

Seminole Pumpkins Heirlooms from a Native American Culture

By Jim Haupt- Master Gardener Volunteer



A green pumpkin on the vine



Mottling is normal on Seminole Pumpkin leaves



Seminole Pumpkins vary in shape and size but inside the sweet pumpkiny flavor is all the same.

Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda, after returning to Spain from the New World, wrote one of the earliest accounts of Native American culture. After being shipwrecked off the coast of Key West, 13-year-old Fontaneda, as well as the crew and other passengers, were held captive by the Calusa Indians. The young Spaniard lived and traveled among Florida Native Americans for 17 years. His memoirs give a vivid description of pumpkins hanging from trees in Indian villages.

The Seminoles gave the name "*Chassahowitza*" to describe a region in Southwest Florida, meaning "pumpkin hanging place." The Seminoles, Calusa, Creek, and Miccosukee cultivated pumpkins at the base of dead trees, allowing the vines to climb up the trunks and the fruit to hang from branches. Later, these hanging gourds were named Seminole pumpkins.

As we enter summer, temperature and humidity increase and the choice of vegetables to grow dwindles to just a few possibilities. The Seminole pumpkin, *Cucurbita moschata*, might be the answer for die-hard Florida gardeners. It is a variety of the *C. moschata* species that includes butternut squash and Calabaza squash or Cuban pumpkins. Pumpkins we use for jack-o-lanterns are unable to adapt to our summer climate, but the Seminole pumpkin is a heat-loving gourd.

The vines are drought tolerant and resistant to powdery mildew. They are not usually bothered by vine borers, mealy bugs, or cucumber beetles. Remarkably, the silvery hairs found on their leaves fend off these intrusive pests by reflecting the intense glow of the sun. Tough vines make them impenetrable to the squash bugs, winds, and rainstorms that damage other squash varieties. These characteristics make the Seminole pumpkin very suitable for Central Florida.

Seeds may be difficult to find locally but can be ordered online. In Central Florida, they are usually planted in the spring or as late as summer. Direct seeding is recommended in an area receiving 6 to 8

hours of direct sunlight. The vigorous vines are large and spread as far as 25 feet. Give them plenty of room to prevent intrusion into other landscaped areas or your neighbor's yard. Fruit will mature in 3 to 4 months but can be left on the vine to become even sweeter. Trellises help to stabilize plants and allow them to climb. Gardeners should scout often and keep a watchful eye for caterpillar infestations. Whilst well-adapted to summer conditions, gummy stem blight can be a problem. To prevent this fungal disease, keep mulch away from the base of vines, water during the morning hours, and direct water to the roots and off the leaves.

Unlike most other varieties, the pumpkin is not uniform, but varies in shape (oblong to round), size, and weight (6 to 12 pounds). The outer shell is equally tough as the vine and varies in color from deep gold to light salmon. The outer shell helps to retain moisture during dry spells. Inside, the thick orange flesh is less fibrous and firmer than other pumpkin varieties.

The Seminoles were sustainable gardeners. Fruit was sliced, dried, and stored. The rind or shell was also made into cups, bowls, and even cut into wedges and toasted. Florida gardeners can cut up and freeze the flesh to be used later in soups or casseroles. Sweeter than butternut squash and similar in flavor to sweet potatoes, Seminole pumpkins can add appeal to any Thanksgiving table. The beautiful blossoms can be fried or stuffed for a side dish.

Seeds may be saved for next year's harvest by rinsing them off, allowing them to dry out, and placing them in a bag or jar. Store them either in the fridge or in a cool place. For more information about Seminole pumpkins and other varieties of ornamental gourds, winter squash, pumpkin pie, and pumpkin puree, go to:

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/pumpkins.html>.

If you wish to grow heirlooms, plant a piece of Native American history in your garden, or keep your garden in production during the dog days of summer, try Seminole pumpkins.



Manatee County Agriculture and Extension Service

1303 17th Street West - Palmetto, FL 34221

Telephone: (941) 722-4524 ~ <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/manatee/>

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



Dear Ask a Master Gardener Volunteer:

Q: I have a palm tree in my backyard that seems to be growing up out of the ground. Is it trying to tell me something?

L., Bradenton



Dear L:

A: Yes, your palm tree is telling you it is doing exactly what palm trees do! This bark curling back is in an area called the root initiation zone. If you were to get down low and look under there, you would see the roots are pushing the bark out. It is considered a 'normal abnormality' of palms and nothing to worry about.

I'm including a link to a publication about palm abnormalities for your reference.

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep344>

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.

Horticultural Information at Your (Digital!) Fingertips

By Amy L. Stripe, Master Gardener Volunteer

We love seeing and hearing from customers in our Plant Diagnostic Clinic (941-722-4524 or visit us at 1303 17th St. W., Palmetto, FL 34221). Use our new online form to submit a query:

https://ufl.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ONfIZ3fyEWluf0F.

You can also email us with photos and queries at manateemg@gmail.com. Drop off soil and water samples at our office for measuring pH and soluble salts (a small fee applies).

However, if you like to search for answers to horticultural questions on your own, there are several superb places to go.

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> Ask IFAS is the “big Kahuna” of information on virtually every Florida horticultural topic you can conjure, from apples to zamias. This is my first go-to source for ANY Florida horticultural question.  powered by EDIS

<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/Manatee/> takes you to the Manatee Master Gardener blog, newsletter, events calendar, classes, and workshops.

<https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu> delivers you to the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ website.

<https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/plants> Discover Florida-Friendly plants for your landscape with the Plant Guide App which is now free on the website.

For Smartphone users, there are apps spanning topics from weather to toxic plants to butterfly gardening to citrus diseases. Go to <https://m.ifas.ufl.edu> to download.

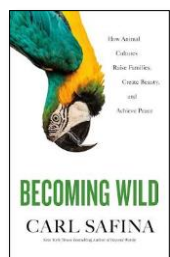
To access our numerous webinars which include growing herbs, vegetable gardening, cultivating palms, growing fruit trees, container gardening, composting, invasive plant identification, butterfly gardening, landscaping with native plants, and much, much more, visit the Manatee County Extension's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/channel/UC3jXr_BhsH7sljji6QUX6jg.

The DDIS (Distance Diagnostic and Identification System) <https://ddis.ifas.ufl.edu/> is another great resource whereby you can submit digital samples to UF/IFAS diagnostic laboratories. Submissions include plant, disease, nutrient deficiency, and insect identification. You must become a “user” to submit samples, but the service is free.

Summer Reads for Gardeners and Naturalists

Recommended Books from my COVID Lockdown Reading List

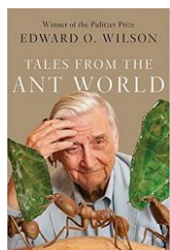
By Amy L. Stripe, Master Gardener Volunteer



Becoming Wild: How Animal Cultures Raise Families, Create Beauty, and Achieve Peace

By Carl Safina (Henry Holt and Co., 2020).

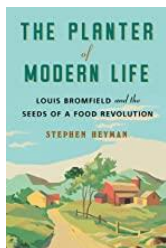
In this most eye-opening read, Safina explores in detail the nurture vs. nature question in the animal kingdom and presents overwhelming evidence of adaptive and learned behavior in species as diverse as sperm whales, macaws, and chimpanzees. One of my favorite (admittedly trivial) tidbits was the female chimpanzee that chose to mate with the non-alpha male. In answer to the age-old question “What do women want?” the researchers concluded: She wants a choice!



Tales from the Ant World

By Edward O. Wilson (Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2020)

This was my second-most fascinating book of the lockdown. Wilson, the world’s most authoritative myrmecologists (ant biologists) gives fascinating insights into fire ants, leafcutter ants, and army ants, among many other species. Generally, ants are warlike and female. Exquisite photos accompany the text, serving to distinguish the many castes that exist amongst highly organized ant societies.



The Planter of Modern Life: Louis Bromfield and the Seeds of a Food Revolution

By Stephen Heyman (W.W. Norton, 2020)

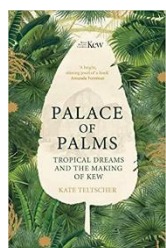
This is the true story of Louis Bromfield, an award-winning novelist who became the first celebrity organic farmer in the country. At his experimental farm in Ohio, he demonstrated the importance of soil conservation. Unfortunately, Bromfield’s innovations were overcome by his ambitions. Nevertheless, from the point of view of organic farming alone, this is a must read.



Native Plants for Florida Gardens

By Stacy Matrazzo and Nancy Bissett (Pineapple Press, 2020)

This book was a gift to me by a fellow Master Gardener Volunteer, and I refer to it every day. The photos are closeups (for those who focus on flowers for identification), the information is up-to-date (classifications change all the time), and it includes wildflowers, vines, shrubs, and trees. It is a superb supplement to traditional native plant books.



Palace of Palms: Tropical Dreams and the Making of Kew

By Kate Teltscher (Picador, 2020)

Amazingly surreal when it opened to Victorian-imagined tropics in 1848, the Palm House at Kew Gardens in the U.K. remains a showcase to the palm hunters of the past century, as well as the engineers, architects, and horticulturalists who were and are instrumental in keeping these specimens alive. This book chronicles that feat. I am looking forward to my third visit in 2022.



FLOWERING Vines

Take Your Garden to New Heights

By Nancy Hammer, Master Gardener Volunteer

Much of our emphasis in landscaping is on trees, shrubs, groundcovers, flowering perennials, and annuals. With a sunny location near a fence, post, wall, trellis, arbor, or pergola, flowering vines can take your landscape to a higher level. They can be used to increase privacy, block an unsightly view, create an entryway, and produce intoxicating scents as well as provide cover and sustenance for butterflies, hummingbirds, and other birds.

Most vines tend to be fast growers which is a benefit especially if you are trying to block the view of your neighbor's pool shower...or, er, utility equipment! However, that also means there can be pruning associated with most vines. So, know your vines, the height of your ladder, and your tolerance for climbing.

Vines grow in three ways – either by clinging with roots or tendrils such as passion flower (*Passiflora* spp.), twining their stems like star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) or sprawling with no attachment as with bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea* spp.).

Here are a few favorites:

Queen's wreath (*Petrea volubilis*)

We have a pair of these in our educational gardens at the Extension office which have graced an arbor for years. Sometimes referred to as "Florida wisteria" or "sandpaper vine," they explode with gorgeous purple flower clusters several times a year – including when many Florida snowbirds are in residence. It is a heavy woody vine and therefore needs substantial support. Once established, it will likely require occasional pruning to keep in check as it has the potential to reach up to 40 feet.

Star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*)

is a twining vine that produces exquisitely scented, white pinwheel flowers in the spring (another pleasing option for snowbirds). It is often referred to as Confederate jasmine, although it is neither native to the south, nor a true jasmine. These versatile vines may grow 20 feet or longer and exude a milky sap when pruned.

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Passion flower/maypop (*Passiflora incarnata*)

is a showy native vine with lavender to purple 3- to 5-inch flowers. It grows 5-10 feet in length. The vine is deciduous, and may freeze back in winter, but will pop back up in the spring. It is a must-have for butterfly gardens, as it is a valuable food source for the larval stages of zebra longwing and fritillary butterflies. It clambers all over the place, so be prepared to do some pruning.



Coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*),

also known as trumpet honeysuckle, is a native twining vine with striking 2-inch red tubular flowers and yellow centers that is a hummingbird and butterfly magnet. It is drought tolerant, thrives in Florida soils, and is easily managed as it tops out at 10-20 feet. It flowers primarily in early spring and summer and is another nice option for snowbirds.



Bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea* spp.)

is one of the few vines that puts on showstopping color in the winter. The "flowers," which are actually modified leaves called bracts, come in an array of colors – everything from apricot to lavender. With proper pruning the stems can be trained to grow on arbors and up and over walls and fences. I have trained my pink bougainvillea to drape over the sidewalk to my porch.

For more information on vines for our area, check out 'Versatile Vines, University of Florida/IFAS', <https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/orname/ntals/vines.html>

'Flowering Vines for Florida'

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/MG/MG09700.pdf>

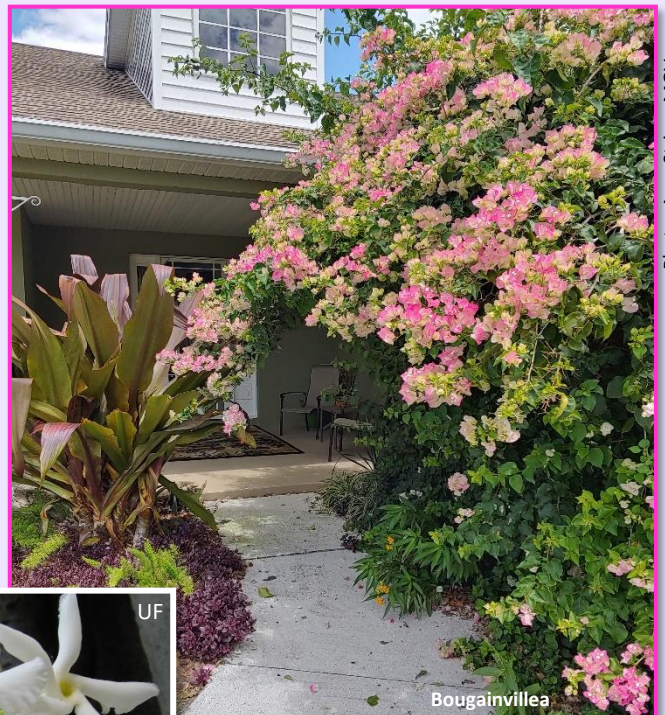
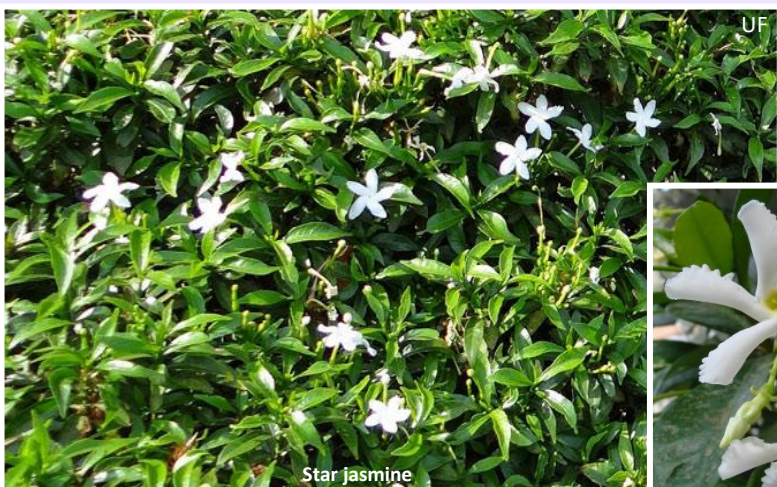


Photo: Amy Stripe, MGv



Darken the Night Sky to Give Nature a Boost

By Norma Kisida, Master Gardener Volunteer

If Vincent van Gogh tried to create his famous “The Starry Night” painting today he would likely have difficulty seeing the stars. Much of the world’s population now lives under ever increasing light polluted skies. Dark skies are an important natural resource which is threatened and should be protected. If you have visited Florida beaches you are probably familiar with the disorienting effect light has on sea turtle hatchlings. However, the effects of light pollution on the natural world are much more far reaching and include detrimental impacts on humans and many other animals, insects, and plants. There are, however, easy and low-cost solutions to decrease light pollution and save money for homeowners and municipalities.

Light pollution is the inappropriate or excessive use of artificial light and includes excessive brightness (glare), brightening of the night sky over inhabited areas (skyglow), light falling where it is not intended or needed (light trespass), and bright, confusing and excessive groupings of light sources (clutter).

Wildlife and plants have evolved with natural biological rhythms which are disrupted with artificial light. Insects, many of which are necessary for pollination of plants and other vital functions, meet their death around artificial lights.

Birds, both resident and migratory, are affected as they become disoriented in brightly lit areas, crash into structures, or die from exhaustion by circling lit structures. In addition to sea turtles, animals such as snakes, salamanders, and frogs are affected as they tend to hunt and move more on dark nights. Fireflies may not mate normally near lights.

To protect against light pollution all lights should have purpose, be directed only where needed, and be no brighter than necessary. Controls such as dimmers and motion detectors make light only used as needed. A common belief is that lighting decreases crime, but studies have not shown that to be true. Try using light shields, which should extend below the bulb, direct the light downward where needed and not up into the sky or in your or your neighbor’s window. LEDs have become popular for their energy efficiency, but many have blue- white lighting which increases glare,

compromises vision and has been shown to affect wildlife behavior and reproduction. Using “warm-white” or filtered LEDs to minimize blue light emission is recommended. Kelvin ratings of 300 or less are good choices for home lighting.

The International Dark-Sky Association (<https://www.darksky.org/light-pollution>) is one organization that works to protect the night sky for present and future generations. Much information about light pollution and suggestions to help can be found on their website. When replacing outdated or inappropriate outdoor fixtures, look for the IDA seal of approval.

Manatee County does have a lighting ordinance which may be accessed at https://library.municode.com/fl/manatee_county/codes/and_development_code?nodeId=CH8ENDEUT_S806OULI

Resource: Conservation Subdivision: Construction Phase – Dark Sky Lighting
<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw328>





UF

Orchids: All Potted Up

By Maureen Hirthler, Master Gardener Volunteer

I love repotting orchids, and here is important advice on how to do it correctly.

“Do I need to repot?” is a frequent question that I’m asked, and the answer is: “Maybe.” The general advice is every two years, but there are other reasons to repot earlier.

Let’s look at when to repot. This is almost always done in the spring, after blooming is over and new growth is seen. Other times are after an orchid purchased in bloom is finished, especially if it’s in moss and you grow outdoors. It is time when your orchid has truly overgrown its pot, with the appearance of circular roots. I also repot any time an orchid looks unhealthy or if the pot is badly broken. If you are in doubt, wait until next year.

Next, choose a potting medium. Here in rainy Florida, we need excellent drainage. The easiest thing is to make your own mix with good quality orchid bark, perlite, and horticultural charcoal.

Can you mount your plant on a tree? If the area meets the light requirement, of course! This works well for many epiphytic orchids. I often mount on cork or tree fern slabs.

I use sturdy, clear plastic pots with a cone in the center because I like to monitor hydration and root health. You can use almost anything, but it should be clean with a dilute bleach solution and have many good-sized drainage holes.

Gently knock the orchid out of the pot. It’s okay to break or cut the pot. Remove as much of the old medium as possible by gently rubbing it off between your thumb and index finger. You will notice mushy, dark, stringy roots primarily in the center – these

are dead. The plump white roots, especially with green or purple tips, are healthy.

Remove dead roots sterily so you don’t spread a fungus or virus. A clean razor blade for each plant works, but they are dangerous. I have a dedicated fine pruning shear that can be liberally wiped with 70% rubbing alcohol between plants. Dust a light coat of cinnamon on the cut edges as a fungicide.

Soak your potting medium for 30 minutes or so and drain thoroughly. Orchids like to be snug, so choose the smallest pot possible. A few non-biodegradable packing peanuts or bits of cork go in the bottom, then a small amount of potting mix. Place your plant with the old growth against one side. If you have high aerial roots, they don’t have to go in the pot.

Orchid roots need good air circulation, but don’t like big spaces. Carefully use small bits of potting medium, filling all the holes very gently with your fingertip or the eraser end of a pencil. Keep tapping on a firm surface to settle. Go slowly. With clear pots you can see the areas that need more medium. Try not to cover the very base of the plant.

If you have a labelling tag, be sure it is in good shape. Put the month and year of repotting on the back and place it securely in the pot near an edge. If you used dry medium, water well. Place your plant in a mostly shady place, water very sparingly, and ignore it until you see new growth. Gradually move it to its regular place.

Look forward to healthy, happy orchids!

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/orchids.html>

Photos: Maureen Hirthler, MGv



Repot when your orchid has overgrown its pot.



This is an orchid that has had dead roots trimmed and is ready for repotting.



Bark, perlite, and charcoal potting media.



Repotting in a clear plastic pot.



Repotted orchid.

May

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

UF

Date	Time	Event	UF
1 st & 3 rd 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.	
1 st & 3 rd 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.	
1 st & 3 rd 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.	
Monday May 3	10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.	Home Composting Webinar and Composting for Compost-a-Thon! In celebration of International Compost Awareness Week (May 2-8) please join us for a virtual home composting class to learn why composting is important. Please collect your compostable scraps from May 3rd-8th and bring in a bag to Manatee County Extension (1303 17th St. W. Palmetto 34221) on Saturday May 8th from 9-11AM as we partner with Sunshine Community Compost's Compost-a-Thon to see how much compostable material we can divert from the landfill this week! To register for the Home Composting webinar, click here or https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_I_iEtRaITx2syG9u4o8vyw	
Saturday May 8	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	
Tuesday May 11	11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	Mushroom Series – Amazing Mushrooms - This is the second in a three-part webinar series covering; Mushroom Biology (April 20th), Amazing Mushrooms (May 11th) and Mushroom Identification Techniques (May 27th). Amazing Mushrooms will cover human uses past, present, and future. Focusing on the known and currently researched applications of mushrooms in medicine, industry, and culture. To register, click here or https://bit.ly/2QzL404	
Saturday May 15	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 https://rye_preserve.eventbrite.com	
Thursday May 20	12:00 p.m.-12:45 p.m.	Sustainable Topics Lunch and Learn webinar - Join Manatee and Sarasota County Extension Agents to pick up some tricks and tips on how you can conserve resources. This is a lunch and learn event, presentation is 20 minutes, questions and discussion 15 min. Register here or https://ufl.zoom.us/meeting/register/UUud-GvrzljHNA3CpoovRU9Ngx79poE_CYd	
Wednesday May 26	10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.	Florida-Friendly Landscaping for Pollinators webinar - Pollinators need our help! Learn about the types of plants you can use to support a vast array of pollinators in your yard and community. To register, click here or https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Ni9pjYHkS7qh5XpkVM6Aazg	
Thursday May 27	10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	Design Your Landscape to Your Site Conditions webinar - Learn about how your soil type, sun exposures, location, drainage, proximity to saltwater and soil pH, among other factors affect which plants would best be suited for your landscape. For details, and to register Click here or https://bit.ly/3vtDVwT	
Thursday May 27	11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	Mushroom Series – Mushroom Identification Techniques –This is the third in a three-part webinar series. This webinar will provide you with the tools necessary to begin your own search for mushrooms, whether in your backyard or on a mushroom expedition. You will learn how to identify habitat, growth, fruiting season, and learn how to safely harvest mushrooms for identification purposes. Register Here or https://bit.ly/2QzL404	
Tuesday June 1	12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.	Tree Care for Hurricane Season - Join our Residential Horticulture Agent in a discussion regarding the do's and don'ts of prepping your trees for hurricane season. Are you prepared? To register, click here or https://bit.ly/2S687je	



University of Florida IFAS Extension - Manatee County
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 Web site: <http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/manatee/> E-mail: ManateeMG@gmail.com



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