by-doing approach with caring adults to help youth gain the knowledge and life skills they need to be productive, responsible citizens remains the same. Florida 4-H is the youth development program of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS). This direct connection with the University of Florida provides the highest quality of educational experiences and hands-on activities to young people in Citrus County and across the state of Florida.

In each of Florida's 67 counties, families can participate in 4-H clubs, activities, camps, or school-based programs. Translation – 4-H opens opportunities for everyone. **#4H4ALL.**

The Florida 4-H mission is to provide youth and adults the opportunities to work together to create sustainable community change following the mission mandates of Extension:



A home demonstration exhibit photo credit: Matheson History Museum



A 4-H member with her fairy garden exhibit
Photo credit: Marnie Ward

(Continued on page 11)



Florida 4-H Youth Development

Head • Heart • Hands • Health



(continued from page 10) *MAKING A DIFFERENCE EVERYDAY—4-H IS FOR ALL*

Dr. Marnie Ward, 4-H Agent



1. Science – 4-H seeks to engage young people in discovery and exploration to prepare them for the challenges of the 21st century.
2. Citizenship – 4-H connects young people to active roles in their communities.
3. Healthy Living – 4-H engages young people and their families with access and opportunities to achieve physical, social, and emotional well-being.

Florida 4-H is available in all 67 countries photo credit: Florida 4-H

Join Citrus County 4-H as we celebrate National 4-H Week October 1 to 7, 2023. Each day has opportunities to connect with the young people in your life and to work with them to improve the quality of life in our backyard.

Celebrate each day with Citrus County 4-H:

Sunday Oct. 1st – “National Homemade Cookie Day”

Monday Oct. 2nd – “Child Health Day”

Tuesday, Oct. 3rd – “National Eat Fruit Day”

Wednesday, Oct. 4th – “National Taco Day”

Thursday, Oct. 5th – “National Do Something Nice Day”

Friday, Oct. 6th – “National Noodle Day”

Saturday, Oct. 7th – “National Play Outside Day”



Citrus County 4-H is a partnership between UF/IFAS Extension and the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners helping build young people with the knowledge and skills to become contributing members of our community. 4-H teaches youth to meet the diverse challenges of today’s world by building self-confidence, learning responsibility, and making positive decisions.

To learn more about UF/IFAS Extension and Citrus County 4-H programs contact:

Marnie Ward, 4-H Agent, at mlward@ufl.edu (352) 527-5712 Or

Toni Noaker, 4-H Program assistant, at tnoaker@ufl.edu (352) 527-5722



Join Us

November 17 & 18, 2023

for the 27th Annual Citrus Stampede Rodeo



at the Citrus County Fairgrounds

**For More
Information:**

gates open at 5:30pm
show starts at 7:30 pm

www.citrusstampederodeo.com

**All proceeds benefit the
Citrus County 4-H program**

UF | **IFAS Extension**
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



Nature Naturally

Bugs, Bugs, Bugs!!!

In the last issue of Nature Naturally, we explored Entomology – the study of insects. The wide category of the phylum Arthropoda includes: horseshoe crabs, spiders, shrimp, centipedes, bugs, ants, and flying insects. Some of the most recognizable insects are bees and butterflies. They are critically important as pollinators for agricultural crops and natural landscapes, but what about other insects? What roles do they play in natural environments?

Source of food for birds – over 90% of the birds in North America include insects in their diets. Some research suggests that by attracting birds to their fields, farmers can reduce the use of other pest control methods.



Eastern Bluebird photo credit: Michael Thomas/Audubon

Recycling of waste – a variety of insects, including the dung beetle, chomp down on animal waste. This helps to breakdown waste and release nutrients back into the soil. More nutrients = more crops.



Dung beetle photo credit: Don Hall, UF/IFAS

(Continued on page 14)

Nature Naturally

(continued from page 13) *Bugs Bugs Bugs*

Pest control – that’s correct. Maintaining a yard that attracts beneficial insects means there are predators to control populations of undesirable insects. The favored prey of the Halloween pennant dragonfly is the mosquito.



Halloween pennant dragonfly photo credit: US Fish and Wildlife

Crustaceans on land – “rolly pollies” or pillbugs. They have adapted to living on land (unlike the majority of other crustaceans). They can be found under leaf debris, fallen trees, and anywhere that decaying organic matter accumulates. As decomposers, they aid in decomposition and restore environments.

The role of decomposers cannot be overstated. In fact, without the decomposing, breaking down, and recycling that insects do, the Earth would be a rather messy place. Check out this link from the Florida Museum of Natural History at the University of Florida, to learn more about the important role of decomposers: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNx_CxIMmEI



Pillbugs eating leaves photo credit: Baylor College



Gardening Seminar: hosted online and in-person - you choose

Register here for these free seminars: <https://ccufflprogram.eventbrite.com>



**"Right Plant,
Right Place"**

Tuesday Oct 10
2:00 - 4:00 pm

**"Create a Florida
Friendly Landscape"**

Tuesday Oct 24
2:00 - 3:30 pm

**"Palms in
Central Florida"**

Tuesday Nov 7
2:00 - 4:00 pm

**"9 Florida-Friendly
Principles"**

Tuesday Nov 21
2:00 - 4:00 pm

**"Managing Pests
Wisely"**

Tuesday Dec 5
2:00 - 3:30 pm

**"Healthy Winter
Landscapes"**

Tuesday Dec 19
2:00 - 3:30 pm

Do you need more information about irrigation?

There are 2 seminars scheduled Thursday October 12:

"Irrigation & Turf Management 101" Noon to 3pm or

"Optimizing Irrigation Systems" 6-8pm

SAVE THE DATE



7th ANNUAL PLANT SALE
Saturday October 21, 2023
8:30am - 12:30pm

Citrus County Extension
3650 W Sovereign Path, Lecanto
352-527-5700



Service animals only please!
(No "comfort" animals)



UF/IFAS Extension

SolutionsForYourLife.com



OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER



Monthly Extension Master Gardener Seminars

Programs offer an opportunity to explore timely garden topics at these seminars offered at each Citrus County Library. No registration required for in person seminars. All programs start at 1 pm, last approximately 1 hour, and are **free**.

ZOOM seminar: pre-register on our Facebook page for the secure link.

October: Landscaping: What's New Under the Sun

November: Invasive Plants

December: Holiday Break! See you in January 2024.

2nd Wednesday	Central Ridge Library	Beverly Hills
3rd Wednesday	Floral City Library	Floral City
4th Wednesday	Lakes Regional Library	Inverness
2nd Thursday	Citrus Springs Library	Citrus Springs
4th Thursday	Homosassa Library	Homosassa
4th Monday	Coastal Regional	Crystal River
3rd Monday	ZOOM —Pre-register on our Facebook page!	



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:

IF-SVC-citrusmg@ad.ufl.edu

Welcome



Toni Noaker, BA

UF/IFAS Extension Citrus County welcomes Toni Noaker as the new 4-H Senior Program Assistant.

Toni joins us with a bachelor's degree in Communications & Marketing (Cal State – Dominguez Hills), and extensive work experience in youth education and programming.

Having worked in Southern California, Seattle, and Palm Beach, FL, Toni developed strong skills in project planning and volunteer development, and she is excited for the opportunity to use these skills in making a positive impact on the UF/IFAS Citrus County Extension 4-H program.

In her leisure time, as a Disney enthusiast, Toni enjoys experiencing all-things Disney and RV cross-country travel with her family. Please join us in extending a warm Citrus County welcome to Toni!

What to do in the Garden in the Fall

Fall is such a great time for gardening, and if you are new or relatively new to Florida, then it is especially fun to be gardening when your northern friends are putting theirs to bed. Unfortunately more than just the weather is different here in Florida. Applying northern plants, timing, and practices here in Citrus County may not give you the results you are looking for.

Let's talk about some of the fall activities that may be new to you.

Lawns:

We are fixated on green grass here in Florida. Even though fall weather is so much nicer here than “back home”, many plants such as the lawn are still going to go dormant. The last fertilization should be no later than about mid-October, otherwise, fertilizers will push new, tender growth on plants. The first frost comes along and causes significant damage because of the tender nature of the new growth. Avoid fertilizing late in the fall season.

Whatever you do, don't use a weed-n-feed type of product. The fertilizer part and the weed component need to be utilized at different times of the year, making this product expensive with half the product going to waste (and potentially becoming an environmental pollutant) no matter when you apply it.

Trees:

When residents make a big investment in a tree, make sure that money is invested wisely. When purchasing a tree, examine the rootball to make sure that roots are not growing through the drain-holes, or excessively growing in circles on the inside of the pot. Circling roots, if left unchecked, will continue to wrap around themselves in the rootball and can eventually strangle the tree in a process called ‘girdling’. Research shows that a smaller plant in a proper sized pot will outpace and more easily establish than one that has been in the same sized pot for too long.

Plant trees at the same depth or slightly higher in the ground than they grew in their container or field. Planting trees too low is a sure death sentence. Once in the ground be sure to give even drought-tolerant plants sufficient moisture to develop a robust root system. Consider a slow-release watering bag distributing water over many hours. Initial establishment could be as short as a month for a very small plant or several months for bigger investment plants.

(Continued on page 19)

(continued from page 18) What to do in the Garden in the Fall

Winter color:

One of the benefits of Florida living is color in the garden during nearly every season. Annuals that may have been grown in the summer north of the Mason-Dixon line, appreciate Citrus County's cooler winter months. Marigold, pansy, torrenia, geranium and snapdragon, all perform admirably in the fall and winter. Camellia, beauty-berry, ornamental grasses and crinum lilies are additional plants that will provide reliable color.

Vegetable and herb gardens:

Winter is a fantastic time to grow edibles that tolerate cooler temperatures. Reliable vegetables to plant through the end of the year include: kale, English pea (i.e. sugar snap), radish, cabbage, beet, kohlrabi, broccoli and cabbage. Even several herbs prefer weather conditions in the winter such as dill, cilantro, and parsley. Summertime heat and humidity usually cause these to fade. So if you had trouble with growing these in the summer sun, they may have simply burned out. Try again this winter with these culinary favorites.

Watering:

Check irrigation controllers to assure that the rain shut off device is working, and that the system is only watering plant material, and not the hardscape due to misaligned heads. These measures will ensure that water applied to the landscape is effective and efficient. This also saves money and precious natural resources.

Towards the end of the year, while plants are dormant and temperatures are cool, reset irrigation controllers to run about once every 10-14 days. For information on how to reset your controller, contact us: citrus@ifas.ufl.edu

What NOT to do

Do not use weed and feed products.