

Winter 2020, Issue 12

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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>

## FLORIDA ARBOR DAY

### TREE GIVEAWAY

Celebrate Florida Arbor Day with UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County Master Gardeners as they distribute trees at Bartram Library, Hastings Library, Anastasia Island Library, Publix at Murabella, and Publix at Nocatee.

**Friday, January 17, 2020**

**8:30 am to Noon**

### Free Bareroot Native Trees/Shrubs:

Hackberry, Redbud, Yaupon Holly, Southern Redcedar, Spicebush, Strawberry Bush and Arrowwood Viburnum.



# Upcoming Programs

Florida Arbor Day celebration continues with

## Lethal Bronzing Disease Update and Pruning Workshop

Wednesday, January 22, 2020

10 am to 12:30 pm

**Proper Tree and Shrub Pruning Techniques** with Terra Freeman, ISA Certified Arborist and Horticulture Extension Agent

**Lethal Bronzing Disease (LBD)** affects 15+ species of palms, has been documented in North East Florida, is highly contagious, and has no cure. Learn the latest research and management for LBD so you can identify and stop it before it spreads in your community. Presented by Daniel Lippi, ISA Board Certified Master Arborist and ISA Qualified Tree Risk Assessor **Registration is free, but preregistration is required at: <https://sjcextensionlethalbronzingpruning.eventbrite.ca>**

**Located at: UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County Auditorium:  
3125 Agricultural Center Dr.; St. Augustine, FL 32092**

**Save the Date:**

**EPIC Flower and Garden Expo**

March 28 and 29, 2020

# Upcoming Programs

## Living on a Few Acres

So you own or are thinking of buying a few acres in St. Johns County and starting an agricultural business. This series of workshops (\$10 each) will provide an introduction into many areas of agriculture. To learn more about these and future classes, contact Tim Wilson at [timwilson@ufl.edu](mailto:timwilson@ufl.edu) or follow the link to register:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/living-on-a-few-acres-workshops-spring-2020-tickets-86560784637>

January 16 – Peaches - Prissy Fletcher  
February 20 – Muscadine Grapes - Terra Freeman  
March 19 – Cottage Food Laws - Melanie Thomas  
April 16 – Backyard Pond Management - Tim Wilson  
May 21 – Basic Equine Management - Tim Wilson

## St. Augustine Lawn Care Workshop: Earn FDACS CEUs

Thursday, February 20, 2020; 9:30 to 11:30

Presented by Joe Kirby, Horticulture Program Assistant, UF/IFAS Extension SJC

Program will cover St. Augustine lawn establishment, fertilization, irrigation, mowing, insect pests and diseases

\$10.00 fee; Preregistration required at:

<https://sjcextensionstauglawncare.eventbrite.ca>

Located at: UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County Auditorium:

3125 Agricultural Center Dr.; St. Augustine, FL 32092

# Upcoming Programs

## Green Industry Best Management Practices (GI-BMP)

March 4, 2020; 9 am to 4:30 pm

This workshop is designed to provide training in Best Management Practices (BMPs) for anyone working in the lawn and landscape industry who wishes to obtain an Urban Landscape Commercial Fertilizer Certificate from FDACS (required by Florida Statute for anyone applying fertilizer for profit). 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 a GI-BMP certificate of completion—a prerequisite for your FDACS license application.

**\$25.00 registration fee includes lunch**

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

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

## Common Pests of Florida Shrubs

Thursday, March 12, 2020; 10 am to 11:30 am

\$5.00 fee, registration required on Eventbrite:

<https://sjcextensionshrubpests.eventbrite.ca>

Presented by Joe Kirby, Horticulture Program Assistant, UF/IFAS Extension SJC

Located at: UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County Auditorium:  
3125 Agricultural Center Dr.

# Florida-Friendly Trees

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

Join SJC Master Gardener Volunteers at the Arbor Day Tree Giveaway on January 17, 2020 (see page 1 of this newsletter for details). In this segment of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ we will explore two of the high wildlife value trees to be offered at the event.

**Hackberry, *Celtis occidentalis*:** This native, deciduous tree is naturally found in moist bottomlands, but is highly adaptable to a variety of conditions (from moist and fertile to hot to dry soils). Adaptable to a wide pH range (except highly alkaline - greater than pH 8), and is drought, flood, wind and pollution tolerant. Prefers full sun to partial shade. This fast grower ultimately reaches 50 to 80 feet tall by 40 to 50 feet wide and forms a rounded to vase-shaped crown.



Common Hackberry, Photo by Dr. Ed Gilman

Hackberry's greatest attribute lies in its wildlife value, serving as a larval host plant for Question Mark, Mourning Cloak, and American Snout butterflies. The sweet fruits are consumed by many birds, including cedar waxwings, woodpeckers, pheasants and quail. Best planted away from sidewalks and driveways as the fruit can be a bit messy.



Yaupon Holly, Photo by Dr. Douglas Welsh

**Yaupon Holly, *Ilex vomitoria*:** Among the most durable and adaptable of native hollies, yaupon thrives in full sun to shade, sand to clay, wet to well-drained soils, and is highly salt tolerant. This small evergreen tree has a modest height of 15 to 20 feet tall with similar width, making it a versatile landscape plant – hedge, screen, or specimen. Wild yaupons are protected by Florida statute.

While this dioecious tree has male and female flowers on separate plants, both produce small, white, non-showy flowers in the spring that attract bees and other pollinators. Female flowers produce abundant nectar while males are rich with pollen, making this an especially attractive tree to bees and beekeepers alike. The fruits, which can be red, orange or yellow, are a primary food source for many birds throughout the winter.

# Winter Lawn Care

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

I remember teaching a plant science unit to my fourth graders one year and offering the definition of a weed as any plant that grows where you do not want it. Well this winter, my lawn has a few different varieties of those darn plants growing where I do not want them. So, I started to investigate what's up with these new "weed plants" springing up once the weather turned colder. Here's what I found out.

In our area, once the temperatures go below 65 degrees for several days, winter annual weeds can start to germinate. My weeds started cropping up in early December, but often these weeds won't become noticeable until closer to the new year. Their life cycle is about six months, at the end of which they will flower, seed and die, leaving their seeds to wait until next year's cooler weather to germinate.

Common winter annual weeds around here are black medic, common chickweed, henbit, Carolina geranium, burweed, hop clover and annual bluegrass.

Once weeds become large enough to notice, it is more difficult to address the problem as younger weed seedlings are easier to control with post-emergent herbicide than mature ones. If you are lucky enough to have them in just a small area, hand pulling the weeds will be your best bet. If annual winter weeds have been an ongoing problem, mark your calendar for next October (when nighttime temperatures drop to 55°F–60°F

for several consecutive days). That's when you can best deal with the problem. At that time apply a preemergent herbicide targeting the problem weeds. You may need to put down a second application six to nine weeks later (always follow instructions on product label) to ensure season-long control.

Finally – if your weed problem during warmer months was crabgrass, the best way to get ahead of it is also a preemergent applied in the winter. Here in northern Florida, you will need to put the herbicide down mid-February to March 1 – or before if day temperatures reach 65° to 70°F for four to five consecutive days. And remember, always carefully follow the label directions when applying any herbicide or pesticide.

Resources: [Weed Management Guide for Florida Lawns: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep141](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep141)



*Annual bluegrass, Photo by Jack Kelly Clark*

# Rabbiteye pie. It's not what you're thinkin'!

Danielle Decker,  
Master Gardener,  
UF/IFAS Extension  
SJC

Hey, north Florida home gardener! Did you know the best time to start a fresh crop of blueberries is mid-December through February? The time is now, which means site preparation should be underway. If you are one of many fruit lovers living in north Florida, then the rabbiteye variety of blueberry is for you! Here are the basics to get you started.

Blueberries require close attention to soil and water levels to thrive. Blueberries take time, so pruning and pollination are also of equal importance.

Rabbiteye blueberries require well-drained soil and an acidic pH (4.0–5.5). But don't fret, planting in a raised bed will also work well in rain-saturated Florida areas. For your soil pH requirements you can turn to your local County Extension office for a soil pH test and guidelines on how to prep and maintain your land. Peat moss and pine bark mulch can be added prior to planting or during growth as



Brightwell rabbiteye blueberry full of fruit.  
Photo by Matt Orwat



Blueberry. Photo credit: Eric Zamora, UF IFAS.

ways of increasing organic matter for pH balance when needed. Plants should be grown in a sunny area away from tree roots or structures, where pollinators can do their work.

When it comes to pruning, proper balance between vegetative and reproductive growth is essential for achieving berries with good, tough skin. On new plants, remove any weak twiggy growth and selectively keep the strongest canes. Also, remove flowers from one year old plants to promote strong vegetative growth and good root establishment. On mature plants (4 to 5 years and older) it is important to begin the annual process of cane removal or thinning to encourage maximum productivity throughout the plants lifespan.

A benefit of the rabbiteye variety is their long-lasting shelf life. Enjoy blends such as "Beckyblue" or "Climax", commonly grown in north Florida gardens. For more information visit the *Blueberries Gardener's Guide*: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg359>.



## Discover Your Inner Creative Self

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



Kale 'Redbor' and Petunias

This is a glorious time of the year to enjoy the outdoors and get back to gardening. Show your artistic creativity by introducing edible plants to your landscape beds. The possibilities are endless. So many of the cool season vegetables offer exciting textures and dramatic colors when planted along with your favorite annual flowers.

Imagine soft pink petunias set against a backdrop of tall purple kale. Swiss chard in a variety of colors shows well behind pansies, petunias and snapdragons. Curly parsley works as a beautiful edging and plays well with snapdragons and dianthus. Purple cabbage can be an accent plant while a captivating near-black mustard plant can offer drama.

There is something very special about a plant that commands so much attention during a flower show. Such was the case during last year's EPIC Flower and Garden Expo when crowds gathered in front of the Kitchen Garden planting in the All-American Selections® (AAS) Display Garden in the St. Johns County Extension Botanical Gardens.

All this admiration was for Brussels Sprouts 'Hestia' as it stood three-foot-tall in its regal grandeur strutting large soft silver green cupped leaves. This 2015 AAS winner tolerates light frost which improves the flavor of the sprouts. The plants remain beautiful in the garden until hot weather arrives in April. The one-inch sprouts positioned along the sturdy stalk can be harvested from the bottom to the top of the stalk over several weeks. Brussels Sprouts grow easily from seed started in the Fall.

Discover your inner creativity and become adventurous in your garden. Visit the St. Johns County Extension Botanical Gardens where you will find inspiration in the ever-changing seasonal display of flowers, vegetables and native plants.



Brussels Sprouts 'Hestia'