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The Lake County Mission Statement

The Mission of the UF/IFAS Mater 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 through Discovery Gardens.

Garden Scoop

Natural Plant Pest Control

BY K. S. Kennen, MGV

Natural pest control is the use of chemical free remedies which can result in less environmental harm through target specific control and use of such naturals as oils and insecticidal soaps. The pluses of using natural products is that they do not remain long after use and will breakdown quickly so they can not continue to cause harm after application. They also act quickly and can kill upon contact. In addition, their low toxicity will be at the safest level for use.

Oils are used on slow moving, soft-bodied pests such as aphids and whiteflies. Oils work well and do kill on contact but must be reapplied since they do no remain long and have to come in contact with the insect to kill it. It is also important to note that you can not use oils if the temperature is above 90 degrees because of the danger of phototoxicity (leaves burning).

Citrus oils can have a limonene component which is derived from the pressed peels of citrus fruit and can kill such pests as fire ants, fleas, and mites. This element is so safe that it is even used topically in animal shampoos as a flea control. It works by contact with the pest and smothers the pest.

Neem oil is from *Azadirachta indica* or neem tree that grows in tropical and semitropical regions like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal. This 75 foot tall tree can have a 4 to 5 foot diameter and is a fast grower. The oil is extracted from the seed kernels of the tree. It targets immature stages of chewing pests such as caterpillars and weevils. There also is some systemic control through presence in the leaves and roots of plants that can help control leaf-miners.



Essential oils can be found in three different forms: plant oils; plant oils along with plant extracts; or plant oils with fish oil. There are many of these products on the market. They have been found to have bioactive toxicity along with the action of smothering the insect pest. These oils may have negative impact on larger pests but unfortunately there tends to be a lack of consistency making it necessary to monitor its use for effectiveness. The most common oils used in these products are sesame, garlic, canola, and soybean. Some herbal extracts include oils from thyme, rosemary, peppermint, cinnamon, and clove.

For more information contact: UF/IFAS Extension, Lake County Office lakemg.ifas@ufl.edu ▪

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Natural Pest Control, cont'd.

Horticultural oils are another natural product that can be used to control garden pests. They are from highly refined and lightweight petroleum products. When used it is necessary to apply and maybe reapply since there is no residue left on plants when they are sprayed. When used correctly, horticultural oils can help manage many piercing-sucking insects and mites. Use for insects such as aphids, whitefly nymphs, mealybug nymphs, and scale insect nymphs. The oils are not as effective against hard-bodied adult insects. Be sure to cover both the top and bottom of leaves with the spray for the most effectiveness. With any of the natural products, be sure to read and follow all directions on the labels to avoid improper application.

One natural pest control product many gardeners are aware of is insecticidal soap. This product, like most natural products, must have direct contact with the pest to be effective. Insecticidal soap is used on soft scale, whiteflies, mealybugs, thrips, spider mites, etc. Be sure to test it on a small part of the plant with pests to be sure that plant is not sensitive to it. After 24 hours, check for any damage to the plant tested area.

It is important to note dish soap and insecticidal soap are not the same product. Dish soap is not a soap but is a detergent and is synthetically produced to be a strong cleaner and should not be used on plants even if diluted. Plants have a waxy layer of lipid that protect the plant. Detergents erode that layer and will result in damaged, brittle leaves.

It is important to also to realize that insecticidal soap is not selective about which pest or insect it will kill. The product is natural but can result in the death of any pest on the plant. Home remedies can also be harmful since some soaps actually have alcohol as a ingredient and no plant should have any form or quantity of alcohol applied to it, since it is harmful and will cause damage.



RESOURCES: <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/pests-and-diseases/pests/management/soaps-detergents-and-pest-management.html>

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/pests-and-diseases/pests/management/natural-pest-and-disease-management.html>

Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Clinic

Bring your plant, insect, and soil problems to our Plant Clinic for advice Monday or Wednesday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. This Plant Clinic is staffed by volunteers. Please call ahead at 352-343-4101 to be sure someone is in the clinic to assist you with your questions. You may also send photos of your local problems to the plant clinic at lakemg@ifas.ufl.edu.

Veggie Planting Time

BY K. S. Kennen, MGV

Hurry, hurry. It is almost past time to plant your vegetable garden. As you may know or will find out, there are three seasons for growing vegetables: spring, summer, and fall. Some veggies you may enjoy growing this spring are Yard Long Beans and Swiss chard.

Yard Long Bean is a bean that look like a green bean (other than the length) and has a flavor similar to asparagus which results in another of its common names: asparagus bean. This is strictly a vining plant and it needs support while growing. This plant is from Southeast Asia and not surprisingly has the best texture and flavor when it is stir fried as opposed to long, slow cooking dishes which use a regular green bean. This bean will become flavorless if cooked too long. The bean can be harvested 80 to 90 days after planting and can be picked every 3 to 5 days to prolong production. It is interesting to note that this bean is a member of the genus *Vigna*, which is different from the common bean, which belongs to the genus *Phaseolus*.



Swiss Chard is the perfect plant to use in your salad as a green but can also work well as a spinach substitute. It is easy to grow and some people not only grow it to eat, but use it as an ornamental in their landscape because of its colorful stalks. Be sure to plant in an area that it will receive at least 6 hours of sunlight. Place plants 6 to 12 inches apart; they look outstanding in a border with dark green or red leaves and midribs of white, red, green, orange, or bright yellow. Some varieties to try are 'Bright Lights', 'Bright Yellow', 'Fordhook Giant', 'Lucullus', and 'Red Ruby'.



The plant is ready to harvest in 40 to 60 days and both the leaves and stems can be eaten. The leaves should be picked when they are young and tender and you can prepare them the way you would any other green. The midribs are often separated and prepared apart from the leaves like celery or asparagus would be prepared. To prolong harvest, pick a few leaves at a time from the outside of the plants.

RESOURCE:

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/swiss-chard.html>

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/pole-beans.html>

Tree Talk: Trumpet Trees

BY Karen S. Kennen, MGV

I planted a golden trumpet tree years ago when it was classified as a *Tabebuia* because my neighbor has one and I really liked its bright, sunny, yellow blooms in the spring and didn't mind that it was deciduous, because the leaves quickly arrive after the blooms along with the somewhat strange-looking, bean-like, seed pods. It was only a few years ago that I found out my tree was not a *Tabebuia* but a *Handroanthus*. In 2007 it was determined that many of the species classified in *Tabebuia* were polyphyletic which means that they had developed from many different groups or species. So, some were placed in the *Handroanthus* group. I know it is important to know the genus and species of a plant since the common name will so often be used for several different species. *Tabebuia* was one of the few that I knew but unfortunately it changed. *Handroanthus chrysotrichus* is now the golden trumpet tree.



There are two *Tabebuias* that are grown in Central Florida. They are *Tabebuia heterophylla* which is commonly known as pink trumpet tree and *Tabebuia pallida*, known commonly as Cuban pink trumpet tree or white trumpet tree. These trees are small from 20 to 40 feet with spread of 15 to 25 feet.

To be further confusing, there are two other trees that have a common name of pink trumpet tree. They are *Handroanthus impetiginosus* and *Handroanthus heptaphyllus* (only grows in South Florida). This slow grower is smaller than other trumpet trees and only reaches 12 to 18 feet tall with a spread 10 to 15 feet wide. Its small size makes this perfect for small spaces in a landscape.



Handroanthus impetiginosus



Tabebuia pallida,

Resource: <https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/trees-and-shrubs/trees/trumpet-tree.html>

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Plant Clinic Clatter



Right Plant , Right Place

BY Sandra M. Bryan, MGV

Right Plant, Right Place is the number one principle of Florida Friendly Landscape Principles. It is a catchy, easy to remember phrase but what does it really mean? Beyond the obvious sun or shade caveats, there is a planting zone to consider, water requirements, position in the landscape, and required maintenance. Does that sound like a complete list of essential considerations? It is not. So, what is missing? What is most often overlooked because it is taken for granted is soil. There is a litany of questions to ask visitors seeking answers to gardening problems. One of those questions is . . . have you done a soil test? The answer is usually no.

The University of Florida recommends doing a soil test every few years and, if you amended your soil in any way, then six to eight weeks later. You should also do a soil test for all that garden soil you purchase at a big box store before you use it.

The Plant Clinic **does not do soil tests for commercial landscapers or pastureland**, because they charge their clients then bring the soil to us for testing. This is also a liability issue for the welfare of animals grazing on the property. So all pastureland issues are referred to our expert, Megan Brew, Director.

Three levels of soil tests are offered. The first test is for pH only and is offered for free. Residents are asked basic questions about contact information and what they intend to grow. The second option for residents is to send their samples to the University of Florida Soils Lab. There are forms and brown shipping bags that can be offered along with instructions on how to take and ship a sample. The cost is between \$3 and \$10 depending on the test the resident chooses. It is the responsibility of the homeowner to package and send samples and the results are returned directly to the homeowner. The third soil test is a University of Florida kit designed to give a comprehensive analysis of soil in an easy-to-understand narrative. The homeowner will have to go online for instructions on how to complete this soil test. The cost of the kit is \$32.95. I generally recommend starting with the pH test in the Plant Clinic. Further questioning often reveals that something else other soil may be going on in a homeowner's landscaping issue.

Why be so concerned about the dirt under our feet?

Every plant, shrub, and tree has a range of pH in which they thrive. Some have a very narrow range; others have a wide range. This range determines how readily the plant can uptake nutrients from the soil. If the pH of the soil is less than or exceeds the listed range for the plant, it may perform poorly or die.

Homeowners get very upset when they buy a weeping red bottle brush for \$150 at a local nursery and it dies in six months. Some of our homeowners have spent thousands for installed landscaping without having a soil test done. This is heartbreaking and unnecessary. I heartily and routinely recommend soil tests for at least pH range.

Master Gardener Volunteer Event

The ECOEXPO at Lake Square Mall

BY: Sandra M. Bryan

On March 2nd at Lake Square Mall in Leesburg, the UF/IFAS Extension Lake County participated, by invitation, in the 2024 ECOEXPO to promote ecofriendly sustainability. The primary interest of UF/IFAS Extension Lake County was in rain barrels.

The event ran all day Saturday with steady attendance throughout the day giving me the opportunity to promote the Master Gardener Volunteer Program, the plant clinic, the plant sale and of course, one of my favorite topics – rain barrels. Flyers, for both the plant sale and April's "Saturday in the Gardens – Rain Barrels," flew off the table. I literally had only one flyer left when I packed up.

More than fifty organizations participated in the event: Trout Lake Nature Center, Bear and Animal Protection Society; Native Plant Society; Parks and Water Resources; Lake County Department of Public Works; Mt Dora Friends of the Environment, Inc.; NAACP Tri-City Florida Branch; Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Lake County; Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society, and a plethora of others.

One of the most impressive was The Neighborhood Center of South Lake. I met both organizers of that charity who explained how they collect food from grocery stores that reached the sell by date and froze it. Supplemented by Second Harvest Foods, they disburse food to food insecure people and families. As of January, they distributed 837,294 meals and collected 1,800,000 pounds of food. I thought immediately of Discovery Gardens and the fruit and vegetables that we sometimes allow to rot on the vine. During COVID, MGVs donated edibles grown in Discovery Gardens to first responders. Why could we not give it to such a worthy cause as The Neighborhood Center for South Lake? The center also provides assistance for medical support, education, training, and assistance in applying for food stamps, Medicaid, and emergency services.

It was exciting to be among people of all ages, backgrounds and interests committed to truly philanthropic causes. I hope they will invite us next year and that some of you will join me.



LIBRARY CLASSES

April presentations will introduce the IPM (Integrated Pest Management). IPM is an active, all encompassing plan to manage garden pests. These presentations are free but it is recommended that you sign up at the library by phone or in person.

April 15, 2024, 2-3 pm

Garden Pest Management

Umatilla Public Library

April 16, 2024, 12—1 pm

Garden Pest Management

Eustis Public Library

April 16, 2024, 4—5 pm

Garden Pest Management

Leesburg Public Library

April 17, 2024, 2—3 pm

Garden Pest Management

Tavares Public Library

April 17, 2024, 6—7 pm

Garden Pest Management

Marion Baysinger Library

Mt. Dora Public Library Presentation

April 7, 2024, 2–3 pm

Propagation Workshop

Free and no registration



Discovery Gardens

Please plan a visit to over twenty different gardens located at 1951 Woodlea Road in Tavares. The hours are Monday through Friday and the third Saturday of the month from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Just like your yard, Discovery Garden changes with the seasons and will reveal something new with each visit. Come see the changes in the garden.