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Hot Topics: Container Mosquitoes and Zika Virus

by Maxine Hunter

Hurricane Irma and heavy summer rains have helped our mosquito populations go into overdrive, and with diseases such as Zika virus, West Nile virus, Dengue fever, and Chikungunya fever it is very important to reduce mosquito breeding grounds. Many mosquito diseases including Zika virus are spread by container



Credit: CDC / James Gathany

Aedes aegypti mosquitoes, like the one pictured, can become infected when they bite infected persons and can then spread the Zika virus to other persons they subsequently bite.

mosquitos, *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*. These mosquitos do not have a large home range, but can reproduce in containers as small as a bottle cap. Larvae develop in water collected in containers such as birdbaths, vases, animal water dishes, flower pots, buckets, or other neglected water-holding objects. Remove or empty any water-holding containers and flush bromeliads and bird baths every 7-10 days to prevent larvae from hatching. If emptying potential breeding grounds is not possible, use mosquito bits, dunks or other products containing BTi (*Bacillus thuringiensis* subspecies *Israelensis*). Be sure to wear repellent or protective clothing when outdoors; the CDC provides a list of mosquito repellents with Environmental Protection Agency-registered active ingredients, such as DEET, picaridin, and oil of lemon eucalyptus that provide long-lasting protection, see: <http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/fq/repellent.html>. For more information on Zika virus, please see: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in1120> , zika.ufl.edu and <http://mosquito.ifas.ufl.edu/Zika.htm>

Also, if you are noticing a large mosquito population, stay in contact with your local mosquito control and allow them to spray. See: <http://marionhealth.org/programs/environmental-health/mosquito-and-rodent-control>.



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BUZZZZ IN THE GARDEN: Cogongrass

By Jennifer Odom, Master Gardener

Cogongrass, *imperata cylindrica*, is the devil. The University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) considers it one of the “top ten worst weeds in the world.” Spreading exponentially, it infests Marion County roadways, fields, and ditches and is especially noticeable in Silver Springs Shores and the On Top Of The World communities.



Photo by Doug Mayo

Because of its documented ecological damage, Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council defines cogongrass as a Category 1 invasive species which means it “alters native plant

communities by displacing native species, competing for resources, changing community structures or ecological functions, or hybridizing with natives.” You don’t want it taking over your neighborhood. The light green leaves, ½ to ¾-inch wide, can grow up to four feet tall. In the winter, after turning orange-brown, or dying, it becomes a highly flammable fire hazard.

Cogongrass, a native of southeast-Asia, was first discovered in an Alabama packing crate. Entrepreneurs hoped it would make a good forage grass. But horses and cattle refuse its rough, serrated leaves. The grass has no nutritional value. It multiplies aggressively via rhizomes (roots) and tiny wind-blown seeds produced by its fluffy white plume heads. The rhizomes can grow four feet deep and produce allelopathic substances which inhibit the growth of other plants. One acre of land can produce 3 tons of rhizomes. This destructive nuisance is very hardy and can grow in most any soil, from heavy clay to sand. No pathogen has been developed to combat its takeover of roadways and pastures across Alabama, Mississippi and Florida and its range extends from South Carolina to Texas.

Identify this plant by its pale, yellow-green leaves with a brownish tip and slightly off center mid-vein. The leaf base is round instead of flat where it comes out at the rhizome. If you live in Marion County, chances are you’ve noticed this

pale, unattractive grass in neighborhoods and along roadways.



Photo by Sonya Reas

There are two weapons to help fight cogongrass. The first is cultivation: in dry weather, digging to six inches will dry out the rhizomes which contain the grass’s food stores. Encouragingly, cogongrass holds back at the edge of cultivated fields and roadsides. Glyphosate at 3-4 quarts per acre will also do the trick, but you’ll have to apply it more than once. Any stronger and you’ll have to

Upcoming Events

October

Dunnellon Satellite Plant Clinic

October 3, 2017

2:00—3:00 p.m.

Dunnellon Public Library

20351 Robinson Rd, Dunnellon

Bellevue Satellite Plant Clinic

October 6 & 20, 2017

10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

Bellevue Public Library

13145 SE Hwy 484, Bellevue

Downtown Satellite Plant Clinic

September 30 & October 7, 2017

10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.

Downtown Farmers Market

3rd Ave and 3rd St, Ocala

Master The Possibilities Series:

October 13 & 18, 2017

10:00 —11:30a.m.

On Top Of The World

8415 SW 80th Street, Ocala

Forest Library

Winter Gardening

October 21, 2017

10:30—11:30 a.m.

Forest Public Library

905 S HWY 314A, Ocklawaha



**NARROW-LEAVED SUNFLOWER
(Helianthus angustifolius)**

FALL SPOTLIGHT PLANT

If you live in the eastern United States, you'll want to have narrow-leaved sunflower in your garden. It's a native and attractive to many of our native butterflies. Narrow-leaved sunflower is often grown in the wildflower garden or in mixed perennial beds. It is rather inconspicuous most of the year, lying low and unobtrusive, but still attractive with its deep green leaves and maroon stems. However, narrow-leaved sunflower comes alive and brightens everything around it from September 'till November. You can cut the plant back in June so it will be a bushier when it blooms later in the year.

Height: 4—6 feet high and up to 6 feet wide. You can cut the plant back in June so it will be a bushier when it blooms.

Light: Like most sunflowers, this one does best in full sun. Plants grown in partial shade will be leggier and probably fall over without support. They will also have less blooms.

Moisture: Narrow-leaved sunflower prefers a moist soil but will thrive in well drained soils if watered during dry spells.

Hardiness: USDA Zones 6 - 9. Narrow-leaved sunflower is an herbaceous perennial that dies to the ground after the first freeze, and returns in spring.

Cogongrass (continued)

wait 10 to 14 days to plant in that soil. Fluazifop, though less effective, also helps. But follow the label's directions, the label is federal law!

According to UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Services (IFAS), "It has been shown that an integrated approach that combines burning, tillage (mechanical disturbance) and chemical applications provide the best solution for cogongrass management." Start with a careful late summer burning of thatch and older leaves and till soil now for best results. Resulting new growth depletes the food stores, energy, and biomass of the rhizomes. Allow 1-4 months' growth before the application of glyphosate or imazapyr. The new growth allows optimal penetration of the herbicides. Ideal timing of this leaf growth is about a month before a killing frost. After this, introduce desired new plants.

Learn more about cogongrass at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/wg202>



Marion County Master Gardeners'

Fall Plant Sale

Saturday, October 7, 2017

8:00 am—Noon

- Fruit Trees
- Ornamental Trees
- Shade Trees
- Shrubs

- Native Plants
- Herbs and Perennials
- Pollinator Plants
- Butterfly Plants
- Hummingbird Plants

- Rain Barrels
- Melaleuca Mulch
- Garden publications
- Master Gardeners available for consultation
- Mobile Plant Clinic on site
- Soil Test Kits available
- South Oaks 4-H will provide tote service

FREE ADMISSION
NO PETS PLEASE!

PAYMENT BY
CASH OR CHECK ONLY

UF/IFAS Extension Marion County
2232 NE Jacksonville Rd, Ocala
For more information call 352-671-8400





Central Florida Gardening Calendar:

What to do in October

What to Plant

Annuals/Bedding plants: Even though temperatures are still warm, begin planting for the cooler months ahead. Dianthus, petunia, and pansy are good annuals for the fall garden. **See Annuals:** http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_annual_landscape_plants

Bulbs: Plant agapanthus, rain lily, and many varieties of lilies now for blooms next spring or summer. Add organic matter to the planting bed for best results. **See Bulbs for Florida:** http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_bulbous_flowers

Herbs: A wide range of herbs can be planted from seeds or plants this month. Some examples include parsley, cilantro, chives, garlic, and sage. **See Herbs:** http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_herbs

Vegetables: Plant crops now that will grow and produce throughout the winter months. This includes broccoli, collards, kale, lettuce, and others. **See Vegetable Gardening in Florida:** http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_vegetable_gardening



What to Do

Lawn weeds: Control winter weeds in lawns before they appear. Preemergence herbicides must be applied at the right time to be effective. Apply when nighttime temperatures are 55°F–60°F for 4–5 days. Avoid "weed and feed" products. **See Lawn Weeds:** http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_lawn_weeds

Ornamental trees and shrubs: Fertilize plants that are not performing as desired. Controlled-release fertilizer provides nutrients over a longer period of time. **See Nutrient Deficiencies (Landscape Plants):** http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_nutrient_deficiencies_landscape_plants

Lawn fertilization: Early October is the last time to fertilize the lawn. Choose a fertilizer (not a "weed and feed") with little or no phosphorus unless a soil test indicates the need for it. A fertilizer with controlled-release nitrogen will give longer-lasting results. **See Lawn Fertilizer:** http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_lawn_fertilization

Strawberries: Prepare beds and set strawberry plants this month. Strawberries also make a colorful and tasty container planting. Either way, water daily until plants are established. **See Strawberries:** http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_strawberries

Winter landscapes: Plant evergreen hollies; their bright berries add color to the landscape when other plants have died back for the winter. Water well when planting and mulch to minimize weeds. **See Holly:** http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_holly



Twig girdlers: Control twig girdlers by cleaning up and destroying fallen branches that young twig girdlers can use for harborage. **See Twig Girdlers:** http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_twig_girdlers

Central Florida: Edibles to plant in October

SURVIVES TRANSPLANTING	Beets, Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, Collards, Kale, Kohlrabi, Lettuce, Strawberries
TRANSPLANT WITH CARE	Carrots, mustard, spinach
USE SEEDS	Onions, Radish, Turnips

Volunteer Spotlight

Betsy Blankenship joined our team in 2014 and hasn't stopped to take a breath since. Her previous experience in the ornamental horticulture industry has been of great benefit to us. She is incredibly dedicated and organizes multiple workforces within our organization. She is the current director of our Demonstration Gardens, working diligently in Taylor garden as well as our vegetable, herb and butterfly gardens. She has been the driving force in the initiation of several updates to the appearance of our gardens, including an informational display case, planters and new fencing. She also organizes the satellite plant clinics at the Belleview Public Library twice a month. We appreciate Betsy's sense of humor and hard work.



These items are available for purchase at the UF/IFAS Extension Marion County. The store is open Mon-Fri from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Please come to see these environmentally-friendly products, as well as many other agricultural-related items.

