

# The Master Gardening Bench



The Manatee County Master Gardener Newsletter  
September 2017 - Volume 16 – Issue 9



## 2017 ANNUAL PLANT FAIR OFFERS SAVINGS AND SELECTION

Do you have a spot in your yard where you would love to have a butterfly garden or does your landscape just need a little splash of color? Interested in growing more Florida natives? Manatee County Extension Master Gardeners may have the answer.

On **Saturday, October 7th from 8:00 A.M to 1:00 P.M.**, the Manatee County Extension Master Gardeners will be holding their annual plant sale fundraiser at the University of Florida/IFAS Manatee County Extension Office located at 1303 17<sup>th</sup> Street West in Palmetto.

These plants have been raised by the Master Gardeners themselves and include a wide array of natives, perennials, shrubs, and ornamental grasses all priced to sell. Gardening accessories will also be on sale.

Many sought-after plants include sea grapes, orchids, vegetables, herbs, bromeliads, wild coffee, stoppers, groundcovers, and butterfly plants.

Come early for the best selection and bring along your own wagon or garden cart to stock up. We accept cash or personal checks ONLY. The first fifty customers will receive a free native plant seedling.

All proceeds from this event go to the operation and maintenance of the Master Gardeners' Educational Gardens and Greenhouse, and to support Master Gardener educational and outreach programs.



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**Q:** Can you please give me some tips on growing cape honeysuckle? I believe it is a *Tecoma* species. It seems to thrive in the dry months but in rainy weather it looks awful! I have it both in a pot and in the ground, but they look equally pathetic about now (August-September.)

Thanks, S.A., Bradenton



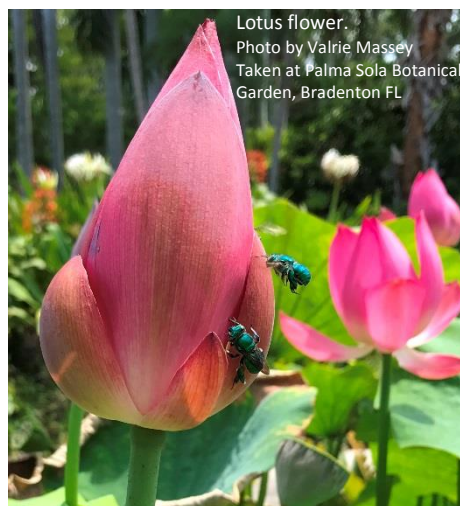
**A:** Thank you for contacting the Manatee County Master Gardeners. *Tecoma capensis*, commonly called cape honeysuckle, originates from South Africa. Its natural habitat is quite dry so it doesn't look its best during our rainy season. This very ornate vine, not a true honeysuckle, is still a great choice for us. Drought and salt tolerant, withstanding part shade or full sun, it can fill several options in the landscape. Cape honeysuckle can be used as a supported vine on a fence or trellis, spilling over a wall, or as a sprawling shrub. Allow it plenty of room to spread out. The orange flowers borne on the ends of the long branches are attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds. Cape honeysuckle benefits from pruning during our wet, summer season when blooming stops. Removing the

spent flower stems will make the plant look neater and promote more flowering once it commences in the fall. Cape honeysuckle is spectacular and carefree for most of the year making it worth the short time during the rainy season it doesn't look its best.

Following is a link to an article about cape honeysuckle.

<http://charlottecountyextension.blogspot.com/2017/01/when-is-honeysuckle-not-honeysuckle.html>

Master Gardener Karen Holleran answers your email questions and looks at photos 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 17th St. W., Palmetto, FL. Or call us with questions at 941-722-4524 and ask for a Master Gardener.



## What's This? The Green Orchid Bee

By Amy L. Stripe,  
Master Gardener 2008

The almost other-worldly iridescent color of this bee always makes me pause in my garden chores. First, for its metallic green color; second, for its flight pattern – agile darting then lengthy hovering; and third, for its choice of plants. In my case this includes common yellow elder (*Tecoma stans*), which boasts a long-throated flower favored by many pollinators, especially those with long tongues, including the green orchid bee.

The green orchid bee (*Euglossa dilemma*) is native to the New World tropics. It is called "orchid" bee as orchids are a favored pollen source (sporting flowers with long throats.) It is about the size of a honeybee but square-shaped as the thorax and abdomen are roughly the same length.

Do not confuse it with a sweat bee. Often sporting a metallic color, the sweat bee resembles a large fly and may harass you as you go about yard tasks since it is attracted to human sweat.

For more information:

[http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/MISC/BEES/green\\_orchid\\_bee.htm](http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/MISC/BEES/green_orchid_bee.htm), on sweat bees, visit

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/IN/IN89700.pdf>.



# The New Sunken Gardens

By Joy Derksen, Master Gardener 2004



If it has been a while since you visited the Sunken Gardens across the bridge in St. Petersburg, you are in for a treat. This garden, started in 1903 by a plumber and avid gardener named George Turner, Sr., has recently been purchased and updated by the City of St. Petersburg. Mr. Turner bought the property for his home and drained a small lake at the bottom of the area. He planted citrus and exotic trees and plants that would thrive in his new home. He opened a nursery to sell his fruit trees and vegetables and flowering plants.

People wanted to walk through his lush gardens and word spread about how unique the gardens were. In 1935 he fenced his gardens and started charging a quarter for tourists to be allowed to wander around. It became a popular tourist attraction on the West Coast. The City of St. Petersburg bought the gardens in 1999 and has been working to improve them.

The newly cleaned up and replanted gardens are open to visitors daily from 10:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. and on Sunday from noon to 4:30 P.M. Costs are low for visitors (\$10 for adults and \$8 for seniors). I have visited the gardens several times over the last

fifteen years and found all the new plantings and signage to be a pleasant surprise.

Because of the age of the gardens, there are many huge trees original to the botanical park. The royal palms are some of the tallest I have seen locally. The paths start at the top of the hill and you stroll down through tropical and semi-tropical landscapes, past waterfalls and water features and ponds. There is a new butterfly garden, an orchid display area, a tiny zoo with rescued, caged parrots and small animals, and a new Chilean flamingo display. In one of the ponds lives a snapping turtle which groundskeepers think is 100 years old.

I found new and interesting plants on display along with the older trees and palms. Like most botanical gardens there are classes and tours. Guided tours can be arranged ahead of time and are included with the cost of admission. This tranquil garden is worth a visit. The shade and the water features make it a cool respite from the heat.

To check for upcoming special events visit:

[http://www.stpete.org/attractions/sunken\\_gardens/index.php](http://www.stpete.org/attractions/sunken_gardens/index.php).

## GRAPES FOR MANATEE COUNTY

By Kathy Oliver, Urban Horticulture Program Assistant

Many of us are working to make our landscapes more sustainable by adding food plants. Among the benefits of growing dooryard fruits and vegetables are reduced environmental impacts, savings on food bills, and enjoyment of fresh-picked produce.

Grapes are a favorite fruit for many families and the plants fit nicely into most landscapes. The vines make use of vertical space and provide material for basketry and wreath crafts.

Native grapevines abound in our forested areas. Wild grapes (*Vitis rotundifolia*) are commonly known as southern fox grapes, scuppernongs, or muscadines. Muscadines are supremely suited to hot, humid climates and sandy soils, growing well with minimal fertilizers and pest control. The round fruit is thick-skinned and sweet/spicy tasting.

Plants may be either male or female; interestingly, most wild grapevines are male. You will need to grow both fairly close to each other for pollination or opt for self-fertile varieties such as 'Granny Val,' 'Ison,' 'Pineapple,' 'Polyanna,' or 'Tara'.

Muscadines have been cultivated for centuries to make juices, jellies, and wines. Recommended cultivars for processing include 'Alachua,' 'Carlos,' 'Noble,' and 'Welder'. These cultivars are self-fertile.

If you prefer to snack on bunch grapes rather than muscadines, your choices are fewer and your workload is greater. Only seven cultivars have been developed for Florida's climate and for resistance to the devastating Pierce's disease. Even so, preventative sprays for fungal diseases are often necessary when growing bunch grapes.

These recommended bunch grape varieties are self-fertile but some require grafting on suitable rootstocks, especially if you have alkaline soil. 'Conquistador,' 'Blue Lake,' and 'Daytona' are purple/red grapes while 'Stover,' 'Suwannee,' 'Blanc Du Bois,' and 'Lake Emerald' are light green grapes. A lower-maintenance option is 'Southern Home,' a muscadine and bunch grape hybrid that produces from August to November. The medium size black berries grow in clusters of 12 and their flavor is non-muscadine.

All types of grapes will require trellising, training, and pruning for good fruit production. More information on grape selection and care can be found in these University of Florida publications:

The Muscadine Grape <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs100>,

The Bunch Grape <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg105>.

For information on growing food around your home, sign up for our Edible Landscaping class on Saturday, September 23 at <http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu>.





# Small Space Gardening

By Susan Griffith, Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Coordinator

If you live in a condo, a mobile home, or just happen to have a yard that is on the small side, don't fret! There are still many creative ways to grow the plants that you want to grow, even in very tight spaces.

## Think *inside* the box

If you use containers of different shapes and sizes, you can fit them together in eye-pleasing groupings. Most plants will do fine, growing happily for many years inside decorative containers, so long as they receive adequate sunlight, airflow, fertilizer, or compost and are pruned as needed.

You are not just limited to foliage plants and flowers. You can also grow vegetables using Earthboxes®, stackable planters, and square-foot gardening strategies.

## The sky is the limit!

Vertical gardening is becoming more popular with the space-challenged and for good reason. This ultra-creative gardening strategy allows you to make your walls come alive! You can put your "reduce, reuse, recycle" philosophy to work as you repurpose old hanging shoe racks as vertical lettuce and herb planters, and a whole bunch of old 2-liter soda bottles cut in half can be attached to PVC pipe to be re-purposed into vertical wall planters too!

Here is a way (below) to garden on the wall horizontally, using re-purposed gutters with holes drilled in them for drainage. They can be cut to fit

any space. Bamboo would work well too for a more natural look.



## Condo-variety fruit trees

Mangoes (*Mangifera indica* L.) such as 'Cogshall,' 'Mallika,' and 'Pickering' varieties are called condo varieties because they can be kept 6-8' tall and can be grown in a pot and still produce a fair amount of outstanding fruit. Key lime trees (*Citrus x aurantiifolia*) can also successfully be kept in a container and still produce enough to make a few pies each season.

Limequats (*Citrus x floridana*), kumquats (*Citrus japonica*), carambola (*Averrhoa carambola*) also known as "star fruit" all do well in pots and can be kept pruned as small trees. Jaboticaba (*Myrciaria cauliflora*), the "Brazilian grape tree" even has a loyal following among bonsai aficionados!

continued on page 5





6' Mango tree for small spaces



Jaboticaba Bonsai

### Small, flowering trees that can be kept pruned and potted

Hibiscus trees can be purchased in “standard” form with a trunk. 'Pink Ball' (*Dombeya wallichii*) is a tropical hydrangea tree that grows to 15 or 20 feet, but can be kept smaller. The same applies to jatropa varieties such as *J. intergerrima*. The tropical dogwood (*Mussaenda philippica*, pictured) is another beauty that stuns during spring and summer with spectacular color and doesn't take up much space. Plumeria (called “frangipani” by some) is another smaller, pruner-friendly tree that takes well to containers. It has an interesting, sculptural look even when it loses all its leaves!

For information about flowering trees of Florida:  
[http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsAZ/Flowering\\_Trees\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsAZ/Flowering_Trees_Fact_Sheet.pdf)



Tropical dogwood

### A focal point

Remember in small gardens it is particularly important to have a striking focal point, whether it is an unusual plant or an object of art or both. You are packing a lot into a small space so be sure that colors and materials are cohesive and complement each other. In “living wall” planters, such as the one picture, the plants *are the art!*



Succulents, ferns, and plants with a low, groundcover-like growth habit are the most ideal plants to use in wall planting applications. So are epiphytes, bromeliads, and orchids that grow on trees in the wild. Look for textures and patterns that will be harmonious and add striking pops of color. You don't have to spend a fortune on specialized framing systems; there are many different DIY options online for every budget.

So don't feel limited by lack of space! Be inspired by all that you can do with it!





## Family Farms Are Alive and Well in Manatee County

"The Bench" interviews Manatee County Extension Livestock Agent Christa Kirby

**The Bench:** The general perception is that most large farms in the U.S. are corporately owned; how is this applicable to Manatee County?

**Kirby:** This is a big misconception. Most of the vegetable production in our county takes place on family-owned farms. Where it gets distorted is that they are supplying produce to national companies. Many agricultural names you might recognize around town, such as Taylor, Jones, and SMR are all family-owned businesses.

**The Bench:** Manatee County was once home to many dairy farms; what happened?

**Kirby:** There are only three commercial dairy farms left in our county; at one time we had many more but it has become a question of economics. We have been out-competed by other counties and states.

**The Bench:** People think that farmers are responsible for overuse of pesticides and fertilizers, and thus the runoff into our waterways that result in algae blooms, among other pollution. True?

**Kirby:** Think about it: a farmer is always seeking to save costs. Why would a farmer "over-apply" any chemical? Plus, most Manatee County farmers and ranchers have taken county pesticide applicator license training. So they know how to apply chemicals responsibly.

**The Bench:** People have latched onto labels such as "gluten free" and "non-GMO"; what is your reaction?

**Kirby:** I sympathize with gluten-intolerant people but don't see how products with no natural gluten can claim they are healthy because of a "gluten free" label!

**The Bench:** I know! Like corn tortillas: no gluten in corn!

**Kirby:** Right. And non-GMO is especially challenging. There are only nine crops that are genetically modified by farmers. In reality, many crops and plants crossbred without human intervention. It's a natural process.

People need to understand that without crossbreeding our farms would be far less productive and potentially require more inputs in the form of pesticides and fertilizers. People also confuse GMO with "Round-Up® Ready" which is a chemical process to treat crop seeds in order to make them immune to the effects of herbicide applications.

**The Bench:** So, what is Christa Kirby's typical day like?

**Kirby:** It varies. There is paperwork, but I have many days in the field. These days I'm involved in several studies researching forage grasses or weeds.

**The Bench:** Really? As our county livestock agent, I thought you'd be out there looking after, well, livestock!

**Kirby:** The wellbeing of livestock begins with what they eat, so that's why we undertake many research studies of forage grasses and weeds.

**The Bench:** So, what is your background?

**Kirby:** I am a graduate of UFL in dairy science. I have been with Manatee County Extension for eleven years and am a native of Manatee County, believe it or not! I was a 4-H'er raising steers and dairy cows.

**The Bench:** Strong!

# Dang Old Crow

By Bob Nicholson, Master Gardener 2008 and Master Naturalist 2011

There are three species of birds in Florida that don't get very much respect.



American crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) have an unpleasant reputation. In folklore, they are tricksters, agricultural pests, and harbingers of death and bad luck.



Similarly, fish crows (*Corvus ossifragus*) are reputed to steal food from other birds and to dig up turtle eggs.



Blue jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) are commonly known as bird feeder bullies. My mother-in-law used to ask me to empty her feeders when blue jays arrived, because they chased away her beloved Cardinals.



If the three birds above are the stepsisters, then the Florida scrub jay is Cinderella. The beloved Florida scrub jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) is reasonably easy to spot in certain habitats, but they are under pressure due to residential development.

So, what do American crows, fish crows, blue jays and Florida scrub jays have in common? They are the four Florida members of the bird family Corvidae.

The real beauty of our corvids is not so much in their plumage as it is in their intelligent behavior. Research shows that corvids have exceptionally large and complex brains relative to their body size, similar to primates. Their developed hippocampus and amygdala give them what Dr. Marzluff, of Washington University, calls "spatially relevant emotional memory;" essentially, the ability to associate experiences with specific locations. They also display "causal reasoning" and innovation, traits that allow them to figure out solutions rather than relying on trial and error. Corvids typically are long-lived (20 plus years in the wild) and are very social.

Florida corvids exhibit these traits in some interesting behaviors: Fish crows are known to cache food and

retrieve it when needed for their young; blue jays sometimes mimic the call of hawks, apparently to scare competitors away from food sources; Florida scrub jays post sentinels and will, when given the signal, gang up on threats.

American crows demonstrate some of the most interesting behaviors. Researchers have found that crows can recognize human faces and teach their young which faces are associated with danger. They often memorize garbage truck routes and show up to steal trash. They drop nuts on the street to crack, strategically timing the drop to coordinate with traffic lights. New Caledonian crows take it to the next level. They have been documented to fabricate and combine tools to solve complex puzzles. Because of their cleverness, crows are often kept as house pets; the stereotypical pirate has a parrot, whilst in real life, the pirate's shoulder-hoisted companion was a crow.

Give some respect to Florida's Corvidae. Spend some time observing their unique traits. Always remember, however, to do your birding and photography from a distance that does not interfere with the birds' natural behavior. You will be greatly rewarded.

Exploring flora and fauna interactions within Florida's natural ecosystems is interesting and fun. Moreover, it engenders an appreciation for the ecosystems and how they can be protected. More information and training is available through the Florida Master Naturalist Program at <http://www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu>

Photo credits:

Figure 1: Christopher L. Wood c/o All About Birds

Figure 2: Bruce Van Valen c/o All About Birds

Figure 3: Gary Mueller / PFW c/o All About Birds

Figure 4: Herb Elliott, Macaulay Library, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology



# September

## 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 September 9	10:00 a.m.-Noon	<b>Fairy Gardening</b> - Fairy Gardening is coming to the 2018 Manatee County Fair! We will help you create an imaginative mini-garden eligible for entry in this new Arts and Crafts category. Advance registration and payment of \$10 for materials (cash or check only) due before workshop. Register on-line at <a href="http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu">http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu</a> or call the Extension Master Gardeners (941) 722-4524.
<b>New Date</b> Saturday September 9	1:00-4:00 p.m.	<b>Rescheduled! Fall Vegetable Gardening</b> - Find out what type of vegetable garden will work for you and get it ready for fall planting! This workshop covers the basics from the ground up, including soils and amendments, plant selection, fertilizing, and pest management. Receive one vegetable seedling. Register online at <a href="http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu">http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu</a> or call the Extension Master Gardeners (941) 722-4524. \$5 fee for materials.
Tuesday September 19	10:00 a.m.	<b>Monthly Guided Tours of the Master Gardener Educational Gardens</b> - 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.
Saturday September 23	10:00-11:00 a.m.	<b>Edible Landscaping – How to Have Your Yard and Eat it Too!</b> Learn how to add edibles to your landscape to heighten the enjoyment you get from your yard. Register on-line <a href="http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu">http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu</a> or call the Extension Master Gardeners (941) 722-4524.
Tuesday September 26	10:00 a.m.-Noon	<b>Taking the Mystery Out of Micro-Irrigation</b> - Don Adkins, Irrigation Technician, will introduce you to micro-irrigation. Learn how to select, install, and operate your own water-saving irrigation system, the pros and cons and parts and pieces. Learn why it is important to water shrubs and other landscape plants separately from your lawn. <b>This class satisfies the irrigation educational class requirement for the Manatee County Outdoor Water Conservation Rebate Program.</b> Register on-line at <a href="http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu">http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu</a> or call Joann (941) 722-4524.
Thursday September 28	10:00 a.m.-Noon	<b>Ground Covers – Plants that Work – Join Valrie Massey</b> , Horticulture Program Assistant, as she presents how landscaping with low-growing ground cover plants has become a popular trend in landscape practices because once they are established, these plants need little or no water. <b>This class satisfies the landscape educational class requirement for the Manatee County Outdoor Water Conservation Rebate.</b> Register on-line at <a href="http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu">http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu</a> or call Joann (941) 722-4524.

## 2017 Master Gardener Plant Fair

Saturday October 7, 2017 ~ 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Save on Florida-Friendly Plants!

Located at Manatee County Extension Service

1303 17<sup>th</sup> St. W. in Palmetto at the Fairgrounds

Come Early for Best Selections!



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University of Florida IFAS Extension - Manatee County

1303 17<sup>th</sup> St. W., Palmetto, FL 34221 Telephone: (941) 722-4524

Web site: <http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu> E-mail: [ManateeMG@gmail.com](mailto:ManateeMG@gmail.com)



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