

WOW! SWEETBAY MAGNOLIA

By Sally Herb, Master Gardener Volunteer

Photos courtesy of Sally Herb

I don't often write about large native trees because most of us don't have a place to plant them, but as I walked through Bob Gardner Park this week, I was enchanted by the lovely aroma wafting from the sweetbay magnolias (*Magnolia virginiana*). When looking up to find the beautiful blossoms, a light breeze was blowing, revealing the striking silver undersides of its leaves. This graceful native sure knows how to put on a Spring show! Usually found in fairly moist, sunny habitats in Zones 8-10A, the sweetbay evergreen is noted for its fragrance, showy red fruit, interesting foliage and hurricane resistance. It may reach heights of 60' in our area but the canopy is fairly narrow, making it a good candidate in areas with limited horizontal crown space. The seeds are loved by squirrels and small birds; it is the larval host for the Southern tiger swallowtail butterfly. Interestingly, beetles are the primary pollinators (although I saw plenty of bees enjoying the bountiful pollen). Historically, uses include medicines for colds and coughs, as a spice or tea, and the roots were often used to trap beavers. Even if you are unable to plant a sweetbay in your landscape, there are plenty of them around for you to enjoy! (Visit Bob Gardner Park at 2710 White Eagle Blvd. in Bradenton. Master Gardener Volunteers operate a mobile plant clinic there the third Sunday of the month from 9 A.M. to noon).

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/ST384>

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/magnolia-virginiana>



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MOLE CRICKETS

By Lindell Townsel, Master Gardener Volunteer Intern

Photo credits: L. Buss, UF/IFAS

Mole crickets are an unusual family of crickets that spend most of their life underground and have modified “hands” (front legs) that help them tunnel through the soil (hence, the name “mole” cricket). In Florida, three species of mole crickets are considered pests:



shortwinged mole cricket, tawny, and shortwinged (again!) Mole crickets tunnel through the soil, often close to the soil surface, severing grass roots and causing the earth to bulge upwards. Mole cricket tunneling and feeding damage looks like ugly brown patches of dying or dead grass, which are typically replaced by weeds.

UF has published a “Mole Cricket Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Guide for Florida” to help people identify mole cricket infestations and manage them effectively and economically while minimizing environmental side effects. It can be used against pest mole crickets in sites such as landscapes, golf courses, athletic fields, sod farms, pastures, and vegetable fields. The guide provides specific recommendations for pesticides as well as biocontrols for mole crickets.

For more information:

<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn-and-garden/mole-crickets/>

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN1021>



Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Clinics

Location	Address	Day(s)	Time
Bob Gardner Park	2710 White Eagle Blvd., Lakewood Ranch	Third Sundays	9AM – 12PM
Crowder Bros. Ace Hardware	5409 Manatee Ave W., Bradenton	Third Saturdays	9AM – 12PM
Central Library	1301 1st St. W., Bradenton	Third Saturdays	11:30AM – 2:30PM
Lakewood Ranch Farmers Market	Waterside Place, 7500 Island Cove Terrace, Sarasota	First Sundays	10AM – 2PM
Rocky Bluff Library	6750 US Hwy 301 N., Ellenton	Second & Fourth Saturdays	10AM – 1PM
St. George's Episcopal Church	912 63rd Ave. W., Bradenton	First & Third Thursdays	9AM – 12PM
Island Branch Library	5701 Marina Dr, Holmes Beach	First Saturdays	10AM – 1PM
UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County Tel. 941-722-4524 manateemg@gmail.com	1303 17th St. W., Palmetto	Every weekday except Wednesdays	9AM – 4PM

BEDDING PLANTS AND ANNUALS FOR A FLORIDA GARDEN

By Joy Derksen, Master Gardener Volunteer

Photos courtesy of Joy Derksen

It's time to liven up your landscape with annual plants. Annual plants can become perennials when there is no winter freeze. First, take a good look at your site for planting. Does it have mostly sun, mostly shade, or a combination of the two? Your chosen plant's requirements must match your yard's sun/shade patterns. Next decide how much water is available in the area you are planting. Does it already have a sprinkler system? Is it boggy when it rains? Is there good drainage? Is the area likely to be exposed to salt spray or salt water?

Prepare the area by amending the soil with compost, potting soil, or peat mix until you have 2-3 inches of organic matter. Mix a controlled release fertilizer such as Osmocote, Dynamite, or something similar into the top 6 inches of soil. Try to use a 6 month-rated fertilizer, so that you do not run into our summer fertilizer ban.

Now it's off to the nursery to see what you can buy. Look for healthy plants: compact with good leaf color and buds. Keep bees and other pollinators in mind by providing Florida-hardy plants like anise, hyssop, pentas, marigolds, gaillardia, salvias, cone flowers, Black-eyed Susans, and zinnias.

For many years, petunias were not a summer plant in our area of Florida—too much sun and humidity. Growers have now hybridized some plants that have petunia ancestors but can withstand our summers. Proven Winners growers have two hybrids that seem to work: one is called 'Supertunia' and the other hybrid is called 'Surfinia'. These are rated for zones 9a-11b (we are mostly zone 10). Another new plant that has popped up in garden centers and is supposed to survive our summers is the calibrachoa and the petunia/calibrachoa hybrid. Check out the new sun and shade begonias and caladiums. Water well before and after planting. Hand water daily for about a week and then water only when plants look wilted. Enjoy the color and sweet odors in your yard.

Gardening with Annuals in Florida (this publication has tables for salt tolerant plants and what blooms when in South Florida):

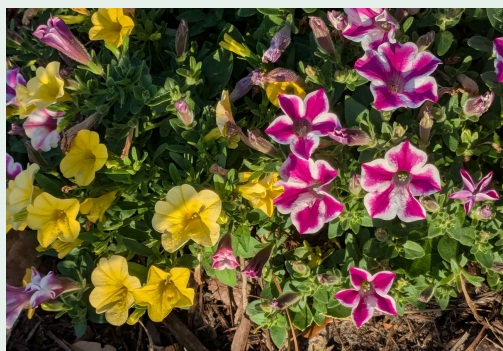
<https://journals.flvc.org/edis/article/view/131768/135385>

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/summer-bedding-plants/>

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/bee-plants>



Calibrachoa



Supertunias



The plants that followed the author

FIND A LOCAL GARDEN CLUB

By John Dawson, Master Gardener Volunteer

There are general gardening clubs (the ones most people are familiar with) and then there are those that focus on a particular genera of plants (e.g., roses, succulents, bromeliads, orchids, etc.).

Gardening clubs are a great way to socialize while sharing similar interests in growing plants. You don't have to be an expert or even own a plant! All of the clubs welcome new members, novices and experts alike. These folks are always ready to share their knowledge and help others in avoiding mistakes made in the past, and to learn about new techniques, plants, and products. Here are garden clubs we are aware of in our area. (If we have missed anyone, please let us know). More detailed information for each club can be found on their websites.

FRUIT

The **Manatee Rare Fruit Council** meets every second Monday of the month at the Manatee County Extension Office at 1303 17th St., W. in Palmetto, starting at 7:00 P.M. Their website is: www.MRFC.org.

ORCHIDS

The **Manatee Orchid Society** meets every second Tuesday of the month at the Manatee River Garden Club building at 3120 First Ave. West in Bradenton, starting at 7:00 P.M. Their web site is: <http://www.manateeorchidsociety.com>.

The regular monthly meetings of the **Sarasota Orchid Society** are held in the Activities Center on the grounds of the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. The gardens are located at 1534 Mound St. in Sarasota. Meetings are held on the first Monday of each month starting promptly at 7:00 P.M. Cultural classes meet every month at 6:15 p.m. Their website is: <http://www.sarasotaorchidsociety.org>.

Englewood Area Orchid Society meetings are normally held the third Monday of each month, starting at 6:30 P.M. at St. David's Episcopal Church, 401 S Broadway in Englewood. Their website is: www.eaos.org.

BROMELIADS

The **Sarasota Bromeliad Society** meets the second Monday of every month at 7:30 P.M. in the Activities Center of the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens at 1534 Mound St. in Sarasota. Their website is: <http://sarasotabromeliadsociety.org>.

ROSES

The **Bradenton-Sarasota Rose Society** holds quarterly meetings. Locations, dates and times may vary. Be sure to check the Events Calendar on their website at www.B-SRS.org.

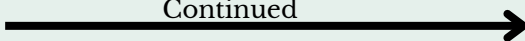
SUCCULENTS

The **Sarasota Succulent Society** meets quarterly on the second Monday of January, April, August, and November in the clubhouse of the Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Boulevard of the Arts in Sarasota. Their website is: <http://sarasotasucculentsociety.org>.

NATIVE PLANTS

The **Florida Native Plants Society – Serenoa chapter** meets at 7:00 P.M. the third Monday each month, September through May at the Activities Building of the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, 1534 Mound St. in Sarasota. Their website is: <http://serenoa.fnschapters.org>.

Continued



GENERAL GARDEN CLUBS

The **Manatee River Garden Club** meets monthly at their facility at 3120 First Avenue West in Bradenton. Their website is: <http://www.manateerivergardenclub.com/>.

The **Palm Aire Garden Club** meets monthly and hosts events at the Church of the Nativity, 59900 N. Lockwood Ridge Road in Sarasota. Their website is: <http://www.palmaire.net/club>.

The **Sarasota Garden Club** meets monthly September through May, although their facilities are open year-round at 1131 Boulevard of the Arts in Sarasota. Their website is: <http://www.sarasotagardenclub.org/index.html>.

The **Lakewood Ranch Garden Club** meets the second Monday from September to May. 9:30 A.M. Social, 10:00 A.M. Meeting followed by a program. Some meetings are held at other locations when there is a field trip. Please check the schedule at lakewoodranchgov.org, under Community Resources, Clubs and Organizations, Garden.

Gardeners Out East Garden Club in Lakewood Ranch meet the second Monday of the month, 1:00 to 3:00 P.M. from October to May. They meet at the Robert Toale & Sons Celebration of Life Center, 4310 Solutions Lane in Bradenton. www.gardenersouteast.com.

The **Anna Maria Garden Club** meets every third Wednesday of each month from October to April at the Roser Memorial Community Church, 512 Pine Ave. on Anna Maria, 12.30 P.M. onwards. Their contact is: gardenclub.ami@gmail.com.

Bayshore Gardens Garden Club meets the first Monday each month at 1:00 P.M. at the Bayshore Gardens recreation center 6919 26th St. West in Bradenton. Their contact is: 941-755-1912. www.bayshoregardens.org/2025-02-03-garden-club-1-pm.

Apollo Beach Garden Club meets the third Tuesday each month at the Apollo Beach Recreation Center at 664 Golf and Sea Blvd. in Apollo Beach. Their website is: apollobeachgardenclub.com.

Founders Garden Club of Sarasota Founded in 1927, contact is at P.O. Box 25612, Sarasota, FL34277. Their website is: www.foundersgcsarasota.org.

Dear MG, Does this "wasp?" eat the monarch caterpillars when they are very little? I had seen 4 or 5 small caterpillars on two different milkweed plants and now they're gone. And I see these going around to the underside of the leaves.



Resident Submission

ASK A MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER

Master Gardener Volunteer Karen Holleran answers your email questions at ManateeMG@gmail.com. Or call our diagnostic plant clinic at 941-722-4524 weekdays (except Wednesdays) from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. In-person visits are welcome at the Manatee County Extension Office at 1303 17th St. W., Palmetto or at our mobile plant clinics (see page 2).



Dear resident, Wasps hunt caterpillars to feed their young. After scouting plants and finding a suitable caterpillar, the wasp stings the caterpillar with venom, paralyzing it. The stunned caterpillar is carried back to the wasp's nest. The wasp lays her egg in the chamber with the caterpillar, and seals it up. When the egg hatches, the larvae has food to eat. Wasps also collect pest caterpillars. For this reason, wasps are considered a beneficial insect in the garden.

Not pretty if you're trying to raise monarch butterflies, but it is the circle of life.

CLUSIA: WHAT'S NATIVE AND WHAT'S NOT?

By Amy Stripe Master Gardener Volunteer

Here was a huge eye-opener to me: *Clusia* “pitch-apple” has become a very popular shrub in home and business landscapes, street medians, and parking lots. However, the specimen usually installed is not the true native *Clusia rosea*, which is in fact a 25-foot tall tree and not a shrub. (They are also called “autograph trees”).

The commonly installed shrub is *C. guttifera* (“small leaf clusia”) and it does not flower (and therefore produce fruit) often compared to the native *C. rosea*. As with many non-natives it doesn't support native wildlife. There is also concern that *C. guttifera* is being so overplanted that it might become subject to disease and pest pressures in the future.

Check out the differences between the two species:

<https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/sarasotaco/2024/02/07/flora-da-friendly-features-imposter-pitch-apple/>

Also: [ENH331/ST172: Calusia rosea: Pitch Apple](#)



Full Form—*Clusia rosea*:
Pitch-apple
Photo Credit: Ed Gilman

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BASIL: AN EASILY GROWN FLORIDA HERB & WHAT TO DO WITH A BOUNTIFUL HARVEST

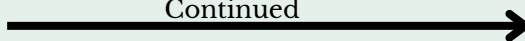
By Cynthia Olcott, Master Gardener Volunteer

Basil (*Ocimum* spp.) belongs to the *Lamiaceae* (mint) family. Basil adds a burst of flavor to countless recipes including pesto, a fresh touch for salads, fish, pasta, salad dressings, and gourmet omelets. It's also relatively easy to cultivate, making it perfect for beginners.

Although basil enjoys plenty of sunlight, intense afternoon Florida sun can be too harsh, especially during the peak of summer. Plant basil in a location that receives partial shade during the hottest part of the day.

Basil prefers moist but well-draining soil. In Florida, it is beneficial to grow basil in raised beds or pots to better control the moisture retention and soil texture. Since Florida soil tends to be sandy, using loamy soils rich in organic matter will help your herb thrive. Basil has an optimal pH range of 6.0 to 7.5. It is considered an annual plant but varieties can be perennial in the Florida garden. Watch for signs of aphids, spider mites, or fungal diseases like downy mildew. Regularly inspect the foliage and take proactive measures, such as using pest control methods or resistant basil varieties.

Continued



Some varieties include:

- Thai basil or holy basil (*O. sanctum*) offering a unique taste with spicy, licorice-like flavor.
- Genovese basil (*O. basilicum* 'Genovese') is the most popular variety, known for its large, tender leaves and robust flavor.
- Sweet basil (*O. basilicum*) is another widely grown variety, prized for its mild, slightly sweet flavor.
- Lemon basil (*O. basilicum* 'Citriodorum') has a refreshing citrus scent and flavor.
- Purple basil (*O. basilicum* 'Purpurascens') stands out for its beautiful, deep purple leaves and slightly spicy flavor.

For more information: [Basil – Gardening Solutions](#)

Picnic Panzella

2 lb ripe heirloom tomatoes with a large shallow X cut on bottoms
2 tbs unsalted, softened butter, 3 Tbs extra virgin olive oil
3 bakery ciabatta rolls, halved and cubed into ½" pieces
1 tsp capers, chopped
2 small shallots, finely chopped
2 pepperoncini peppers, chopped
½ cup roughly chopped basil leaves
¼ tsp anchovy paste
1 tsp Kosher salt
½ tsp cracked black pepper
2 tbs extra virgin olive oil
1 tbs red wine vinegar

Immerse tomatoes in boiling water 1-2 minutes to loosen skin. Transfer to bowl of ice water. Remove skin and seeds and discard. Place tomato flesh in sieve set over a bowl and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Saute ciabatta crumbs in oil and butter until toasted. Combine chopped items and add anchovy, salt, pepper, oil, vinegar and chilled tomatoes. Toss with toasted bread and be amazed.



Photo Credit: Basil –
Gardening Solutions

Pesto with Walnuts from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
courtesy of Tim Chin - Makes about 1 cup

1 cup packed parsley (optional)
1 cup packed basil
Salt, to taste or omit
¼ cup walnuts (optional, traditional pesto substitutes pine nuts)
¼ cup (½ ounce) parmesan cheese
3 cloves garlic (garlic powder is fine, less is better)
½ teaspoon pepper
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil (or sunflower oil)

Fill medium bowl with ice water. Bring 2 quarts water to boil in large saucepan over high heat; add parsley, basil, and ½ teaspoon salt, return to boil, and cook 45 seconds until herbs are bright green and wilted.

Drain herbs in fine mesh strainer and transfer immediately to ice water.

When herbs no longer feel warm, drain in strainer again and dry with paper towels.

Transfer herbs to bowl of food processor (break up herbs with fingers to distribute evenly).

Add walnuts, parmesan, garlic, pepper, and 1/2 teaspoon salt to food processor and pulse until finely ground, about 20 pulses. With processor running, add oil in steady stream until mixture is smooth and combined, 1 to 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer pesto to air-tight container until ready to use (pesto can be stored in refrigerator for up to one week). Serve over rigatoni pasta.

MAY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Time	Events Register Here: linktr.ee/manatee_ufifas
5/2	8:30am-4pm	<p>Grazing Management Tour and Workshop - 32160 Orange Ave, Fort Pierce, FL 34945 This course is sponsored by The South Florida Beef-Forage Program of the University of Florida/IFAS. It is conducted with the volunteer assistance of area livestock producers and Allied Industries. This program is part of a continuing multi-county education effort to help South-Central Florida producers raise and market more high quality beef cattle, per cow, per acre, profitably.</p> <p>Grazing management is the manipulation of livestock grazing to obtain defined outputs of livestock products. It involves careful management of both pasture and livestock resources to meet desired objectives. This course is offered to provide producers the opportunity to see demonstrations related to weed control, pasture management, green chop, inoculants and equipment demonstrations.</p> <p>Registration covers lunch and any materials.</p> <p>Any participants requesting accommodations should contact Lauren Butler at l.butler@ufl.edu a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the course.</p>
5/3	8am-12pm	<p>2025 Master Gardener Volunteer Spring Plant Sale Please choose one ticket type. If you purchase an Early Bird ticket you do NOT need a Regular entry ticket. You can continue shopping after 9AM.</p> <p>8AM-9AM Early Bird Individual Ticket: \$10 Early Bird Family Ticket (2+ people): \$15 9AM-12PM Regular entry: FREE</p> <p>Keep in mind the earlier you attend, the more selection of plants you'll have!</p>
5/22	11am-12:30pm	<p>FFL The Importance of Native Plants & Trees for Birds & Butterflies Palma Sola Botanical Park Join us to learn about Florida native plants and trees to add to your landscape to help support these beautiful creatures who are losing habitat and need our help!</p>
5/29	10am-12pm	<p>Salt Tolerant Plants and Irrigating with Reclaimed Water - Lakewood Ranch Library Presented by Valrie Massey, Horticulture Program Assistant with the Mobile Irrigation Lab working with Manatee County Ag Extension, University of Florida, Manatee County Utilities department and Water Conservation.</p>

Master Gardener Volunteer Amy Stripe & Joy Dersken, Co-Editors. Contents reviewed & edited by Extension staff.

Note change in Manatee County USDA Hardiness Zones! Majority of county is now 10A (annual extreme minimum temperature 30 – 35 degrees F) and 10B (35 – 40 degrees F.) Plants suited to only cooler zones (e.g., 9) may not thrive.

An Equal Opportunity Institution.

The University of Florida is committed to providing universal access to all of our events. For disability accommodations such as sign language interpreters and listening devices, please contact our office at (941) 722-4524 at least 1 week in advance. Advance notice is necessary to arrange for some accessibility needs.

University of Florida IFAS Extension - Manatee County

1303 17th St. W., Palmetto, FL 34221

Telephone: (941) 722-4524

Website: <http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/manatee/> Email: ManateeMG@gmail.com