



## In this Issue

Title	Page
Hot Topics	1
Invasives in Bloom	2
Time for Fertilizer	3
Master Gardener Corner	4
DIY Beeswax Wraps	5
What to Plant	7



Azalea Care on page 4-5

## Hot Topics by Maxine Hunter

Dear Horticulture Friends,

If you need something done, ask a busy person! Our Master Gardeners have already contributed over 4,500 hours of service already this year! There's ample evidence of their accomplishments since our January newsletter. The Demonstration Gardens surrounding the Extension Service Building have been transformed thanks to the dedicated work, talents and skills of our Florida Friendly Landscaping Agent, Amanda Marek and Master Gardener Volunteers. The new hydroponic garden is thriving, the succulent display has a new roof, and the raised edible landscape beds are proving to be bountiful. Whether you are a visitor, guest, snow bird, new or long-time resident, add the demonstration gardens at the UF/IFAS Extension Marion County Office to your list of destination sites.

Master Gardeners have also been actively participating in many diverse community events over the past three months through exhibits, consultations, education and demonstrations. In addition to helping staff the horticulture information desk at our Spring Festival, MG's have informed our community about the Extension Service and Florida Friendly Landscaping at the Strawberry Festival, numerous school gardens through the FANS program, and at many HOA's.

Successful businesses make what they know; successful sales people sell what they love. In future editions of our newsletter, we plan to share tips from our Master Gardeners who tend the demonstration gardens, give names of the thriving plants and give advice on the most frequently asked questions that come to our Plant Clinic.

If you are interested in becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer for the first time or are already a master gardener from another state who wants to be trained as a Florida MG, contact Maxine Hunter, our Marion County Horticultural Agent about enrolling in the next training class starting in August.

If you would like to submit information for the newsletter, please send it in to the extension office or contact me directly. This newsletter will cover April through June of 2019 and the next issue will be released in July 2019. If at any time you wish to have an email address removed or would like an email added to the newsletter email list, please contact the Extension Office: [maxine32666@ufl.edu](mailto:maxine32666@ufl.edu) or 352-671-8400.

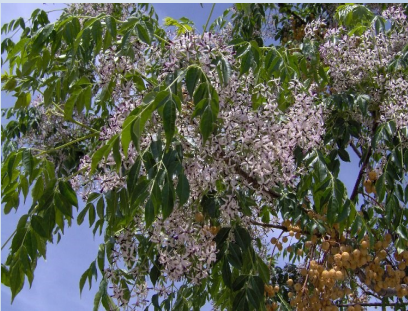
# Invasives in Bloom

**Amanda Marek**

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Extension Agent I



Cogongrass Courtesy: Florida Forestry Service



Chinaberry Courtesy: hort.ufl.edu



Bloomify™ Rose is a non-invasive variety of lantana. Courtesy: hort/ufl.edu

For more information about invasive exotic plants in Florida, call your Marion County Extension Service or go online to the UF/IFAS Assessment website:

<https://assessment.ifas.ufl.edu/>.

Spring is in the air. The bees are buzzing, the pollen is falling, and the flowers are blooming. It's a beautiful time of year, but there are some blooming plants amongst us that despite their attractiveness don't belong.

Invasive exotic plants are by definition plants whose origins are outside the United States and that once established alter how our natural ecosystems function. Oftentimes they reproduce and grow more rapidly than our native plants and quickly overtake entire areas, reducing habitat for our wildlife.

Arguably the worst invasive exotic plant in Marion County is cogongrass. Its long white plumes are in full show right now along the roadsides and in medians. This tall lime-green grass has sharp leaf blades that can cut the skin if you rub your hand against it and is extremely flammable. Vehicles left running for too long in tall patches of cogongrass have been known to catch fire. Animals don't eat it and before long the seeds and the long, sharp, underground runners can spread to completely consume entire forested areas, yards, and horse pastures.

Another lovely invasive exotic plant blooming right now is chinaberry. Chinaberry is small to medium sized tree and this time of year is covered with lovely purple flowers that emit a pleasant smell. The issue is, each of those flowers later produces orange berries that are toxic to people and mammals and can even paralyze birds.

And lastly, one of the world's worst invasive plants, lantana, is also showing off its brightly colored orange, pink, red and yellow flowers all around the county. *Lantana camara* is a popular butterfly plant not only for its attractiveness to pollinators but also for its hardiness. Unfortunately, the invasive exotic lantana has hybridized and replaced our native *Lantana depressa* which is now endangered. In fact, one invasive lantana plant can produce about 12,000 berries per plant, berries that are easily spread by wildlife regardless if it's grown in a pot or the ground. And as if that wasn't enough, all parts of the plant are highly toxic to livestock and people, including children who have been poisoned by eating the fruits. Thankfully, there are now two sterile varieties available to homeowners called Bloomify™Red and Bloomify™Rose that can satisfy our desire for beautiful lantana without wreaking havoc on our natural areas.

If you have one of these invasive exotic plants on your property it is recommended that you remove it and replace it with a native or Florida-Friendly non-native plant before it becomes too large or produces seeds.

## Upcoming Events April through June

### **Bellevue Public Library Satellite Plant Clinic**

13145 SE Hwy 484, Bellevue  
10 a.m.– 1 p.m.

April 5 and 19

May 3 and 17

June 7 and 21

### **Downtown Farmers Market Satellite Plant Clinic**

3rd Ave and 3rd St, Ocala  
10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.

April 6, 2019

May 4, 2019

June 1, 2019

### **Dunnellon Public Library Satellite Plant Clinic**

20351 Robinson Rd, Dunnellon  
10 a.m.-1 p.m.

April 2, 2019

May 7, 2019

June 4, 2019

### **Master The Possibilities**

*On Top Of The World*  
8415 SW 80th Street, Ocala  
10.00 a.m. -11:00 a.m.

**Curb Appeal:** April 12

**Container Gardening:** May 10

**Garden Design:** June 14

### **Marion County Main Library Butterfly Festival**

April 27, 2019

### **Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale**

May 11, 2019

## Time for Fertilizer!

**Maxine Hunter**

Horticulture Extension Agent

I have lived in Florida my whole life but never had time to care for my lawn. Lawn maintenance was very easy - I wrote a check every month for service. I have lived in other areas of the US with more concrete than lawn, short growing seasons, and 90% of my yard was mulched. The few flowers that bloomed were beautiful and I started to learn how to care for them but it was a very short garden season. But living in Florida and it is easy to look forward to “playing in the dirt”; I want to learn and enjoy caring for my lawn and garden. I have learned so much about the proper care of the lawn using fertilizer from working in Extension. It is important to maintain a healthy lawn for several reasons:



- A healthy lawn keeps your property value up.
- A happy, healthy lawn reduces soil erosion and filters storm water runoff.
- A thick lawn also filters and traps sediment and pollutants that otherwise contaminate surface and ground waters.
- A healthy lawn cools the air and reduces glare and noise.

The key to maintaining and achieving a healthy lawn is to fertilize your turf at the right time, with the right amount, and the right product. My learning curve starts by figuring out WHY I need to fertilize my grass. I always assumed it grew when you watered it daily. WRONG! My next learning goal was to find WHAT product I needed to get. There are lots to choose from and then WHEN do I apply it and how much.

**Why** - Lawns need “food” to stay healthy. Just like our bodies, the turf needs the right nutrients to stay healthy. Some of the nutrients are nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, calcium, zinc, magnesium, iron, and manganese. Good soil needs to be replenished with nutrients to maintain being healthy. Having your soil tested by the University of Florida to help you figure out what nutrients are lacking in your soil.

**What** – To get the right fertilizer for your home lawn you need to look for urban turf fertilizer, not fertilizer for flowers or vegetables. Always read labels to get the right product and the right amounts. Urban Turf Fertilizer Labeling Rule (RE-1.003(2) FAC became a rule in June 2007 when the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services required labeling information for urban



# Master Gardener Corner

## Azalea Q&A

Azaleas are bursting into bloom all over Ocala. A single azalea blossom is attractive enough for a close-up photograph of it alone; a bush covered with blossoms makes a remarkable spring show. Want to know more about these remarkable plants? Read on.

### When do azaleas bloom in Florida?

Florida azaleas bloom from late February to early April, depending on the variety and our weather. Since we have had such a mild winter this year, azaleas are blooming a bit early.

### How should you plant an azalea?

Azaleas prefer filtered light and need well-drained soil. Dense shade will reduce growth and flowering. Soils with a pH of 4.5 to 5.5 are best for azaleas, so you may want to have your soil tested if you would like to install several bushes. (Soil pH can be tested at your local Extension Office.) Amending the soil with peat, compost or pine bark can help increase moisture, nutrient and micronutrient retention. Azaleas should be planted in a hole 12 inches wider than the root-ball at or slightly above the depth at which they were

Continued on page 5

# Time for Fertilizer! (continued)

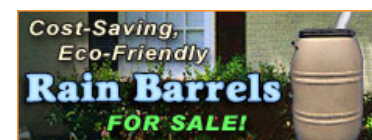
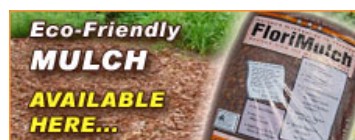
Maxine Hunter  
Horticulture Extension Agent

turf (home lawn) fertilizers. Obtaining the right fertilizer will depend on what species of grass you have and the geographical location of your home. For the typical homeowner, a 30% slow release nitrogen product will provide a longer lasting result and prevent burning from an excessive application. Most box store fertilizers are labeled with nitrogen, a low amount of phosphorus and potassium for your turf. UF/IFAS recommends a 15-0-15 slow release fertilizer.

**When** – During the warm season when days are long and the temperature is high allowing the grass to take up the nutrients. Don't fertilize when your grass is not growing; this will create nutrients leaching through the soil and run off. You want to avoid leaching. Be aware of the ordinances in your area that limit the time you can fertilize. In Marion County, April 15th is ideal and then again around the end of September.

**How Much** – The ratio is 1 pound of nitrogen for every 1000 square feet of lawn for each application. Applying the wrong amounts increases disease and insect problems. Many fungal issues are related to high nitrogen applications.

These three nutrients will help keep your turf grass healthy. **Nitrogen**, being the most important component of a turf fertilizer is responsible for the green color and the grass blade growth. If you purchase a fertilizer that is not slow release you may see your turf become green and grow fast the first 3-4 weeks but then stop. You can keep your turf looking good for a longer period of time using a slow release fertilizer. **Phosphorous** is responsible for the root system of your turf. Starter lawn fertilizers will have a high phosphorous count to get the lawn established; once it has an established rooting system typically you would look for a fertilizer with a low amount of phosphorous. **Potassium** helps keep your turf healthy from disease, drought and cold. I found a tip while researching for this article, "Up, Down and All-Around" to help you remember the number system. Up is for rapid growth (first number); down is development of the roots (second number) and all around is the health of your overall grass (third number).



*These items are available for purchase at the  
UF/IFAS Extension Marion County.*

growing. They should be spaced 3-5 feet apart depending on the mature size of your cultivar. Two to three inches of organic mulch will help conserve moisture and reduce weeds, but don't allow the mulch to touch the trunk or branches.

### How do I care for my azaleas?

Newly planted azaleas should be watered twice weekly if the weather is dry, and established plants should receive water every 10-14 days. Wet the soil to a depth of 14-18 inches. Light applications of an acid-forming fertilizer complete with micronutrients should be done in spring, summer and fall. Fertilizers made specifically for azaleas are available. Apply approximately ¼ pound to a mature plant or ¾ to 1½ pounds per 100 square feet.

### When should you prune azaleas?

Pruning is necessary to create a full, well-branched azalea. Several light prunings just after flowering and continuing through the growing season will result in a compact, denser plant. Flower buds are initiated in late spring and early summer, long before they can be seen, so pruning should end in midsummer (July 4 is an easy date to remember). Pruning after this date decreases the number of spring flowers.

## DIY Beeswax Food Wraps

Yilin Zhuang

Water/Energy Extension Agent

Did you know... Each time you wash your face, brush your teeth, or do laundry, you just might be adding microscopic bits of plastics into the aquatic environment. These tiny particles are called microplastics. They are less than 5 mm (0.2 inch) in diameter or length. Microplastics come from a variety of sources. One major source is from larger plastic debris that breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces over time. The other major source is microbeads. They are very tiny pieces of manufactured plastic that are added to health and beauty products, such as some cleansers and toothpastes. These tiny particles easily pass through water filtration systems and end up in water. In addition, the fleeces you love to wear are also contributing to the plastics in our waters. Today's sportswear often has synthetic fibers to create stretchy, breathable clothing, but more of these fibers shed off with every wash.

In water, toxins tend to stick to the surface of these plastics. They might be million times more concentrated on the plastics than in the water. Aquatic animals eat these microplastics and think they are food. Because microplastics are smaller enough, they can be consumed by filter-feeders, and eventually clog an animal's digestive system, leading to starvation.



Microplastics from facial scrub.  
Source: Dr. Maia McGuire

There are different ways to get involved and help raise awareness about microplastics in our waters and help keep them clean. The simplest way is to reduce your plastic waste, such as avoid using plastic drinking straws, use reusable shopping bags instead of single use plastic ones, and choose more natural fabrics rather than microfiber or other synthetic fabrics. Or you can try to make your own beeswax food wraps.

### What You Need

- Pre-washed cotton material piece: It can be pre-used materials such as sheets or T-shirts. 100% cotton thin materials usually work better.
- Pinking shears: Use them to cut fabric squares as they help materials keep from unraveling
- Beeswax beads or pellets: About 1/4 cup of beeswax for every 0 inch square piece of fabric
- Parchment paper: You can reuse them as you iron
- Iron and ironing board or cutting board, or other flat surface that can withstand heat



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

### How to Do It

- Tape or place one piece of parchment paper to the ironing board.
- Place your cloth on the parchment paper.
- Sprinkle beeswax pellets on the cloth.
- Make sure it is evenly spread and the edges are covered (figure 1).
- Cover your cloth and beeswax with a second piece of parchment paper (figure 2).
- Iron gently over the top of the parchment paper. Set iron on cotton setting; make sure that wax is melted into all areas; it is better to have too much wax than not enough. If there is not enough wax, liquids will pass through the cloth. If there is too much wax, use an extra cloth to soak up some excess wax. Lay a second cloth on top and then parchment paper, iron gently until the original cloth has a nice amount of wax.
- Remove the parchment paper.
- Wait a few moments for the cloth to cool enough to touch.
- Gently remove the cloth and let it cool off.

### How to Use It

Use it as cling wrap or zip lock bag alternative (figures 3 and 4). It makes the cotton water-tight. Use the heat of your hands to shape and secure it. Beeswax melts at 62 °C to 64 °C (144 °F to 147 °F). Heating softens the wax and makes it easier to mold and easier to stick to itself.

### How to Maintain It

Wash with cold water with mild soap. Add small amount of wax and re-iron when your wrap loses wax. These wraps are made only of cotton cloth and beeswax. They will not be sticky like commercial beeswax wraps, which also contain tree resin and plant oil. These beeswax-only wraps will also acquire folds and creases over time. They may develop areas of “low-wax”. You can add wax and re-iron to refresh the wraps at any time.





# WHAT'S FLOWERING

*in Florida?*


# APRIL

NORTH/  
CENTRAL

- Rose\*  Non-native, evergreen (*Rosa spp.*)
- Southern Magnolia  Native, evergreen (*Magnolia grandiflora*)
- Bottlebrush  Non-native, deciduous (*Callistemon spp.*)
- Gardenia  Non-native, evergreen (*Gardenia jasminoides*)
- Glossy Abelia  Non-native, evergreen (*Abelia x grandiflora*)
- Yesterday-Today-and-Tomorrow  Non-native, evergreen (*Brunfelsia grandiflora*)



SOUTH

- Rose\*  Non-native, semi-deciduous (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*)
- Jacaranda  Non-native, evergreen (*Nerium oleander*)
- Oleander  Native and non-native, evergreen (*Hibiscus spp.*)
- Hibiscus  Non-native, evergreen (*Loropetalum chinense*)
- Chinese Fringe Bush

**UF** IFAS Extension  
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA






**Gardening SOLUTIONS**

For more information, please visit  
[GardeningSolutions.ifas.ufl.edu](http://GardeningSolutions.ifas.ufl.edu)

\* Both in North and South.

# EDIBLES TO PLANT IN APRIL

	North	Central	South
 Survives Transplanting	Collards, Eggplant, Peppers, Sweet Potatoes, Tomatoes	Sweet Potatoes	Sweet Potatoes
 Transplant With Care	Mustard		
 Use Seeds	Beans (bush, pole, lima), Cantaloupes, Corn, Cucumbers, Okra, Peas (southern), Pumpkin, Squash (summer, winter), Turnips, Watermelon	Beans (bush, pole, lima), Cantaloupe, Okra, Peas (southern)	Beans (bush, pole, lima), Peas (southern)



**UF** IFAS Extension  
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



**Gardening SOLUTIONS**

For more information, please visit  
[GardeningSolutions.ifas.ufl.edu](http://GardeningSolutions.ifas.ufl.edu)

Marion County Master Gardeners

# *Spring Plant Sale*

**Saturday, May 11, 2019**

**8:00 a.m.—Noon**

- Fruit Trees
- Ornamental Trees
- Shade Trees
- Shrubs

**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**

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

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

**UF** IFAS Extension  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



Marion  
County  
FLORIDA