



A quarterly online magazine published for Master Gardeners in support of the educational mission of UF/IFAS Extension Service.

Winter Blooms and Bees

By Ellen Mahany, Master Gardener Volunteer

Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) presents its beautiful blossoms in late winter. This fragrant vine bloomed profusely on my arbor from mid-February through early March. In addition to being gorgeous when flowering and providing a pleasing green cover the rest on the year, it is a native that attracts bees, hummingbirds and the now-endangered spicebush swallowtail (*Papilio troilus*), such great attributes.

I noticed both a Polydamus swallowtail (*Battus polydamus*) and an eastern tiger swallowtail (*Papilio glaucus*) sipping nectar on-the-run. Honey bees lingered in the deep cups while a buzzing group of bumble bee look-alikes darted in and out of the trumpet openings, moving too fast to capture on my digital camera.

Eventually, I was lucky enough to find a small “bumble bee,” apparently

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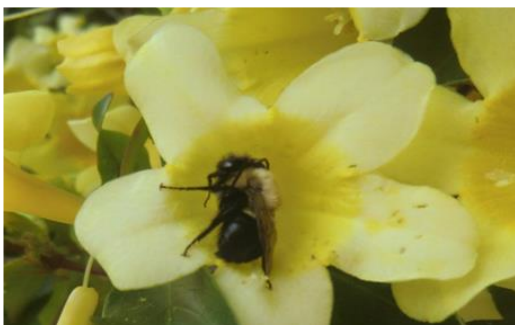
Flowering Carolina jessamine brightens a Florida winter landscape (All photo credits: Ellen Mahany)

asleep inside a blossom. I snapped its picture, identified it, and proudly sent it to iNaturalist. But when a global identifier of bees and wasps, a professor and natural museum curator in Australia, corrected the ID, I quickly agreed with him that it is a southeastern blueberry bee (*Habropoda laboriosa*), familiarly known as a “blueberry digger.”

Through research, I discovered that this native bee lives above ground for only a few weeks, flying at the time that blueberries need pollination. It is important commercially as a master pollinator of this fruit, using “buzz pollination,” a vibration of the bee’s shoulders inside the flower. This process loosens the anthers’ pollen, which clings to the female bee as she inadvertently connects it to the stigma to fertilize the flower.

It would be wonderful to have blueberry plants, but Carolina jessamine is also special. There is the caution, however, that all parts are poisonous to human beings and livestock. Equally troublesome, there is some evidence that that it may harm honey bees. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildlife Center states if honey bees consume the nectar in large quantities, it can be toxic. In contrast, native bees are immune from the toxic alkaloids in this plant’s nectar. One theory is that native bees have had time to evolve with this native plant. The honey bee is susceptible because it is of European origin.

Although there has been no published report of danger to honey bees, the Bee Informed Partnership mentions that beekeepers in Texas have observed dead honey bee larvae and pupae, dead young worker bees, and “intoxicated” bees, as well as low success with raising queen cells during this nearby plant’s short heavy blooming period. Honey bees use multiple sources for nectar and fly year-round, so this plant is a rare source of their nectar and pollen. On my arbor, pollinators disappeared as the flowering thinned throughout March. Carolina jessamine would be suspect in the vicinity of commercial honey bees, but it surely remains a welcome addition to a pollinator garden and a blessing for the southeastern blueberry bee.



Left: This blueberry digger may have fallen asleep at the table. Right: This half-hidden honey bee seeks nectar and pollen in the deep blossom

Ghostly Mystery Webs of Tree Cattle

By Susan Ladwig, Master Gardener Volunteer

Occasionally, the county extension office help desk receives a call or visit from someone with a mysterious web forming on their live oaks. These webs are frequently the work of the webbing barklouse, or *Archipsocus nomas* Gurney. These insects are sometimes referred to as “tree cattle” since they live in large groups, and move about like a herd. The barklouse is a psocid (Insecta: *Psocoptera*: *Archipsocidae*). They are found along the Gulf coast from Texas to Florida and along the Atlantic coast north to South Carolina.

Some years, webbing barklice spin extensive webs, reminiscent of the awful Halloween spider webs folks throw over everything in October. Coincidentally, these webs are usually formed from July to October, thanks to their life cycle.

Colonies of *A. nomas* might be seen in live oak hammocks and cabbage palms during the winter. From March to June, their colonies increase, reaching the maximum number from July to October. The long-winged female *A. nomas* are usually only seen in the fall. The nymphs and adults are thought to feed on lichens. Once the weather cools off, they die.

Since these web-spinning insects are not harmful to their hosts, homeowners do not need to treat them. Entomologists believe the webs protect the barklice from predators. They will fade away on their own, to mysteriously return another fall.



Photo credits: Left: Chazz Hesselein, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Bugwood.org
Right: D. W. Hall, UF/IFAS

Managing Your Garden with Word Processing Software

By Jay Gould, Master Gardener Volunteer

As a good gardener, you know the importance of keeping records detailing what you planted, when you planted, what grew, what didn't grow, and dozens of other information bits to repeat successes and avoid failures.

Our current knowledge of plants, gardening and nature is based on many famous diarists. Thoreau filled 47 manuscript volumes with his observations which are still valuable today¹. While Darwin sailed to new worlds, he filled fifteen field notebooks with descriptions of animals and plants he encountered, and we know how that turned out.²



Photo Credit: UF/IFAS

We can still employ paper like they did to jot our gardening observations. However, we also have fantastic technological tools to increase the ease and efficiency of both recording and retrieving information and insights.

Recording observations led to paradigm changing insights but imagine having to flip through page after page, scanning each for that one observation that you slightly remember. Today, with only a few keystrokes, you can tell the computer how to categorize, group, and organize your observations. You will be able to find things easily.

Previous diarists recorded everything in a chronological order and so it stayed. Thoreau had no means to return to a previous entry about a particular flower (if he could even remember when he made the first entry) and insert a new observation.

But we, with word processing software, can instruct the software that "spinach" is a heading and then enter the description "Bloomsdale Longstanding" as a subcategory. Once you have given these instructions to your computer, the magic begins.

With a few more keystrokes, you can insert a table of contents which will show your categories and sub-categories. Look at this section of my garden journal.

C. Beans..... 183

(1) [V44, Bush Blue Lake 156](#)..... 183

(2) [V69 Bush Blue Lake 274](#)..... 183

(3) [V48 Bush Blue Lake, no number](#)..... 184

(4) [V12, Cherokee Wax](#)..... 184

(5) [V62, Golden Wax Improved](#)..... 185

(6) [Kentucky Blue](#) 186

(7) [V53, Kentucky Wonder, Rust Resistant , Pole](#)..... 186

(8) [V84, Pinto Beans](#) 187

(9) [V85, Soybean Disoy](#) 188

(10) [V38, Stringless Blue Lake, FM1 K pole](#)..... 188

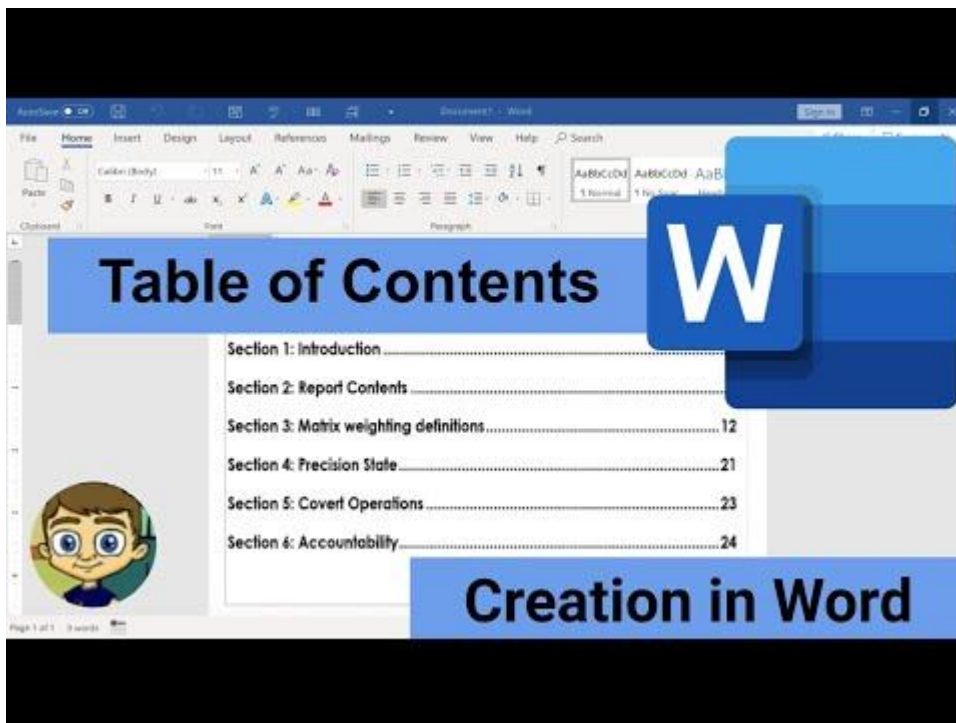
(11) [Tendergreen Improved \(Bush\)](#)..... 188

(12) [V11, Tendergreen Improved Bush](#)..... 189

(13) [V12.1, Top Notch Golden Wax Bush](#)..... 189

But wait, you say you don't know these magical instructions! You can use YouTube for more than just watching cute kittens.

Here's a video (click graphic below to play) that will walk you through creating headings for chapters, sections, sub-sections, etc.

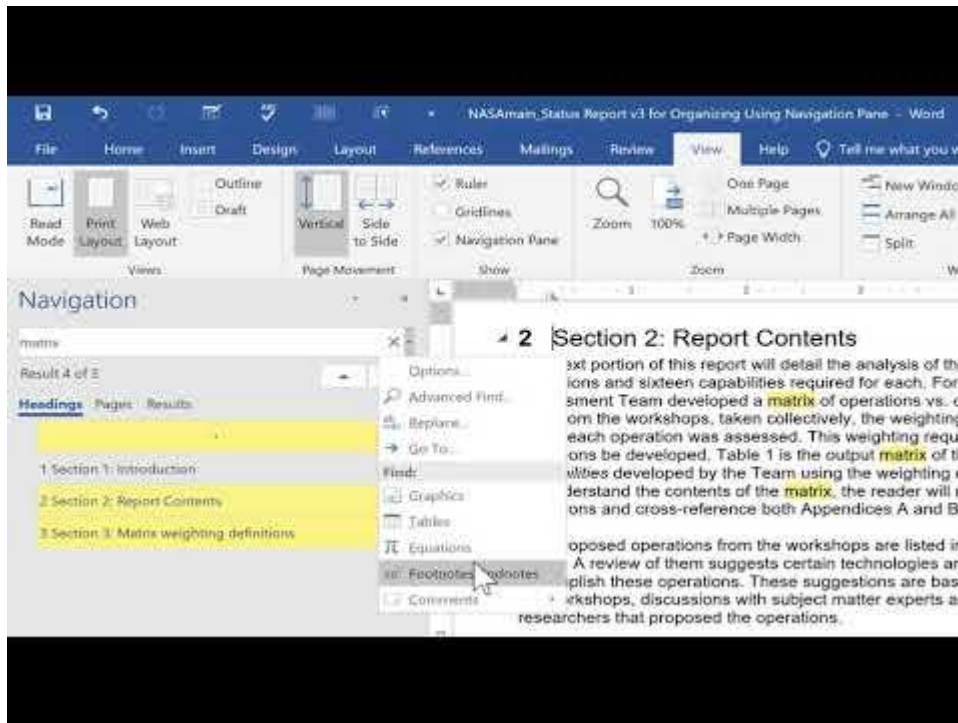


You can substitute “Beans” for chapter one and type of bean for section one.

Whenever you want to try a new trick like “insert a date”, search in Google for videos on YouTube. Look for articles from Microscope support. They are the people who created Word.

Now for some more magic after all that work. Let’s zip to any bean in my journal.

I click on the “Find” bottom on the home screen (upper right corner). This triggers the “Navigation” box to open on the left side of your screen. Notice that the items you have labeled as headings appear as a table of contents. This video will walk you through the steps (click graphic below to play).



Clicking on any item listed allows you to zoom to that place in your document! No searching for what you wrote about your Cherokee Wax bean crop last year!

So, what do you record in your journal? For each plant, I record where it came from. Could be seeds purchased or a four-pack of seedlings. Such information can save hours trying to remember where I got those great cauliflowers. Here is what a typical series of entries looks like:

V44, Bush Blue Lake 156

Thursday, August 04, 2016 11:26 AM

Purchased at Home Depot, 14 grams, \$1.58. Ferry Morse. Was looking for a pole bean and Blue Lake was listed. I should have noticed the “Bush” in the name – my mistake.

V69 Bush Blue Lake 274

Thursday, August 22, 2019, 4:52 PM

Purchased home depot Burpee \$1.49, 28 grams.

Thursday, August 22, 2019, 7:51 PM

Seeded two rows of V69 Bush Blue Lake 274 on south edge of bed 1

Sunday, September 01, 2019, 2:19 PM

Reseeded – many voids. Think that soon after germination, the tender shoots were subjected to multiple days without water → stunting and death.

Think of all the mistakes that I won't be repeating!

Not only will your garden records leap into the 21st century, but your new skills are transferable to other word processing tasks such as newsletters, office work, or a family biography. Experiment and learn.

References

¹ <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/57393/57393-h/57393-h.htm> The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau, Online Journal Transcripts, accessed January 7, 2021.

² <http://darwin-online.org.uk/manuscripts.html> Papers & Manuscripts, Darwin online, accessed January 7, 2021

Contain Your Purpose: Gardening Wellness

By Shinita Redmond, Master Gardener Volunteer

Nurturing, growing, and connecting are the main ingredients for successful gardening and relationship building. As a Master Gardener Volunteer, learning how to properly grow and nurture plants helps to reflect on many aspects in life, such as parenting, working and cooking. It provides a necessary calm. Sharing the learning of proper gardening techniques with others is even more invigorating.

Gardening is rewarding in many ways. It helps increase energy, reduce stress, aid memory retention, support healthy bones and immune systems, bring families together during a pandemic, connect others with nature, and much more. As we return to normalcy, it will be exciting to see and learn new gardening ideas and new works that have been driven by purpose.

What's your why for gardening? Is it the captivating, beautiful, and natural Florida landscape or community gardens? Is it for meditation or just for fun? Whatever your why is, just know that you can contain your purpose, have fun at it, and change the world! Grab your container and start gardening with a purpose today!

5 Steps to Contain your Purpose: (May repeat as needed)

1. Select a container (Choose popping colors and make drain holes if needed)
2. Select drought friendly plants (Choose vibrant colors and select among succulents, bromeliads, Coleus, etc.)
3. Select a good, light-weight potting mix
4. Arrange your plants. Use the concept of "thriller, filler, spiller. Thrillers are the big focus of your container, fillers are mid-size plants, and spillers are those plants that cascade over the side of the container.
5. Congratulations! You've launched your container purpose journey.

Happy Gardening!

This trio of Graceful Grasses 'Fireworks', African Bush Daisy, and Purple Pixie Weeping Loropetalum will provide color for several seasons. Photo credit: UF/IFAS



Children's Botanical Garden at the Florida Botanical Garden

By Emily Bloxam, Communications Coordinator, Florida Botanical Garden

The Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation is excited to share the plans to build a new children's garden at the Florida Botanical Gardens. The 2+ acres site, located along McKay Creek, will feature a 600 square foot outdoor classroom, play equipment, exploratory trails, a "Roots and Shoots" potting area, and Florida-Friendly gardens and exhibits.

Our goal is to use the visitor center and surrounding garden areas, including the butterfly, native plant, herb and tropical fruit gardens, to build strong educational programming. The chosen location for the Children's Discovery Garden (CDG), west of McKay Creek, would serve to complement the existing educational resources from UF/IFAS and create a space where nature exploration and education meet. To view the plans, visit: www.flbgfoundation.org/childrensgarden.

We invite you to become a part of our future!

- **Participate in upcoming events and activities.** Our goal is to begin crafting programming for families and children, even leading up to the opening of the Children's Discovery Garden.
- **Advocate to your community.** Spread the word on the future Children's Discovery Garden and help us form a solid base prior to our grand opening.
- **Join our membership.** As a member of the Florida Botanical Gardens, you directly support our mission to create, sustain and grow a world-class botanical garden.
- **Volunteer with us.** Contribute by giving your time to the cause— engage with our membership, visitors and the general public at our trainings, classes and events. Please always check with your coordinator Theresa Badurek to see which events meet UF/IFAS Master Gardener volunteer hours criteria.
- **Donate to the Children's Discovery Garden fund.** In addition to promotion, financial support is essential to ensuring we accomplish our goals of maintaining a premier destination for our visitors.



We Need a Co-Editor

Looking for a fun and interesting way to achieve your volunteer hours? Work with another to edit and produce “The Dirt” four times a year. The current editor will work with you to help you learn the steps necessary. Contact Dianne at fecteaudianne@gmail.com or call her at 727.366.1392.



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SPEAKER'S BUREAU

We are looking for MG's interested in giving presentations of their topics of specialty.

If you have been a speaker at an event or would like to become a speaker, please let us know!

Contact MG Trainee Samaly "Molly" Ruiz at pcmgspeakers@gmail.com with your contact information and topic.

WE NEED SPEAKERS LIKE YOU!

Send your Articles and Pictures

The next Issue of *The Dirt* is June 2021. The deadline for articles is June 7. Share your passion for gardening with your fellow Master Gardeners by writing an article for *The Dirt*. Include images where possible. However, if you include images they must fall under one of the following guidelines:

- your own
- UF/IFAS image
- open access image, as in wiki-commons, where all rights are open and the photographer is credited
- used with the express permission of the photographer

When you do send images, please do not embed them within the article. Include them separately. Please send all files as Word files. I cannot edit .pdf files.

Do you like to photograph plants or trees but don't like to write? Send me your photos with a description, even without an accompanying article, and I'll publish them with the description as well as a credit to you, the photographer.

Send your articles, images, and your photos to Dianne Fecteau at fecteaudianne@gmail.com. My phone number is 727.366.1392.

Agent and Master Gardener Coordinator, reviews and approves all articles prior to publication.

The Dirt

Published quarterly for Master Gardeners by Master Gardeners:
April, July, October & January

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