

Prepare Your Landscape for Cold Weather

By Amy Stripe, Master Gardener Volunteer

Regardless of whether you are reading this article dressed in flip-flops and shorts or are bundled in a sweatshirt and fluffy slippers, be prepared in the event of cold weather.

Frost (radiational freeze) occurs in clear skies and still air. Frost may be present on leaves.

Freeze (advective freeze) is much more punishing. A sudden drop in temperature, cloudy and windy conditions, and a deep cold air mass aloft cause ice to form inside leaf and stem tissue. As the ice thaws, the tissue breaks down and usually dies.

Hard freeze is when the ground surface is frozen underfoot – very rare in our county – except with plants in containers! Consider that their roots are exposed to above-ground cold temperatures.

The number one rule for prevention of cold damage is **selecting plants that are cold hardy** in your USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) plant hardiness zone. The zone indicates the minimum range of temperatures a plant will tolerate for four continuous hours without sustaining damage.



Plant placement considers your site’s microclimates on the north, south, east, and west side of your house, the sun/shade patterns, elevations (cold air sinks) and surface reflectivity (e.g., masonry absorbs more daytime heat than grass), and proximity to a large body of water (which helps to warm cool air.)

Proper cultural practices will help. Do not fertilize or prune after the end of November as you do not want a flush of new growth as cold weather approaches. Scout for pest insects and disease. Ensure plants get adequate moisture via rainfall or irrigation.

Container under cover & against a wall
Photo: Amy Stripe





Outside lights can generate heat
Photo: Wikipedia



Wrapping young tree trunks
Photo: UF/IFAS

Steps to take before the cold front hits:

- Water your landscape and pots. Damper soil absorbs more solar radiation
- Move potted plants under an overhang, against a masonry structure or bring indoors. Group them together if outdoors
- Cover plants to trap radiant heat. Cover all the way to the ground; plastic covers are not advised. Use cardboard boxes, sheets, etc.
- Wrap trunks of seedling trees with burlap or blankets
- Add heat by encircling trunks and shrubs with fairy or Christmas lights (incandescent only) and / or leaving on outside security, carriage, or porch lights
- Create a windbreak with patio furniture, trellises, and fencing

Things to NOT do:

- Running sprinklers (this requires precision timing)
- Use fire, which creates an updraft, drawing in cold air from the surroundings
- Use extra mulch; bare earth absorbs more daytime heat
- Be over-protective. Many sensitive plants can adapt to cold weather.



Remove all protective covers immediately following a cold snap and water plants as needed. Leave cold damaged foliage on until weather warms up (unless fungal infection is present.)

For more information: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/cold>

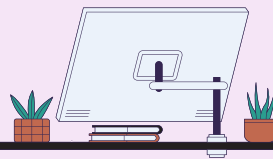
Tour our Educational Gardens During the Manatee County Fair & Get FREE Seeds!



FREE Seed Packets
Photo: Katie Granberg, UF/IFAS

The Manatee County Fair runs from January 12 - 22. During the Fair, Master Gardeners will open the Educational Gardens at Extension to anyone interested in learning about our Florida-friendly plants and trees. We are **giving away free packets of seeds**, from native perennials to vegetables. Stop by! Our hours will be 12:00-6:00 p.m. on the extended fair days (Saturdays, Sundays, MLK Day (Monday), and Senior Day (Wednesday).

On MLK Day, bring the kids to enjoy our fun and interactive **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle program** in the Educational Garden. Activities include a garden scavenger hunt with prizes plus other games, a temporary tattoo station, and a craft table where kids will decorate a can and plant a succulent to take home. This event runs from 1:00-3:00 p.m. on Monday, January 16. All children and students with school ID receive free admission to the fair from Noon-3:00 p.m.



Orange Geiger Tree
Photo: UF/IFAS



Geiger Tortoise Leaf Beetle
Photo: Doug Caldwell, UF/IFAS

"Ask a Master Gardener Volunteer" Karen Holleran shares her story:

I have a *Cordia sebestena*, orange geiger tree, in my yard that I grew from seed. It is a cherished tree, not just because I germinated it and watched it grow into a lovely centerpiece in my landscape but also for the carefree nature of the tree. It is drought tolerant, covered in clusters of orange flowers, and pest free. In the past, I have observed evidence of insect activity by way of a few dead leaves with holes chewed in them but had never seen the culprit responsible for the damage.

Hurricane Ian drove the tree to lean slightly, resulting in stress to the tree. It seems that the condition invited an outbreak of *Physonota (Eurypepla) calochroma floridensis*, Geiger tortoise leaf beetle, the pest responsible for the chewed leaves. The adult beetle is attractive, but the larva is very unpleasant to observe. It's a lucky break that they feed in clusters, so the remedy was to use clippers to remove the leaves with the heaviest infestation and dispatch them straight into the trash. The tree will withstand the beetles with just a few tattered leaves, and my Geiger beauty will maintain her esteemed value in the landscape.

The following link is to information about the Geiger tree leaf beetle for your reference.

<https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/collierco/2018/03/07/geiger-tree-leaf-beetles-active-now-march-2018-marco-island/>



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 at 941-722-4524 weekdays from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. and press 1 to speak to the Master Gardener Diagnostic Plant Clinic.

Hurricane Debris Piles Leave Dead Patches in Area Lawns

Text and photos by Norma Kisida, Master Gardener Volunteer

Many of us have bare areas in our lawn after we cleaned up from Ian and left debris at the curb for weeks or months before it was collected. As a fix you can go traditional and resod the grass or use it as an opportunity to beautify by planting something different.

A temporary fix would be to sow wildflowers which will bloom in the early spring. It is important to use ecotypes (plant material originating in and native to a specific geographic area, in this case, Florida) which can be purchased from native nurseries or ordered through Florida Wildflower Foundation (<https://www.flawildflowers.org/>). Seeds from outside of our area may not do well or could be invasive.



Wildflower Mix



Mixed Native Bed

If in keeping with your HOA, if you have one, this would be the perfect time to use the bare area to establish a native and Florida-friendly plant bed with shrubs and perennials. Remove any debris and remaining grass and mulch the area with a Florida-friendly mulch such as melaleuca, pine nuggets, or pine straw. If you want to wait until spring to plant, cover the area with cardboard, then mulch and wait at least two months before planting. Native plant nurseries are happy to help you select plants for the area or you may contact the Manatee County Master Gardener Volunteers for suggestions.

Some groundcovers that work well and offer food for wildlife such as butterflies and other pollinators include perennial peanut (*Arachis glabrata*), powderpuff (or sunshine) mimosa (*Mimosa strigillosa*), and frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*). All of these tolerate foot traffic and can be mowed like grass. Be aware that these will spread into turfed areas unless the bed is edged. Many plants that are listed as ground covers such as beach sunflower can be used but are taller so cannot be mowed or trod upon. <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/lawns/turf-types/alternatives-to-turfgrass.html>



Powder Puff Mimosa Groundcover

Left alone the bare areas will likely fill in with a mix of grass and weeds. Overseeding with rye grass is an option because of its fast growth and low cost, but rye will die off as temperatures climb out of the low to mid-70s. Bare areas may be reestablished by seed, plugs, or sod, depending on the type of grass.

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/lawns/lawn-care/renovating-your-florida-lawn.html>

Neem Oil for Managing Pests

By Maureen Hirthler, Master Gardener Volunteer



A neem tree with fruit. Neem oil is derived from the bitter seeds of this fruit.

Photo: Rajib Ghosh

Neem oil is one of my favorite treatments for pests because it follows the rules of IPM (Integrated Pest Management) and is so effective. It is extracted from the neem tree, *Azadirachta indica*. The oil works by suffocating (blocking breathing pores) of insect and mite pests. Neem oil is most active on soft-bodied insects and mites such as aphids, whiteflies, spider mites, mealybugs, and scales. But did you know neem also contains another biological pesticide?

One of neem oil's other components is called azadirachtin, an insect growth inhibitor. Azadirachtin repels insects, inhibits feeding, and disrupts their growth, metamorphosis, and reproduction. Basically, neem products prevent insects from maturing. When immature insects contact certain neem products, either through ingestion or external contact, the molting process of the insect is disrupted.

Commercial neem oil contains some azadirachtin, which is a dual-action pesticide and less likely to develop resistance. This is one of the reasons it is a first-line choice for garden pests. You should apply it out of the direct sun and when larval stages of pests are identified. Overuse can be toxic to some beneficial bugs, fish, and wildlife.

Insect growth regulators can be sold separately. Some trade names are Azatin, Neemazad, Ornazin, Neemix, Agroneem, and Aza-direct. Because they are more selective, they are less harmful to the environment and more compatible with pest management systems, including biological control. These products are primarily used in agriculture.

Neem has been used for thousands of years; it's one of the safest products available. Remember, though, neem is a pesticide, and it's essential to read the label and follow the instructions. The label is the law.

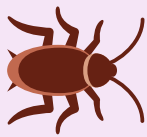
Next time you see pests, you can marvel at this botanical gift from the neem tree.

For more information:

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/pests-and-diseases/pests/management/natural-pest-control-with-oils.html>

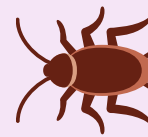


January 20, 2023 join us for TreeQuest! Find tagged trees at Conservatory Park, Emerson Point Preserve, Riverwalk, and/or The NEST at Robinson Preserve. Scan the QR code to answer a few questions, learn about the specific tree species, and enter to win prizes! No advance registration required. Learn more here: https://youtu.be/Z_N2ngfGNDI



Cockroaches

By John Dawson, Master Gardener Volunteer



Head into the kitchen for a midnight snack, turn on the lights and watch them scurry! Cockroaches belong to the order of insects Blattodea, and are considered by many homeowners as filthy, disgusting pests. The English word “cockroach” derives from the Spanish word *cucaracha*. There are over 4,600 species of roaches worldwide; 69 in Florida alone, not all of which are native. Here in Central Florida, only seven species are common household pests: the Florida woods roach (palmetto bug), American, brown, smokybrown, Australian, German, and Asian cockroaches. As the last three names indicate, cockroaches are master stowaways, and they can easily hitch a ride into your home unnoticed. Being mostly nocturnal, they are unlikely to be seen during the day unless you happen upon one of their hiding places. Pictures and descriptions of each roach can be found at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IG082>.

Palmetto bugs (the big ones) and German cockroaches (the little ones) are the most common nocturnal invaders of our homes, usually in the kitchen. Outside in the wild, cockroaches are decomposers, feeding on dead or dying plants and animals. Cockroaches are adaptable and resilient survivors, having evolved very little in over 320 million years. They eat about anything (even their own dead) and can go a month without food, twelve days without water, 40 minutes without air (they can swim under water), survive temperatures below freezing, and absorb fifteen times the amount of radiation that would kill a human. They can even survive decapitation for more than a week.

Their natural habitat is outdoors and the main reason they appear in our homes is to search for water and food. Once in our homes, they present a health hazard, carrying disease and causing allergies from their molting sheds and feces. Once they get comfortable, they will begin to multiply. Cockroaches tend to socially congregate, so if you see one, there are usually many more around. As lone scouts, they release pheromones that guide others to food, water, and shelter.

To keep roaches from entering your home, you need to remove their basic needs: water, food, and shelter. Sealing off your entire home is impossible, but sealing off entry points, such as areas around wires and pipes that run into your home from outdoors or from the garage, is a place to start. Keep mulch away from outer walls and seal noticeable cracks and holes. Indoors, look for areas that may hold standing water; repair, drain, or remove pet dishes, dripping faucets, poorly draining sinks, or shower basins and over watered flowerpots/saucers. Consider stopping up drains when not in use (a main entry point). Do not leave food and drink out and seal tightly all food containers. Clean up grease and crumbs and dirty dishes, vacuum and clean often, including those hard-to-reach spots where they like to hide (under stoves, refrigerators, and sinks).

Just know that even the cleanest of homes may still have roaches. Once you know they have invaded, there are things you can do to encourage them to leave. If you think you know where they may be hiding, re-evaluate how they got in and eliminate further entry. There are many internet sources for DIY roach removal; some work, some don't. If you decide to try one, make sure it does not involve harmful chemicals for you, your family, or your pets.

Please consider using the above link for more scientifically based approved removal methods.

When all else fails, hire a reliable licensed pest control specialist.



Palmetto Bug
Photo: UF/IFAS



German Cockroach
Photo: UF/IFAS



Native Blooming Now: Varnish Leaf (*Dodonaea viscosa*)

By Sally Herb, Master Gardener Volunteer

Looking for a lovely, small specimen tree to brighten up your garden? Varnish leaf is an excellent choice. While ambling through a local native plant nursery, this plant caught my attention and I just had to have one for the Native Gardens at Extension.

The glossy green leaves are coated with a resin that protects against water loss, making it extremely drought tolerant. Varnish leaf has tiny, unremarkable blooms in Spring and Fall – the show is about to begin! Flowers are followed by showy pendant fruit hanging in clusters on the branch tips. They emerge pale green, change to yellow green, then pink and red.



Varnish Leaf (*Dodonaea viscosa*)

Photo: UF/IFAS

Suitable for Zones 9-11, this 6-15' X 10' (not to worry, it takes well to pruning) gem prefers full sun and is tolerant of most soils. Early settlers and Native Americans chewed the leaves to ease a toothache (it contains saponins, so they didn't swallow the juice), made weapons from the hard wood, and used the fruits as a hops and yeast substitutes to produce beer.

[Native Florida Plants](#), Haehle, Robert C. and Brookwell, Joan, Gulf Publishing Company, 1999.

Pslbg.org/varnish-leaf.html

Edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FP181

Manatee County 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



JANUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Time	Event
Saturday 1/7/23	9:00AM	Emerson Point Preserve Tour Casually stroll through the beautiful Emerson Point Preserve and learn about Florida's native plants and inhabitants of a coastal environment. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/desotoriverview-pointe-preserve-tour-november-may-tickets-441206910747
Thursday 1/12/23	11:30AM	Talk Plants with Me Submit your questions to our Horticulture Agent for live Q&A! We will talk about hot topics in the plant world and may have a few guests join us along the way. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/talk-plants-with-me-tickets-391234883067
Saturday 1/14/23	1:00PM	DeSoto/Riverview Pointe Preserve Tour Casually stroll through the beautiful Riverview Pointe Preserve and learn about Florida's native plants and inhabitants of a coastal environment. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/desotoriverview-pointe-preserve-tour-november-may-tickets-441206910747
Monday 1/16/23	1:00PM	Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Plan to visit the Master Gardener Educational Gardens when you attend the Manatee County Fair on Martin Luther King Jr Day! The fair that day is free and the kids are off from school. Learn how to be a good steward for the community and save the planet! Join us for crafts, games, demonstrations, & temporary tattoos!
Friday 1/20/23	All Day	TreeQuest Find tagged trees at Conservatory Park, Emerson Point Preserve, Riverwalk, and/or The NEST at Robinson Preserve. Scan the QR code to answer a few questions, learn about the specific tree species, and enter to win prizes! No advance registration required. Learn more here: https://youtu.be/Z_N2ngfGNDI
Saturday 1/21/23	9:00AM	Rye Preserve Tour Take a hike through upland habitats along the beautiful Rye Preserve and learn about Florida's native plants, natural history, and early settlement of the area. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rye-preserve-tour-december-april-tickets-446062233147
Saturday 1/28/23	9:00AM	Perico Preserve Tour Explore one of Manatee County's newest preserves and learn about Florida's native plants, how they benefit wildlife, and how they can be used in the home landscape. Learn about the wide variety of ecosystems on display and how the preserve was transformed into what it is today. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/perico-preserve-tour-jan-april-tickets-446155371727

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