

Fall 2019, Issue 11

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Veggie Garden

Bulbing onions, lettuce, arugula, spinach and more thrive this time of year. For a complete list, download the North FL Gardening Calendar: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/EP/EP45100.pdf> or The Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021>

HOLIDAY CENTERPIECE WORKSHOP

Thursday, December 19, 2019

10 am to 1 pm

\$25.00 Registration Fee

Pre-registration required, Non-refundable

Register via eventbrite at:

<https://>

sjcmastergardenerholidayworkshop.eventbrite.ca

Located at SJC Extension Auditorium

3125 Agricultural Center Dr.

St. Augustine, FL 32092



Upcoming Programs

Fall for Native Plants

Fall for Native plants with SJC Master Gardener Renee Stambaugh. In 2015, the state of Florida designated October as Florida Native Plant Month. The recognition was given to emphasize the importance of native plants' vital role in sustaining healthy, diverse ecosystems that support wildlife.

Property owners are encouraged to celebrate Florida Native Plant Month by incorporating native trees, shrubs, vines, wildflowers and grasses into their landscapes. This benefits the environment by drastically reducing the need for irrigation, fertilizers and pesticides. Native plants are also the preferred choice for attracting birds, butterflies and other pollinators to the garden.

**Presented by Renee Stambaugh,
SJC Master Gardener**

When: Thursday, Oct. 24th; 2-3 pm

**Where: UF/IFAS Extension SJC Wind
Mitigation Building:
3111 Agricultural Center Dr.
St. Augustine, FL 32092**

Registration is fee of charge, but space is limited. **Preregistration required** via eventbrite: <https://fallfornativeplants.eventbrite.ca>



Invasive Species Alert: *Lantana camara*

Terra Freeman, Urban and
Commercial Horticulture
Agent, UF/IFAS Extension
St. Johns County

One of the most widely studied invasive plants in the world, *Lantana camara* is found in almost every county in Florida as well as in many surrounding states. *Lantana camara* is native to the West Indies, and while there are a few species of lantana that are native to small, isolated areas of Florida, they are rare and not native to St. Johns County. Many homeowners are unaware of the invasive nature of this plant, and would not think twice about adding it their garden since it is readily available at garden centers and touted as a butterfly plant. They unwittingly add this Category 1 invasive species to their landscape, compounding its threat to Florida's fragile ecosystem.

Not sure if you have lantana planted in your garden already? Fortunately, *Lantana camara* is easy to identify, with sandpaper-like, serrated leaves that boast a distinct citrusy aroma when crushed, and clusters of small, multicolored flowers. The flowers, which bloom year round, tend to darken in color as they mature, from yellow to orange to red, or white to pink to lavender. The tiny (0.2 inch), round green fruits morph to dark purple and eventually black.

Lantanas adaptable nature (moist to dry, sun to shade, and salt tolerant) contribute to its popularity in landscapes and container gardens, as well as its spread into pastures, forests, fruit groves, and along roadsides. A favorite among birds, this prolific seed producer (approximately 12,000 fruits per plant!) can easily transfer from your garden to natural areas. In fact, seed

germination is typically low unless passed through a digestive system. Lantana is considered a bane among cattle ranchers, as the unripened (green) fruit is toxic to cattle (and other mammals such as pets and humans).

To remove lantana from your landscape, dig out the entire plant (including roots) or repeatedly mow the patch. Additionally, you can spray the freshly cut stumps with glyphosate, but repeated applications will likely be necessary.

Availability in the nursery industry does not always equate to appropriateness in our ecosystem. It is important to educate ourselves about invasive species so we can make wise decisions when designing our gardens. In recent years, researchers at UF have developed two varieties of *Lantana camara* that are sterile: 'Bloomify Red' and 'Bloomify Rose'. If you wish to plant lantana in your landscape, seek out these sterile cultivars so you may enjoy your garden without contributing to ecological harm.

For more information on *Lantana camara* or other invasive plant species, visit UF/IFAS Assessment of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas at: <https://assessment.ifas.ufl.edu/>.



Watch Out for These Fall Lawn Pests

Carol O'Hagan,
Master Gardener,
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

Fall is a wonderful time of year here in northeast Florida. The weather begins to cool down and outdoor activities become more enjoyable. There are several lawn pests that appreciate this nicer weather as well.

If your lawn looks like it has been mowed too closely in some spots, you may find that webworms or armyworms have moved in. The leaf blades of your lawn may have notched edges where these caterpillars have chewed. Both of these caterpillars are greenish when young, but turn brown as they mature. Armyworms are the larger of the two, growing to about ½ inch in length and having a light mid-stripe along their back with darker bands on their side. The webworms feed in patches and at night while the armyworms cause more scattered damage and can be found feeding in the day. The adult of both species is a small grayish to brown moth. Control should be targeted at the caterpillars, not the non-feeding adult moths. Insecticides with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), a bacterium that only kills caterpillars, works well.

Visible dirt mounds in your lawn can be a sign of red, imported fire ants. Ineffective methods for dealing with these pests include using club soda, grits, soap or wood ash, shoveling the mounds together or spraying foraging workers. Spraying is ineffective since only 20% of the foragers are active at a time. Unfortunately, there are no control methods to permanently eliminate fire ants from an area, but you can reduce them. Combining a broadcast bait application with treatment of individual mounds with baits can be helpful. One of the best biological controls for fire ants is other native, non-pest ants, so any control method used should not target all ants.

And remember, if you choose to use a pesticide, always follow the label directions carefully.

Resources: <https://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/tag/fall-armyworms/>

<http://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/pests-and-diseases/pests/fire-ants.html>



Sod webworm larvae. Photo courtesy UF/IFAS.

All I Want for Christmas is Last Year's Poinsettia

Melissa Strohminger,
Master Gardener,
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

If you are anything like the rest of the country, you probably bought a poinsettia or ten last Christmas. Over \$250 million worth of over 100 varieties of poinsettias are sold in the U.S. each year. But how many of your poinsettias from last year are still around? Probably not many, if any at all. Most folks just throw them out after the holidays and buy new ones the next year. Some poinsettias, however, with proper care, can live to see another Christmas in your garden.

Continue to water your poinsettia in the pot until the danger of frost has passed. The plant only needs water when the soil is dry to the touch. Plant the poinsettia in well-drained, slightly acidic soil in a nice sunny spot that gets no artificial light at night. Poinsettias need a full night's rest from sunlight until they are in full bloom.

Multi-stem plants with green, healthy leaves are the best ones to put in the ground. Put the plant in the soil at the same depth it was growing in the pot. Cut off the fading flowers, which are actually modified leaves called bracts, but keep the green leaves. Mulch and keep it moist. Fertilize your poinsettia monthly from May to September with a product that has equal parts nitrogen (N) and potassium (K) and low phosphorus (P), following the directions on the product label. To make it bushy, pinch back some of the new growth each month from summer through August, making sure to keep four leaves on each stem. Watch for pests, protect from freezing temperatures or frost, and manage their light. You should start seeing buds in October and full blooms just in time for Christmas!

For more information, visit: Poinsettias at a Glance <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep349>



Photo credit: Tyler Jones, UF/IFAS



Sweet William

Shirley Barber,
Master Gardener,
UF/IFAS Extension
St. Johns County



We survived the 100+ heat index of the summer. It is time to emerge from the comfort of our air-conditioned homes and get back to work in the garden. Thought about clearing an area in your back 40 or building a new landscape bed or path? It could be time to remove that overgrown shrub, install a new water feature or revitalize your garden. Take advantage of cooler temperatures and put into action those projects you've been contemplating to make them a reality.

So many plants enjoy cooler weather and tolerate light frosts: petunia, snapdragon, dianthus, sweet alyssum, cabbage, kale, broccoli, Swiss chard...to name just a few. If you visited the flower show last spring at the St. Johns County Extension Botanical Gardens, you would have seen many of these varieties in the All-American Selections® (AAS) Display Garden.

Dianthus is a diverse family of about 300 species of flowering plants with different traits and growing habits. They are commonly known as Sweet William, pinks and carnations. These plants prefer cooler temps and may diminish during the heat of summer. Dianthus is easy to grow from seed, which can be obtained online. Plant in well-drained soil in sun; however, afternoon shade can be helpful.

Two dianthus varieties have been outstanding in the AAS Display Garden: 'Jolt™ Pink' (AAS winner 2015) and 'Supra Pink' (AAS winner 2017). These plants were selected for their vigor, gorgeous color and ability to rebloom. You can't miss 'Jolt™ Pink' with its stunning bright pink flower heads held on sturdy 13-17 inch stems. This variety is a great cutting flower and also works well in containers. Dead-heading encourages reblooming at each node on the stem. 'Supra Pink' is a compact bushy plant with a height of 10-12 inches. The soft pink flowers have frilly petal edges and don't require deadheading to rebloom. Its low stature makes it perfect for containers or a low edging at the front of the border.

Visit the Botanical Gardens at the St. Johns County Extension Center where there is an ever-changing seasonal display of flowers, vegetables and native plants.

