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UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County

St. Johns Lawn and Garden Gazette

An Equal Opportunity Institution

SOLUTIONS

Spring 2019, Issue 9

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St. Johns County Master Gardener Program Applications

The Florida Master Gardener program is a volunteer training program designed to help University of Florida Cooperative Extension faculty disseminate research-based information about horticulture to the public.

UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County is accepting applicants for the 2019 Master Gardener Program. The program provides participants with 50 hours of horticulture training and requires 75 hours of volunteer service within your first year to become certified.

The deadline to apply is Thursday, May 31, and classes will be offered on Wednesdays, from August 7 to October 16. Interested St. Johns County residents should contact Terra Freeman at terraf@ufl.edu for an application. We need the interested persons e-mail address—not their phone number—in order to provide an application.



Veggie Garden

April is the time to plant many of your warm season crops, including Swiss chard, beans, squash, and tomatoes. 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>



For more information contact: UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County
Terra Freeman ▪ terraf@ufl.edu ▪ (904)209-0430 ▪ FAX (904)209-0431

Upcoming Programs



UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County Master Gardener Plant Clinic and Help Desk

Unproductive crops? Lawn suffering from insect damage? Citrus tree exhibiting symptoms of a nutrient deficiency? Air potato woes? Wondering what crops will grow in Florida this time of year?

Master Gardeners are available to answer your diagnostic questions at **St. Johns County Extension Master Gardener Help Desk at (904) 209-0430, many weekdays from 9 to noon.** You can drop off a sample, or call in with your questions.

Master Gardeners are also on hand to assist with your gardening questions at the **Master Gardener Plant Clinic** on the **second and fourth Tuesday of each month, from 10 am to 1 pm**, located at **Home Depot: 1750 US Hwy 1 South, St. Augustine**

GI-BMP Workshop

This workshop is designed to provide training in Best Management Practices (BMPs) for anyone working in the lawn and landscape industry. The BMPs are focused on reducing non-point source pollution resulting from fertilizer application. At the end of this training you will be given a post-test, which if successfully passed, will provide you with a GI-BMP certificate of completion. This certificate is required in order to apply to FDACS for your Urban Landscape Commercial Fertilizer Certificate, which is required by Florida Statute for anyone applying fertilizer for profit in Florida.

Date: June 14, 2019

\$25.00 registration fee includes lunch

UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns
County Wind Mitigation Building:
3111 Agricultural Center Dr.
St. Augustine, FL 32092

Register on eventbrite: <https://gibmpsjcune.eventbrite.ca>

Florida-Friendly Native Grasses

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



Pink Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) is one of the most popular native grasses in the landscape – and for good reason. Its unique pink plumes are an autumn eye catcher. Native to pine flatwoods, sandhills, dunes, coastal strands and hammocks, it is moderately salt tolerant. This hardy grass is tolerant of moist and dry; and acidic and alkaline soils. Preferring full sun, this upright, clumping grass grows a moderate 3' tall by 3' wide. Small animals use the canopy for shelter and small birds eat the seeds.

A small (1.5' tall by 1.5' wide) clumping perennial, **Purple Love Grass** (*Eragrostis spectabilis*), is aptly named for its showy, purple inflorescence each fall. Native to sandhills, pine flatwoods, and coastal uplands, this plant prefers full sun and sandy, acidic to alkaline soils. Its ability to tolerate fluctuations in moisture levels, from dry to wet, makes it an excellent rain garden plant. It has a low salt tolerance, but is excellent for erosion control and mass plantings. Birds and other wildlife consume the seeds and it serves as a larval host for the Zabulon Skipper.



Reaching only 3' tall by 3' wide, **Dwarf Fakahatchee Grass** (*Tripsacum floridanus*), is a smaller relative of Fakahatchee Grass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*). A threatened species in Florida, Dwarf Fakahatchee is native to only the rocky pinelands of Collier, Miami-Dade, and Monroe Counties. Commonly grown by native plant nurseries, it performs quite well in central and north Florida. Its evergreen, clumping nature, adaptability to wet or dry soils, moderate salt tolerance, and full sun to part shade tolerance make this an ideal plant for tough conditions.

An ideal rain garden plant due to its efficiency at removing pollutants from water as it flows slowly through its clumps. Seeds are eaten by birds and it serves as a larval host for the Byssus Skipper.

Spring Lawn Care

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

Knock, Knock.

Who's there?

Weed.

Weed who?

Weed better mow the lawn before it gets too long!

Yay! It's April – spring has sprung and you may be anxious to do some lawn work after the long, “cold”, winter. Congratulations on waiting until now to apply fertilizer. Your lawn has been dormant for the past few months but will soon begin to green up on its own. Wait until you see that sign to apply fertilizer. The warmer soil temperature will enable the turf to access iron and potassium more efficiently, reducing the chance of your lawn appearing yellow due a lack of iron availability in the cooler, winter soils.

So what should we look for in a fertilizer? Of course, you want a fertilizer specific for turf – not flowers or vegetables. Look for slow-release nitrogen and low or no phosphorus. Slow-release nitrogen will provide a longer-lasting response and most Florida soils are naturally high in phosphorus. For St. Augustine grass in north Florida, apply 2-4 pounds of nitrogen annually per 1000 sq. feet of lawn. If your lawn is another type of turf or for additional information on application rates, check the tables here:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep236>.

If you haven't already done so, you might want to do a soil test. Click here for information on UF soil testing <http://soilslab.ifas.ufl.edu/ESTL%20Home.asp>. After fertilizing, be sure to irrigate long enough to just moisten the top 1/4 inch of soil. This will ensure the fertilizer isn't washed past the root zone.

Irrigation should be in the morning hours, near sunrise, so the blades can dry out during the day, reducing the chance of disease. The amount of water you continue to apply to your lawn will vary with the season.

Here are some things to look for to determine if your lawn needs irrigation:

- Leaf blades folded lengthwise to conserve water
- Grass has a blue-gray color instead of green
- Footprints visible on the grass long after they are made

When you see these signs in 50% of your lawn, apply ½ to ¾ inches of water. In general, for north Florida, this will be every 3-11 days in the spring. This publication has more information: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/LH/LH02500.pdf>.

Finally, when you are ready to mow, remember:

- Never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade at a time
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn
- Keep mower blades sharp
- Never mow when the grass is wet

For more information, check this link: <https://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/2015/03/17/wait-until-mid-april-to-fertilize-north-florida-lawns/>



Some Like it Hot!

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

The weather is heating up and now is the time to plant heat loving plants such as pepper, tomato, eggplant, okra, squash, bean and basil. The sooner, the better...as the goal is to harvest before the heat, humidity and pests of the summer take their toll.

The huge pepper genus (*Capsicum*) is in the nightshade family and includes sweet peppers, hot peppers and ornamental peppers. There are literally thousands of varieties, including our local favorite - the Datil.

Capsaicin is the substance that produces heat in peppers with the highest concentration in the white pith surrounding the seeds. Heat in a pepper is determined through a scientific test measuring the amount of capsaicin resulting in a rating in units on the Scoville scale. For comparison...Carolina Reaper is 2.2 million units; Habanero 350,000 units; Datil 300,000; Jalapeno 8,000.

The popularity of the pepper is evident by the number of new varieties introduced each year. A favorite at the St. Johns County Extension Botanical Gardens is the habanero variety 'Roulette' named an All-American Selections® (AAS) vegetable winner in 2018. The pepper appears to resemble the traditional habanero pepper with one exception...no heat!

Capsicum chinense 'Roulette' is a sturdy three foot plant with dozens of peppers hanging below a beautiful healthy canopy. Production starts early and remains constant with peppers maturing to a bright red. The plants in our gardens survived the mild winter and are already producing peppers. For those who love the habanero flavor, but can't stand the heat, 'Roulette' is the perfect pepper to spice your favorite dish. Visit the St. Johns County Extension Botanical Gardens where you will see many warm season vegetables and flowers.

