THE GARDEN BENCH

The Manatee County Master Gardener e-Newsletter

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Photo: https://askabiologist.asu.edu/

Bee Swarms

By Joy Derksen, Master Gardener Volunteer

People are usually wary of bees. Despite all the good they do pollinating our flowers and food, they sting us. Ouch! So when you see a large number of honeybees (5,000 - 20,000) flying by or gathered in a big buzzing group, the first instinct is panic.

Be careful, but don't worry overly much as a swarming bee is a docile bee. They are on a journey and have filled themselves up to the brim with honey. They are like people after a huge Thanksgiving dinner—quiet and ready to nap!

Swarming bees have no hive and no young to protect. If they are left alone, they will leave you alone. No throwing rocks, no hitting with sticks, and no spraying with the garden hose because even a docile bee will attack when directly threatened. It's a good idea to keep children and pets away from the swarm because the latter's curiosity and desire to poke at the swarm is tempting, but a bad decision.

Scout bees are out looking for a new home and when they find that home, the swarm will leave. This takes anywhere from 2 hours to 24 hours.

In late spring or early summer, honeybees swarm as a way to reproduce. When a hive becomes too crowded, half the hive gathers around the old queen and head out to look for a new home. The other half of the bees stay home with a brand-new queen who continues that hive.

The other reason bees swarm is that the old hive has become uninhabitable due to a lack of nearby food and water, disturbances by humans or animals, or a diseased hive. Destruction of habitat for human housing can cause bee swarms at any time of year.

The swarm is led by the scout bees who are looking for a dark hollow space to start the wax and honeycomb process of rebuilding. The rest of the bees are workers who will make the new hive space a home. The queen is protected in the middle of the swarm. If the scouts aren't fast enough at finding a home, the workers will start building where they are grouped. Sometimes the new home is a hollow tree or an old beekeeper's hive. And sometimes that hollow space is in your walls or your attic.

If the swarm stays around your house and isn't moving after a day, look where the bees are going. If bees are hanging out on your house or flying under the eaves or going in a hole in your home, it is time to call for help removing the hive.

Your choices for removal are: 1. a pest control company specially certified to deal with bees or 2. a local beekeepers' association whose members may want your hive. Our Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Clinic can help you find these experts.

Here is more information about swarms and bee removal: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in778

www.suncoastbeekeepers.org/ The Suncoast Beekeepers Association. They have information about bee removal by their members.

Manatee County Agriculture and Extension Service
1303 17th Street West - Palmetto, FL 34221
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Master Gardener Volunteer Amy Stripe & Joy Derksen, Co-editors
Contents reviewed & edited by Alyssa Vinson, Extension Agent
Send a photo or gardening problem via e-mail to the Master Gardener Volunteers at ManateeMG@gmail.com or visit them at the County Extension Office
Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; closed on Wednesday

ASK A MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER

Q: I sincerely hope you can help me with identifying this (beetle) bug. The beetle is not swift and does not react quickly, so it is easy to scoop up and set free.

I have included a photo. The **body** is less than ½ inch long. I hope it isn't "dangerous," isn't breeding or infesting, or wasn't transported from another locale or country.

I keep finding one at a time, in a large RV van I purchased last month. (The vehicle does have a black water tank, if that makes a difference, but the van is clean, and has not been used for several months.) Your assistance is **so** appreciated.

G.G.

A: This insect isn't a beetle but a brown marmorated stink bug (*Halyomorpha halys.)* It's an invasive insect from Asia and has spread across the U.S.

Curiously, they are associated with man-made structures so that may be why you're finding them in your van. That is thought to be how they spread about - transported in cargo being trucked from coast to coast.

BMSB populations have not become established in Florida yet. You must be careful if you handle them as they produce a noxious odor that lends itself to their name.

I'm including a link to information about the insect for your reference. https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in623

Master Gardener Volunteer Karen Holleran answers your email questions.
Send questions and/or photos for identification or for diagnosis of residential gardening problems to ManateeMG@gmail.com.
Or call us during office hours 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. at 941-722-4524 and ask for a Master Gardener Volunteer.

What's This?
Boisduval Scale of Orchids

By Maureen Hirthler, Master Gardener Volunteer

This appearance is a scary sight for orchid lovers. Boisduval scale (*Diaspis boiduvalii* Signoret) is one of the most common pests of orchids, particularly Cattleyas. Scales are piercing/sucking insects that spread easily and can cause significant damage. Scout for this and other pests early and often. You can find Boisduval scale under the dry sheaths covering the pseudobulbs beneath the leaves (which is why growers advise removing them.)

Scale is very difficult to eradicate. Isolate affected plants and follow the recommendations of Integrated Pest Management https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/IN/IN10900.pdf using the least toxic method possible. Be prepared to treat multiple times with different agents.

For much more information on orchids, attend my webinar series "Introduction to Orchids" beginning April 14th, 2021.

Register here: https://tinyurl.com/thbbmffe

Cilantro *(Coriandrum sativum)* vs. Culantro (*Eryngium foetidum*)

By Nancy O. Porter, Master Gardener Volunteer

Cilantro looks a lot like parsley, but the flavor has a bit more zing. It is used often in Latin cuisine, as well as many Asian dishes. However, some people find it has a soapy taste and are not fans of this herb.

Here in Florida, cilantro grows better in the cooler months. It likes well drained soil and should be planted about 8 inches apart. Stagger your plantings so you always have a bountiful supply. Plant in a container, or an area with full sun to part shade and rich, well-drained soil.

Cilantro planted in summer tends to bolt (go to seed) very quickly, then you find you are growing coriander. On the upside, it's a "two for one" type of herb. In about 2-3 months, the plant will send up slender stalks of white to pink flowers, and from there you can harvest the small brown seeds. When dried, the seeds can be ground, and the result is coriander.

Cilantro can also be an attractor for pollinators and beneficial insects.

Culantro is an herb that has a similar flavor as cilantro. Culantro and cilantro look nothing alike. Culantro's leaves are long and serrated, resembling long-leafed lettuce. Its flavor is stronger, so you use less compared to cilantro. It handles the warmer weather a bit better than cilantro and does not go to seed quite as quickly.

For Floridians, culantro is a great alternative because it grows well in summer heat. It also grows great in the shade. Culantro is a terrific choice, as it tends to close the flavor gap for cilantro lovers who prefer growing their own herbs.

Culantro grows best in an area with moist, well-drained soil; it is also moderately salt tolerant. Contrary to most herbs and vegetables, culantro does best in a shady area. It can be planted either in a container or directly in the ground. If planted in the ground, you get a longer growing period.

Culantro, like cilantro, might attract beneficial insects such as ladybugs and green lacewings, which is a bonus. Unlike cilantro, culantro leaves do not store well. The leaves can also be a bit tough, so it is best used finely chopped.

For more information on growing cilantro, or culantro, in our area, contact your local county Extension office. Also go to:

https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/culantro.html or

https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/cilantro.html.

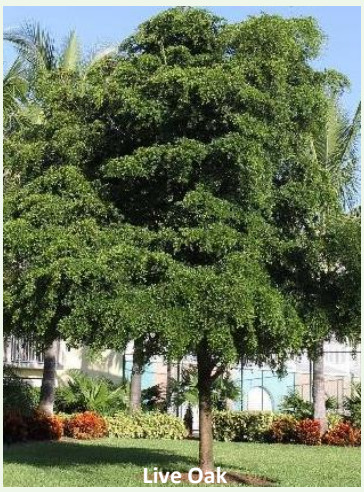
Alternatives to Southern Live Oak for Smaller Landscapes

By Nancy Hammer, Master Gardener Volunteer


Crapemyrtle


Fringetree


Southern Magnolia


Live Oak

Trees in your landscape boost curb appeal, increase property value, contribute shade, provide privacy, reduce sounds from neighbors and the street, may attract birds and pollinators, and even lessen cooling and heating costs.

Our native Southern live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) is commonly planted in Manatee County, and in large landscapes is a sure-fire winner. With a mature height of 60 to 80 feet, and canopy width of as much as 60 to 120 feet, it is unparalleled in its southern beauty. I recently saw such a tree on the grounds of St. Leo University with a 120-foot spread, and it was magnificent!

However, many of our neighborhood landscapes are too small for a tree of that eventual size. Here are some ideas for shade and ornamental trees that are better suited to smaller yards. What are your goals? Are you looking for, and do you have the space for, a shade tree? Are you pining for a flowering tree? Is a native tree a priority?

If you want a shade tree, and have the space, consider the following:

- **Black Olive 'Shady Lady'** (*Terminalia buceras* 'Shady Lady') grows to 30 feet, and may spread 15-20 feet, with attractive horizontal branches. It is not related to an edible olive tree but may drop staining fruit if close to sidewalks and driveways. It is listed as a zone 10 tree, but with warming temperatures, it is thriving east of I-75. It is a "caution" invasive tree in South Florida.
- The native **Gumbo Limbo** (*Bursera simaruba*) is worthwhile considering just for the name and its attractive peeling coppery bark. UF/IFAS publications say, "It can reach 60 feet in height, but it's usually seen smaller in landscape plantings" (30-40 feet in height, and 30-foot spread). This beauty is suitable for 10A coastal areas west of I-75.
- Another native, the **Southern Redcedar** (*Juniperus virginiana* var. *silicicola*) is a juniper (not a cedar) which resembles a Christmas tree and makes an effective screen, cover for birds, and windbreak. It may reach a height of 40 feet and spread 20-30 feet.
- **Japanese Blueberry** (*Elaeocarpus dentatus or decipens*) is an attractive, relatively new tree to the Florida landscape, which can grow to 30-40 feet in height and spread. It grows low branches to the ground but may be pruned for a visible trunk. It is suitable for all zones in Florida but not in soils that are highly alkaline. Avoid placing near a driveway or sidewalk due to non-edible fruit drop.

For even smaller yards, the following may provide some shade as well ,with less horizontal spread:

- Native **'Little Gem' Southern Magnolia** (*Magnolia grandiflora* 'Little Gem'), native dahoon holly (*Ilex cassine*), and native 'East Palatka' Holly (*Ilex x attenuata*).

If you have an eye for a flowering tree, there are an array of choices:

- **Fringetree** (*Chionanthus virginicus*) is a deciduous native tree which grows 12-20 feet, and 10-15 feet in spread. It sports beautiful ribbon-like white blooms in the spring.
- **Crapemyrtle** (*Lagerstroemia spp.*) is a deciduous ornamental tree which is available in a variety of bloom color, height, and spread – including 'Acoma' (white flowers, 10 feet tall), 'Comanche' (coral flowers, 20 feet tall), and 'Miami' (dark pink flowers, 35 feet tall).

Others to consider include ***Jatropha integerrima*, Geiger tree** (*Cordia sebestena*), **white Geiger** (*Cordia boissieri*), **Jacaranda** (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*), and **golden trumpet tree** (*Handroanthus chrysanthus*).

A good place to start your search is by looking online for 'The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guide to Plant Selection & Landscape Design' (Watermatters.org – resources - free publications) followed by searching specific trees through UF/IFAS www.solutionsforyourlife.com. As a reminder, if you are in an HOA, you will want to check for an approved tree list. Lastly, if you want Florida-Friendly Landscaping recommendations based on your landscape conditions and goals, contact Susan Griffith, FFL Coordinator at sjgriffith@ufl.edu about our free Landscape Assistance Program.

New Turfgrass Cultivars You Should Know

By Amy L. Stripe, Master Gardener Volunteer

Photo by Annelie Turner on Unsplash

There are exciting developments in the world of turfgrass. Two recently developed St. Augustinegrass cultivars are now available for sale at retail: CitraBlue™ and ProVista™.

A fact sheet is available on both of these cultivars at https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/mastergardener/pdfs/resources/turf-field-day-2018/new-staugustinegrass-options.pdf

CitraBlue was developed by the University of Florida to be a more shade tolerant, sport a denser habit of growth (to better suppress weeds), and be more drought and disease tolerant than other St. Augustinegrass cultivars. Turfgrass scientists hope that the mowing height can also be reduced in order to lengthen the time between mowings (but studies are still underway).

ProVista is a St. Augustinegrass cultivar developed by Scott's. This grass has also been developed to require less maintenance; including a genetic modification to make it glyphosate-resistant (in other words, it can stand up to herbicides like Round-Up™) applied to kill weeds.

Whilst both cultivars continue to be tested by UF, from a Master Gardener Volunteer point-of-view, we are leaning towards CitraBlue as a better choice. ProVista invites application of herbicides, which is just putting more chemical inputs in the landscape (cost) and more risk of lethal overspray to landscape beds.

I did a quick call to landscape supply companies around town and found that the cost of both new cultivars is comparable, and they are a bit pricier than Floratam, the most installed cultivar of St. Augustinegrass.

Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

Over Watering

By John Dawson, Master Gardener Volunteer

Water is a necessity for all living things; without it, we cannot survive. Land plants and animals all have differing water requirements. Having too little or too much of what you need eventually causes physical damage.

The trick to good plant health is maintaining a healthy balance. If your plant has *yellowing* leaves and *old* leaves as well as *new* leaves that are falling at the same rate, you may be overwatering. Wilted plants may also be a sign of either too much or too little water. Often, the physical symptoms of too much or too little water among plants are quite similar.

Hibiscus' lower leaves turn yellow when receiving too much or too little water. The biggest difference between the two is that too little water will result in your plant's leaves feeling dry and crispy to the touch, whilst too much water results in soft and limp leaves.

Correction is simple: if it's been hot and dry, give it water. If it's been rainy, let it dry out. Unfortunately, it seems to be human nature to look at a plant that is doing poorly and automatically assume it needs water! Adding water to a plant that is drowning will only hasten its demise. In drowning, water pressure begins to build in the plants cells when the roots absorb more water than they can use. The cell walls swell and eventually burst, forming blisters and areas that look like lesion, a condition known as edema.

More household plants have died by drowning than by drought. Plant roots need air which is normally found in tiny pockets within the soil. Over watering fills these pockets and creates a pressure that overwhelms the root's capability to bring in water and nutrients, causing wilt and other symptoms.

To avoid problems when potting, choose a loose soil mix that drains quickly rather than garden soil which may have too much clay (clay has very tiny particles and air space). If you find you have a heavy hand for watering, you may want to choose indoor plants that like more water such as impatiens and begonias and stay away from plants like succulents.

For potted plants, make sure drain holes are working and only water when the soil feels dry. Use a soil moisture meter or your finger to test the soils moisture. Soil that is constantly wet may lead to fungal problems, gnat invasions, and root rot. If you still find you just can't keep your hand away from the watering can, then maybe you should try your luck with growing aquatic plants.

It's much more difficult to control overwatering outdoors in your landscape, especially here in Florida, where we seem to get more water from rain than we need during our summer months. Whereas we cannot control the weather, we can control our watering and planting habits. Do not plant in low areas that do not drain well after a heavy rain (where water sits for more than 20 minutes); plant in well-drained soil, in mounds, raised beds, or in containers.

Make sure your irrigation system is calibrated and functional and that it has a rain sensor shut off (make sure it is working). During our rainy season, you will need to adjust your irrigation timing for less frequent watering and duration. Turning the system off and running it manually as needed will not only save your plants from overwatering but will also reduce your water bill. Check the system once a month on your watering day and operate the system manually through each cycle only long enough to spot potential problems.

Most folks may not know they even have a problem, because their watering cycle is complete before they wake up. Correct any problems as soon as possible. If you water manually; the same rules apply outdoors as indoors, only water when needed. Turf grass only needs water when leaf blades start to fold or when you see your footprints or wheel tracks are still visible minutes later. Landscape plants do best when grouped together by their water needs and watered accordingly. Mixing thirsty plants with drier loving plants in the same area, makes watering adjustments that much more difficult.

For more information on proper irrigation, check out https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/irrigation/.

Reducing Stormwater Runoff

By Jim Haupt, Master Gardener Volunteer

UF

Since the early 1980's, stormwater ponds have been a common feature in residential communities, apartment complexes, and golf courses and are now an integral part of the urban landscape. Stormwater ponds do more than beautify our landscapes and increase property values. Wet stormwater retention ponds are much like water treatment plants. Florida receives a tremendous amount of rain. On the average, fifty-five inches annually on average. Draining off rooftops, roadways, and parking lots, storm water flows into retention ponds that trap pollutants and sediments from getting into natural waterways. In this way, developers fulfill the state's mandate to treat water before it leaves the property.

In contrast to wet stormwater retention ponds, *dry stormwater detention ponds,* low grassy areas, or basin, are dug out to hold rainwater runoff. Water is trapped for brief periods of time then gradually released into surrounding soils.

Fountains are a common sight in many stormwater ponds. They add aesthetic appeal to many residential communities and HOAs. Aeration devices, such as surface aerators (fountains) or bubblers (bottom aerators), increase oxygen levels that sustain fish and other wildlife. Both systems help create wave and surface movement that disrupt the accumulation of algae and keep water from becoming stagnant.

There are now 76,000 stormwater ponds scattered throughout the state. According to the University of Florida, they are beginning to show their age and not be meeting water quality standards. Stormwater ponds were planned cleanouts every 10 to 20 years. But, over the last several decades, pond management has been reduced to monthly chemical treatments to kill unwanted aquatic plants and algae. Per the University of Florida's publication *Stormwater Ponds Need Your Help!,* "Very few ponds have been cleaned out leaving them out of balance, and unbalanced ponds create problems."

What can you do to help keep our water clean? Becoming familiar with Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles can be your first step. The 8th principle, 'Reducing Storm Water Runoff", encourages percolation of water into soil by slowing the movement of water from our landscapes and properties.

The fertilizers and pesticides we use in our landscapes, pet wastes, and oil from our cars move from one body of water to the next. Healthy shoreline vegetation acts as a buffer, capturing pollutants before reaching the water. By fertilizing appropriately, managing yard pests wisely, and watering efficiently we can significantly keep our waterways clean. Using native plants, putting them in the right place, and following Florida-Friendly principles will go a long way in protecting our precious waterways.

For more information:
https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/media/sfylifasufledu/sarasota/documents/pdf/water/2019_Water_factsheetStormwaterPonds_PRINT.pdf

http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/escambiaco/2020/12/16/weekly-what-is-it-stormwater-ponds/

https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/about-ffl/9-principles/principle-8-reduce-runoff/

Date	Time	Event
1st & 3rd Sunday of the month	10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.	**Master Gardener Mobile Plant Clinic at Lakewood Ranch Farmer's Market** (8330 Lakewood Ranch Blvd.) Visit the Master Gardener Volunteers who are available to share their knowledge on horticulture and assist community residents with horticulture questions.
1st & 3rd Thursday of the month	9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	**Master Gardener Mobile Plant Clinic at St. George's Episcopal Church (**912 63rd Ave. West, Bradenton) Come visit the Master Gardener Volunteers who are available to share their knowledge on horticulture and assist community residents with horticulture questions.
1st & 3rd Saturday of the month	10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.	**Master Gardener Mobile Plant Clinic at Christ Episcopal Church** (4030 Manatee Ave. West, Bradenton) Visit the Master Gardener Volunteers who are available to share their knowledge on horticulture and assist community residents with horticulture questions.
Saturday April 10	9:00-11:00 a.m.	**Extension Master Gardener Nature and Plant ID Tour - Riverview Pointe Preserve –** DeSoto National Memorial – Stroll through Riverview Pointe Preserve to learn more about Florida's native plants and inhabitants of a coastal habitat. Suitable for all ages. The hike begins in the parking area of the DeSoto National Memorial Park and enters into the Riverview Preserve at 8250 DeSoto Memorial Highway, Bradenton. Register Here or https://riverview_pointe_preserve.eventbrite.com
Saturday April 10	9:00-11:00 a.m.	**Extension Master Gardener Nature and Plant ID Tour – Emerson Point Preserve** - Stroll through Emerson Point Preserve to learn more about Florida's native plants and inhabitants of a coastal habitat. Suitable for all ages. Register Here or https://emerson_preserve.eventbrite.com
Wednesdays April 7 April 14 April 21	4:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.	**Nature Journaling Webinar Series** - Join UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County's Residential Horticulture Agent and Manatee County Public Libraries for a series of webinars on Nature Journaling beginning on March 17. We will cover; Getting Started, Health Benefits, Plant, Tree and Mushroom ID techniques. In celebration of National Poetry Month, the last class will focus on the influence of plants and nature on poetry. Register once and attend any of the six webinar classes. Register here or https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_HEZKX8g6T4SjZHnupxyIEQ
Wednesday April 14	11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	**Orchid Webinar Series – Introduction to Orchids –** an introduction to species, fun facts, a little botany, and lots of photos of interesting orchids. Included is a discussion of Phalenopsis, Cattleya, and Oncidium, the easiest orchids to grow in Florida. Register Here or https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mJG8_ClPQxmZ5ELjIDvgxg
Saturday April 17	9:00-11:00 a.m.	**Extension Master Gardener Nature and Plant ID Tour – Rye Preserve -** Take a hike through upland habitats along Rye Branch and learn about Florida native plants, natural history, and early settlement of the area. Drinking water, sturdy shoes, and hiking sticks are recommended. Register Here or 0847https://rye_preserve.eventbrite.com
Tuesday April 20	11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	**Mushroom Series – Mushroom Biology –** this is the first in a three-part series. What is a mushroom? This webinar highlights the ecological role of the fungi in our global ecosystems. Participants will learn about the distinguishing characteristics of mushrooms and the vast diversity of species and how they fit into the Fungi kingdom. Register Here or https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mushroom-series-tickets-144694508169
Wednesday April 21	11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	**Orchid Webinar Series – Basic Orchid Care –** Right Plant, Right Place is the first principle of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™. Take a deep dive into all the factors that go into planning your well-designed landscape and truly putting the right plant in the right place based on your site conditions. Register here or https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_8xshScS7SDieXSKKdfod5w
Saturday April 24	9:00-11:00 a.m.	**Extension Master Gardener Nature and Plant ID Tour – Perico Preserve –** Explore one of Manatee County's newest preserves and learn about Florida's native plants, how they benefit wildlife, and how they can be used in the home landscape. Learn about the wide variety of ecosystems on display and how the preserve was transformed into what it is today. Suitable for all ages. Click here to register or https://perico_preserve.eventbrite.com
Wednesday April 28	11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	**Orchid Webinar Series – Advanced Orchid Care –** Learn advanced orchid care including fertilizing, repotting, and pest management. Register Here or https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_xZkSNHiDQTetYiJOA7vJrA
Thursday April 29	10:30-11:30 a.m.	**Native Plants for Florida Yards Webinar –** Learn about why it is important to add native plants to your landscape and which ones will be the most suitable for your location. Register Here or https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_c2wiF5VGTG-7ndSgqkRKvA

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