

The Master Gardening Bench



The Manatee County Master Gardener Newsletter
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Aloes

By John Dawson, Master Gardener 2007



Aloe vera



Aloe maculata



Aloe sinkatana

Most folks know aloe (*Aloe vera*) as a medicinal plant, but there are over 500 species of aloe ranging from very small (less than an inch) container plants to tree size (50 feet). Originally from the African continent, aloes are succulents that store water in thick spiny waxy leaves clumped in a vase shaped rosette. Almost pest free, the spiny leaves and bitter tasting sap prevent animals and insects from eating them. They are easy to grow especially for those who tend to forget to water their plants.

You can grow them both indoors and outdoors. If you plan to grow them in your landscape, make sure you find a spot that drains well. Too much water will drown the plant and rot the roots. The size of the plant can be controlled by the size of pot it is placed in: the smaller the pot, the smaller the plant.

Aloes are salt tolerant and suitable ground covers around palms in beach sand. The plants can be grown in full sun or mostly shade, but should not be moved from one to the other unless done gradually. Aloes flower best when grown in full sun.

The clear cooling gel (sap) found in aloe leaves can be used to treat sunburn, minor burns, and scrapes. Treated areas tend to heal faster without infection. I have planted aloe throughout areas of my landscape. Whenever I get scraped (usually tending my bromeliads), I break off an aloe leaf and squeeze the gel over the affected area, providing instant relief from the itching. You may see aloe sold in markets or health food stores for internal consumption, but be aware that some aloes are toxic.

Besides being quite useful, aloes add beauty to your landscape. Some aloes produce small downward angled flowers of yellow, orange, or red on tall spikes, while others have unique patterns on their leaves. Although they can be propagated by seed, it is best to divide them as they produce numerous offshoots or suckers (called pups) around the mother plant (similar to bromeliads). Once removed, allow the pups to dry out for a few days before replanting. Aloes are best obtained from friends willing to share, and hopefully you will do the same when your collection starts to grow.

Here are some aloes you might see in area gardens:

Aloe vera – The aloe normally used in medicinal preparations, shampoos, and skin care products. It has yellow flowers on tall spikes above the leaves. It grows well in our area and is somewhat cold hardy.

Aloe maculata – Also known as “soap aloe,” it has white spotted, sword shaped, 18” leaves with pinkish-red flowers atop 3 foot stalks. The gel has been used as a mild sun block, soap, shampoo, and facial scrub. It was originally named *Aloe saponaria*, “sapo” being Latin for soap. The gel mixed with water lathers into a soapy mix.

Aloe sinkatana – Also known as “Sudanese aloe,” it is a fast-growing aloe that stays around 6 inches tall. It is stemless with white spotted leaves, red teeth, and yellow and red flowers. This aloe is perfect in a rock garden or in a pot with other succulents.



Dear Master Gardener:

We think our two beautiful Bismark (palms) are in distress from wind damage. We rushed to cut the snapped branches and maybe should have left them for the potassium. It still has plenty of fronds on the one we trimmed and only trimmed one frond on the other tree that is starting to look weepy.

Can you give me any info on anything we can do to keep them alive? They were so healthy but we are sure they caught all the wind Hurricane Irma blew our way.

P.K., Palmetto



Dear P.K.:

I'm glad to see that your palms have plenty of fronds on them although they look a little droopy. As long as the droopiness is a condition of the hurricane, then I believe they have a good chance of recovery. The worst part of this damage is that all we can do for it is the hardest thing - WAIT! These fronds are still photosynthesizing, that is, feeding the palm, so it is best to leave them on the tree until they die off naturally. Sometimes it may be necessary to prune off just part of the frond; the least amount removed is best. It's likely going to take at least six months before you can be sure the main bud wasn't damaged. A new emerging spear leaf indicates the bud is still alive. The fronds may look distorted at first but with each subsequent frond, the appearance becomes more normal. It will take some time to restore the canopy to the look it had before the storm, maybe several years.

Following a hurricane, the University of Florida recommends irrigating palms three times a week for six weeks if there isn't sufficient rainfall and do not fertilize until new growth comes on. Sometimes the bud can be injured but damage is not readily apparent. There is some thought that a bud drench may be beneficial to help limit damage from disease organisms that attack stressed tissue. I have included a publication that has the ingredients used in the bud (not soil) drench should you decide to take that route. It is not guaranteed, but for valuable palms, it may be worth considering. Also, I have included links to two other publications about caring for storm-damaged palms. It is my hope that your palms make a full recovery.

<http://disaster.ifas.ufl.edu/PDFS/CHAP05/D05-42.pdf> (page 2),

Assessing palms after the storm, section VI -

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FR/FR17200.pdf>,

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/EP/EP46500.pdf>.

Master Gardener Karen Holleran answers your email questions and looks at photos 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.



Pests in the Pantry!

(It's Not Pepper in the Pasta!)

By Nancy O. Porter, Master Gardener 2014

Living in Florida, the battle is real! There are bugs inside and outside the house. Inside the house, check out your pantry.

Believe it or not, our kitchens and pantries can be infested by insects! Weevils, beetles, moths, and borers, oh my!

We may meet up with flour beetles, saw-toothed grain beetles, cigarette beetles, drugstore beetles, mealworms, granary weevils, rice weevils, spider beetles, grain moths, sweet potato weevils, flour moths, lesser grain borers, bean weevils, warehouse beetles, and flat grain beetles. A most disturbing fact is that these nuisances can multiply quicker than rabbits, often producing numerous generations in a year. Many are quite active year-round.

Often, it is not our fault. Much of the food we purchase is already infested. Then, if an opened package isn't sealed tightly, it can lead to infestation. From there, the pests are apt to spread to other packages.

Your best bet is to stop the infestation BEFORE it happens. When purchasing food products such as pasta, be sure to inspect them by looking through the package window for signs of bugs. If there are dark spots or whitish spots along the noodle, that could be an indication of an insect larva.

You can store your pasta in the freezer; cold may

kill the intruders. Use the product directly from the freezer. If you take it out and store in the cupboard after freezing, it can become moldy.

If you get an infestation in your cupboards, your best bet is to vacuum thoroughly. Follow up with washing the shelves with warm, soapy water. Remove all the drawers and shelves after cleaning and spray them well with a crack-and-crevice pesticide. Allow the spray to dry before returning the shelves to the pantry or restocking with food items. If there are any cracks, seal them with caulking.

Then there is your pet food. If you purchase dog food from stores with large inventories, you might be inviting two forms of insects: the adults and their larvae! If you open the bag and see webbing, it is a good indication the bag is infested with Indian meal moths, members of the grain moth family. It won't take too long before you have an infestation of moths flying about. It won't hurt your pet to eat the food, but you might want to freeze it, just like your pasta. If you throw it out, be sure to bag it securely so there is no possibility of insects escaping.

Here's a personal story regarding pantry pests who decided to leave the pantry:

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Once upon a time there was a sweet little girl who made a cute beanbag frog. This frog had a place of prominence in her bedroom, on the curtain rod above her bed. It remained there a very l-o-n-g time.

Then came the first cries of, "Mom, there are bugs in my bed!" There were LOTS of them, resembling very, small, brown beetles. Immediately this mother began searching for the origin of these critters. The bedding was scooped up, washed with bleach, and dried in the sun to assure freshness.

Imagine the surprise, when the next morning the bug cry was heard again. Another round of washing and drying ensued. Hiding places were examined to no avail. This went on for a while with the infestation seeming to get much worse.

As a last-ditch effort, the beanbag frog was examined and discovered to be alive! Literally! It was filled with those tiny beetles!

For more information on pantry and stored food pests visit <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ig095>.

Flour Beetle		Spider Beetle	
Saw-Toothed Grain Beetle		Grain Moth	
Cigarette Beetle		Sweet Potato Weevil	
Drugstore Beetle		Lesser Grain Borer	
Mealworms		Bean Weevil	
Granary Weevil		Warehouse Beetle	
Rice Weevil		Flat Grain Beetle	

Check out the Featured Creatures website <http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/> which provides in-depth profiles of insects, nematodes, arachnids and other organisms. The site is a cooperative venture of the University of Florida's [Entomology and Nematology Department](#) and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' [Division of Plant Industry](#).



What's This?

Corkystem Passionflower

Photographs and text by Norma Kisida, Master Gardener 2012

Corkystem passionflower (*Passiflora suberosa*) is a short-lived perennial vine native to Florida. It is hardy in zones 9A -11 and blooms off and on all year. It gets its name from the stem that becomes winged and spongy, like cork, especially as it gets older. The small white flowers and black berries are insignificant in size but the plant is prized by butterfly lovers in our area as a host plant for the caterpillars of the gulf fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*) and zebra longwing (*Heliconius charitonia*) butterflies.

It can be grown on a trellis or as a ground cover or will climb up a tree. It can be grown in sun to part shade. Considered invasive in some parts of the world, in our area it may be somewhat aggressive by popping up from seed in the landscape. Butterfly lovers may be thrilled with these “free” plants but others may not be. These volunteer seedlings pull out easily.



Zebra longwing



Gulf fritillary





Fresh From Florida to the Rescue!

By Joy Derksen, Master Gardener 2004

Earlier this year, I discovered a world of services from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). The website <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/> is a portal into many different areas of consumer services. Not surprisingly, they have chef-inspired recipes for Florida produce including seafood. If we raise it, farm it, or fish it, there is a recipe here for you. There are even videos from the chefs at <http://followfreshfromflorida.com>.

Unlike many other places where I have lived, consumer protection in Florida comes under the Agriculture Department at <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Consumer-Services>. This is the place to go for help with consumer issues. They call themselves "the clearinghouse for consumer complaints, information, and protection." Don't have access to a computer? There is a phone number to get in touch: 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352).

These are the people in charge of the "Do Not Call List." They keep an eye on recent scams and report them to you, so you will not be taken advantage of. If you would like to see what's going on in the world of scammers, look at this list: <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Consumer-Resources/Scams-and-Fraud>. You can sign up for a newsletter to keep you up-to-date on scams. You can check on charities to make sure your money is going to the needy, not the greedy!

Do you feel like you have been cheated or misled by a business? Go to this link for help: <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Contact-Us/File-a-Complaint>. I have used this service and it is impressive. I complained about a TV cable/internet company raising my rates unexpectedly. I tried to deal with the business, but they kept me on the phone forever and then passed me around from person to person. One day I spent 2 hours and 20 minutes on the phone without getting any answers. Then I saw a show on a local newscast about the complaint service at Fresh From Florida. I filled out a complaint form without expecting much to happen. Within 24 hours I had a case number and a real person who was in charge of helping me. In another 24 hours I had a call from a vice president of Customer Relations at the cable company. My complaint was resolved and the FDACS caseworker checked back just to make sure I was satisfied.

This is a terrific resource. Use it!



I Know I've Become a Florida Gardener When...

Quotes from veteran Manatee County Extension Master Gardeners:

John Dawson says:

- ...stopped trying to save plants in winter and realized if they don't survive on their own, they don't belong here.
- ...I look at my lawn and say, "As long as it is green, it can stay!"
- ...I noticed the minerals in my multi-vitamin are the same as on a fertilizer bag.
- ...I warn people not to buy tomato seedlings in summer.

Nancy Porter says:

...I have heard of - and tried - some of the fire ant sting home remedies including fluoride toothpaste, clear nail polish, half a lime or onion, warm tea bags, ammonia, alcohol (usually the isopropyl variety), baking soda, 20 Mule Team Borax, meat tenderizer, regular Chapstick, and pennies! (*Here's what really works: benzoyl peroxide - the active ingredient in many acne medications - applied immediately!*)

Nancy Hammer says:

...I appreciate why they're called armadillos (as in: suit of armor).

Bob Nicholson says:

...asked if I've ever been bitten by a fire ant, my response is, "You mean today?"

Amy Stripe says:

- ...my ride-on lawn mower is my BFF.
- ...I stared down a lubber grasshopper and lived!
- ...I have "reclassified" certain weeds as "wildflowers!"

Send us your revelations to ManateeMG@gmail.com.



HOUSEPLANTS GONE WILD!

Photographs and text by Joy Derksen, Master Gardener 2004



Asparagus fern taking over shrub



Pothos



Sansevieria

Do you have a houseplant you think would prefer living outside instead of on your windowsill or decorating an occasional table? Many of what we consider classic houseplants can grow outside in Manatee County. Some of them quickly become terrible pests.

Variegated pothos (*Epipremum aureum*) is a native of French Polynesia, which seems to love Florida as much or more than its native lands. The form we all grow as a houseplant is considered the juvenile form. It grows up fast when allowed outside. The leaves stay small and cover the ground, heading for the nearest tree. When pothos starts up the tree, the leaves grow to two feet across! The vine thickens and becomes a liana that Tarzan would be happy to swing on. It can totally smother the tree it climbs. Pothos, also called "Devil's Ivy," is difficult to control. Any bits that fall off the liana will root themselves and continue to grow. This plant needs to stay inside at all times. Getting rid of it outside involves pulling up all the pieces and putting them into a plastic bag for yard disposal.

Another troublesome plant, once it gets outside, is the asparagus fern (*Asparagus aethiopicus*.) This hardy, delicate-looking plant has roots that retain water and bright red berries that easily produce more plants. I remember having a window box in Colorado filled with asparagus fern. Wonderful plant *there* ... It withstood Colorado's dry climate, bright sunshine, and freezing winters. *Here* it is an unwelcome monster. It will outcompete most Florida native plants, covering and killing the shrubs or plants underneath. If you see this in the landscape, try to remove it before the berries form and the thorns get too sharp. You need to dig it up which can be difficult if it is living in your shrubs or hedges. Asparagus fern can also be treated with glyphosate, but you will have to do several applications, while avoiding getting the spray on any plant it is trying to smother.

Sansevieria spp., also known as Mother-in-law's tongue or snake plant, is another popular and easy-care houseplant. But again outside it runs wild in Florida. One entire hill in Emerson Point Park is crowded with the plants. *Sansevieria* can reproduce by popping up new plants from its rhizomes. The rhizomes must be dug up to totally remove it from your landscape.

There are many other houseplants that become pests in Florida. So, please, if you are thinking about disposing of a houseplant by planting it outside, don't do it. Bag the plant and put it out for the waste collection.

For more houseplants that become outdoor pests, visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in530> (arrowhead vine), <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/st585> (an invasive schefflera), and <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/st252> (rubber tree). You can also bring a photograph or a plant sample to our Plant Diagnostic Clinic and we can look up information to its invasive qualities.

November

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Time	Event
1 st Saturday	10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	Ask a Master Gardener – Island Library – 5701 Marina Drive, Holmes Beach. Visit the Extension Master Gardener information table and get answers to your gardening questions.
2 nd & 4 th Saturday	10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	Ask a Master Gardener – 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 – South Manatee Library – 6081 26 th Street West, Bradenton. Visit the Extension Master Gardener information table and get answers to your gardening questions.
Saturday November 11	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Extension Master Gardener Plant ID Tour – Emerson Point Preserve - Stroll through Emerson Point Preserve to learn more about Florida's native plants and inhabitants of a coastal habitat. Suitable for all ages. Tour begins in tower parking area at 5801 17 th Street West, Palmetto. Call the Extension Master Gardeners at (941) 722-4524 to register.
Saturday November 11	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Extension Master Gardener 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. To register call the Extension Master Gardeners at (941) 722-4524.
Saturday November 18	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Extension Master Gardener Plant ID Tour - Rye Preserve - 805 Rye Wilderness Trail, Parrish 34219. Meet at Rye Preserve on the east side of Rye Road and North of Manatee River. Drinking water and hiking sticks are recommended. There are places to enjoy a picnic lunch, if desired. Register by calling the Extension Master Gardener Plant Diagnostic Clinic (941) 722-4524.
Saturday November 18	10:30 a.m.to Noon	Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ for Pollinators – Learn how to use the best Florida-Friendly plants for attracting pollinators to your yard. Register on-line at http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu or call the Extension Master Gardeners (941) 722-4524.
Sunday November 19	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Extension Master Gardener Plant ID Tour - Robinson Preserve – Stroll through the Robinson Preserve's salt marshes to learn more about Florida's native plants and inhabitants of a coastal habitat. Suitable for all ages. Tour begins in parking area by main entrance at 1704 99 th Street Northwest, Bradenton. To register call the Extension Master Gardeners at (941) 722-4524.
Tuesday November 21	10:00 a.m.	Monthly Guided Tours of the Master Gardener Educational Gardens - Join us for a guided tour lasting about one hour. The gardens illustrate a variety of garden styles and techniques, demonstrate Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles, educate residents about plants that perform well in Florida landscapes, and inspire garden visitors to follow recommended gardening practices at home. Register by calling the Extension Master Gardener Plant Diagnostic Clinic (941) 722-4524.
Tuesday November 28	10:00 a.m.- Noon	Landscape Tips for Water Conservation - This class satisfies the landscape educational requirement for the Manatee County Outdoor Water Conservation Rebate Program. Topics will focus on Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ tips such as right plant vs right place, watering efficiently, and the benefits of mulch. Register online at http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu or call Joann at (941) 722-4524.
Thursday November 30	10:00 a.m.- Noon	Irrigation with Water Conservation in Mind - This class satisfies the irrigation educational requirement for the Manatee County Outdoor Water Conservation Rebate Program. Topics will focus on how to adjust your in-ground sprinkler system to conserve water, how you can repair parts, and the benefits of installing smart irrigation devices. Register online at http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu or call Joann at (941) 722-4524.
Saturday December 2	9:00-11:00 a.m.	A Make and Take Workshop: Mounting Tillandsias & Bromeliads on a Palm Boot – Learn how easy it is to mount Bromeliads and Tillandsias on a palm boot, how to care for air plants, and how to display your piece of art. Bring wire cutters and pliers. \$30 advance materials fee due by November 27 th , cash or check only. Checks made payable to Friends of Extension. Register online at http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu or call the Extension Master Gardeners (941) 722-4524.



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