

# 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.

## Inside the World of the Cut Flower Industry

By Amy Stripe, Master Gardener 2008

As Mother's Day approaches you are probably either snatching up a bouquet from your local grocery store or ordering flowers online for your dear mum. And in all likelihood you are buying roses, carnations, or chrysanthemums.

Mother's Day is the second most popular holiday when people buy cut flowers (Valentine's Day is first among holidays) and grocery stores corner the market on retail outlet purchases, although not in retail value. Florists still make the most per purchase. Internet sales are gaining swiftly on both outlets, however.

And, roses. Well, they are by far the favorite among cut flowers in the U.S., even though the scent has gone off the rose, so to speak! Color and durability have taken precedence over scent. Imagine that you are a flower, cut in Colombia (our biggest source of cut flowers with 78% of the import market), taking a three-hour plane ride to Miami, where you are then trucked to New York for an additional 15 hours, without water. Something gets sacrificed.

*To maximize the life of your cut flowers, buy ones that have been kept refrigerated, rehydrate certain flowers (like roses) by plunging the flower under cold water, strip off leaves that will be underwater in the vase, add a pinch of sugar and drop of bleach to the vase water, keep out of direct sunlight, and recut stems and change water every few days.*

The U.S. cut flower industry is worth \$8 billion. This "floriculture" industry (which includes potted plants and flowers) is third in terms of agricultural production in the United States. While production may be high, consumption of cut flowers in the U.S. dwindles in comparison to other countries. Europe has the highest consumption of cut flowers in the world.

For more on this and information on this hugely fascinating industry, read the book Flower Confidential by Amy Stewart. Other sources of information for this article:

American Society of Florists  
<http://Aboutflowers.com>

Society of American Florists  
<http://Safnow.org>

American Floral Endowment  
<http://Endowment.org>







A: Dear Bill:

Thank you for contacting the Manatee County Extension Master Gardeners.

The vine is *Epipremnum aureum*, golden pothos. This is a popular house plant, as it likes shade, so it does well indoors. As you can see from your palm tree, it also does well outdoors in our climate; however, once it starts to climb trees, the leaves become huge. This in itself isn't a problem and the vine doesn't hurt the tree, but over time the vine can produce adventitious roots that hang down and look quite unsightly. The vine won't smother the palm, once it reaches the smooth, green frond sheath.

Over time, and especially after bad weather, the leaves can look beat up and being so high up in the tree makes maintenance difficult. However, the University of Florida/IFAS Extension assessment has identified golden pothos as a Caution species for our area. Whether you decide to keep the vines on your palm or not, you should take measures to prevent the spread of the plant into neighboring areas. Following is a link to information about pothos and the IFAS assessment webpage:

<https://www.south-florida-plant-guide.com/golden-pothos.html>

<https://assessment.ifas.ufl.edu/assessments/epipremnum-pinnatum-cv-aureum/>.

Master Gardener Karen Holleran answers your email questions and looks at photographs for identification of problems at [ManateeMG@gmail.com](mailto: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 17<sup>th</sup> St. W., Palmetto, FL.

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





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<https://bugguide.net/node/view/697599>

## What's This: Biting Midges

Betty Ann Price, Master Gardener 2012



No-see'um (Culicoides)

Spring and summer biting midges (Culicoides) have earned a variety of monikers: no-see'ums, punkies, sand flies, five-O's, pinyon gnats, moose flies and flying jaws. They are active during early mornings and evenings and during the daytime on cloudy days when winds are calm.

These tiny pests can readily penetrate standard mesh screens to bite humans. They are particularly attracted to persons laboring outdoors.

Typically, flying jaw bites are immediately irritating, painful, and may cause long-lasting painful lesions for some people. Like mosquitoes, adult female no-see'ums require blood to develop their eggs; males do not bite.



Aquatic Midge (Chironomid)

Biting midge adults are less than 1/16-inch long. In Florida, biting midge larvae can be found in mangroves or estuarine areas with sandy beaches year-round with the period of greatest adult activity during June, July, and August. Eventually, the larvae enter the pupa stage on floating debris or at the water's edge where they remain until emerging as adults.

Adult activity is associated with lack of air movement. Subsequently, feeding activity is reduced in the presence of a breeze or high velocity fan. Smaller size screen mesh can minimize their penetration into a screened lanai.

For more information, visit: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/mg/mg10200.pdf>.

Photo credit: Ed T. Schmidtmann, USDA/ARS

Photo credit: James Castner, UF



# World Naked Gardening Day

By John Dawson, Master Gardener 2007



No, I did not make this up. Folks around the world have been celebrating this event on the first Saturday in May since 2005. The event supposedly was started by a group of naturists wanting to share their enthusiasm about being outdoors and communing with nature whilst gardening “au natural”. It may have been inspired by the 2003 movie “Calendar Girls” about a group of “proper” English gardening club ladies deciding to raise money by making and selling a nude calendar of its members.

Apparently, the enthusiasm for “nude gardening” has spread with participation growing every year. This year the event falls on May 4, which is, as most of you know, a great time of the year to be outdoors here in Florida. So with that in mind, I thought I might share some precautions you may wish to consider, if you decide to participate!

Public nudity is still against the law even on Naked Gardening Day. You may want to confine your activities indoors, in the privacy of your green house or in those outdoor gardens secluded from public. Remember spy satellites see everything!

1. You may want to refrain from using power tools, such as weed whackers, chain saws, and hedge trimmers. Whilst dangerous at any time, it may be a bit embarrassing explaining your injuries in the Emergency Room. Of course, you also need to be very careful with those sharp pruning shears, loppers, and limb saws as well. It is also not the best day to be sharpening those garden tools with all those sparks flying around.
2. Pruning your citrus, bougainvillea, and roses should be done on another day. The same goes for potting up cacti and thorny succulents and transplanting roses.
3. If you are new to Florida and have not met Mr. Fire Ant, you may want to be very careful where you sit down.
4. You must protect yourself by generously slathering on sunscreen and insect repellent to those parts of your body you never bother with normally.
5. It might not be the best time to clear out that poison ivy patch or confront an angry raccoon.
6. If you are a bit shy, you may not want to plant Doll’s Eyes, Black Eyed Susan, Bird’s Eye Bush, Hawaiian Blue Eyes, or the Eyeball plant.
7. Never a good day to be spraying harmful chemicals.
8. Not the best day to share those selfies showing off your prized veggies on social media.
9. Wearing sunglasses and a floppy sun hat may not be enough to hide your true identity.

All fun aside, this article hopefully points out the dangers to unprotected skin and the need to wear proper protective clothing at all times while conducting gardening chores!

*(Photo: Naked author taking selfie whilst ducking behind a cactus. Yikes.)*





# SNAILS AND SLUGS YOU'VE BEEN SLIMED!

By Joy Derksen, Master Gardener 2004

Have you planted seedlings one day and then returned the next morning to tiny green stalks where your plants used to be? Have you found small holes appearing in the middle of new leaves; sometimes scraped so well there is a window-like layer of cells left to see through? Are there thin silvery paths glistening in the sun in the morning?

Then, you probably have a snail and/or slug problem. Snails and slugs are mollusks, and are categorized as gastropods (which translates into "stomach foot"). Structurally they are the same, except slugs are missing the outer shell. Surprisingly, slugs have a tiny inside shell hiding in their hump. Snails and slugs also have a unique method of movement. The foot secretes a thin layer of mucous upon which they glide. The foot never touches the ground!

Snails and slugs can easily dry up, so they spend their lives avoiding dry weather and sunlight. They are active at night and on cloudy days. If you are going to hunt out snails in your garden, you must look for them at night or in early morning. By the time the sun is out they are hiding in dark, moist places. Good places to look for them are under pots and under pot rims. Several sources suggest putting out a lettuce or cabbage leaf, or a grapefruit or melon rind. The snails and slugs will use the underside for a hideout during the day.

You can carefully pick these up and dispose. A recent study by the British Royal Horticultural Society tried several home remedies including copper tape, horticultural grit, pine bark mulch and egg shells in order to save lettuce from these garden pests. The same amount of damage was done to both groups.

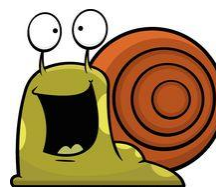
If you feel the problem warrants chemical action, there are a few suggestions. You can trap snails with a saucer or tuna can of beer with banana slices (the smell attracts snails), or a mixture of yeast, water, and sugar. Put the container top level with the soil; the snails drown in the beer. You can throw out the dead snails in the morning. A couple of pesticide options exist; iron phosphate (trade names Sluggo and Slug Magic) and bait products which contain metaldehyde and carbaryl. As a plus, iron phosphate is good for your plants as fertilizer. Products with metaldehyde and carbaryl should be used with caution. Always follow the label instructions.

For more information:

The British study on home remedies: <http://press.rhs.org.uk/RHS-Science-and-Advice/Press-releases/RHS-slug-study-busts-home-remedy-myths.aspx>,

Slugs: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in891>,

Snails: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in893>.



Snail secretes a mucus trail.



# Backyard Fruit

By John Dawson, Master Gardener 2007

With all the current problems with citrus in Florida, many folks ask what kind of fruit they can plant here that is not citrus. Actually, there is a lot to choose from. Over 250 species of perennial non-citrus fruit that will grow here, with each species having several or very many varieties.

There are at least 70 Florida natives; which obviously do well here, but most of these are used in jellies or jams. Some, like *Carissa*, cocoplum, or any of the edible *Eugenia* species, can also be trained as edible hedges. Many fruit trees can serve double duty as attractive landscape plants.

You might want mango or avocado and ask yourself: “Which is the best one?” The answer is: “The one you like.” For those folks who have only tasted fruit bought at the store, it is a pleasant taste awakening when they try their first ripe fresh fruit from the tree. Taste tests from various fruit festivals show that store bought varieties usually rank low on taste scores. That is because store fruit varieties must ship well and stay long on grocery shelves, two things sweet fresh fruit cannot do well.

So, if you want good tasting fruit, you either have to grow your own or go U-Pick. Planning what to plant is Step 1 (the most important step). This is a decision only you can make; however, your choice must be based on knowing if it is the right plant for the place you plan to put it, with the growing conditions you have.

Many books, websites, growers and personnel at your local Extension Office can help you. The best advice is “try before you buy”. If you plant a fruit species/variety you have never tasted, you may be very disappointed having waited 3, 5, 8, 12 or more years for the first fruit, just to find out you don’t like it! Step 2, planting your choice is next in importance. Doing it correctly may provide you with bountiful fruit for the next 30 years or more; doing it incorrectly could mean a dead plant in less than a year. Again, seek help before you plant.

Step 3, maintaining your choice, means adhering to scheduled maintenance such as watering, pruning and fertilizing and these can be found at Fruit Scapes <https://trec.ifas.ufl.edu/fruitscapes/>. These fact sheets should answer most of your questions and provide guidance for maintaining your fruit investment.

For those folks wanting to try something new and unordinary, visit a Florida fruit festival and try some fruit you’ve never tasted before. There are several mango festivals each year featuring a hundred or more varieties to try. Closer to home, go to a local Manatee Rare Fruit Council chapter meeting and learn more about different rare fruit. As a bonus, there is usually fresh fruit available to taste. The Manatee Rare Fruit Council sale is scheduled for May 19<sup>th</sup> at the Bradenton Area Convention Center in Palmetto.



# Summer Spinaches

Text and Photographs by Kathy Oliver, Program Assistant, Urban Horticulture Program

When summer heat kicks in, we say goodbye to many vegetables in the garden including greens and even warm-season favorites such as tomatoes and peppers. If you are not ready to relinquish homegrown spinach in your salads, wraps, and smoothies, consider a summertime alternative. Several tropical plants can fill the bill. While botanically unrelated to the spinach with which we are familiar, they are great for hot weather gardening. The leaves tend to be a bit tougher and more “slimy” than true spinach, but they are nutrient dense.

Tropical spinaches will grow in containers, as well as in the ground, in an area that receives sun to part shade. They tolerate a range of soil types but prefer well-drained organic soil and consistent moisture. Those that grow like a vine do well on a trellis or fence. Cut stem tips when harvesting to keep plants bushy and productive. Newer shoots and leaves are more tender and milder in flavor than older ones. These herbaceous perennials will freeze to the ground but often regrow from roots or seeds. Relocate plants in containers to a protected spot, or take cuttings from in-ground plants and grow them indoors in winter.

**Okinawa Spinach** (*Gynura crepioides*) is a member of the Aster family and hails from Indonesia and parts of southeast Asia. It performs well in zones 9-11, the subtropical and tropical climates of central and south Florida. This vigorous plant is low growing, and its attractive green and purple leaves are borne on short stems. Eat the leaves raw or cooked. Bright orange flowers in spring attract butterflies but are usually sterile. Any seeds produced may not come true, so the best method of propagation is by stem cuttings.



**Longevity Spinach** (*Gynura procumbens*), also called Leaves of the Gods, is the all green cousin of Okinawa spinach. The some-what succulent leaves are a bit stronger in flavor and texture. The name “Longevity” could refer to its purported health benefits in lowering blood sugar, inflammation, and cholesterol. Propagate this plant from cuttings like Okinawa spinach.



**Malabar Spinach** (*Basella* sp.) from India is a climbing spinach. It is a fast growing, vining plant with fleshy heart-shaped leaves. Of the two varieties, commonly available, the green version, *B. alba*, is more robust, and the red stemmed *rubra* species is more compact. It is perennial but often grown as an annual as it produces an abundance of seeds each year. Pinch off the small white flower clusters during the growing season for more leaf production and better flavor. You can let it go to seed eventually to have a supply for next summer. The large fresh leaves make good wraps, and they can be cooked in soups and stir-fries. Warm, wet weather may induce leaf spots, but these are generally an aesthetic concern. Malabar spinach is high in protein, vitamins, and iron.



**Surinam Spinach** (*Talinum triangulare*) also goes by the name Jewels of Opar. It is related to another edible weed, purslane. Surinam spinach grows to about 2 feet and sends up delicate sprays of pink flowers followed by brown seed pods. It readily reseeds in garden settings.



To learn more about summer vegetables and garden management, register for our “Summerize your Vegetable Garden” workshop on Saturday, May 25 from 10AM to Noon [https://prepping\\_your\\_vegetable\\_garden.eventbrite.com](https://prepping_your_vegetable_garden.eventbrite.com).

# May

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Time	Event
1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday	10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	<b>Ask a Master Gardener</b> – Island Library – 5701 Marina Drive, Holmes Beach. Visit the Extension Master Gardener information table and get answers to your gardening questions.
2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Saturday	10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	<b>Ask a Master Gardener</b> – Rocky Bluff Library – 6750 US Highway 301 N., Ellenton. Visit the Extension Master Gardener information table and get answers to your gardening questions.
2 <sup>nd</sup> Saturday	10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	<b>Ask a Master Gardener</b> – South Manatee Library – 6081 26 <sup>th</sup> Street West, Bradenton. Visit the Extension Master Gardener information table and get answers to your gardening questions.
Saturday May 4	10:00 a.m.-Noon	<b>Herbs in Your Daily Life</b> - Congratulations! You have succeeded in growing your own herbs - now what to do with your green harvest? Learn the benefits of herbs, how to incorporate common herbs into your everyday diet, and how to create creams and lotions for your skin. Workshop includes handouts, tastings, and demonstrations. \$5 advanced administrative fee, \$8 day of workshop. Register online at <a href="https://herb_garden_harvest.eventbrite.com">https://herb_garden_harvest.eventbrite.com</a> or call the Extension Master Gardeners (941) 722-4524, ext. 1819 or 1820.
Saturday May 11	9:00-10:30 a.m.	<b>Compost Happens – Home Compost Class</b> - Composting is easier than you might think, happens very naturally, and creates a useful soil amendment for your landscape plants and vegetable gardens. Join us as we participate in Compost-a-Thon, an effort to create awareness of the environmental benefits of composting our vegetable food scraps rather than letting them go to the landfill. Bring a bag of vegetable scraps/shredded paper products to the class and we will weigh-in to see how many pounds we diverted from the landfill. \$5 advanced administrative fee, \$8 day of workshop. Compost bins available for purchase after class for \$60 each (cash or check only.) Register at <a href="https://home_composting.eventbrite.com">https://home_composting.eventbrite.com</a> or call the Extension Master Gardeners (941) 722-4524, ext. 1819 or 1820.
Saturday May 11	9:00-11:00 a.m.	<b>Extension Master Gardener Plant ID Tour - Riverview Pointe Preserve</b> – 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. To register call the Extension Master Gardeners at (941) 722-4524.
Tuesday May 14	10:00a.m.-Noon	<b>Irrigation Designing 101</b> - Join Don Adkins, Irrigation Program Assistant, as he discusses the basics of great irrigation designing and learn some helpful tips and tricks for installing an in-ground irrigation system! This is a hands-on class and most of the instruction will be outside. This class satisfies the irrigation educational class requirement for the Manatee County Outdoor Water Conservation Rebate Program. Register online at <a href="http://uf-ifas-extension-manatee.eventbrite.com">http://uf-ifas-extension-manatee.eventbrite.com</a> or call Erik (941) 722-4524, ext. 1828
Thursday May 16	10:00a.m.-Noon	<b>Drought Tolerant Plants 101</b> - Learn how to choose beautiful drought tolerant plants for your landscape and know what to put back on the shelf! Valrie Massey, Horticulture Program Assistant, will discuss the difference between the good and the bad plant. <b>This class satisfies the landscape educational class requirement for the Manatee County Outdoor Water Conservation Rebate Program.</b> Register online at <a href="http://uf-ifas-extension-manatee.eventbrite.com">http://uf-ifas-extension-manatee.eventbrite.com</a> or call Erik (941) 722-4524, ext. 1828
Saturday May 25	10:00a.m.-Noon	<b>"Summerize" Your Vegetable Garden</b> - Get tips on summer gardening including vegetables to grow, how to take advantage of down time with cover crops, and soil solarization. Heat and humidity can take a toll on you and your garden. \$5 advanced administrative fee, \$8 day of workshop. Register online at <a href="https://prepping_your_vegetable_garden.eventbrite.com">https://prepping_your_vegetable_garden.eventbrite.com</a> or call the Extension Master Gardeners (941) 722-4524, ext. 1819 or 1820.

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UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



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The University of Florida is an Equal Opportunity Institution.

**Now accepting applications for the 2019 Master Gardener Volunteer Training.**  
**Call today for an application and mark your calendars for June 20<sup>th</sup> to attend our Meet and Greet to learn more about this Volunteer Training Program, now celebrating our 40<sup>th</sup> year!**