



March 2017

Lawn Grasses for North Central Florida

The Merry Month of March

Timely Gardening Tips for Marion County

Upcoming Events

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Extension Marion County

Timely Gardening Tips for MARION COUNTY

by Josephine Leyte-Vidal, UF/IFAS
Extension Marion County Master Gardener

Spring has arrived in Florida, causing us to look at that green carpet in front of the house. Yes, it is time to fertilize. The University of Florida recommends a slow release fertilizer labeled 16-4-8, 12-2-8, or 15-0-15 in the amounts stated on the bag's label. Fertilize your trees and shrubs if you have not already done so in February. Refresh the mulch in all the beds up to three inches.

It is time to check your roses for leaf diseases and use specially formulated rose spray. Pruning and cleaning perennials can be accomplished now.

Lawn Grasses for North Central Florida

by Inga Carbone, Master Gardener Emeritus

St. Augustine is the most common grass planted in Florida. Producing an acceptable lawn requires irrigation and fertilization on a regular schedule. Watering twice weekly, three quarters of an inch, is a must. St. Augustine can tolerate light shade, salt, and nematodes, but is susceptible to chinch bugs. To start this lawn you must purchase sod or plugs; it cannot be started from seed. An irrigation system is recommended for a good looking St. Augustine lawn. It does have several drawbacks though: it is pest-prone, has a coarse leaf texture, will brown out if dry, has poor wear tolerance, is prone to cold damage, and is expensive to water. St. Augustine requires cutting weekly, fertilization two times yearly, and pesticide applications as needed.

Other St. Augustine grass cultivars are available. *Floritam* is an improved St. Augustine with some chinch bug tolerance, very coarse texture, and poor shade tolerance. It is good for sunny areas. *Raleigh* is another cultivar that is cold hardy and medium green in color. It has a tendency to yellow, so iron applications are necessary.

Bahia grass, also called pasture grass, is the easiest to care for grass in mid and northern Florida. It can be started from seed or purchased as sod-squares. Two forms of Bahia grass are available: *Pensacola* and *Argentine*. Pensacola produces a long, narrow-leaved Bahia grass and is extensively used along the roadsides in Florida, and is a very prolific seed head producer. Argentine bahia is by far the best for lawns. It has wider leaves and forms a dense sod, has good color, is cold hardy, and responds well to fertilization. It is also the least susceptible to dollar spot disease. This grass is drought resistant once it is established, needing irrigation only once a week if we have no rain. Bahia should be fertilized twice a year with a 15-1-15 slow



Argentine Bahia

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by Josephine Leyte-Vidal, UF/IFAS Extension Marion County Master Gardener

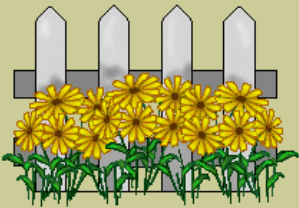
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Since our last frost date is traditionally March 15, wait until then to begin planting. Below are a few suggestions of plant that grow well in Central Florida;

Ground covers for shady areas: Algerian ivy, liriope, mondo grass and peacock ginger.

Bulbs: Amazon, Aztec, blood, canna, gloriosa, spider and rain lilies, along with caladiums and shell ginger.

Annuals: Amaranths, balsam, celosia, impatiens, lobelia, marigold, salvia, and straw flowers.



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release fertilizer, and mowed once a week during growing season. When we get freezes during the cold season, this grass goes dormant. Mole crickets are the main pest of Bahia grass. This grass can withstand heavy traffic and has low maintenance needs. Existing Bahia lawns can be treated with a pre-emergent herbicide in early spring for weeds. Also a yearly over-seeding will keep the lawn dense. For a quick greening in mid-summer, a chelated iron spray can be applied.

Zoysia grass has been much improved over the last few years and is a beautiful grass in the south, but it requires a high level of maintenance and is not as trouble-free as advertised. It is wear resistant, has dense sod, needs less mowing, is uniform looking and has low weed invasion once established.



Zoysia

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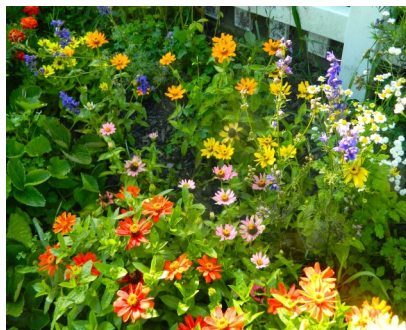
The disadvantages are that it must be sodded, is extremely slow growing (it takes two season to become established), produces heavy thatch, and needs periodic renovation. Zoysia has a slow recovery from damage, high fertilization requirements, and requires frequent irrigation. This grass has problems with nematodes.

Edibles to plant in March

SURVIVES TRANSPLANTING	Beets, Collards, Eggplant, Kohlrabi, Lettuce, Peppers, Sweet Potatoes, Tomatoes
TRANSPLANT WITH CARE	Mustard
USE SEEDS	Beans (bush, pole, lima), Cantaloupe, Corn (sweet), Cucumbers, Okra, Onions (green, shallots), Peas (Southern), Pumpkin, Radish, Squash (summer), Turnips, Watermelon

The Merry Month of March

by Anne Lambrecht, Master Gardener (ret.)



Source: ifas.ufl.edu

This is the BEST time of year! I love springtime in North Central Florida. I never want to go inside, even when the day is done. The earth is finally ready to plant, prune, and feed.

The last frost date for our area is March 15th – and winter is then officially over! The garden centers are overflowing with great flowers and plants such as marigold, salvia,

verbena, and zinnia. There are warm season veggies that can be planted now (did you start your seeds in January?). Beans, corn (I've tried broom corn, the kind they used to make brooms with. It's a wonderful accent plant and a great addition to the flower garden), cucumbers (try staking them on a trellis), eggplant, peppers, squash, and tomatoes. Veggies need at least six hours of full sun, plenty of water and regular feedings. Slow release fertilizer is the best—you only need apply two or three times a year. This fertilizer looks like a bunch of little round balls. The fertilizer is released from the outside layer of the ball each time you water or when it rains.

Plant warm weather herbs now: basil, dill, fennel, Mexican tarragon. Just remember that bees are crazy for basil and tarragon flowers and swallowtail butterflies lay their eggs on dill and fennel and the caterpillars will eat it right down to the root. So plant extra for them.

It's time to decide what plants need dividing like liriopse, flax lily, and gingers. But don't divide any plant that looks like it's close to flowering such as amaryllis or day lilies. The rule of thumb on any plant is always divide or trim AFTER flowering. Likewise, prune azaleas and camellias immediately after they flower.

Pot up any "volunteer" plants and use these freebies to fill in the gaps in the flower bed. By Valentine's Day you should have pruned back your roses-- but not to worry, there's still time. Trim with clean, bleach-clean, sharp clippers one-third to one-half the cane size. Also trim all dead or crossing branches which will open the center for air circulation. Do not trim climbing roses. Roses are heavy feeders and love good quality organics.

Gently prune crape myrtles (a favorite activity of mine) and ligustrums before

UPCOMING LECTURES/EVENTS:

Educational seminars and events are presented by UF/IFAS Extension Agents and/or Master Gardeners. Unless otherwise indicated, to pre-register, please call 352-671-8400 or e-mail terry.holt@marioncountyfl.org.

March

Dunnellon Satellite Plant Clinic

March 7, 2017
10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.
Dunnellon Public Library
20351 Robinson Rd, Dunnellon

Master The Possibilities Series:

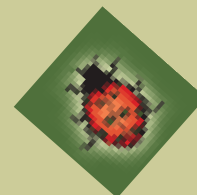
Composting
March 10, 2017
10:00—11:30 a.m.
On Top Of The World
8415 SW 80th Street, Ocala

Ask The Experts

March 18, 2017
10:30—11:30 a.m.
Forest Public Library
905 South Hwy 314A, Ocklawaha

Dunnellon Library

Growing Herbs
March 21, 2017
2:00—3:00 p.m.
Dunnellon Public Library
20351 Robinson Rd, Dunnellon



UPCOMING LECTURES/EVENTS:

April

Downtown Satellite Plant Clinic

April 1, 2017
10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.
Bellevue Public Library
13145 SE Hwy 484, Bellevue

Dunnellon Satellite Plant Clinic

April 4, 2017
10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.
Dunnellon Public Library
20351 Robinson Rd, Dunnellon

Bellevue Satellite Plant Clinic

April 7, 2017
10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.
Bellevue Public Library
13145 SE Hwy 484, Bellevue

Master the Possibilities Series

What is Lichen?
April 14, 2017
10:00—11:30 a.m.
On Top of the World
8415 SW 80th St, Ocala

Freedom Library

Butterfly Gardening
April 14, 2017
12:00—1:00 p.m.
Freedom Public Library
5870 SW 95th St, Ocala

Dunnellon Library

Earth Day Activities
April 18, 2017
2:00—3:00 p.m.
Dunnellon Public Library
20351 Robinson Rd, Dunnellon

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by Anne Lambrecht, Master Gardener (ret.)

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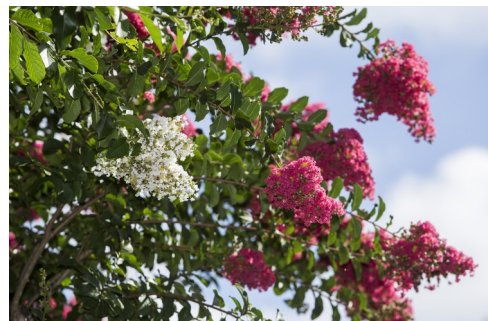
the new spring growth starts, allowing them to grow as freely and naturally as possible. Ligustrums should look graceful and free form and not like a lollipop.

Trim citrus trees of their out-of-bounds growth and any dead branches. Give them their first

feeding of the year at a rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ -pound for each inch of trunk circumference measured 6" above the ground. Use a special citrus fertilizer and scatter it under the spread of the tree and a little beyond. Feed again in May, August and early October.

It's a great time to plant new trees and shrubs when they can begin new growth without the stress of heat. Water them daily (or every other day) for the first few weeks, wetting thoroughly the root ball and surrounding soil.

New lawns love this time of year. It's a good time to repair bare spots by removing all weeds (by hand is the most effective way) and debris, till the soil before adding new sod. For only a few bare spots, loosen the soil lightly and install plugs. Growing grass from seed is not easy. Get the information you need from your University of Florida Extension office before you begin. Feed lawns through March. Most good lawn fertilizers contain no phosphorus (the middle number). Our soil already has plenty, but a soil test from the University of Florida Soils Lab will make sure.



Crape Myrtle

ifas.ufl.edu



Marion County Master Gardeners

Spring Plant Sale

Saturday, May 13, 2017

8:00 am—Noon

- Fruit Trees
- Ornamental Trees
- Shade Trees
- Shrubs

FREE ADMISSION
NO PETS PLEASE!

PAYMENT BY
CASH OR CHECK ONLY

UF/IFAS Extension Marion County

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

- Rain Barrels
- Melaleuca Mulch
- Micro-irrigation supplies
- Garden publications
- Master Gardeners available for consultation
 - Mobile Plant Clinic on site
 - Soil Test Kits available

UF IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



AZALEA—MARCH SPOTLIGHT NATIVE PLANT

Spectacular flowers and shade tolerance are among the reasons for the azalea's popularity. Azaleas enhance the home landscape in foundation or mass plantings. Many cultivars and dwarf varieties are available.

LIGHT: Performs best in areas with filtered sunlight.

MOISTURE: $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 inch of water every 10 days to 2 weeks. Well-drained, acidic soils are best suited. Irrigation is necessary for optimum growth during extended dry periods.

PRUNING: Several light prunings just after flowering and continuing through the growing season result in a compact, denser plant. Flower buds are initiated in late spring so pruning should cease in midsummer (July 4 is an easy date to remember).