

The Master Gardening Bench



The Manatee County Master Gardener Newsletter

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All articles are researched utilizing UF/IFAS Extension and/or other educational sources unless otherwise noted.

An Interview of Alyssa A. Vinson

Our New Master Gardener Coordinator

By Joy Derksen, Master Gardener Volunteer 2004

The Manatee County Extension Service recently welcomed Alyssa Vinson to the position of Agent for Residential Horticulture. She is the new “boss” of Master Gardener Volunteers here in Manatee County. Ms. Vinson is accustomed to Extension as she previously worked with the Sarasota County Extension Service in the role of Horticulture Program Coordinator and in Sarasota County’s Environmental Protection division managing the mangrove program where she ran classes for certification of mangrove trimmers. Previously, she worked with the Patel College of Global Sustainability at the University of South Florida and Hillsborough County School District developing curricula for sustainability.

Ms. Vinson is a graduate of the Florida University system with a B.S. in Environmental Science and Policy from the University of South Florida and an M.S. in Ecological Restoration from the Forestry School at the University of Florida. As part of her Master's work she was involved in looking at the use of volunteers for long-term monitoring of conditions in Robinson Preserve.

In Manatee County, Alyssa will be spending half of her time as Master Gardener Coordinator. She will be facilitating training for new Master Gardeners. She plans to expand training for experienced Master Gardeners by bringing in University experts in various fields and offering training in advanced plant diagnostics.

The other half of Ms. Vinson's time will be spent as community liaison. She looks forward to focusing on getting horticultural help to Manatee County residents, especially in underserved neighborhoods. She plans to develop and provide horticultural programs for the community's urban landscapes and find a way for residents to provide habitat for biodiversity in our coastal landscape. She will be continuing the instruction and certification of Master Naturalists. Ms. Vinson would also like to see Florida Friendly Yards and Neighborhood principles brought forward into county planning and with developers before the landscaping is installed in new homes.





ASK A MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER

Dear Master Gardener Volunteer:

These rolled up things are falling from my neighbor's oak tree onto the drive and he thinks it is causing a lot of stains. They are about the size of a fat grain of rice. I took several apart and did not see an insect. One has a hole that looks like something came out. Here is a photo of that one. Thank you so much.

Ken and Norma



Dear Ken & Norma,

The rice sized pellets falling from the tree are the result of the leaf-rolling weevil, *Homoeolabus analis*. The pellet is called a nidus and contains the weevil's egg. There is an interesting relationship, up high in the oak, between the leaf-rolling weevil and a predator, the thief weevil, *Pterocolus ovatus*. After the leaf-rolling weevil lays its egg and rolls it up in the leaf, the thief weevil also lays its egg within the nidus rolled by the leaf-roller. That larva hatches out first and feeds on the leaf-rolling larva. The hole is the exit of the larva, which could be of either of the weevils, as both exit the nidus and overwinter in the soil. The leaf-rolling weevil does not harm the tree.

Young oak leaves, preferred by the weevils, have the highest tannin content and can stain concrete. Blowing the leaves and rolls off the surface as soon as possible will minimize the stains. Tannin stains will wear away in weather over time. A power washer or chemical stain remover can also be used. For more information visit:

http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/misc/beetles/H_analis_P_ovatus.htm



Lateral view of adult *Homoeolabus analis* (Illiger), a leaf-rolling weevil. Photograph by Lyle J. Buss, University of Florida.

Master Gardener Volunteer Karen Holleran answers your email questions and looks at photographs for identification of problems at ManateeMG@gmail.com.

Or visit our Plant Diagnostic Clinic Monday through Friday (closed Wednesdays) from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. at 1303 17th St. W., Palmetto, FL.

Or call us with questions at 941-722-4524 and ask for a Master Gardener Volunteer.



Free Plants!

Plant Propagation from Stem Cuttings

By Nancy Hammer, Master Gardener Volunteer 2014

Would you like to have more of your favourite plants – at minimal cost? Propagation from stem cuttings, root cuttings, leaf cuttings, layering, and of course, division, will produce plants identical to the parent. This is also called cloning.

Small containers with drainage holes filled with moist potting mix are used for stem cutting propagation. Plastic pots, trays, or plastic cups with the bottoms perforated with holes for drainage are suitable. When propagating cuttings for our Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Fair, we generally use 4-inch plastic pots.

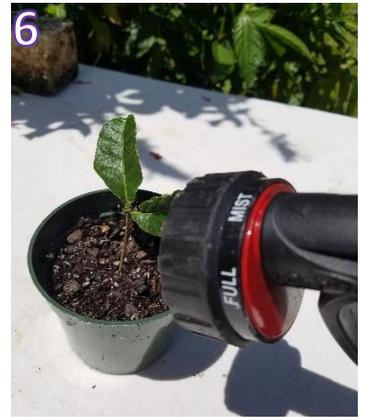
Most stem cuttings in Florida are taken from either new growth called “softwood” – often in spring or early summer - or from semi-hardwood, which occurs after the current season growth has matured. Take 6-inch tip cuttings from healthy plants that include at least one set of lower leaves (1), and then remove those leaves 1 inch from the bottom of your cutting (2). Roots will emerge from the node where those leaves were removed. You may dip the bottom of the stems in rooting hormone (3). Use a pencil as a “dibbler” to create a planting space in the potting medium (4). Then, insert the cutting ½-1 inch, making sure at least one node is in the soil (5).

Root development will vary depending on the species – anywhere from 2 weeks to several months. A moist, warm (warmth is key especially in the winter time) environment out of direct sun is critical for success. The potting medium must be kept moist, but not overly saturated - too much moisture can encourage rot. Many cuttings are more successful when misted (6), and some will be more successful if kept in a sealed clear plastic bag which will keep the air moist. I have had good results with the difficult-to-propagate queen’s wreath (*Petrea volubilis*) (7 and 8) by keeping the potted cuttings in sealed gallon-sized plastic bags (9).

Check the cuttings for roots from time to time by *gently* tugging on the stem. Once rooted (10), increase the likelihood of success by hardening your new plants through gradually reducing humidity and increasing air flow and light.

Examples of plants that can be propagated from stem cuttings include everything from bedding plants such as impatiens, plectranthus, coleus, and begonia, to trees and shrubs such as sea grape, crape myrtle, and azalea. Many succulents, herbs, and vines are also good candidates.

See the University of Florida IFAS/EDIS publication, [‘Plant Propagation Techniques for the Florida Gardener’](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg108) <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg108> for propagation methods for common Florida landscape plants. The publication includes a table of plants and how to propagate them.





ROCKING YOUR LANDSCAPE

By Mary Lange, Master Gardener Volunteer 2017

Many decades ago, well ahead of his time, my father made a bold decision to replace all his turf with plain brown rock. I was appalled, but as I struggle with my own extensive and expensive St. Augustine lawn, I realize he may have been on to something. Rocks have a lot going for them. They are a great barrier to weeds, low maintenance (no watering, mowing or fertilizing), and durable. Unlike turf or mulch, rocks will never decompose or die off.

Here in Florida, landscaping with rock has become increasingly popular. Many new homes include a landscape plan with at least one or two islands of rock interspersed with turf or mulch. Sometimes, rocks make up much of the yard, leaving only minimal space for turf or mulch. Too much rock will add heat to a yard and home in the dog days of summer. However, the right rock bed, accentuated with flowering plants or grasses, can look stunning. If you are interested in rocking your landscape, consider the following:

- **Develop a landscape plan:** Map out your yard and determine if and where rocks make sense. For example, rock beds next to your house may be preferable to mulch to discourage insects. Likewise, consider rocks for fully shaded areas where grass can't grow. You may want to put mulch rather than rocks around trees and shrubs to add nutrients to your soil and better retain moisture. Contact Manatee County's Landscape Assistance Program (941) 722-4524, ext. 1825 for free advice on planning your landscape.
- **Select your rocks:** Rocks come in all sizes, shapes, and colors. Starting small, consider pea gravel or pebbles for well contained areas or foot paths. Moving up in scale, 1" – 3" river rock – in white, brown, black, or mixed – makes for a beautiful bed to highlight native drought-tolerant plants. A large boulder on top of a bed of rocks can provide a great focal piece in a landscape. In terms of color, select rock that best complements your house. For example, red lava rock may not flatter a red brick house; white chipped rock could be too bright for a white house.
- **Calculate quantity and cost:** The quantity of rock you purchase will depend on your landscape plan. For a small project, consider buying 30-50 pound bags of rock from nearby home improvement stores. For larger projects, order rocks from a local landscape supply store by the cubic yard or ton. One cubic yard (equal to 1.35 tons), laid three inches deep, will cover roughly 100 square feet and will cost anywhere from \$100 to \$300 depending on the stone. Large boulders can run from \$200 to \$300. Also, factor in delivery costs (\$50 - \$100 depending on the amount to be delivered and distance from the store).
- **Site preparation:** Before laying rock, the ground should be cleared of turf and weeds. Next, compact the soil by first watering it and then stomping on it evenly or using a hand tamper. Laying down landscaping fabric will help prevent weed growth (especially if your rock layer is less than three inches deep). Finally, use pavers or edging to ensure the rocks stay in place. After the rocks are spread evenly with a rake, a quick rinse with water will remove any sand and dirt, leaving you with a beautiful rock bed. Plants can easily be added by temporarily moving aside a small area of rock, cutting slits in the landscape fabric, planting, and then putting the rocks back in place.

For more information on landscape design and Florida-Friendly Landscaping™, visit:

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep375>; <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep396>;
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep424>; or <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep439>.



What's This? Scale

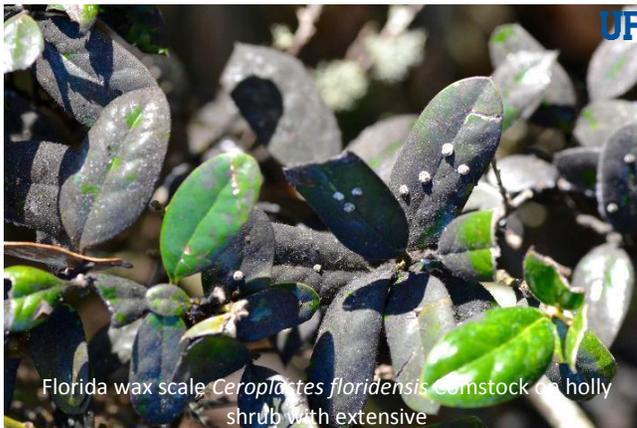
By Joy Derksen, Master Gardener Volunteer 2004



Sooner or later, your Florida plants will have scale insects, both because they are very common and because there are numerous varieties of this bothersome insect. Scales suck plant fluids from the leaves, stems, and roots of plants. The University of Florida considers scale the most serious pest of ornamentals.



How can you tell if you have scale? First you might see them on the veins of leaves, either on the top side or the bottom of the leaf. You might notice small bumps on the stems. You might also see sooty mold on the leaves. The mold grows on the feces of the scale which is full of plant sugars. Symptoms that your plant is overwhelmed by them are spotty yellowing of leaves, leaves falling off, and branch dieback.



Different scale varieties have adapted to different plants. Crotons, bamboo, magnolias, crepe myrtles, oleanders, and cycads all have their own special scale. But there are general scale insects which attack all sorts of plants.

Predators of scale are lady beetles, green lacewings, and tiny parasitic wasps. If you frequently use pesticides on your plants, these beneficial predators may have been killed, too. Scale can be effectively managed by using horticultural oils and soaps for infestations in the home landscape.



In commercial settings, and for more serious infestations, a systemic insecticide applied to the soil may be called for. If applying a systemic insecticide, be sure to avoid spraying during times of flowering to lower potential impacts to pollinating insects. For more information on this pest, more photographs, and how to control it visit: "Managing Scale Insects on Ornamental Plants" <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg005> and "A Guide to Scale Insect Identification" <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ch195>.

Growing Olives in Florida

By Norma Kisida, Master Gardener Volunteer 2012

Photo IFAS Extension, University of Florida

As citrus greening disease makes huge citrus production declines in Florida – both commercially and in the home landscape – the agricultural industry is looking for alternatives. Olives (*Olea europaea*), originating in the deserts of the Middle East, are the oldest known cultivated crop. Although olives have been grown here in Florida on a small scale, there is much more to be learned about the best cultural practices for plant health, fruit production, and plant selection. The Florida Olive Council, established in 2011, is working with University of Florida/IFAS Extension to promote research, cultivation, and marketing of olive trees and products.

As olive trees are evergreen, they can also be used in the landscape as ornamentals. The leaf color is usually grayish-silver-green and the white flowers appear in April or May before the fruit sets. Because of the leaf and flower colors, olive trees fit well in a Mediterranean-themed landscape. Some urban areas have banned the planting of regular olives because of pollen allergies. However, there are sterile, nonflowering varieties available as landscape trees.

Olives prefer well-drained, sand-dominated soils with a pH of up to 8.5 and are somewhat salt tolerant. They do not do well in low areas where water stands. Olives have low nutritional requirements, especially for nitrogen, as too much will cause excessive vegetative growth and decreased fruiting. Although olives are relatively pest and disease free, in Florida they are susceptible to insects which lead to the growth of sooty mold. They may also have leaf damage by caterpillars and grasshoppers. Olive trees

and mature fruit are usually cold hardy to 12 degrees F., but green fruits may be damaged at or below 28 degrees F. Although pruning is important for regular flowering, to shape the tree, and to reduce fungal disease, it can be tricky because flowering occurs on the previous season's new growth. This new growth is necessary because the olive does not bear fruit on the same place twice on the stem.

An olive tree will usually bear fruit in 3-4 years after planting and may have a heavy fruit harvest one year and lighter harvest the next. The fruit (drupe) is usually green and will change color to blackish-purple when ripe, but some varieties may remain green when ripe. Raw olives contain an alkaloid which makes them unpalatable until processed. Home processing and recipes can be found at <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8267.pdf>.

Pollination of olive trees can be complex. Some varieties are self-fertile in the region where they were developed but not in another region. Some varieties are self-incompatible, meaning its own pollen is prevented from reaching the egg cell. Therefore, it is recommended that two distinct cultivars be planted close together to increase wind pollination.

If you are interested in growing olives, I would recommend [Olives for Your Florida Landscape](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep515) <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep515>, a detailed University of Florida publication from which most of this information was taken. You may also find information from the [Florida Olive Council](#).

Summer Lawn Tips

By Amy L. Stripe, Master Gardener Volunteer 2008

Here are some tips for keeping your lawn in tip-top shape through the summer:

- Inspect weekly for any areas of the lawn that appear to be in trouble. Yellowing grass bordering the edges of sidewalks and driveways could be a sign of chinch bug infestation. Ensure sprinklers are hitting all areas of the lawn, keeping in mind that too much water – irrigation combined with frequent or heavy summer rains – can be just as detrimental. Other summer problems are mole crickets and take-all root rot.
- Weed control with a preemergent herbicide will have to wait until nighttime temperatures drop to 55 to 60 degrees F; postemergent herbicides are also best left until drier, cooler weather, since most of these products need time to work following application and may damage turfgrass in hot temperatures. Until then, pull or spot-treat weeds with a non-selective herbicide.
- Manatee County's fertilizer ordinance restricts the use of any fertilizer containing nitrogen from June 1 to September 30. However, an application of iron will help keep your lawn green during the summer months. Both liquid and granular iron formulations are available at most garden centers.
- If you go away on vacation, make sure your lawn gets mowed while you are gone, otherwise you can shock the grass by having to cut too much off overgrown turf. Likewise cutting it too short - scalping – can make it prone to root rot. Since your mower generally works overtime in the summer, make sure to keep it in good working order. Wash it after every use, sharpen blades frequently, and follow manufacturer's recommendations for servicing.
- Florida's common turfgrasses can all be planted in the summer months, and in fact it may be more economical to do so now because of the need to water newly seeded or sodded grass to help it get established. Before installing any new sod or planting seeds, it is a good idea to hit the area with a non-selective herbicide to get kill any weeds that are present.
- Keep an eye on tree and shrub growth; a summer flush of growth can shade areas of turfgrass once in full sun. Depending on your grass type and cultivar, it may not respond favorably to deepening shade.



Visit our website for more information on lawn management at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/> and type "turfgrass" into the search box.



Photo: <https://newswire.caes.ufla.edu>

July/August CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Time	Event
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Now accepting applications for the 2019 Master Gardener Volunteer Training. Call today (941) 722-4524 for an application! We've Got a Good Thing Growing!

2 nd & 4 th Saturday	10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	Ask a Master Gardener Volunteer – Rocky Bluff Library – 6750 US Highway 301 N., Ellenton. Visit the Extension Master Gardener information table and get answers to your gardening questions.
2 nd Saturday	10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	Ask a Master Gardener Volunteer – South Manatee Library – 6081 26 th Street West, Bradenton. Visit the Extension Master Gardener information table and get answers to your gardening questions.
Part III Wednesday July 24 & Part IV Friday August 2	Both Sessions 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Garden Educator Training Series Parts III & IV - Learn how to create a sustainable community or school garden in this four-part summer series. Part III of the GETS series will continue our efforts to develop quality school/community garden programs. In this session, we will be covering vegetable gardening, organic methods, and garden curriculum. Part IV of the series will cover garden pests, Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles, and garden design. For more information, please call Mack Lessig at (941)722-4524 ext.1821 or mlessig@ufl.edu .
Saturday July 27	11:00 a.m.- 12:30 p.m.	Rain Gardens Workshop 101 - Rain gardens are an important element of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles and serve multiple functions. This class for homeowners will walk you through creating your own rain garden. These gardens are designed to mitigate excess stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces. Specific plants are selected to allow water to infiltrate back into the soil while reducing pollutants from the runoff. \$5 Administrative fee. \$8 day of class. Register online at http://uf-ifas-extension-manatee.eventbrite.com/ or call the Extension Master Gardener Volunteers (941) 722-4524.
Friday August 2	Application Submission Deadline By 5:00 p.m.	Water-Wise Awards – Your yard might have what it takes to win! The Water-Wise Awards Program is designed to recognize attractive, water conserving landscapes for homes and businesses. Winning landscapes balance attractive design with plants, landscape elements and efficient irrigation techniques. Points are awarded for the use of appropriately located plants and efforts to retain or restore natural areas for wildlife habitat. They are also free of invasive species and landscape elements that could minimize fertilizer and pesticide use. Winners receive a stepping stone! Apply online at https://tinyurl.com/manateeww by August 2.
Saturday August 24	10:00 a.m.- Noon	Bromeliads to Know and Grow - With their wide variety of colors and shapes, these beauties add tropical flair to any landscape. This workshop covers types of bromeliads that work well in our area and how to care for them. Included is a visit to the Bromeliad Garden created and maintained by Master Gardener Volunteers. \$5 advance registration fee. \$8 day of class. Register online at http://uf-ifas-extension-manatee.eventbrite.com/ or call the Extension Master Gardener Volunteers (941) 722-4524.
Saturday August 24	12:30.-2:30 p.m.	Florida Backyard Landscaping for Wildlife - Manatee County is urbanizing rapidly and as natural areas vanish, it becomes more and more important to provide suitable habitat for native wildlife in our own backyards and established communities. This workshop will help guide you in landscaping your property in a Florida-friendly manner that will benefit many different species of wildlife while providing you with additional viewing opportunities. \$5 advance registration fee or \$8 at the door. Register online at http://uf-ifas-extension-manatee.eventbrite.com/ or call the Extension Master Gardener Volunteers (941) 722-4524.

UF IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



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