

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.

You Call This Dirt?

By Karen Kennen, MGV

So often people moving to Central Florida are stunned by the sandy-looking soil found in Florida. Little do they know, it is a very unique “dirt” found only in Florida. In 1989, the governor declared this dirt the state soil. It is called *Myakka* which in Native American means, “Big Waters” because it was formed circa 1467 from sandy, marine deposits. It is found in over one and one-half million acres of Florida flatland. Longleaf Pine, Slash pine, Scrub Oak, Saw Palmetto, and Huckleberries grow naturally in the flatlands of Myakka.

The many functions of soil are to use as building materials; foundation for buildings, roads, etc.; help water infiltration; provide growth area for micro-organisms; and, finally, serve as plant growth-medium. Not surprisingly, the last function listed is the one most often thought of by Florida gardeners.

Your **soil pH** is one piece of information about your growing-medium you need to know for a thriving landscape. A soil range of 5.5 to 7.0 is suitable for most plants since the pH governs chemical processes that affect the availability of nutrients for growing your plants. It is easy to bring a sample into the Lake County MGV [Plant Clinic](#) for pH testing.

For in depth understanding and management of pH refer to EDIS publication “[Soil pH and the Home Landscape or Garden](#). See photos on [page 5](#).

References: EDIS [HS1207](#) | [SL256](#) | [Changing Soil pH](#) | How to Take a [Soil Sample](#) | [Soil Testing](#) | [Garden Soil](#) | USDA [Soils](#) |

Plant Clinic Chatter

By Sandra Bryan, MGV



How many of you have heard of Stinkhorn fungus (*Agaricomycetes: Phallales: Phallaceae*)? Me neither. The fungus is resistant to fungicides. Once established, it forms mushrooms with a disagreeable pong. To get rid of the growth you must dig out the egg-like structures that form below the mushroom or disturb the mulch during the fungus' morphology into the mushroom. According to UF/IFAS: As a fungus, the stinkhorn breaks down organic matter and makes those nutrients available for plants. Stinkhorns do not harm landscape plants or grasses.

Some compare it's strong smell to rotting carrion or dung. It is this smell that makes it possible for the fungus to exist. Since it does not spread spores by the wind, insects that are attracted by smell ingest the spores and spread them into decaying matter in your yard (leaves or mulch). In spite of the smell, this is considered a delicacy and said to taste like hazelnuts when harvested in the egg stage.

Useful Links: [EDIS](#), [UF/IFAS](#), [Gardening Solutions](#)

Lantern Stinkhorn: Jackson Nugent



Elegant Stinkhorn: Jimmy Craine



Spring cleaning time is here!

Some filth-breeding flies were brought into our Plant Clinic in January (Humpback specifically). These non-biting flies of many different names, live where it is warm, humid and dirty. They thrive in kitchens, bathrooms, and dark spaces—like drains—where there may be a build up of molds, slime, and animal or vegetable debris. The key is to keep drains clean. Any big box store has a plethora of contact and residual products available for fly removal/prevention/capture.

More Info: [Filth-breeding flies](#) | EDIS [SP121](#) | [ENY-222](#) | UF/IFAS [Entomology](#) |



Figure 9. Humpbacked Fly (family Phoridae)



Figure 7. Vinegar fly.



Figure 5. Moth fly.

Photos: UF/IFAS

Glorious Gaillardia

Cathy Leavers
Master Gardener Volunteer

The explorer Ponce de Leon was so impressed with the beautiful wildflowers he found here that he named this region, *La Florida*, Land of Flowers. *Gaillardia*, also called Indian Blanket or Blanket Flower, was undoubtedly one of the flowers he saw when he explored this state. It is one of the most brightly colored wildflowers around and is a real standout in any garden.

The bright blooms attract pollinators and, later in the season, birds are attracted to the seeds. It is easy to grow, thriving in even poor sandy soils, and blooms profusely spring through summer. The blooms are red & yellow, sometimes with red being predominant with yellow tips; yellow petals with a red base; half red and half yellow; or can also be solid yellow, orange, or red.

It grows to a height of 1-2 feet with a spread up to twice its height. Gaillardia needs well-drained, sandy soil and full sun. It will not do well in wet conditions or in shade. Removal of spent flower heads will increase its life span and flowering. Over time one may need to remove older plants.

Once established, the plants will tolerate very dry conditions and do not need a lot of care. They can be grown from cuttings or seeds and will reseed themselves in sunny, well-drained sites. But you should make sure not to have an abundance of mulch around these plants since that will inhibit the self-sowing of the seeds. This is a highly recommended plant and a favorite among native plant enthusiasts. So give it a try and add some brilliant color to your garden! Useful links: [Gardening Solutions](#) | [Fact Sheet](#)



Gaillardia pluchella Photograph by Stephen H Brown UF IFAS Lee Co.

SNAKES IN CENTRAL FLORIDA



Venom 2 was established in 2018 by Dr. Ben Abo and EMS Chief D. Miller. This group of fire rescue members answers calls about venomous snakes and snake bites in Lake County. In their first year, they had over 100 calls for delivery of anti-venom; removal of snakes; and identification of snakes. There are two things to remember when dealing with snakes and snakebites. First, do not mess with snakes -- if you leave them alone, they won't bite. Second, early treatment -- anti-venom is not harmful to you, so treat early.

As gardeners, it is important we take some easy precautions to avoid being bit. Wear heavy cloth or leather garden gloves and wear close-toed shoes. Be cautious around tall grass, shrubs and lakes. If bitten, remain calm; immobilize the area while trying to keep it below the heart; remove any jewelry; and, safely observe the snake to help identify it or take pictures if possible. Then contact 911 or drive to the emergency room.

Call the non-emergency Lake County Fire Rescue number, 352-343-2101, for a non-bite (identification) or nuisance situation.

There are only four poisonous snakes indigenous to central Florida. The three hemotoxic (blood) snakes with triangular-shaped heads are the Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake, the Water Moccasin, and the Pygmy Rattlesnake. The fourth is the elapid (neurotoxic), Coral snake, which does not have a triangular shaped but has a rounded nose with a neckless head.

Remember the saying to help identify Corals: **Red** touches **yellow**, kills a fellow. **Red** touches black, venom lack.

Information from LT. Jeffrey Sacco's presentation

Useful Links: [Venom 2](#), [2018 article](#), [Venomous snakes](#), [Snake Bite Foundation](#), [UFW](#),
EDIS: [WEC219](#), [WEC220](#), [WEC221](#), [WEC222](#)

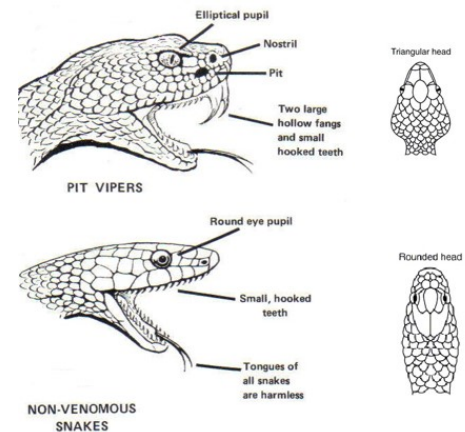


Photo: TX A&M AgriLife



CORAL SNAKE

- Found statewide
- Average length 2 to 3 feet
- Colorful red, yellow and black, thin-bodied snake
- Often confused with the non-venomous Scarlet King snake
- Can be identified with the rhyme "Red touches yellow, kills a fellow. Red touches black, venom lack."



COTTONMOUTH/ WATER MOCCASIN

- Found statewide near bodies of water
- Average adult length is 3 to 4 feet
- Colors vary from black and gray to brown with dark brown markings on its heavy body
- When disturbed, will often give an "open mouth display"



EASTERN DIAMONDBACK RATTLESNAKE

- Found statewide in both dry and wet habitats
- Average length of 5 feet and a maximum of more than 7 feet
- Heavy-bodied with light to dark brown color, distinct diamond pattern on back, and rattle at end of tail



PIGMY RATTLESNAKE

- Abundantly found statewide in wooded habitats, occasionally found in marshes
- Average length is 1 to 1 1/2 feet
- Grey in color, with dark gray or brown blotches and red highlight from head to tail

Plant of the Month: Camellia



Rose-
Double

By Karen Kennen, MGV

Camellias are long lasting trees and shrubs with year-round glossy leaves and cool weather blooms. They have been in the US since 1797 when they were brought to New England from Asia.

Camellias like to be in a well-drained soil with a pH of 5 to 6.5. An ideal planting location would be where the plants are in the afternoon shade. Under a tall tree is often where they are planted and do well. They are drought tolerant but should have one inch of water every 10 days to two weeks during a drought. They can also receive one to two applications of a 12-4-12 or 15-5-15 fertilizer. The plant lives a very long time. My neighbors have a small tree that was planted in 1955 and is still blooming and adding beauty to the landscape.

There are two main cultivars that perform well in central Florida. They are *Camellia japonica* and *Camellia sasanqua*. *Japonica* is the larger of the two growing from 5 to 20 feet tall. While *sasanqua* usually grows from 2 to 4 feet. *Japonica* has larger leaves and flowers with colors ranging from red to pink to white and sometimes with stripes or spots of color. The bloom forms can be single, anemone, semi-double, double, peony or rose-double.

Sasanqua has mostly single or double blooms that are small and only 3 to 4 inches in diameter. The colors are white, pink, rose, and cherry red. The *sasanqua* Camellia is often used with other shrubs because of its small growth and blending with other shrubs.



Single Form



Double Form

January, February & November are good months to plant new Camellias.

Camellia Gardens: [Harry P. Leu](#), Orlando | [Bob Wines](#) Camellias Garden, Orlando | [South Seminole Farm](#), Cassleberry

Resources: EDIS [CIR461](#) | [Camellia](#) Topics | Pests [ENH1294](#) | NC Ext.: [sasanqua](#)



Semi-Double Form



Anemone Form



Peony Form

Photos:
Leu Gardens



Camellia japonica 'Fashionata' Pink Midseason.
Photo: Regina D, MGV

BIRDS & BUGS

By Jean Davidson, MGv



Look at this picture. The true statement comes to mind, "a picture is worth a thousand words." I have been a gardener since 1974 and seen a lot of my questions answered by observation. One question I hear a lot from people calling or visiting the Plant Clinic, is if they should get rid of a bug they see in their garden or just leave it alone.

Well, if they watch their garden carefully, they will see a wonderful phenomena occur. With their diligent observation over a period of time, they will see the insects' natural predator eat the bug and, by the way, have a delicious meal for it and its family!

One insect predator to take note of are birds!! First to consider is the Crow. Crows can be harmful to crops, but they also may prevent damage by eating insect pests. According to the [Animal Diversity Web](#), recent studies have shown that 60-90% of insects eaten by crows are agricultural pests.

Sources: Audubon [Bird Guide](#) | [All About Birds](#) | [Crows & Ravens](#) | [Florida's Birds](#) | [FL Museum](#) | UF [FNATL](#)



Photo: Audubon

Another bird that is helpful for our gardens is the colorful Blue Jay. They are largely vegetarians and most of their diet consists of acorns, nuts, and seeds. They will also eat caterpillars, grasshoppers, and beetles.

Next, there is the Mockingbird (our state bird) with its melodious song. They are omnivores and eat such insects as grasshoppers, caterpillars, and beetles in the summer; and rely on berries in winter.

Finally, consider the Cardinal that eats mainly seeds and fruit but supplements its diet with beetles crickets, leafhoppers, cicadas, flies, centipedes, spiders, & katydids. So the next time you are tempted to pick up a can of insecticide, think about the wonderful ecosystem already in place!



Mockingbird

Photos:
Cornell
Lab



American Crow

Arbor Day 2020



Master Gardener Volunteers helped give away over 1,000 trees!

Some 500 trees were donated by Lake Soil & Water Conservation ([LSWC](#)) of which elected Board member, Banks Helfrich, was there to help educate the public and hand out Green Ash, Red Maple, American Elm & Leyland Cypress trees.



Over 500 Longleaf & Slash pines were donated by the FL Forest Service ([FFS](#)) of which County Forester, Chris Otremba, was there to help educate the public and hand out the pines.

NATIVES & THEIR IMPORTANCE

Information quoted from linked UF/IFAS sources

“[Native plants](#) are an important part of Florida's ecosystem and provide food and shelter for other native species. You can help native plants make a comeback by planting them in your garden.”

"Native" species are widely understood to be those that occurred within political borders before European contact (~1500), and not as a result of direct or indirect human influence ([ENH1045](#))."

"Native plants and wildlife evolved together in communities, so they complement each other's needs. Furthermore, native plants are suited to the local climate, which means that within the historical range of weather conditions, and when properly sited, they can survive without fertilization, irrigation, and cold protection. Non-native plants from other parts of the world may provide some of the resources needed by native wildlife. However, their benefits can come with a high cost ([WEC339](#))."

There are also native wildflowers—much harder to find, like Coreopsis, Phlox, Milkweed, and Spiderwort.

Ask your local nursery what natives they have for the conditions in your landscape. Remember that natives, like all plants, are more likely to survive and thrive when they're planted in the right place. Use them correctly, and your garden should flourish ([list of Native plants](#)).

Resources: [Native Plants](#) | [Florida Friendly](#) | [Marion County](#) | FL [Native Wildflowers](#)



Coreopsis photo: MGV Regina D.

MYAKKA: FLORIDA STATE SOIL

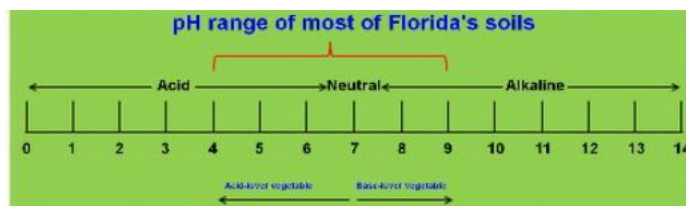


Figure 1. The pH scale and vegetable categories. The pH is measured on a logarithm scale from 0 to 14.

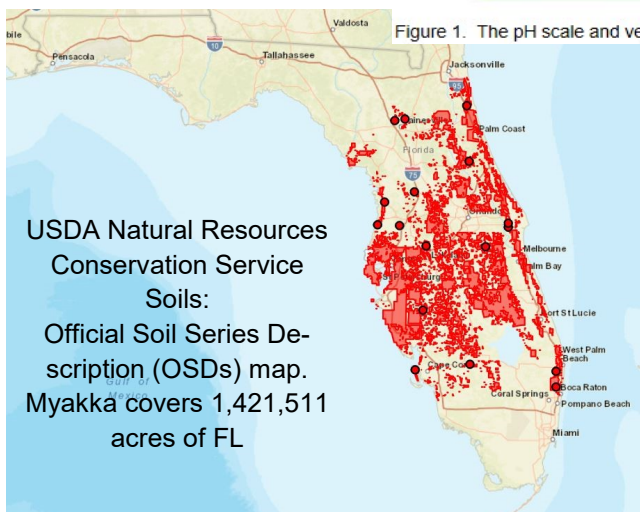
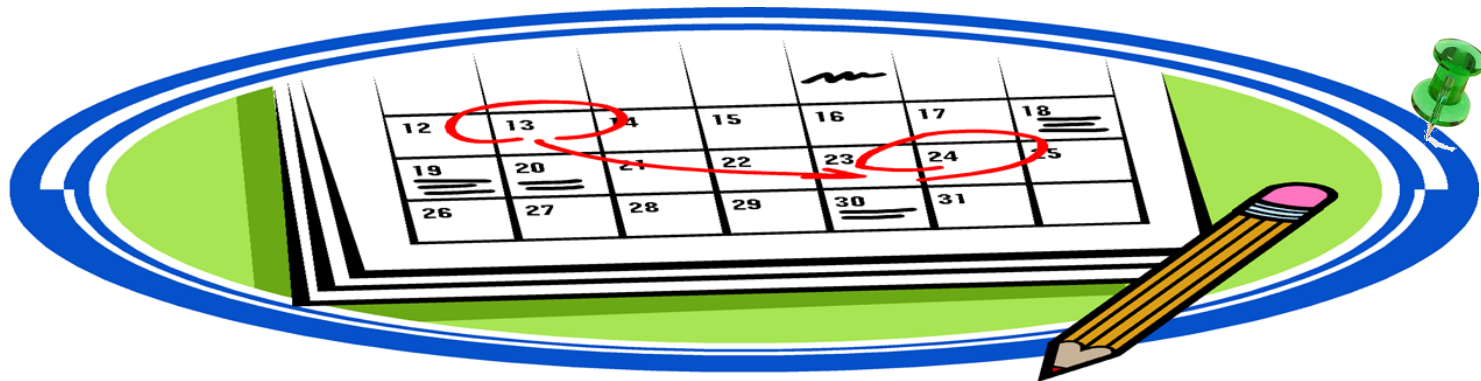


Figure 14. Myakka fine sand.

Credit: Tyler Jones, UF/IFAS



Calendar of Events

- ♦ **Monday-Friday: Plant Clinic:** 9-3pm @ Lake County Ext., 1951 Woodlea Rd, Tavares
Bring your questions, soil samples, etc. for a Master Gardener Volunteer to answer in person or email us at, lakemg.ifas@ufl.edu
- ♦ **2/7: The Art of Pruning Roses:** 9:30-10:30am @ Lake County Ext., [Register](#)
- ♦ **2/11, 2/12: Wildlife & Invasive Species Education (W.I.S.E.):** times vary by day, Sumter County Ext., 7620 SR 471, Bushnell, Pre-[Register](#)
- ♦ **2/15: Landscaping Gardening Trends:** 10-11am @ Lake County Ext., 1951 Woodlea Rd, Tavares,
Join us for our *Saturday in the Gardens Speaker Series*! This month we'll discuss the design trends that will work for Florida Landscapes. Pre-[Register](#) for \$5 or pay \$6 at the door with cash or check (made out to: *University of Florida*) . According to the Society of Garden Designers (SGD), its top trends for 2019-2020, are Bold colors, hanging plants and making a home for nature. **2/22: Seminole County Gardening Expo:** 9-3pm @ 250 W. County Home Rd, Sanford, [More Info](#)

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

<https://lakegardeningprograms.eventbrite.com>

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

Be sure to catch our *From the Extension* articles in the *Daily Commercial*! Read [January's article](#) about Cleaning Gardening Tools & other January gardening activities.