

HHH GARDEN BENCH



The Manatee County Master Gardener E-Newsletter

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The Peaceful Path: Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Principles Showcased

Text and Photos by Nancy Hammer, Master Gardener Volunteer

Enjoy the serenity of a unique, natural path just 4 miles east of I-75 off SR 64. The Peaceful Path, on the grounds of Peace Presbyterian Church in East Bradenton is a 0.4-mile forested path on 11 acres, including 5 acres of protected wetlands.

Two years ago, a group from the congregation conceived of creating a place for reflection and contemplation. Members surveyed the best course for the path and removed invasives such as Brazilian pepper. Others in the congregation and community at large have created sculptures, trail markers, kindness rocks, and maintained the path. Volunteer Jamie Reagan says there is a "mystery artist" who has created over 1,000 kindness rocks for people to take from the Path. Additional kindness rocks are contributed by visitors and children from the church. Many of the painted trail markers created by members and visitors include inspirational quotes.



The sign/map for "A Peaceful Path"

The Path and the volunteers who care for it incorporate all the Florida-Friendly Landscaping principles. Along the principle of right plant/right place, there are thriving native plants such as slash pines; saw palmettos; laurel, water, and live oaks; cabbage palms; air plants; maples; and mosses and ferns. For color, there are numerous Florida-friendly bromeliad sculptures, and a bromeliad wall. More recently orchids and succulents have been added. There is no irrigation system, so plants manage on what nature provides. Mulch and soil amendments come from fallen pine needles, decaying wood, oak leaves, and wildlife. The gardeners do not spray for plant diseases or pests but do remove invasive plants and protect the wetlands. Three composting areas are maintained. (Cont'd page 2)

For more Garden Bench, visit <https://bit.ly/32LVY8T>

Sculptures and wreaths are created by repurposing vines, palm fronds, tillandsias, bromeliad spikes, berries, pinecones, twigs, Spanish moss, nuts, and palm tree boots found onsite. Potter volunteer Toni Muirhead furnishes ceramics. Toni created a large vine-wrapped wooden picture frame and hung it from a tree where visitors can look through it, viewing the wetlands as a backdrop. She says visitors take ideas back to their own yards, e.g., attaching bromeliads to trees. Jamie says, "Just color outside of those lines. Be inventive and take risks."

Maintenance is done by a core group of church members, as well as other volunteers such as Cub Scouts, and Girl and Boy Scouts. Scouts are currently constructing a labyrinth. Just beyond the entrance walkway are charming outdoor musical instruments, and three meditation benches welcome walkers along the way. As The Peace Path is near wetlands, the best time of year to visit is before or after the rainy season (mosquito repellent may be advisable). Visitors are encouraged any day of the week between sunrise and sunset. Parking is free at the church. For information on Florida-Friendly Landscaping Principles, visit ffl.ifas.ufl.edu.



Tree Sculpture



Decorative Wreath



Owl Sculpture



Picture Frame Sculpture

What's This?: The Webbing Barklouse

Text and Photos by Maureen Hirthler, Master Gardener Volunteer

Every morning, I scout my orchid greenhouse for problems. Mealybugs, thrips, aphids, ants, snails...I've had them all. I recently found several mounted orchids wrapped in a thick sticky webbing that I could not identify. I asked at our local Orchid Society and The American Orchid Society for help, but it puzzled even the experts. The tiny insects were barely visible to the naked eye and very, very fast. Finally, I caught a live one! At UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County, agents thought this was a barklouse (also called psocid), usually found in trees. We sent it to University of Florida entomologist, Dr. Lyle Buss, who confirmed the barklouse (*Archipsocus nemes Guerne*) and noted it can appear in odd locations, although he had never heard of it on orchids. It doesn't hurt plants, feeding primarily on lichens. It is believed the webbing is a defense against predators. It was so unsightly on my orchid, however, that I eliminated mine using pyrethrins. (Read and follow the label on any pesticide.) For orchid lovers, there are always surprises.

Find more information at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN553>

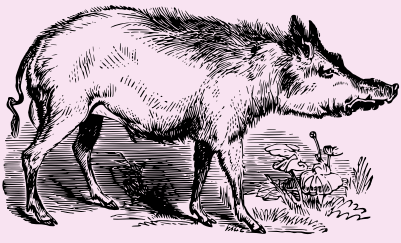


Manatee County Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Clinics

Have a gardening question? Consult one of our Plant Clinics!

Location	Address	Day(s)	Time
Central Library	1301 1st St. W., Bradenton	Third Saturdays	11:30 A.M. – 2:30 P.M.
Lakewood Ranch Farmers Market	Waterside Place, 7500 Island Cove Terrace, Sarasota, FL 34240	First Sundays	10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.
Robinson Preserve	840 99th St. N.W., Bradenton (South entrance, near pavilions)	Fourth Sundays	9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
Rocky Bluff Library	6750 US Hwy 301 N., Ellenton	Second and Fourth Saturdays	10:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.
St. George's Episcopal Church	912 63rd Ave. W., Bradenton	First and Third Thursdays	9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County Tel. 941-722-4524 Email: manateemg@gmail.com	1303 17th St. W., Palmetto	Every weekday except Wednesdays	9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.

For residents of Del Webb Lakewood Ranch (6805 Del Webb Blvd.), Plant Clinics are the 4th Wednesday from 10:00 A.M.- 12:00 P.M. at the Clubhouse in conjunction with the Butterfly Garden Club.



FERAL HOGS

By Joy Derksen, Master Gardener Volunteer

Feral hogs are becoming more of a homeowner problem in the last few years, as we build our homes in areas adjacent to invaded natural areas. Hogs can destroy landscaping and lawns with their rooting behaviors. You may wake up one morning and see a lawn that looks as if small tractors with plows have run across it.

Hogs have been in Florida for a very long time. Although there were no native pigs in what became the United States, early Spanish explorers Hernando de Soto and Juan Ponce de Leon brought swine to supply a colony at Charlotte Harbor in Lee County in 1521 and 1539. More pigs were brought by settlers over the next 400 years. During those times pigs were raised in semi-wild conditions. They were allowed to roam freely, feed off the land, and fend for themselves. The pigs were rounded up when meat was needed. Free roaming hogs were allowed until the mid 1900's. Obviously, some of these hogs escaped into the wild and established feral populations. Later in the 1900's, private landowners and the state of Florida released hogs and European boars in certain areas of the state for recreational hunting. Some of these hogs and boars also escaped the hunters and interbred with the earlier feral hogs. These feral hogs, now numbering around a half million, have adapted very well to Florida's climate and terrain.

Wild hogs prefer to live in large tracts of forest with abundant food, access to water, and dense undergrowth. (Their favorite food is acorns!) This could describe many of the east county areas where new homes have been built. Humans are now the main predator of feral hogs -- although they also are killed by bears, panthers, and alligators. Piglets are sometimes taken by foxes, coyotes, and bobcats.

Feral hogs are omnivorous. They eat both vegetation and small animals. Grass, shrubs, roots, tubers, leaves, seeds, fruits, and mushrooms are all things pigs like to eat. They will also eat a variety of small animals including worms, insects, crustaceans, mollusks, baby turtles, small birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. When humans are around, they do most of their eating at night and take it easy in meadow areas during the day.

What can you do if your neighborhood and your yard is having a hog problem? Trapping and hunting are both methods of controlling the feral pig population. Trapping is probably the only way to manage the hog problems in suburban communities. Nocturnal hunting may be more efficient but is not allowed in neighborhoods. Fencing is also a method of keeping them out of a garden or lawn area. The University of Florida recommends chain link or heavy gauge hog wire buried at least 12 inches underground or the use of multi-stranded electric fencing for the best results.

Like much of Florida's wildlife, we need to figure out ways of living with these animals as neither of us is going away.

- University of Florida: "Wild Hogs in Florida: Ecology and Management": <http://ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/IR/00/00/24/43/00001/UW22100.pdf>
- Florida Fish and Wildlife: <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/mammals/land/wild-hog/>
- Florida Fish and Wildlife rules for hunting hogs: <https://myfwc.com/hunting/wild-hog/>

Lazy Gardeners, unite!

By Jennifer Tonge-Martin, Master Gardener Volunteer



All my life, I have loved to collect plants and dream of cultivating a perfect garden. But I didn't call myself a gardener because that implies hard work: tilling and turning the soil, fertilizing, pruning, spraying, and medicating to keep everything growing. In the past, I established "gardens" all over the world. I would throw a lot of plants together into a space until it looked good, struggle with them for a couple of years, then abandon them to move to a new place. My experience has taught me a lot of what NOT to do!



Hand pruners clipping a branch

With retirement, I found my "forever home" here in Manatee County. Using my "expertise" I acquired a lot of plants in a short time. Many died, many were invasive, and weeds grew at such an alarming rate that I couldn't keep up! Fortunately, I discovered the wonderful Master Gardener Volunteers (MGVs) at UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County. I regularly trotted down to them with offerings of dead and dying plants and LOTS of questions, all focused on "what am I doing wrong?"

The MGVs guided me through the basic principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™. I received informative articles and attended the great classes they offered. I learned that I was planting the wrong plants in the wrong place. I had the wrong soil and was using mulch incorrectly. I was watering too much, fertilizing too much, mowing too much, and spending way too much time and money on all the wrong things. In fact, I was working too hard and killing my garden with misplaced effort.

So, I gradually learned to "work less" and "enjoy more" of my garden. By following the nine principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping, I am a happy, more relaxed gardener with a REAL garden, not just a collection of struggling plants! I mow my "Freedom Lawn" less and use mulches and groundcovers which decrease my need to weed and water. With less fertilizer and pesticides, I have more blooms, birds, and butterflies than ever before. I even enjoy fresh tomatoes at Christmas-to the envy of my friends and family up North!

I became so excited by these "lazy gardener" techniques that I took the Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) training so I could share the good news with all my neighbors. I am so grateful to be able to play in my garden, rather than fight it. I hope you will be able to do the same.

Still skeptical? Just try us: our services are free or have a small cost to offset supplies. Try us before you blunder through any of the hundreds of mistakes I made. The MGVs know what you are going through and are eager to help. Your landscape will thank you, the environment will thank you, your neighbors will thank you, your less-painful back and knees will thank you, and even your wallet will thank you!

See the Plant Clinic 'box' in this issue for how to contact Manatee County MGVs.



Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ yard sign

Update on Palm Issues: Highlights from Recent UF/IFAS Palm Short Course

By Amy L. Stripe, Master Gardener Volunteer

I recently had the privilege of hearing from University of Florida's top palm scientists on critical challenges facing our landscape palms. Some updates:

Ganoderma butt rot: This fatal fungal disease that affects ALL palm species can now be detected via trunk samples if ganoderma is suspected but tell-tale conks have not appeared. This works best in younger palms. Samples should be drawn per bahderlab.com instructions and sent to Dr. Braham Dhillon, Palm Mycology Lab, 3205 College Ave, Davie FL 33314. The cost is \$80 per sample. Because removal of an infected palm is the ultimate solution, it is important to know if the disease is present before you take this step with high-value palms.



Ganoderma butt rot of palms



Collecting LBD samples

Lethal Bronzing Disease (LBD). Over twenty species of palms have been documented with fatal LBD and in an ever wider geographic range: it can be considered a problem in every Florida county and no palm species should be ruled out if it displays symptoms of the disease. December through May yield the most positive tests for LBD presence (most active time for the insect vector). The carrier of this fatal disease, a leaf hopper, is best controlled in nursery settings where it lives in wet, grassy areas. Inoculations against LBD are effective but only as a preventative measure, not a cure.

Injections of fertilizers / pesticides:

This is becoming an increasingly popular way to introduce inputs in an environmentally friendly way to deal with fertilizer blackout dates and polluting nearby waterways, palms planted in medians where broadcasting is impossible, costs and speed of effectiveness, and soil pH that prevent uptake of certain broadcast nutrients. The negatives are creating wounds in palms stems (trunks) and, at present, a lack of data.

For all things palm, go to <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/palms>.



Planting from Seeds: Hybrids vs. Heirlooms

by John Dawson, Master Gardener Volunteer

It is believed that the first flowering plants appeared some 130 to 250 million years ago. For millions of years flowering plants evolved without intervention from man. Most of those plants were open pollinators; they receive pollen from the male part of "Plant A" to the female part of another "Plant A" via wind, insects or some mammals. There were also some plants which self-pollinated and some which relied on spores to propagate. Some plants were naturally created when a "Plant A" pollinated a "Plant B" creating seeds that may demonstrate numerous traits or versions of both parents. This process is called cross pollination, represented by (A x B). The changes or mutations that help a species survive are more likely to be passed on to the next generation. Offspring of these plants - those that have survived throughout the millennia - created all the natural plants we have today. Those which were unable to adapt disappeared just like the dinosaurs.

Around 10,000 years ago, the earliest farmers searched for seeds from food plants in the wild and learned how to grow food crops "close by." By saving only seed from the best plants that produced the greatest yields, showed resistance to disease, or tasted better, they were able to feed more people. Saving and transporting seeds allowed pioneering people to expand into new territories. Successful, family-grown seeds passed down from generation to generation are called "heirloom seeds." All heirloom seeds come from open pollinated plants. Because of this, you must be careful what plants you grow together and how close they are to avoid cross pollination.

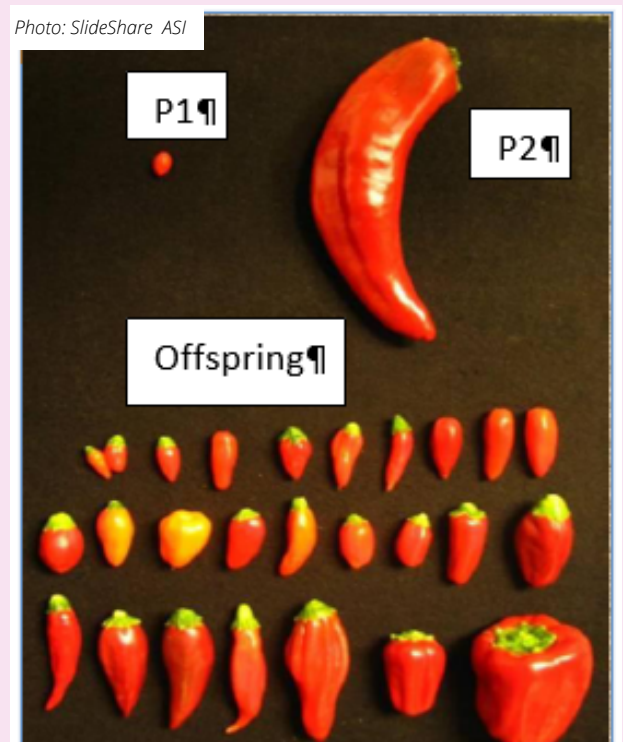
In the 1860s, Charles Darwin theorized and Gregor Mendel demonstrated purposeful cross breeding of different varieties of peas to predict the traits of their offspring. From this start, plant breeders to this day purposely cross pollinate parent plants to develop hybrid offspring (first generation seeds) which hopefully demonstrate the selected traits from each parent plant. Traits such as disease resistance, coloration, size, drought tolerance, and

productivity are just a few characteristics breeders develop to make their seeds more marketable. Seeds from *these* hybrid offspring plants (second generation) usually do not represent the original first-generation parent plant (i.e., they do not "come true" to their parents). They can show various traits from past generations or be completely sterile.

Seed from unprotected open pollinated plants (heirlooms) or those that have been purposely bred (hybrids) can be saved, but the resulting offspring may not always be what you expected. The photo below illustrates the physical variation that results from planting seed from a cross of two different pepper plant parents (P1 x P2). Tastes among the offspring may vary as well.

If you want a plant that has lasted the "test of time" and worthy of continuation, plant an heirloom. If you desire a special trait not found in an heirloom, plant an appropriate hybrid.

Learn more about seeds at "Seeding the Garden" at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/VH026>.



Cross breeding example

April Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event
Friday 4/15/22	11:00AM	Gardening with Mushrooms Join UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County for a conversation about using mushrooms to enhance your gardens. Not always nefarious, fungi in the garden can be used to help build soil, process compost, and support plant health. Participants have the option to take home a block of ready to grow mushrooms. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gardening-with-mushrooms-tickets-303931115147
Saturday 4/16/22	10:00AM	Orchid Repotting Do you have an orchid bursting from its pot and wonder what to do now? Learn the proper way to care for and propagate several varieties of orchids. Bring your overgrown orchid and pruners for a hands-on exercise of dividing the orchid. We will provide you with an orchid pot, potting media, and other materials. Registration and advance payment of \$15 for materials is due by April 8 and guarantees your spot in class. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/orchid-repotting-tickets-296854689367
Thursday 4/21/22	10:30AM	FFL Edible Landscaping Get some tips on how to create your own edible landscape the Florida-Friendly way! This method integrates edibles into your landscape in a cohesive way that looks like a beautiful landscape rather than, well, a farm. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ffl-edible-landscaping-tickets-296869764457
Friday 4/22/22	10:00AM	Gardening 101: The Scoop on Dirt Join UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County for the inside scoop on dirt! New to gardening in Florida? We have the info you need to be successful. This course will cover basics of Florida soils and how to build a healthy foundation for your plants. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gardening-101-the-scoop-on-dirt-tickets-296894919697
Friday 4/29/22	10:00AM	Gardening 101: Which End is Up? Join UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County to learn about planting your garden. New to gardening in Florida? We have the info you need to be successful. This class will cover planting methods for a variety of different plants, from herbs to trees and everything in between. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gardening-101-which-end-is-up-tickets-297041086887
Saturday 4/30/22	10:00AM	Wonderful Wiggly Worm Composting In this workshop, children will learn the basics of worm anatomy and vermicomposting. Participants will assemble and decorate their own mini worm composting container to take home. Ages 6-10. Class fee is \$5 per child which includes the cost of materials and worms. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wonderful-wiggly-worm-composting-tickets-294571189357

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