



Winter 2023, Issue 25

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Florida Arbor Day Tree Giveaway

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

Friday, January 20, 2023

10:00 am to Noon

Free Bareroot Native Trees/Shrubs:

Southern Red Cedar, River Birch, Buttonbush, Fringe Tree, Dahoum Holly, and Cherry Laurel

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>



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

Upcoming Programs

Green Industry Best Management Practices

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: Friday, February 10, 2023

Time: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Location: UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County Auditorium

3125 Agricultural Center Dr

St. Augustine, FL 32092

Registration via Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/503686719537>

Non-refundable registration fee: \$20.00.

Bring your own lunch



Upcoming Programs

Your Florida-Friendly Landscape™

Program will include an introduction to the 9 principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ and how to integrate them into your landscape to conserve water and protect water quality while maintaining an attractive landscape.

Friday, February 17, 2023

Time: 11am– noon

Program Fee: \$5.00 (total is \$6.04 with Eventbrite fee)

Eventbrite registration: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/your-florida-friendly-landscape-tickets-518944255237>

Location: UF/IFAS Extension Auditorium

3125 Agricultural Center Dr

St. Augustine, FL 32092

For questions, e-mail terraf@ufl.edu



Upcoming Programs



UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County

Certified Arborist Exam Review

February 15 & 22, 2023

St. Johns County Ag Center
3125 Agricultural Center Drive, St. Augustine, FL 32092
904-209-0430

Register here

www.eventbrite.com/e/489998537817



Agenda – February 15

Time	Topic
9 a.m.	Introductions, refreshments
9:15 a.m.	Tree Biology – Larry Figart
10 a.m.	Tree Identification – Larry Figart
10:45 a.m.	Break
11 a.m.	Tree Selection – Maxine Hunter
11:45 a.m.	Installation & Establishment Maxine Hunter
12:30 p.m.	Lunch (provided)
1:15 p.m.	Diagnosis and Plant Disorders Bonnie Wells
2 p.m.	Plant Health Care – Bonnie Wells
2:30 p.m.	Break and next week's reminders
2:45 p.m.	Water Management – Prissy Fletcher
3:45-5 p.m.	Tree Pruning – Terra Freeman

Agenda – February 22

Time	Topic
9 a.m.	Review and refreshments
9:15 a.m.	Soil Science – Prissy Fletcher
9:45 a.m.	Tree Nutrition and Fertilization Prissy Fletcher
10:30 a.m.	Break
10:45 a.m.	Urban Forestry – Larry Figart
11:30 a.m.	Trees and Construction – Larry Figart
12:15 p.m.	Lunch (provided)
1 p.m.	Tree Support and Protection Systems Danny Lippi
1:45 p.m.	Tree Assessment and Risk Management Danny Lippi
2:45 p.m.	Break
3 p.m.	Safety – Larry Figart
4-5 p.m.	Climbing and Working in Trees Larry Figart

The University of Florida is committed to providing universal access to all of our events. For disability accommodations such as sign language interpreters, listening devices, and alternate formats of written material, please contact Prissy Fletcher, pfletch@ufl.edu, 904-209-0430 at least 10 days in advance. Advance notice is necessary to arrange for some accessibility needs.

An Equal Opportunity Institution.

Upcoming Programs

FRESH & LOCAL *to You*



**Every Friday
February 24 – March 24
10:00 am – 12:00 pm**

**UF/IFAS Extension
St. Johns County
3125 Agricultural Center
Drive, St. Augustine, FL
32092**

**Registration \$50 +
Eventbrite fees**

**Register online
<https://bit.ly/freshandlocaltoyou>**

6-Part Series

February 24 – Container Gardening

Learn how to grow herbs and leafy greens

March 3 – Cooking with Herbs

Discover the flavors of cooking with fresh herbs

March 10 – Farm Tour

Explore local agricultural operations

March 17 – Local & Seasonal Cooking

Learn how to incorporate fresh fruits and veggies

March 24 – Farm-to-Table Brunch

FARM FRESH RECIPES

LOCAL FARM TOUR

VEGETABLE GARDENING

UF | IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Registration link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fresh-local-to-you-5-part-series-see-description-for-dates-tickets-508171684187>

White Clover:

A Growing Trend in Alternative Lawns

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

Clover lawns are gaining in popularity throughout the United States. I have received several inquiries from St. Johns County and surrounding residents as to the feasibility of replacing lawn grass with clover or a clover/



lawn mixture. Internet searches are ripe with inspiring articles on integrating clover, mostly white Dutch clover, into the landscape as a turf alternative. Excited by the prospect of adding clover lawns to my list of alternative lawn recommendations, I first needed to do some research.

What became apparent early on in my research was that most of the information available about clover lawns are from northern climates, where white clover thrives as a year-round perennial in the cooler temps. Most of the published research regarding clover in Florida is specific to its use as a forage or cover crop. Little information is available about using it as a residential lawn alternative.

In this article, I aim to include information I believe to be relevant to the use of clover in lawn, with the caveat that it is derived mostly from research regarding its use as a forage or cover crop in Florida.

So what exactly is a clover lawn and why would we want to plant one?

A clover lawn can be composed entirely of

clover, or as of combination of clover and lawn grass (or other self-sowing pollinator-friendly plants).

White clover has small, white flowers that attract beneficial insects and pollinators. It's broad trifoliate leaves cover the ground

much like lawn grass. It performs well in full sun to partial shade and requires a pH range of above 6.0 but not to exceed 7.0.

Because it is a legume, clover is able to capture nitrogen from the atmosphere and release it to nearby plants, thus eliminating or reducing the need for fertilizer. At times you may need to use a low-nitrogen fertilizer to provide phosphorus and potassium if the clover appears in need of a boost; however, intermixing grass with clover will produce a healthier, more vigorous, and greener lawn.

White Dutch clover is typically the type used in lawn or lawn mixes, so we will focus on that for the purposes of this article; however, I would be interested to learn more about local experience with other types of clover as well.

Research trials among several varieties of white clover ranked *Trifolium repens* L. 'Ocoee' among the top due to its tolerance to root-knot nematodes (RKN), which can be a problem for clover in Florida. 'Osceola' is also a recommended variety due to its summer persistence (when clovers may die out due to the heat).

White Clover:

A Growing Trend in Alternative Lawns

Terra Freeman, Urban and
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St. Johns County

White clover performs best on fertile soils with decent moisture holding capacity throughout spring, summer, and fall; however, can be drought tolerant once established due to its extensive root system. In Florida, white clover behaves as a cool season annual, and is best planted in the fall between mid-October to mid-November.

Clover blends very nicely with other lawn types. For example, you can create a sustainable lawn alternative by overseeding Bahia grass with clover. To do so, first mow the Bahia to 2 inches (less than the typical recommended mow height of 4 inches). Aeration or dethatching prior to sowing the clover seeds can help improve seed/soil contact for successful establishment. Sow clover seed that has been previously inoculated with the correct strain of *Rhizobium* bacteria to eliminate the need for nitrogen fertilization. Provide daily irrigation until established, then cut down to supplemental irrigation as needed. Once established, the clover may only require mowing at a height of 4 inches every 4 to 6 weeks during the summer to prevent overshadowing. However, if mixed with Bahia grass, the mow cycle will more likely depend on the needs of your Bahia grass.

Pure clover lawn will likely require annual reseeding; however, when mixed with other plants, it may reseed itself enough to be more self-sustainable. Clover handles foot traffic best when mixed with other grasses than when

planted solo. Bear in mind that clover is used as a livestock forage and therefore must be adept at handling a certain amount of trampling.

Clover is a wonderful pollinator plant for bees, which may be considered a pro or a con depending on how the lawn is used. Another bonus is its soft texture which can feel great on bare feet, compared to some of our stiffer lawn grasses. And for dog owners, an added bonus is that clover is not affected by dog urine!

If you feel so inspired, I encourage homeowners to experiment with overseeding some of your lawn with clover and see what happens. If you like the effect, expand the area the following year. Perhaps this could be the beginning of less nitrogen use in landscapes across our county.

I'd love to hear about your experiences with this! Send photos and details to terraf@ufl.edu.

References: White Clover: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/AA198>



White clover (*Trifolium repens*).

Preserving Herbs by Air Drying

Pat Ludwig, Jane Palmer, Linda Mundy, and Pam Hutcherson
Master Gardener Volunteers
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

Gardeners who are successful in producing a healthy herb crop can easily dry these herbs to preserve them for later use. You can often preserve not only the leaves, but the flowers, stems, and seeds.

To avoid the more bitter flavor of flowering herbs, herbs should be harvested just before the flowers first open. When harvesting your herbs, use scissors to cut the stems just above a leaf or pair of leaves and leave 4 to 6 inches of stem. Consider harvesting your herbs mid-morning, after the morning dew has dissipated. Seeds should be harvested when mature. This will help with their preservation.

Preparation is key to successful herb preservation. You will need to remove imperfect leaves or stems and inspect the plants for insects. Inspection is also required for mature seeds that you plan to dry. All stems, leaves, and seeds should be rinsed with water and dried, either by patting them after the rinse with a paper towel or using a salad spinner to remove moisture. Throughout any drying process, the focus should be on starting with as little moisture as possible and making sure the dried leaves, stems and seeds are thoroughly dried to avoid mold development.

There are several methods that can be used for herb drying: air-drying, oven-drying, microwave drying or dehydrator-drying. Sun-drying in Northeast Florida is **not** recommended because high humidity prevents the quick removal of moisture which negatively impacts your herbs color and flavor. Oven-drying too has its limitations. To be successful with air drying, avoid dust, humidity, and poor air circulation. An easy way to air-dry herbs such as sage or thyme is to tie the stems in a bundle (you can use a rubber band) and hang them in a dry area. Mint can be dried using this method as well. It is a good idea to hang the cluster of drying herbs away from humidity and dust. Consider covering them with a small paper bag to help keep the dust away.

Herbs with leaves can also be placed on a food safe screen or sheets of paper towels to dry. Keep the leaves on the stem while drying and remove the leaves after they are thoroughly dried. As many as

five layers of herbs and paper towels can be used but as the paper towels absorb the moisture, they should be exchanged with dry paper towels.

Once your herbs have dried, you can store them in airtight containers in a cool, dry, dark area away from moisture. Most dried herbs can keep well for up to one year. If you can, consider storing herbs whole as the herb will hold its oil and retain its flavor longer. You can also store dried herbs in the refrigerator or freezer. When removing them from cold storage, be careful that condensation doesn't form, and your herbs inadvertently absorb moisture.

Adding dried herbs to a dish is a wonderful way to add flavor to any meal while lowering sodium or salt. Remember that dried herbs and seeds are more powerful in flavor than fresh herbs, generally 3-4 times stronger than fresh herbs. When substituting dried herbs for fresh herbs, a general rule of thumb is to use less dried herbs, about 1/4 to 1/3 the ratio compared to fresh herbs.

Looking for more information on preserving your herbs and herb gardening? Please refer to UF/IFAS publications. And feel free to spice up your meals with herbs carefully dried from your own garden!



Frost and Freeze Prevention Tips

Karen Doyle,
Master Gardener Volunteer
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

You know the old adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."? Well it couldn't be more true when it come to preventing frost and freeze damage to our gardens & landscape.

We live in northern Florida, where we are fortunate to have lovely, warm-ish winters most of the time, but there is always the chance of a cold snap severe enough to damage our plants. It just happen this past Christmas and boy did it get cold! The damage to landscapes can still be seen far and wide.

On the positive side of things, we usually have plenty of advance warning and time to take precautions to protect our most vulnerable vegetation.

Now when we say protection, even with your best efforts, it doesn't mean you will have zero damage in a "hard freeze" (28 degrees and lower for several consecutive hours). But you may be able to save your some of your most tender plants from dying by taking a few simple steps.

1. Bring inside any plants that are in containers that you can manage. Trade some car space in the garage for your plants.
2. For plants that cannot be moved, cover them with frost cloths all the way to the ground. You can buy these online or find them in garden centers. Be sure to secure them to the ground with rocks and/or landscape staples (6" long ones are best). There are all kinds of clever designs, shapes and sizes of frost cloths. It takes a little planning to get the right sizes (width & lengths) and to get adequate supplies in advance.

Tips:

1. Get your supplies ahead of time, they tend to sell out quick locally when there is a freeze warning.
2. Water the soil deeply around trees and shrubs before a freeze. Do NOT get the leaves wet, only the soil.
3. Mulch well (2-4 inches) around trees & shrubs. Be sure not to let the mulch touch the trunks.
4. Do NOT use plastic to cover your plants. It does not provide adequate insulation.
5. When using frost cloths, note that where the cloth touches the plant, it is a possible area where you may see some cold damage on the tips, but usually the plant will survive.



When properly covering trees in your landscapes, make ghosts not lollipops. Radiant heat from the ground will get trapped under the ghost, helping keep your tree warmer. Photo courtesy of Molly Jameson, UF/IFAS Extension Leon County

Frostbitten Plants: Put Away the Pruners

Patty Plourde
Master Gardener Volunteers
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

Despite our best attempts to protect our plants from freezing temperatures, plants that are not adapted to cold weather risk dying. Plants are damaged when ice crystals form on the plant cells. As these crystals expand, cell walls rupture and prevent the plants from maintaining shape. (Carter, 2014) When freezing temperatures hit, plants may exhibit damaged foliage that appear wilted and drooping. Within a short period of time, plant leaves will darken and turn black. Flowers and buds may die, blacken, and drop to the ground. Damaged flowers will not develop into fruit.

So, what are gardeners to do when their plants succumb to frostbite?

1. The first thing to do after a freeze is check the soil around your plants. Even wilted damaged plants need water if the soil has dried out. Watering the area can help defrost the soil and provide your plants with moisture.
2. Don't prune cold-damaged plants right away. The dead foliage looks bad, but it will help protect plants from further injury. To be certain where to prune, wait until plants begin to sprout new growth. Pruning should be postponed until cold temperatures are no longer expected and new growth begins to appear on the plant. The reason for this is to make sure that live stems, which appear dead from losing leaves, are not mistakenly removed from the plant.
3. While it may seem that a little fertilizer may help to speed up plant recovery, hold off.

Fertilizing too early could encourage new growth before cold weather has gone. It's best to wait until spring to begin fertilizing. Once the danger of frost has passed, an application of fertilizer can help promote new growth.

4. Additional mulch can be added to help normalize soil temperature, hold in moisture, and supply nutrients.

In time warm weather will return and once again our gardens will flourish and bring joy to our hearts!



References: Carson, Roy. Treating Damaged Plants, Cold Damage Plant Care, UF IFAS Extension, January 20, 2014. Cold Damaged Plant Care | Gardening in the Panhandle (ufl.edu)

Dickert, George M.. District Extension Director, Greenville, Clemson University. Winter Damage, Clemson Cooperative Extension, January 7, 2019: Winter Damage | Home & Garden Information Center (clemson.edu)

Treating Cold – Damaged Plants. UF IFAS Gardening Solutions: gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/ca

A Garden that Speaks for Itself

**Dianne Battle,
Master Gardener Volunteer,
UF/IFAS Extension SJC**

This winter has been a hardship for our landscapes and gardens. Plants that stayed healthy last winter are now brown and dry. That dead foliage is still useful providing protection for dormant plants and for birds and other wildlife. Alpine Groves Native Plant Butterfly Garden is in the same situation. Firebush, porter weed, and spiderwort that were vital and green last winter, have only dead leaves and branches. It's hard to imagine them vibrant and filled with birds, bees and butterflies. But native plants are resilient. They will leaf out, and the seeds of annuals will sprout, drawing the creatures that give us so much pleasure, dancing above the blossoms.

In the meantime, the garden's "caretakers," St. Johns County Master Gardeners and the Garden Club of Switzerland, are starting a project that should make your experience in the garden more enjoyable and informative. All of the plants in this garden have value to pollinators, but few of them are identified with signage. Nor are the pollinators they serve indicated. Thanks to a grant from National Garden Clubs, Inc. we now have a system to label our plants, and to provide a scannable QR code to look them up at the University of Florida or the Florida Native Plant Society's website. All of the plants and seeds from our garden were obtained from native plant nurseries nearby or less than 2 hours drive away. Once you find a plant you'd like for your own garden, we can help you locate a nursery that sells it.

In addition to signage for the plants, the County Parks and Planning Department will be installing a kiosk with a poster showing Florida's Butterfly Caterpillars and their Host Plants from the Florida

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Once you've identified a plant from our signage, you can refer to the kiosk to find out what butterflies use it for nectar or to feed their caterpillars. The poster is no longer available, but the St. Johns County Library has the information in book form. Look for the book titled, "Florida Butterfly Caterpillars and Their Host Plants," by Marc C. Minno from the University of Florida Press.

Once the system is in place, we'd appreciate your feedback. If you take a picture of a butterfly or plant in our garden, we'd be happy to feature it on our garden club website, www.switzerlandgc.org.



Sow Native Plants

Dianne Battle,
Master Gardener Volunteer,
UF/IFAS Extension SJC

Successful native plant species have been consistently germinating without human intervention for centuries.

Native plant seeds are, under the right environmental conditions, self-germinating. Most seeds, whether they are

native or cultivated, have a basic structure. The outer coat protects the dormant embryo, and a food supply is available to sustain the embryo until conditions are favorable for germination. In the case of native plants, it may take months or years before the seed germinates.

Commercially produced seeds are often pre-treated: inoculated with microbes to increase viability, coated with fertilizer, water retainer, or pesticides. They may be genetically modified (GMO) to provide the plants with resistance to certain herbicides that kill pests of the plant. Plants grown for food production are cultivated and processed for high yields and consistent output. Given the right inputs (water, sun, soil amendments), crop yields are impressive.



Many gardeners are more interested in planting natives than ever. For the best outcomes whichever type of plant, you are growing, find out what you need to do to ensure consistent germination rates. For commercial seeds, read the back of the seed package for germination times and when to

begin propagation. For natives, research the plant's germination requirements through UF/IFAS extension or Florida Native Plant Society. You might need to scarify the seed coat to help the embryo sprout more quickly. Native scarlet hibiscus (*hibiscus coccineus*) is one example of a seed that benefits from scarification. A light abrasion with fine sandpaper or a nail file should work. Soaking in warm water or providing an acid bath are options for more experienced growers. Some species require their seeds to be cold stratified; that is, to be subjected to colder temperatures for several weeks before being planted. Or you could do what many wildflower planters do: let the seeds germinate naturally and see what happens.

The Everblooming Wax Begonia

Shirley Barber,
Master Gardener Volunteer,
UF/IFAS Extension SJC



You are the midst of rebuilding your flower beds and find you need a touch or swath of color to make the display come alive. It is so easy to run by the plant nursery or big box store to pick up the go-to popular wax Begonia to fulfill that need. However, is it possible to grow some remarkable varieties at home with a little fore thought and planning? Explore new varieties and order seeds so you can grow that remarkable presentation,

knowing you have the latest evaluated varieties from the plant breeders and avoid your trip to the plant nursery. Check out your award-winning options by researching the All America Selection (AAS) Winners at <https://all-americaselections.org/winners/>. Two recent winners earning their space in the AAS gardens in the Botanical Gardens at St. Johns County Extension Center are the new wax begonia introductions: Viking™ XL Red on Chocolate F1 and Viking™ Explorer Rose on Green F1.

Both varieties sport healthy shiny leaves, heavy flower production and tolerance of heat and humidity; perfect for our weather conditions on the First Coast. Viking™ Explorer Rose has beautiful rose flowers on glossy green foliage and a trailing habit that will grow well in containers or flower beds. Viking™ XL Red on Chocolate features brilliant red blooms held high above dark foliage presenting a striking contrast.

Wax begonias are easy to grow from seed and require some patience and light since the seeds take time to germinate and grow slowly as small seedlings, but take off when they pass the “true leaf” stage. Seeds for these varieties can be found from a multitude of online sources. As with all begonias, avoid excess irrigation for the plants will surely melt away in wet conditions. Also, don’t install your plants too deep giving plants plenty of room for air circulation and growth. It is said that begonias will grow in full sun; however, wax begonias will flourish and thrive in part sun or shade out of hot direct sun. The dark leaf begonias will do better in the sunny locations.

Check out the AAS flower and vegetable displays at the Botanical Gardens at St. Johns County Extension Center where you will see flowers and vegetables co-mingling to create exciting and colorful options to try in your gardens.