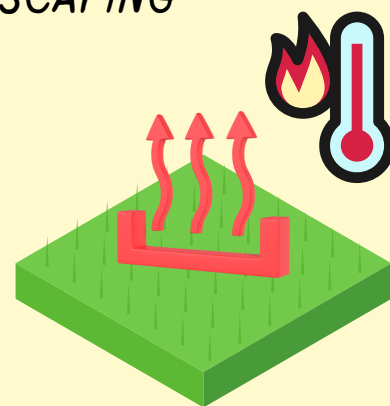


ARTIFICIAL TURF & FLORIDA-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPING™

By Nancy Hammer, Master Gardener Volunteer

Artificial turf was originally created as an alternative to grass on playgrounds. It has gained popularity within certain HOAs and in other urban horticultural settings. People welcome its “low” maintenance including no irrigation, fertilization, and mowing.

However, because artificial turf is not a living plant, it cannot support the ecosystem, or be considered Florida-Friendly. Natural turfgrass contributes to cooling of the environment, while synthetic grass does not. Average surface temperatures of natural grass may be up to 100 degrees cooler than that found on artificial turf. High surface temperatures can cause significant air temperature increases, and higher home cooling costs. Large installations of synthetic turfgrass can create “heat islands.”



Unlike some natural turfgrasses, artificial turf does not need supplemental irrigation. However, if it gets hot enough, it may need to be watered to cool it down for practical use and / or to remove dirt, leaves, pet urine and other debris.

Installation typically requires removal of 2-4 inches of topsoil, followed by compaction to create a solid, even base. Compaction in conjunction with the loss of a root zone makes for more difficult water infiltration, less water retention, and more stormwater runoff than with natural turf. Runoff from the plastic turf may include chemicals such as zinc, and other contaminants. Synthetic turf also does not have the soil erosion mitigation of live plants.

Synthetic turf does not support insects that feed birds and other wildlife. It has a lifespan of between 10-20 years depending on the consistency of care such as washing, removing of debris and sanitizing. Eventually it will have to be removed, likely disposed in a landfill, and replaced.

For more information, see the following. <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP612>



Ask a Master Gardener Volunteer



Recently, a homeowner asked us to confirm his identification of a pest insect that is not common in our area, the Edward's wasp moth (*Lymire edwardsii*). Although the moth's range reaches as far north as St. Petersburg, the caterpillar of this moth is more often seen south of our area. The caterpillars feed on all *Ficus* species. The *Ficus* being affected by our homeowner was *Ficus altissima* (common names: council tree, false banyan,) a large tree with a trunk diameter of up to 60 feet. The feeding can defoliate a vast portion of the tree. Worse yet are the cocoons the caterpillars weave to pupate. These cocoons can number in the hundreds and are often attached to the stucco, soffits, screened porches, and pool cages. Removing them is no easy task; spraying with a hose is ineffective. Hand removal is an effective method though time-consuming. Treating a *Ficus* tree for the caterpillar might be successful if the trees were not so big. Spraying a pesticide on such a large tree is impossible without a bucket truck, and the cost for a professional to do it can be prohibitive. Like other pests that establish themselves, natural predators can keep them in check and limit their spread, but not before they have made their presence known and their unsightly damage is apparent. More information: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN339>



Edward's wasp moth
Photo: Jeff Hollenbeck

Master Gardener Volunteer Karen Holleran answers your questions at ManateeMG@gmail.com or call our diagnostic plant clinic 941-722-4524 on 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. Help is also available at our mobile plant clinics (see page 7).

WHAT'S THIS? MONK ORCHID

By Norma Kisida, Master Gardener Volunteer



Monk Orchid
Photo: Norma Kisida



Monk Orchid
Photo: UF

I was a little excited to find what looked like an orchid growing in the mulch and leaf litter under a magnolia tree in my garden but, being a Master Gardener and having a radar for invasive plants, I decided to identify and research it. It turned out to be a monk orchid (*Oeceoclades maculata*), an orchid from tropical Africa, which was introduced to Florida before 1994. Unfortunately, like many introduced species, it has escaped cultivation and is colonizing many conservation areas in Florida due to the ability to reproduce easily, grow rapidly, and tolerate a wide range of environmental conditions. It is listed as a *caution* plant for all of Florida on the UF/IFAS Assessment because of the ability to form dense stands and interfere with the establishment of native plants. Pull or dig it out, bag it, and dispose of it in the regular trash and not the yard waste trash. If you find a plant in your garden that you do not recognize or did not plant, it is best to research it before letting it multiply. You can always call the Manatee County Master Gardener Plant Clinic for identification and information.

<https://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/plant-directory/oeceoclades-maculata/#:~:text=It%20grows%20rapidly%2C%20colonizing%20new,caution%20for%20all%20of%20Florida>

HOW TO PLANT A TREE

By Maureen Hirthler, Master Gardener Volunteer



Here are ten steps to ensure a successful start for your new tree:

1. **Know** the type of tree you are planting, its cultural requirements such as amount of sunlight, and how large it might grow before you choose a site. Always look up! Are there overhead utility lines or overhanging roof lines? And before you dig, call 811 to check for the location of any underground utilities.
2. **Dig** a shallow, wide hole. To estimate the depth of the planting hole, measure the distance between the **topmost root** and the bottom of the root ball. Then, dig a hole slightly shallower than this distance. Make the hole at least 1.5 times the diameter of the root ball. Remove grass or other plants around the hole.
3. **Examine** the tree. **Remove** any rootball coverings, including burlap. (This is typically how field-grown trees arrive at your landscape.) If potted, gently remove the pot without pulling on the trunk (you can cut the pot).
4. Look at the root ball top and bottom for circular roots and cut or free these up. You can remove one inch of the root ball's bottom and sides.
5. **Plant** the tree in the hole, holding it by the root ball or close to it.
6. **Position** the tree with 1-3 inches of roots **above** the landscape soil level. It is better to plant too high rather than too low.
7. **Straighten** the tree in two directions (get some help) and add just enough soil to hold it in that position.
8. **Backfill** with soil removed from the hole. Amendments are not necessary unless soil quality is poor. Slice a shovel down into the backfill 20 to 30 times around the tree as you add backfill soil. Attempt to break up large soil clumps as much as possible. Do not pack the backfill; instead, press gently to help stabilize the root ball. **Add 10 to 20 gallons of water** to the root ball and backfill. Fill in any holes or depressions with additional backfill soil, but don't pack the backfill too tightly.
9. **Mulch** with organic material such as leaves, pine needles, compost, Floramulch, bark, or wood chips three inches deep and place mulch only up to the **outer edge** of the root ball. A 2-to-3-foot diameter circle of mulch per inch of tree trunk caliper will provide an adequate mulch area for newly planted trees and avoid damage from lawnmowers and line trimmers. A thin (1-inch) layer of mulch can be placed over the root ball for aesthetic reasons, but deep layers on the root ball can prevent adequate irrigation and rain from reaching the roots.
10. **Stake** and prune the tree if necessary. Safe options are shown in the second reference listed below. Prune only dead branches for now.

A little extra work in the beginning will provide your tree with a healthy start in the landscape.

References:

How to choose a tree <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP310>

How to plant a tree <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP314>



KEEPING PALMS HEALTHY DURING SUMMER FERTILIZER RESTRICTIONS

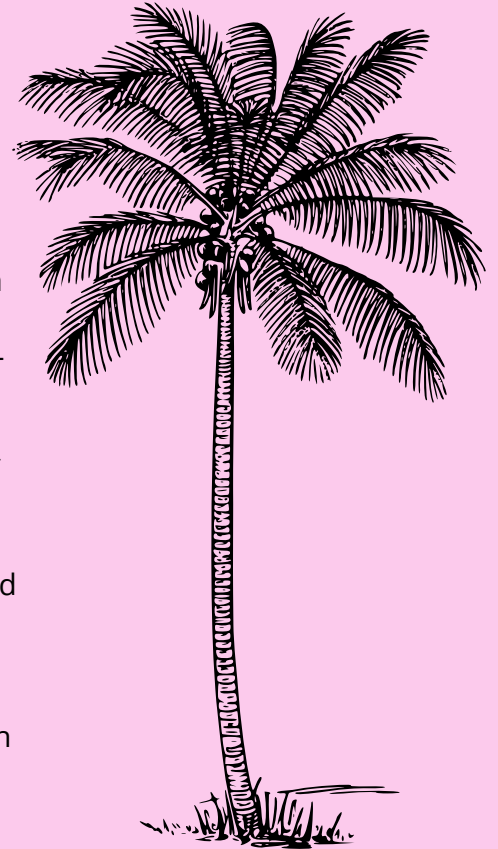
By Amy L. Stripe, Master Gardener Volunteer

Manatee County's fertilizer ordinance prohibits application of non-organic nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) to home landscapes between June 1st and September 30th. Unfortunately, this period represents the growing season for most plants, including palms. And palms are notoriously deficient of nutrients in Florida.

Two key nutrients palms require are potassium (K) and magnesium (Mg.) If applied in the proper ratio, these elements can help keep your palms green during the heavy rainfalls and fertilizer restrictions of summer. Sulfate of potash-magnesia is a mineral (sometimes called "SPM," or commercially, "K-Mag"). It is a naturally mined substance that fits the bill.

With a two to three ratio of K to Mg, it is balanced to prevent deficiencies of one against the other. Typical analyses are 22%K, 22%S, 11%Mg or 0-0-16 + 6 Mg or 0-0-22. Two potential commercially available sources of K-Mag are Lesco brand 0-0-16 +6Mg (available at Site One landscape supply stores) and www.treesaver.com online which sells 0-0-22. Both products contain micronutrients too.

Outside of the fertilizer restriction season, keep in mind that the typical high nitrogen fertilizers of turfgrass that might surround your palms exacerbate palm malnutrition. When fertilizing palms, use palm fertilizer fifty feet in all directions around the trunks. Your landscape will love it!



NATIVE JAMAICAN CAPER - VERSATILE AND ATTRACTIVE

Text & photo by Sally Herb, Master Gardener Volunteer



Jamaican Caper

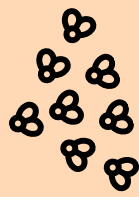
Jamaican caper (*Quadrella jamaicensis*) is a lovely specimen plant that will delight you April to June with its white, rapidly turning to pink, aromatic flowers. These open in the evening and last for a day. Moths are attracted to the fragrant flowers and pollinate the tree. The fruit pod bursts open showing orange flesh and round seeds that birds enjoy. The leathery, glossy dark green leaves are the perfect foil to show off the flowers.

Found mostly in coastal scrub and hammocks in Zones 10A-11, the Jamaican caper grows in most soils, prefers full sun to part shade and is remarkably drought tolerant. This long lived, evergreen perennial may grow 6-10 feet wide by 6-12 feet tall but takes well to pruning. As with most native plants, Jamaican caper may need extra watering to assist in establishing a good root system when it is an exceedingly slow grower. The one at the Extension took two years to grow two inches and finally put out a few blooms last year, so have patience. Most parts of the plant were used traditionally in tisanes to relieve both internal and external ailments. While related to the edible Mediterranean caper, this one is only "for the birds!" If you're looking for a sturdy, low maintenance specimen shrub with year-round interest, the Jamaican caper is a delight.

https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/media/sfylifasufledu/monroe/docs/Jamaica-caper_final.pdf

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/quadrella-jamaicensis>

<https://wildsouthflorida.com/jamaican.caper.html>

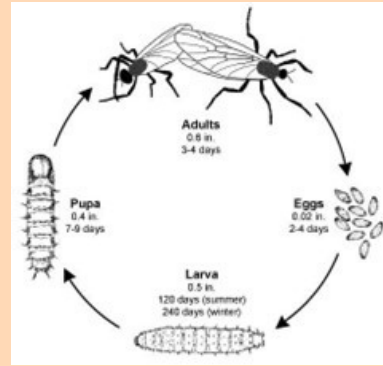


The Lovebugs are Coming! The Lovebugs are Coming!

By Catherine Rueth, Master Gardener Volunteer



Mating pair of lovebugs
Photo: UF/IFAS



Life stages of a lovebug
Photo: UF/IFAS

It's time again for the lovebug invasion as they usher in May with a bang. If you are new to Florida, lovebugs are usually seen in May and September in our area. Lovebugs (*Plecia nearctica*) are not native to Florida but came from Central America in the 1940s and spread throughout Florida by the 1970s.

This species of fly is black with a red thorax. The females are 1/3 inch long which is a little larger than the 1/4-inch-long males. These little critters are famous for doing their own "Lovebug Lambada", a coupled mating dance in which the male and female face opposite directions and mate while flying. They will mate for two to three days and then the female deposits a batch of eggs on decaying material on the ground. And just that fast, the adults will die. The larvae will hatch after two to four days and feed on the material around them.

Lovebugs are active only during the daytime hours. While actively mating, they will fly willy-nilly right smack into you and/or your car. Lovebugs are attracted to the heat and exhaust of cars so they will end up plastered to the front end leaving quite a mess. You may have heard that acid in the lovebug will hurt your car's paint but it's not only the lovebug guts and eggs that cause the problem but the reaction of the sun and heat with the acid, so washing the car before the sun gets to it is important. A good coat of wax on your car will go a long way to prepare as well as avoiding driving between 10 am and 6 pm.

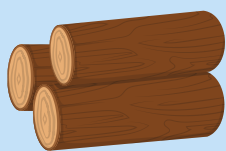
Pesticides are not effective on lovebugs due to the high numbers so the best we can do is prepare for the invasion. If they happen to make their way into your house or car, just vacuum them up. Although lovebugs may be considered a nuisance, they don't bite, sting, poison, or spread diseases, and they even have some benefits as well. The larvae are great at decomposing dead plant material and creating humus which improves the health of soil immensely. The adult lovebugs feed on the nectar and pollen of plants so they are considered beneficial in their role as pollinators. They are particularly fond of goldenrod, Brazilian pepper, and sweet clover.

We can be thankful that the invasion is much less aggressive in our area than it has been in the past, but some people are still not all that enthused. Before you know it, this generation of lovebugs will be gone but never fear, their offspring will be back in September!

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/MG068>

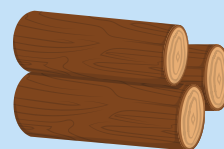
<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN694>

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN204>



TREATED LUMBER: IS IT SAFE FOR THE GARDEN?

By John Dawson, Master Gardener Volunteer



I am often asked if using treated lumber for container gardening is safe for growing ornamentals and edibles. The answer is yes, with various caveats.

Wood is a great and usually cheap product for many garden construction projects. Untreated wood - such as pine - is safe but will start to rot within a year when contacting garden soil. Naturally "rot resistant" lumber such as cedar, redwood or various hardwoods are safe and will last longer but will also succumb eventually.

To make wood more resistant to rot or insect predation, it must be treated to prolong its useful life. Plant oils have been used topically since ancient times but require frequent applications. They are only barriers to water penetration and have negligible effect deterring insects and microbes. Plant tars, especially pine tar, were used in marine preservation for many years. Wooden ships needed protection from the elements of the sea. Early sailing ships had a lifespan of around fifteen years, not only because of rot, but also shipworms. The Royal Navy discovered that by applying copper sheets to their hulls, it would dispel worms and deter barnacles. Copper is a necessary mineral for plant development and is used extensively in pesticides, but as any gardener knows, too much copper is deadly to plants.

In the 1940s wood started being pressure treated (chemicals forced into wood under pressure) with chromated arsenicals (poisons) to protect wood from insect and microbial attacks. This increased the life expectancy of lumber used for "in ground contact" to between 20 and 40 years. In 1948, wood preservers began using creosote, a distillation of coal tar to protect rail ties, pilings, and utility poles. In 1950, pentachlorophenol was used as a preservative and was eventually removed from commercial processes in 1987. In the late 1970s, chromated copper arsenate (CCA) was used until December 31, 2003, when it was removed from all "residential use" products. All chemicals that are used to treat wood will eventually leach out over time. Obviously, all these poisonous chemicals are not what you would want to contact your fruits and vegetables, so for many years, gardeners were told it was unwise to construct raised beds, etc., using treated lumber.



Wooden raised beds in a vegetable garden

Photo: UF/IFAS

Since 2004, however, all the treated lumber available to homeowners in the U.S. has been treated with ACQ (alkaline copper quaternary), which is a water-based wood preservative that prevents decay from fungi and insects and is approved "safe" by the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) for use in food production. Unfortunately, use for "in ground contact" is only half of what it used to be. Newly treated U.S. lumber is safe, but used lumber treated prior to 2004 should be avoided. New synthetic lumber (recycled plastic) products are also safe but expensive. If you are unsure which treated lumber you have, you can always line your project with plastic sheeting between the soil and wood. See also <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/design/types-of-gardens/building-raised-beds.html>

LANDSCAPE DESIGN WORKSHOP

Tuesday, May 14 at 9a.m.



Join UF Professor Dr. Gail Hansen to learn all about Sustainable Landscape Design for your Florida yard.

\$25 per person; scholarships available, email Alyssa Vinson at alyvinson@ufl.edu for more information. Located at the UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County office (1303 17th St W, Palmetto, FL)

Agenda:

9:00 - Gathering Information

- Site Inventory and analysis
- Client Interview
- Selecting a style theme
- Florida-Friendly styles

10:00 - Plant selection

- Ecology- right plant, right place
- Function
- Aesthetics- texture, form, and color

12:00 - Lunch-On Your Own

1:00 - Landscape Design Principles

2:00 - Worksheets

- Selecting plants for a landscape
- Design Practice

3:00 - Adjourn

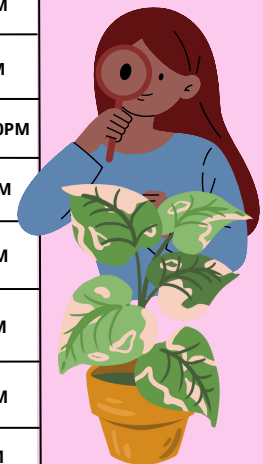


Landscape Design Examples

Photo: UF/IFAS

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 and 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



Master Gardener Volunteer Amy Stripe & Joy Dersken, Co-Editors Contents reviewed & edited by Alyssa Vinson, Extension Agent. The University of Florida is committed to providing universal access to all our events. For disability accommodations such as alternate formats of written material, please contact Katie Granberg katiebg@ufl.edu at least 1 week in advance.

Register Here: linktr.ee/manatee_ufifas

The University of Florida is an Equal Opportunity Institution



APRIL CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Time	Event
4/4/24	12:00PM	Groundbreaking Groundcovers Join UF/IFAS Extension to learn about the wide array of groundcover options available for Florida landscapes. Topics will include plant selection, site preparation and maintenance. Be prepared to break ground on your new landscape with this class from our experts.
4/5/24	9:00AM	Composting & Food Waste Prevention with Landfill Tour Located at the Lena Road Landfill. A partnership between UF/IFAS Extension and Manatee County at the Lena Rd Landfill, this eye-opening day of learning will tell you everything you always wanted to know about recycling, food waste reduction and tips on composting, followed by an informative tour of the landfill!
4/12/24 4/19/24 4/26/24	10:00AM	Garden Leadership Training The Garden Leadership training series is a collection of classes and activities designed to educate individuals seeking leadership positions in public gardens. The classes are open to everyone, but will be tailored toward community gardens, school gardens, and other public gardens.
4/12/24	10:00AM	Creating Botanical Art: Pounding Flowers Join us for a fun, stress-busting morning! Flower Pounding is a craft for anyone – if you can wield a hammer, you can create botanical art. Learn the basics of how to select and prepare fabric, choose botanicals that yield the best results, and how to pound and create decorative art.
4/19/24	11:30AM	The Gift of Trees Join us for a crash course in trees. We will cover the value of trees in our communities, tree selection and planting, maintenance, pruning and long term care considerations.
4/26/24	9:00AM	Ranching Foundations Located at the Range Cattle Research and Education Center. Through this course participants will learn about various aspects of cattle management. Topics will include calf care, heifer management, cow management, bull management (breeding soundness exams), and the legality of selling meat from the ranch.
4/27/24	10:00AM	Native Wildflower Workshop: Pollinator Pots Pollinators and other beneficial insects need our support more than ever. You can create your own pollinator garden one pot at a time. Pollinator pots provide a small oasis of food plants for butterflies, bees, and other insects in suburban landscapes. They work well in small sunny spaces. Learn about Florida's native wildflowers and plant a pot to take home for your pollinators.

Register here:



Scan with smartphone camera app

University of Florida IFAS Extension - Manatee County

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