

Know, Sow, Grow newsletter

UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County

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NEW YEAR, NEW PROGRAMS!

By Sharon Smith and Kathi Wright, Master Gardener Volunteers

One of the primary goals of Florida Master Gardener Volunteers is to provide you with research-based horticultural information and education to help you create a thriving landscape, enjoy gardening, and protect the environment by following Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Principles.

We are excited to continue our mission in 2025 by continuing our Horticultural Workshop Series at the Palm Coast Community Center with new topics that we hope will leave you excited and engaged. Judy Jean, Extension Agent, Urban Horticulture, will lead workshops at the UF IFAS Extension Flagler County. Plus, we will continue to offer presentations during our special events at the extension office. Here's our current schedule:

Palm Coast Community Center

Register at: <https://tinyurl.com/7hhkmcen>

Easy to Grow Indoor & Outdoor Plants

If you struggle to keep your plants alive, Sharon Smith can help! Bring your questions and leave with the knowledge that success is possible.

Tuesday, Jan 28, 6:30 PM

Friday, Jan 31, 10:00 AM

Setting Up A Food Forest Like a Garden at Home

Christine Paris will teach you how to incorporate food into your landscape to feed your friends and family.

Tuesday, Feb 25, 6:30 PM

and

Perennial Vegetables for Florida

Tuesday, Mar 25, 6:30 PM

New Year Programs continued on page 2

Composting

If you are a beginner at composting, Debra Jameson will get you started. If you are experienced, there is still more to learn.

Friday, Mar 28, 10:00 AM

How Plants Solve Crimes

Heidi Mollman will lead a fun class where you will see the science involved in botanical evidence.

Tues, Apr 25, 6:30 PM

Fri, Apr 28, 10:00 AM

Hurricane Prep: Don't Be Gone with the Wind

Denise Cochran will review how you can plan for minimal damage to your yard and property.

Tues, May 27, 6:30 PM

Fri, May 30, 10:00 AM

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Our Mission

To assist Extension Agents in providing research-based horticultural education to Florida residents.

Our Vision

To be the most trusted resource for horticultural education in Florida.

New Year Programs continued on page 2

UF IFAS Flagler County Extension

Register at: <https://tinyurl.com/5e4jym9r>

Backyard Roses: Growing Beautiful Blooms at Home!

Discover tips and tricks to ensure your roses thrive and showcase their beauty. Take home your own rose bush from Nelson's Roses!

Friday, Jan 24, 10 AM - 12 PM

Fragrance in the Gardens: Selecting and Growing Scented Plants

Explore aromatic plants suited to every garden style. Take home a fragrant plant for your garden! **Saturday, Feb 8, 10 AM-12 PM**

Gardening with Fruits: Native Fruit Trees

Learn how to grow fruit trees in your garden. Take home one of the trees we will be reviewing. **Friday, Feb 14, 10 AM-12 PM**

Southern Blooms: Cultivating Azaleas and Camellias

Perfect for anyone looking to add a pop of color and elegance to their garden! Take home an azalea or camellia. **Friday, Feb 28, 10 AM-12 PM**

Bloom & Benefit!

We will have food trucks, a silent auction, and presentations by experts on topics such as Roses for Florida, Citrus and Other Fruit Trees, Growing a Vegetable Garden, and more. Master Gardeners will be available to answer questions. Proceeds support education in the community. **Saturday, March 15, 11 AM - 3 PM**

COVER PHOTO: Christine Paris presenting at the Fall Bazaar, George Carfagno

NEW COMMUNITY GARDEN

by Sharon Smith, Master Gardener Volunteer

One of the features of the new Southern Recreational Center in Palm Coast is a community garden. There are twelve raised beds that are available to the public for a small fee. Two of the beds are waist high for those who cannot bend, and the rest are one foot high. Each bed is connected to an irrigation system. The area is fenced and secured with a combination lock.

The Flagler County Master Gardener Volunteers have planted a bed that contains strawberries, carrots, arugula, longevity spinach, broccolini, parsley, kale, oregano, lettuce, chives, and green onions. These are cold weather vegetables appropriate to north-central Florida. There are also marigolds and nasturtiums to help with insect control.

As noted in the article on page one, Christine Paris is leading two classes at the Palm Coast Community Center on growing your own food.

PHOTO

Master Gardener Volunteer Community Garden Team,
Sharon Smith



MULCH MATTERS

By Mary Ellen Setting, Master Gardener Volunteer

Adding a layer of mulch to your landscape beds will produce lasting benefits. Mulch retains moisture around the root zone of your plants, moderates soil temperature, controls weeds, and provides aesthetic appeal. It can improve soil texture and add nutrients to the soil. Mulch can even help reduce erosion, protect plants from certain diseases, and provide a buffer from trimmers and mowers.

Mulch Types

There are two types of mulch available – inorganic and organic. Inorganic (non-living) mulches, like pebbles, shell, or rubber mulch, are very durable but are not recommended. They have zero nutrient content so will not improve the soil, will not retain moisture, will increase soil temperature, and will never decompose. Inorganic mulches are best used for paths or under the eaves of houses, free of plants. If you currently have areas around your home that are mulched in rock and want to add plants, add containers of flowers or shrubs on top of the rock for interest.



Organic mulches are preferred as they break down over time and enrich the soil. Examples of this include pine straw (needles), pine bark nuggets, melaleuca chips, and other wood and leaf mulches. Pine straw adds organic matter, needs to be reapplied every six months to a year but will not wash away. Pine bark enriches the soil, lasts two to three years and can wash or float away in heavy rains. Melaleuca mulch is made from exotic invasive trees that are cured at high temperatures to prevent germination. It is low in nutrients but lasts a long time and will not float. Although cypress is an organic mulch, it is not recommended since this is an important wetland plant that needs to be conserved.



Applying Mulch

Mulch should be applied to flower beds, vegetable gardens, and around trees and shrubs to a depth of no more than two to three inches. Adding more mulch can harm plants since the mulch can intercept rain and irrigation and prevent moisture from reaching roots. Never pile mulch around the base of tree trunks, called "**volcano mulching**." When mulch is piled high against the base of a tree, it holds moisture which encourages rot in the trunk. Pull mulch back away from the tree trunk, so the root flare is left uncovered. Mulch out to the drip line (area on ground under the outer edges of the tree) or beyond. Rake older mulch to refresh its appearance, open up crusted areas to benefit plantings and before adding a new layer. Some mulches can become matted, preventing water and air from seeping through.

PHOTOS

UPPER: Organic mulches, Frank Galdo, UF IFAS

LOWER: Volcano mulch at tree base, Joe Boggs, OSU Extension

RESOURCES

Mulch: <https://tinyurl.com/4yb5neh6>

Proper mulching is an essential component of a Florida-Friendly landscape. Mulch mimics the natural processes you find in a healthy, mature forest with its thick layer of leaves or needles blanketing the ground, creating rich soil. Consider which mulch best fits your garden needs and select your mulch for appearance as well as to support a healthy landscape.



SAVE THE PALM TREES

By Doreen Westcott, Master Gardener Volunteer

Our state palm tree is the sabal palmetto, also known as the sabal or cabbage palm. The University of Florida, arborists, horticulturists, Green Industry Professionals, and Master Gardeners agree that to keep the palm trees healthy, prune off seed pods and dead fronds only. Palms need to feed on the green fronds for food nutrients to keep them healthy. Homeowner associations (HOA) and condominium owner associations (COA) might find it necessary to remove more fronds for appearance. The 9 o'clock and 3 o'clock cuts are the only other cuts that are acceptable for all palms.

Improper trimming of palms is known as over-pruning. I am going to use the pineapple shape at the top of the sabal palm as the face on a clock. After pruning, if fronds that remain growing out at the 12 o'clock position look like a feather duster or have few fronds remaining coming out at the sides of the pineapple at 11 o'clock and one o'clock, it is called a hurricane cut. Hurricane cuts do not save trees from strong wind damage. This abuse causes stress because the palm will use stored nutrients instead of producing new fronds for food right away. The palms eventually become weak, susceptible to insect damage, have nutrient deficiencies and diseases, and a thinning trunk called penciling. This can happen with continuous abuse. A proper trim is pruning all palms from the bottom up to a horizontal straight line stopping at 9 o'clock and 3 o'clock on the clock.

RESOURCES

Palm tree pruning: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP443>
 Sabal palm: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/ST575>

The best time to trim a sabal palm is the end of spring or early summer. In our area, prune late May or early June to avoid the mess of flowers, seeds, and berries to avoid this unwanted mess on your property or in your pool. This also helps the palm have enough fronds to protect the crown shaft from hurricane damage. The crown shaft is the heart of the tree. The tree cannot live if the crown shaft dies. Not all palms have a green crown shaft. Other palms have a bud protected and enclosed in the crown. The sabal palm flowers once a year and there are other palms that flower often during the year. Palm trees should never have more than 1/3 of their fronds removed at a time and never be trimmed less than a 9 o'clock and 3 o'clock cut.

I live in a COA, and for years our palms were trimmed improperly until we had to remove some with penciled trunks. Our Canary Island date palm had nutrient deficiencies and a canopy collapse from palm weevils. We hired an arborist to inspect our palms and advise us on the proper trimming procedures and care for our situation. The arborists reported that the palms planted too close to our buildings could be trimmed at 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock cut because the fronds were damaging the paint. They needed to be fertilized, and in a few years the fronds will be over our buildings and can be trimmed at 9 o'clock and 3 o'clock like the rest of our palms. The penciled trunk and Canary Island date palm needed to be removed. Always follow laws for removing palms.



PHOTOS:

UPPER: Properly trimmed palms, Doreen Westcott
 LOWER: Hurricane cut palms, Doreen Westcott

WHAT THE HECK IS THAT IN MY GARDEN?

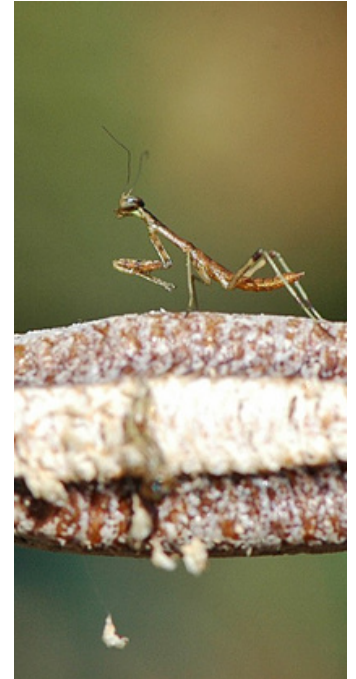
By Mary Ellen Setting, Master Gardener Volunteer

Have you ever found something strange looking in your garden and wondered, “What the heck is THAT?” Sometimes you do not even know what manner of plant or animal this new find is, so identifying it is difficult. Deciding what, if anything, to do about it is even harder. To give you some guidance, we are presenting a series of oddities you might encounter to help solve the mystery

A hard, tan colored foam-like mass about 1-2 inches long stuck to a branch or twig, resembling a small spongy oblong pillow:

This strange looking blob houses hundreds of tiny **praying mantis** eggs. Females lay eggs in an **egg case** called an ootheca. She secretes a liquid that mixes with air to make a froth that solidifies into a protective case. The case shields the eggs from predators and is weather resistant. The egg cases are usually wrapped around stems of shrubs.

The egg cases are laid in fall and hatch in spring. The nymphs, which are smaller, wingless versions of adult praying mantises, will emerge through small openings in the case. Since praying mantises are beneficial insects that feed on pests, the egg cases should not be disturbed or destroyed.



Small, cup-shaped growth on mulch with little spheres inside that resemble eggs:

The **bird's nest fungus** looks like a small nest containing multiple tiny eggs. The cup-shape “nest” is a fruiting fungus that contains spore-filled balls. When rain hits the inside of the nest, it propels the eggs into the air. After landing on leaves, branches, or twigs, the spores disperse to germinate new growths.

Bird's nest fungi get their nutrients by decomposing plant organic matter, so it is common to see them on plant debris and mulch. They are not considered dangerous to plants, animals, or humans so fungicides are not recommended.

PHOTOS

UPPER RIGHT: Praying mantis egg casing, Lyle Buss, UF IFAS

UPPER RIGHT: Emerging praying mantis, MJ Raupp, UM
LOWER LEFT: Bird's nest fungi, iNaturalist

REFERENCES

Praying mantis:

<https://ipm.ifas.ufl.edu/pdfs/PrayingMantis.pdf>

Bird's nest fungi:

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/PP361>

GROWING INDOOR PLANTS

By Sharon Smith, Master Gardener Volunteer

There is no such thing as a green thumb or a black thumb. Following a few key rules will help you successfully grow indoor and outdoor plants. For this newsletter, indoor plants will be the focus. In the spring newsletter, outdoor plants will be the focus.

Rule #1. Know the requirements of the plant. There are three basic things to know. 1) Does it need a lot of light or does it do best in low light? 2) Does it need humidity or is dry air preferred? 3) Does the soil need to be moist or dry? Knowing and providing these three things will keep your plants healthy and growing well.

Look at your home. Do you have lots of light from the windows? This is where you grow cactus, succulents, and hoyas. They require very little water and need very little care.

If your rooms are light part of the day, this is ideal for most house plants. Grow pothos, philodendron, begonias, dracenas, and palms. They require water at least weekly, but let them dry out between watering.

For darker areas consider ferns. They need to be kept moist and sprayed with water or in a bathroom that gets steamed up from the shower.

PHOTO

Houseplant collection, Stock



Many houseplants also do well on the lanai, but need to be brought in or covered if there is a frost or near frost.

Lastly, houseplants need to be examined for insects. Common insects include spider mites, which suck the chlorophyll from the leaves. Look under the leaves and for webs. Mealybugs look like pieces of white cotton. Scale is a hard shell and leaves a sticky residue. Spray or wipe the plant with neem oil or horticultural oil if you see insects. Treat the plant a few times once or twice a week to make sure you remove all the insects. Move the plant away from the other plants when you are treating it.

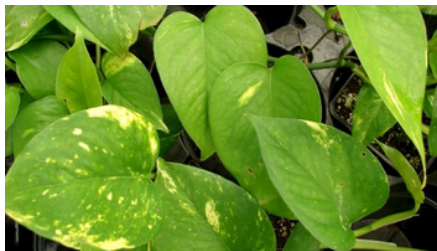
So rule #1, which is to know the requirements of your plant, is most of what you need to know. If a plant is doing well, consider purchasing similar plants or ask friends what they find easy to grow. Next newsletter will address easy to grow plants in the landscape.

EASY INDOOR PLANTS

By Kathi Wright, Master Gardener Volunteer

In the article above, Sharon gives you a great overview of how to grow indoor plants. Here is information on some of the plants she references.

Pothos is a common houseplant but is considered invasive in south Florida and is on the caution list in central Florida. Keep it in the pot!



Philodendron come in a variety of sizes. Some get very large, and others are vining and work in hanging baskets.



Dracaena is great for low-light areas with foliage in many colors.



Hoya is a vine that is good as a hanging plant. It likes bright light and can be placed near a window.



REFERENCES

Control your Pothos: <https://tinyurl.com/3kftkpcv>
 Philodendrons: <https://tinyurl.com/48j5v7f>
Dracaena marginata: <https://tinyurl.com/2atfdr74>
 Hoya: <https://tinyurl.com/2s43cwsj>

PHOTOS

UPPER LEFT: Pothos, UF IFAS
 UPPER RIGHT: Philodendron, Kim Taylor, UF
 BOTTOM LEFT: *Dracaena marginata*, UF IFAS
 BOTTOM RIGHT: Hoya, UF IFAS Extension Duval County

PLANTING A WINTER GARDEN

By Doreen Westcott, Master Gardener Volunteer

Whether you are adding to an existing vegetable garden or flower garden or starting a garden for the first time, there are plenty of plants to plant in the winter. Always protect your plants from the cold.

Central Florida Gardening Calendar: Vegetables

December: Plant cabbage, broccoli, lettuce, Swiss chard, cauliflower, kale, celery, beets, carrots, and radishes. Many garden centers have seasonal plants for sale. Strawberries are great to grow in containers. Herbs to grow: parsley, thyme, sage, rosemary, cilantro, and fennel.

January: Continue planting cool season crops and broccoli, kale, carrots, and lettuce. Add Irish potatoes; start with healthy seed pieces or seeds from a nursery or online catalog. Tomatoes can be planted if you protect them from the cold. You may want to plant in a container for now.

February: Plant warm and cool-season vegetables. Protect tomatoes and cold tender vegetables from frost or freezing temperatures. Early February planting of tomato plants yield early summer tomatoes. Plant again in September for fall and winter tomatoes.

March: Plant warm season crops like peppers, squash, and beans. Now is the time to plant more herbs. They are not only good for cooking but will also attract butterflies.



Central Florida Gardening Calendar: Flowers

December: Plant annuals, bedding plants, and bulbs. Refresh your garden with winter colors and add masses of pansies, petunia, and snapdragon. Add herbs the same as the vegetable garden. Monitor your house plants for pests. Poinsettias are houseplants that are kept indoors out of the cold until spring.

January: Plant annuals, dianthus, petunia, viola, and snapdragon. Add bulbs, agapanthus, gloriosa lily, and crinum lily. Plant camellias. Nurseries have an assortment of colors. Plant deciduous fruit trees. Prune nonflowering shrubs.

February: Plant annuals, pansy, petunia, verbena, dianthus, strawflower, and lobelia. Protect from freezing temperatures and frosts. Bulbs to plant include Amazon lily, crinum lily, and agapanthus. Mulch your bulbs to protect them from the cold. Azaleas are in full bloom this month, time to add more. Remove dead and damaged rose stems.

March: Replace declining annuals with angelonia, gazania, impatiens, and salvia. Plant caladium bulbs. Add herbs to attract butterflies. Prune your azaleas.



PHOTOS:

UPPER: Swiss chard, UF IFAS

LOWER: *Gloriosa superba*, UF IFAS Marion County

Always scout your garden for insect damage. The Central Florida Gardening Calendar has additional information about vegetable gardens, flower gardens, shrubs, trees, and garden pests. <https://tinyurl.com/38eddju2>

YOUR MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS

Christine Paris

We're excited to name Christine Paris as our **Master Gardener Volunteer of the Season!** Christine became an MGV in 2023 after relocating to the area from New Zealand bringing a love of growing food.

Christine has taught multiple classes on growing edibles and has led efforts to grow a food forest at the demonstration gardens at our extension center. She has increased the amount and varieties grown, extended the harvesting season, and created a "grocery row" section.

Thank you, Christine! We appreciate your knowledge, passion, and dedication!



FALL BAZAAR APPRECIATION

A big thank you to everyone who helped to make our fall bazaar a success! We had a wide variety of donated items for our rummage sale. We were even able to raffle a bike from The Bike Men of Flagler County! Proceeds go toward educational programs in Flagler County.



Food trucks and vendors were popular, and presentations on cool season crops, managing yard pests responsibly, composting, and water conservation were well attended. Thanks to everyone who brought food items for Grace Community Food Pantry. We donated over 50 pounds of food!

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK!

Stay up to date with Master Gardener events and read educational information to help you have success with your landscape and garden. Follow UF IFAS Flagler County Master Gardeners on Facebook!

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8srfaw>

SAYING GOODBYE

We are sad to have lost two Flagler County Master Gardener Volunteers. Both were important members of the community and will be missed.

Robert Tabit, who passed in November 2023, was very active with many organizations, including the master gardeners, the Audubon Club, the Garden Club of Palm Coast, and Rotary International. <https://tinyurl.com/35fy3dst>

PHOTOS

TOP RIGHT: Christine Paris in the Demonstration Gardens, Sharon Smith
LEFT: Fall Bazaar preparation, George Carfagno

Daisy Henry, a former Bunnell city commissioner and community advocate, passed in May 2024. She was a cherished member of our community, known for her passion for gardening and her dedication to making our environment more beautiful. <https://tinyurl.com/msuwh3yv>

If you have any plant-related questions or need gardening advice, do not hesitate to reach out to us. Flagler County Master Gardener Volunteers are a great resource for home gardeners and can provide valuable info and guidance on topics such as soil health, pest management, plant selection, and more. We are trained volunteers who have a passion for gardening and can provide advice on a wide range of topics. If you need help, stop by or reach out to your local Master Gardeners (email: mgardener@flaglercounty.gov).

Helpful Links

Flagler County Extension: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/flagler/>

UF Solutions for Your Life: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/>

Florida-Friendly Landscaping: <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>

UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions: <https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/>

UF Master Gardener: <https://tinyurl.com/nhk2z2eh>

Know, Sow, Grow Past Issues: <https://tinyurl.com/yc67dfwk>