



GARDEN BENCH

The Manatee County Master Gardener e-Newsletter

UF IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



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Here it Comes, Ready or Not: S.U.M.M.E.R.

By Nancy O. Porter, Master Gardener Volunteer

Summer is almost here and it's getting hotter day by day. As a gardener you need to be ready to fight the heat, not just for yourself but for your plants. Learn the signs of heat stresses in people and plants, especially if you are new to our area.

In people, outdoor fatalities often occur within the first few days someone begins working in our hot, humid climate. It is because the body needs to build up a tolerance (gradually) to the heat. This particular process is called heat acclimation.

So before you begin gardening, please take care of YOU and your plants.

IF YOU BECOME OVERHEATED, TRY THE FOLLOWING TO COOL YOURSELF OFF:

- Rest in a cool place. Getting into an air-conditioned building is best, but at the very least, find a shady spot or sit in front of a fan.
- Drink cool fluids. Stick to non-carbonated water or sports drinks; definitely **NOT** a cold beer, no matter how wonderful it sounds!
- Try cooling measures, e.g., a cool cloth to your forehead, loosen clothing.

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/WC/WC35900.pdf>

<https://plant-pest-advisory.rutgers.edu/managing-heat-stress-in-nursery-and-landscape-plants/>

<https://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/fcs/2014/06/27/quench-your-thirst-to-beat-the-heat/>

Heat Stress Indicators:

YOU

- Cool, moist skin with goosebumps
- Heavy sweating
- Faintness, dizziness, fatigue
- Weak, rapid pulse
- Low blood pressure upon standing
- Muscle cramps

YOUR PLANTS

- Wilting leaves
- Dry soil around base
- Brown spots on leaves
- Brown leaves
- Leaves dropping off plant

Beating the Heat:

YOU

- Drink water before going outside
- Remain hydrated
- Utilize morning hours
- If you get hot, take a break

YOUR PLANTS

- Water in the morning
- Make sure soil is healthy and nourished
- remove weeds around plant (reduces moisture loss)
- If new, make a trench around the plant to retain water

Edible Harvest

By Rob Hinz, Master Gardener Volunteer

Two common plants to consider among the numerous edibles that dot Florida's landscape are the [saw palmetto](#) (*Serenoa repens*) and the [seagrape](#) (*Coccoloba uvifera*). These plants are easily recognizable and are good for a fall harvest.

The [saw palmetto](#) is named in honor of Harvard botanist Sereno Watson. The genus name "Serenoa" means calm or peaceful and "repens" means "creeping". This aptly describes the 5' to 10' high, and 4' to 10' spreading palm which has many branches that creep along in dense thickets. The word "saw" can create a red flag of warning: leaf stalks sport two rows of sharp, cutting teeth along each blade. Always wear long pants if hiking through dense stands of saw palmettos.

The slow-growing, multi-trunked saw palmetto is native to the southeast, growing as far north as South Carolina and as far west as Texas. Habitat varies from sandy ridges, flatwood forests, coastal dunes, to islands near marshes. Much of the southeastern pine forests are covered by this palm. It can be found in clay, sandy, acidic or alkaline soil, and has high drought and salt tolerance. In August to October following flowering, the plant develops oval black berries (drupes) of about one-half to 1 inch.

The palm provides food and shelter for numerous mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. As an edible plant for humans, the raw or dried fruit, hearts, crowns at the tips of the leaves, and the seeds can be eaten.

It is best to consult experts, and/or your physician before sampling this plant to prevent interactions with medications or other side effects. Nevertheless, if you feel in an adventurous state of mind there are recipes to sample that can be obtained via the internet.

Native Americans have called saw palmetto the "spring of life" because of its therapeutic effect on the male reproductive system. It has become popular as an alternative treatment for prostate cancer, although, the Cancer Society has no evidence of its effectiveness. The FDA has no regulation for its use.

Selling the berries to European countries has become a \$70 million business for Florida. As a result, the state of Florida has instituted some regulations and laws concerning the unlawful gathering of the berries. See the FDACS website for further information, see below:

<https://www.fdacs.gov/Divisions-Offices/Plant-Industry/Business-Services/Plant-Pest-Permits/Native-Plant-Harvesting-Permit/Saw-Palmetto-Berry-Harvesting>

REFERENCES: Saw Palmetto

https://irrecenvhort.ifas.ufl.edu/virtualgarden/infosheets/Saw_palmetto.htm
<http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/trees-and-shrubs/palms-and-cycads/saw-palmetto.html>
<http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/wakullaco/2017/01/12/saw-palmetto-is-native-to-florida/>
<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fp547>
<http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/news/1996/09/05/boom-in-natural-medicine-pushes-saw-palmetto-into-agricultural-big-time/>

CONTINUED ON PG. 3

The **seagrape** is dioecious, meaning there are separate male and female plants. The female produces a cluster of fruit that resembles grapes from which it gets its name. However, it is not a true grape, but belongs to the buckwheat family (Polygonaceae). This is a native of Florida and is also found in Central America, northwestern portions of South American and the Caribbean.

This aerosol salt and drought tolerant Florida-friendly plant can be a good choice for a home garden or a beachfront property. Not only is it decorative, but it stabilizes beaches and provides food and a protective habitat for wildlife. It can grow up to 35'-50' in height and have a spread of 20'-30'. The large, leathery leaves (8" to 10" in diameter) can be a litter nuisance when they drop in late winter. Seagrape is adaptable to clay, sand, alkaline, and acidic well drained soils.

Seagrapes begin to produce fruit when they are six to eight years old. This spherical fruit hangs in clusters and is about $\frac{3}{4}$ " in diameter, ripens from green to a rich reddish purple, with a large pit inside. When ripe, grapes will come off when rubbing your hand over the cluster. They can be used to make jams, jellies, sauces, and wines. Numerous recipes can be found on the internet.

Cultural uses for the plant include wood for fire and charcoal. In the West Indies and Jamaica the sap is called the "sap of the sea" which is used for dyeing and tanning. The wood of older plants is also used for cabinetry. In Florida, it is illegal to harvest seagrapes from public land as stated in the Florida statute 161.242.



Sea grapes in bloom



REFERENCES: Sea Grape

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/trees-and-shrubs/trees/sea-grape.html>
<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/st175>
http://sfrc.ufl.edu/extension/4h/trees/Sea_grape/index.html
<https://www.venicemagazineonline.com/travel-and-outdoors/2015/06/authentic-florida-sea-grape-jelly>
<https://www.winemakingtalk.com/treads/wine-from-sea-grapes.9108/>
<http://www.eattheweeds.com/sea-grapes-maritime-marvels/>



Ask a Master Gardener Volunteer



DEAR ASK A MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER:

Q: My tree was healthy a month ago and now there are very few green leaves left. It breaks my heart. My landscaper said he only used fertilizer on the grass. Here are a few pictures of the tree. What could possibly be wrong?

- D.P., Manatee County



Dear D.P:

A: It's very odd to me that the tree is defoliating from the bottom up. I've forwarded the pictures to Kathy Oliver, Program Assistant, Residential Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension for her opinion. The following is the response from Kathy and Jeffrey Eickwort, Administrator of the Southern Forest and Tree Health Diagnostic Group to whom she submitted your photos. It's encouraging to know the tree has a good possibility of recovering.

Jeffrey says:

A: This looks pretty typical for damage from 2,4-D (an herbicide that is often applied to turfgrass in the early spring), or an herbicide in that class. When the weather gets warm (about 85 deg. F or above), that type of herbicide can "volatilize" (evaporate), drift upwards in the air, and condense on the leaves of trees above. This can happen even weeks after the application was made. The symptoms that lead me in this direction are the bottom-up pattern of the defoliation, and especially the twisting of petioles (leaf stems) combined with the curling of leaves - these are telltale signs of phenoxy herbicide damage on trees.

I know that you said "only fertilizer," but it's my experience that landscaping companies are often reluctant to say that they've applied herbicides for weed control (especially when there is tree damage in question). Or, the representative may not even be aware that their "standard mix" for spring lawn spraying is really a weed-and-feed type, with an herbicide component.

The good news is that trees can usually recover from this. There may be some permanent twig dieback, but often the affected branches will gradually start putting on normal leaf growth (stunted and off-color at first) over the course of several months.



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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 Wednesdays

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Cicadas -- Sweet Summer Singers

By Joy Derksen, Master Gardener Volunteer

It is summer and the locusts are singing in the trees. Or are they? The insects singing are really cicadas. Early pioneers who saw mass emergences of periodical cicadas were reminded of biblical plagues of locust and the name has stuck in America over the years. (Locusts are the swarming phase of some grasshoppers which become migratory, consuming all the vegetation where they land.) Some species of cicadas take either 13 or 17 years to complete their life cycles. These are called periodical cicadas which emerge in vast numbers every 13 or 17 years. People regarded this as “magical” and the Latin name for these species is *Magicicada*.



This year is the emergence of the 17-year brood! (Also known as *Magicicada septendecim*.) If you live in or are visiting these states, you may witness the emergence: Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. When the soil heats up to 64° F at 8 inches down, billions of the creatures arise from the ground and climb the nearest tree to meet cicadas of the opposite sex. The loud singing attracts a mate. This is the end of the cicadas 17-year life span: they do not eat; they just reproduce and die.

In Florida, we do not get such huge hatchings of cicadas. All our species produce adults every year. The females lay their eggs on the ground or in living twigs. The eggs hatch into tiny, pale, ant-sized nymphs which find their way underground. There the nymphs seek rootlets to feed on and begin their long underground lives. Scientists are not completely sure how long it takes the non-periodical cicada nymphs to turn into adults. They do know it takes more than a year, and up to 10 years, for a nymph to molt into an adult. All cicadas molt four times while they are underground.

When the nymph is ready for its fifth molt it makes its way to the surface, climbs a short way up a tree trunk, hooks itself to the trunk with its front claws, and emerges as a big-eyed, flying adult. The brown, papery nymphal shell is a familiar sight on tree trunks. Adult cicadas spend their lives in the trees. The adults also feed on sap, but they rarely live more than a few weeks and do little harm to the host plants.

Most of the adults' time is spent finding a mate. The males call for females with a drum like structure found on their abdomens. Each species has its own “calling” song to attract the right females for mating. This can be deafening when numerous cicadas are singing at the same time. (In St. Augustine, Florida it was reported that the cicadas were so loud that they interfered with a movie company's soundtrack for a beach scene.)

Since cicadas are rarely seen, it is easier to identify them by song. If you'd like to know which species is singing in your back yard, use this web site to compare songs:

<http://entomology.ifas.ufl.edu/walker/buzz/c700fl1.htm>

I'm pretty sure that I have swamp cicada living in my trees!



Enjoy this interesting creature. Cicada are not harmful to forests. They do not sting or bite.

They do not pass on diseases to plants or animals. They provide food for birds, small mammals, and other insects. More detailed information on cicadas can be found at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in602>.

And if you are interested in the 17 year cicadas there is an entomology site called cicadamania at <https://www.cicadamania.com/cicadas/> which has all things cicada including citizen science projects, pictures, singing sounds, and a bingo game to play with kids of all ages.

Watering Efficiently with Ollas

by John Dawson, Master Gardener Volunteer

Ollas (pronounced “oi-yahs”) are unglazed clay pots which are buried in the ground with a fill top exposed and filled with water for sub-surface irrigation of plants. They have been around for more than 4,000 years and are still in use in many parts of the world today, mostly in arid areas.

The clay pot allows water in the pot to slowly seep through micro-porous holes in the clay structure. This oozing occurs more quickly if there is suction acting upon it nearby. A suction force can be created by soil moisture tension and/or by plant roots themselves (think of sucking in water through a straw). Plant roots will grow towards and around the olla, seeking the moisture they need.

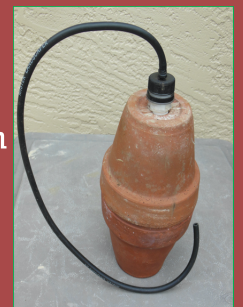
Ollas save water by providing water directly where and when it is needed. “Ollas virtually eliminate the runoff and evaporation common in modern irrigation systems, allowing the plant to absorb nearly 100 percent of water.” (City of Austin Texas Water Conservation, 2006.) During a rain, the soil becomes wet; osmosis back pressure will prevent water inside the olla from seeping through and thus overwatering the area; instead saving the water for when it is needed. In normal garden soil you may expect an olla to cover an area of one square yard, but in heavy sand, this would be reduced. In our area, ollas would be most effective in raised beds or well composted soils. Once in the ground, you can determine how large an area an olla covers, either by visual difference in soil color or by using a soil moisture meter. You can check water levels in the olla using a dip stick. Top off your olla when it is about half full.



<https://www.permaculturenews.org/2018/12/25/how-to-make-your-garden-drought-proof-using-unglazed-clay-pots/>

The internet can provide you with many techniques to make your own ollas (none are sold locally and they can be pricy if ordered online). I have developed my own design which can be filled manually or connected to micro-irrigation or a rain barrel. I use two 8” unglazed clay pots which hold 48 ounces of water. You can make them using any size clay pot (small enough for a planter or bigger for the garden).

Full instruction on how to make your own ollas using my design can be obtained by contacting the Master Gardener Plant Clinic at (941)722-4524 or E-Mail at ManateeMG@gmail.com and requesting the DIY sheet on constructing an olla.





By Nancy Hammer, Master Gardener Volunteer

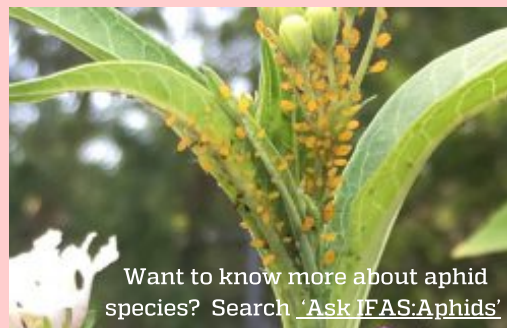
Aphids are pear-shaped, soft-bodied, sap-sucking insects commonly found in Florida landscapes. They come in an array of colors, and sizes and tend to hang out on undersides of leaves, protected stems, and flower buds - out of sight, out of mind of the gardener! These insects feed on a plant's sugary sap using their piercing, straw-like stylets, which may result in puckered, yellowing leaves and leaf drop. Aphids may also inject viruses during feeding. Although feeding damage is unsightly, well-established plants often weather the damage well.

When aphids (or other sap-sucking insects) are present, you may notice sooty mold, which is a black fungus that feeds on the honeydew (a charming word for the insect poop). Ants love honeydew and will herd and protect aphids from those who would do them harm. If these aphid attendants are "controlled," predators, such as lady beetles, and parasitic wasps may move in and knock down aphid populations. Regular scouting of your most prized plants is recommended to monitor pest populations and look for beneficial insects.

If you do not see predators, try a steady stream of water from your hose to knock off aphids, and prune affected leaves and stems. Horticultural oils and insecticidal soaps are also useful but follow directions carefully.

One of the easiest ways to identify aphids is by using a hand lens and noting the presence of cornicles - sometimes referred to as dual tail pipes by gardeners with a sense of humor. Cornicles are protruding structures on the abdomens of aphids. At one time, entomologists thought that honeydew was produced from these cornicles. Later research showed that honeydew, which is a product of digestion, is exuded from the rectum...the afore-mentioned aphid poop. The secretions from the cornicles are actually defensive alarm pheromones which are produced when an aphid is threatened. These pheromones can cause other nearby aphids to stop feeding and drop from the plant.

The life cycles of aphids are noteworthy. Males and females mate, and females lay eggs. When the eggs hatch, all the nymphs are females. Those females do not lay eggs - they produce live young which are clones and are already pregnant with their own clones. **Wrap your head around that one!**



June

Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Description
Tuesday 06/01/2021	12PM	<u>Tree Care for Hurricane Season</u> : Join our Residential Horticulture Agent in a discussion regarding the do's and don'ts of prepping your trees for hurricane season https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_nwPiwvsVTmCxIoTzVTQ6TA
Friday 06/11/2021	12PM	<u>Tree Care Series</u> : Join UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County's Residential Horticulture Agent for a series of webinars focused on community tree care. Trees are incredibly important for our personal and environmental health. This three part series will cover; selection and planting, establishment and maintenance and pruning. Register once to attend all three. https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hDbEVnc6QUiH7NyeZ1Ewvv
Wednesday 06/23/2021	10:30AM	<u>SSSsssnakes of Southwest Florida</u> : Join us for an informative presentation to familiarize yourself with all of the snakes that you are most likely to encounter in our area. Hopefully this class will help to alleviate some fears and clear up any misconceptions about snakes. https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_C_hGneEATA2bAK0tWU_Skw
Wednesday 07/28/2021	10:30AM	<u>Rain Barrels for the Rainy Days of Summer</u> : The massive summer rains we experience can cause a lot of headaches in the form of stormwater runoff. Learn more about the issue and how you can help to manage stormwater runoff in your own yard by incorporating rain barrels to use for landscape irrigation. https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Mj9faZlaRnKXvz8atBiyNw
Friday 08/06/2021	12PM	<u>Mangrove Considerations</u> : Join UF/IFAS Extension's Alyssa Vinson for a discussion of one of our most valuable coastal resources: Mangroves. Learn the ins and outs of living with these valuable and irreplaceable tree species. Topics covered will include; identification and ecology, rules and regulations and best practices for trimming. https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_kKQy-kBKRja5NSdovpf3bQ
Thursday 08/26/2021	10:30AM	<u>Rain Gardens</u> : Rain Gardens are important part of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ and serve multiple functions. This class will provide you with the information to help you design, install and maintain your very own rain garden. https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_oh6MwZN_QZ6Q0LWopB5uBO