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July—September 2007

Contact us at: (321) 697-3000
(321) 697-3010 FAX

Jennifer L. Welshans, Horticulture Agent
Newsletter Editor: Barbara Shuman, Master Gardener
Ass’t Editor: Donn Barclay, Master Gardener

Heritage Park
Approx. 1 mi. W of Tpk. Exit 244 on 192
# Extension Calendar of Events

Registration is required for all classes – call 321-697-3015 unless other registration is provided.

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>July 9, 2007</td>
<td>7 p.m.</td>
<td>ReLeaf Osceola – Free Tree Program</td>
<td>Extension Services, Osceola Heritage Park</td>
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<td>July 11, 2007</td>
<td>10 a.m. – noon</td>
<td>Low Maintenance Landscapes</td>
<td>Extension Services, Osceola Heritage Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 11, 2007</td>
<td>4 p.m.-5 p.m.</td>
<td>Africanized Honey Bees</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 14, 2007</td>
<td>9 a.m. – noon</td>
<td>Low Maintenance Landscapes</td>
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<td>July 18, 2007</td>
<td>6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Homeowner Pruning Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 23, 2007</td>
<td>11 a.m.</td>
<td>ReLeaf Osceola – Free Tree Program</td>
<td>Extension Services, Osceola Heritage Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 27, 2007</td>
<td>11 a.m.-noon</td>
<td>Africanized Honey Bees</td>
<td>Extension Services, Osceola Heritage Park</td>
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<td>July 31, 2007</td>
<td>7 p.m.</td>
<td>ReLeaf Osceola – Free Tree Program</td>
<td>Extension Services, Osceola Heritage Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 2, 2007</td>
<td>10 a.m. – noon</td>
<td>Low Maintenance Landscapes</td>
<td>Poinciana Library</td>
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<td>August 4, 2007</td>
<td>9 a.m. – noon</td>
<td>Low Maintenance Landscapes</td>
<td>Poinciana Library</td>
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<td>August 9, 2007</td>
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<td>ReLeaf Osceola – Free Tree Program</td>
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<td>ReLeaf Osceola – Free Tree Program</td>
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<td>August 21, 2007</td>
<td>7 p.m.</td>
<td>ReLeaf Osceola – Free Tree Program</td>
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<td>August 23, 2007</td>
<td>6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Homeowner Pruning Workshop</td>
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<td>August 24, 2007</td>
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<td>Homeowner Pruning Workshop</td>
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<td>Fall Landscaping</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 11, 2007</td>
<td>6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Homeowner Pruning Workshop</td>
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<td>September 15, 2007</td>
<td>9 a.m. – noon</td>
<td>Fall Landscaping</td>
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Register online at [www.tohowater.com](http://www.tohowater.com) or call 407-518-2578.
What is it that makes gardening fun? It's certainly not the fire ants, biting flies, dirt or heat. To me it is not only the beautiful flowers, but also the wildlife I see while out there working.

Several years ago, while living in a different area of the Southeast, I purchased my first butterfly bush (buddleia officinalis). To my amazement, butterflies appeared from nowhere as soon as I set the new plant down on the driveway.

At my present location, I decided to go with about 12 plumbagos to start. Once again I was amazed as butterflies quickly began fluttering around the new plants.

Since I have no irrigation system, and we seem to always be having a drought, I have plenty of time to watch the butterflies when I water things. One morning I noticed something darting in and out of the stream of water from the hose. Afraid of hurting whatever it was, I changed the position of the water hose. I soon realized that the little creature was a hummingbird and that it wanted to be in the water.

At this point I decided to remain as still as possible so I could watch. Within seconds, there was a squadron of hummingbirds flying in a line, making a figure 8 pattern back and forth through the water. The ruby throats of the male birds flashed brightly in the brilliant sunlight. After several minutes of this, they flew back into an oak tree, where they have a nest.

Lately the hummingbirds seem to spend most of their time on the 8' hibiscus plants, making their faint squeaking noises as they drink nectar. They eat small insects as well. Some sources suggest that people in Florida may have less success with hummingbird feeders than people in the North do. They attribute this to an abundance of natural food here, which the birds may prefer. For those who wish to attract hummingbirds, the following plants may help: firebush, red powderpuff, pentas, golden dewdrop, hibiscus, shrimp plant, firespike, and turk’s cap. Annuals such as impatiens and petunias may also attract a few.

There are so many more rewards of this kind from doing yardwork that one could go on and on. However, for now I will end with the story of the wild turkeys staring at me as I crouched down in the front thicket, trimming off dead sticks and fronds. As I rooted around in that dense vegetation, scarcely able to move, the turkeys calmly strolled up and down the driveway where there were no obstacles.
The past four articles about Old Garden Roses (OGR) were about the history and some interesting stories surrounding some of them. “Classes” of roses was mentioned. So what are classes?

Roses, like all plants, are grouped according to growth habit and performance. While all roses belong to the genus or family known as *Rosa*, there are many species or varieties within the family. The species of OGR that we are interested in for FL are those that have adapted themselves to hot climates like ours. The Hardiness Zone Map of the US shows us that central FL is in Zone 9b which means that plants here will tolerate a minimum temp. of 30 degrees F. This is important to know when purchasing plants or wanting to bring plants from up north to plant here. Plants designated for colder climates like Zone 1 to 7 may not thrive here. Roses for colder climates need a cold dormant period to set blooms and to flourish so they will not be included in this series. The roses for here will be those that can be grown in zones 6 to 9.

The classes of OGR for our FL climate are: SPECIES, CHINA, NOISETTE, BOURBON, TEA, POLYANTHA, and FOUND.

The Species Class roses are those found in the wild and were the earliest roses to appear on the planet centuries ago. Since they have had to adapt to different climates throughout time they have become very diverse. It may be hard to identify a Species rose since it may be a climber or shrub, fragrant or non-fragrant, repeat bloomer or once bloomer. They all are extremely good at resisting disease, grow vigorously, and perform well in poor soil with little or no care. Some examples of this class are:

*Rosa moschata* or Musk Rose 1540 (date of introduction into commerce) zone 6/ 4-6 ft. high/ 3-4ft. wide/ very fragrant/ white/ repeat bloomer.

*Rosa laevigata* or Cherokee Rose 1759 zone 7/ 5-10 ft. high/ over 15ft. high. climber/fragrant/white/ once bloomer.

*Rosa banksiae* or Lady Banks 1807 zone 8/15-20 ft. climber/very fragrant/white/yellow/once bloomer.

*Rosa roxburghii* or Chestnut Rose 1814 zone 6/5 to 7 ft. high/4 to 5 ft. wide/slightly fragrant/ medium pink/slightly repeat bloomer.

*Rosa palustris scandens* or Swamp Rose 1824 this is a North American native that can be found in moist swampy areas from MN to FL since it tolerates extreme cold and extreme heat. Zone 4/4 to 6 ft. high/4 to 6 ft. wide/slightly fragrant/medium pink/once blooming/double blooms.

*Fortuniana* 1850 this is a natural hybrid of the Cherokee and Lady Banks. It is extremely disease resistant and thrives in poor sandy soils; therefore, it is used as root stock for other roses grown in FL. Zone 7/20ft. or more/climber/very fragrant/white/once blooming

In the next issue of Roots & Shoots the China class of Old Garden Roses will be presented.

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**NEW MASTER GARDENER TRAINING**

By Jennifer Welshans, UF/IFAS Extension Agent

Do you want to learn more about gardening? Do you find yourself sharing your gardening knowledge with others, and do you enjoy meeting new people with similar interests? Are you looking for an opportunity to volunteer in the community? Are you willing to participate in a University of Florida training program? If you said “yes” to any of these questions, then the Osceola County Master Gardener program may be for you.

The rapid growth in many areas of the United States, coupled with increased interest in the environment and home gardening, have prompted ever-increasing numbers of homeowner questions to County Extension Service agents. Many of these questions are seasonal in nature and are relatively easily answered, assuming that one has basic horticultural training and experience.

In 1972, an innovative Extension Service agent in the state of Washington reasoned that well-trained volunteers could respond to many of the everyday homeowner questions, freeing him and his colleagues for more technical and difficult problems. Volunteers, such as extension homemakers and 4-H leaders, had always been a part of the Extension Service but never before in the area of homeowner horticulture. The extension agent selected, trained, and certified volunteers as “Master Gardeners.” They soon succeeded in meeting his desired objectives - in fact they exceeded his expectations. And so, the Master Gardener Program began.

(Continued on page 5)
Master Gardener volunteers in Osceola County have been involved in a variety of activities helping youth and adults in our county learn about horticulture. They've also put a lot of work into creating our two demonstration gardens, landscape and edible, located in the Osceola Heritage Park complex. These gardens show county residents actual gardening techniques that can be used at home. In addition, Master Gardeners can be found at the Osceola County Extension Office Plant Clinic to help answer the plant care questions of county residents every weekday. Since 1981, over 300 Osceola County Master Gardeners have been certified, providing over 83,000 hours of service to more than 75,000 local residents.

Gardening in Central Florida is like nowhere else and can be very frustrating for a veteran gardener who learned gardening in another part of the country. Understanding our growing seasons and knowing what plants grow well here can be very non-intuitive. The Osceola County Master Gardener program is designed to help train volunteers the proper horticultural practices for Florida in order to pass this gardening knowledge on to others.

Extension agents and specialists from the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Science (UF/IFAS) provide the training for the Master Gardener volunteers. Master Gardeners receive over 60 hours of training during a 3-month period. Classes are held on a variety of gardening topics, including citrus, pest management, and lawn care. Through field trips, demonstrations, and activities, class participants learn about soils, insects, plant diseases, weeds, efficient irrigation, attracting wildlife, natural ecosystems, and native plants and invasives.

Upon completion of the training program and a comprehensive exam, participants agree to provide at least 75 hours of service back to the Osceola County Extension and the Master Gardener program during the first year to help local citizens reduce their impact on the environment while having attractive and functional landscapes.

After the initial year, Master Gardener volunteers agree to provide 35 hours of volunteer service along with 10 hours of continuing education through field trips, special programs, and classes.

In this way, the Osceola County Master Gardeners serve as volunteers for the UF/IFAS Osceola County Extension Service. Many volunteers renew their contracts year after year and continue to be active well beyond their original commitment. In fact, one volunteer is still active in this, her 26th year!

Classes for the new crop of Master Gardeners will begin in September 19th and continue until mid-December. Classes are held once a week from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The cost for the program is still to be determined, however it will just cover the cost of books, materials, and field trips.

Since 1981, over 300 Osceola County Master Gardeners have been certified, providing over 83,000 hours of service to more than 75,000 local residents.

If the gardening training sounds interesting, but you cannot commit to the volunteer hours, we are also offering a similar program called the "Osceola County Great Gardeners," which is a shorter educational program that does not provide the volunteer opportunities.

For a Master Gardener or Great Gardener application, copy the form on this page or contact our office by August 1st, 2007. The class sizes are limited, so don’t delay. Call us at (321) 697-3000 or email your name, address, and phone number to jwel2@osceola.org, specifying which program, Master or Great Gardener, interests you in the “Subject:" line.
Tool Tales

Note: Early this spring, Barbara Shuman, our editor, put forth the call for Master Gardeners to send in accounts of their encounters with tools: favorites, nightmares, or just reminiscences. How this was interpreted varied wildly, as you can see below. We hope you enjoy the variety, and at the very least, maybe pick up a new idea or inspiration.

Experience Teaches the Basics
By Sandy Webb, Master Gardener (2005)

I used to think nothing could be done in any garden without a digging bar: a heavy six foot hexagonal iron bar with a point on one end and a slotted screwdriver on the other, a huge pry bar. That was in northern Virginia. That was work I had previously done with a shovel and a mattock or a pick. What a great thing that digging bar was! Just when I figured out what to use, we moved to the land of citrus and strawberries.

Here in Florida, shoveling is easier by far. It's that runner grass that grows eight inches under the mulch and everywhere else that is killing me. Glyphosate kills the tops, but the runners continue like they are headed to Madagascar. Here in Florida, the best garden tool is a garden fork for prying that stuff loose. The weasel won't weed it; string trimmers don't trim it and since the worst part is underground, just trying to predict where it is calls for a drink. Back to the garden fork... the best kind has a wooden handle but even that won't pry bamboo out of the ground, whether the ground is wet or dry. A digging bar won't work either. A shovel won't even touch the stuff.

The second best tool is a lawn chair with a drink holder. But wait! There's more! An umbrella would be nice. A chair with an umbrella and a drink holder, now THERE'S a garden tool I can go for! Right NOW!

Okay, I admit it IS hot here, but no hotter than northern Virginia. We just have it LONGER here. Work outside for an hour, sit in the shade, and drink iced tea for an hour. Alternating isn't a bad idea, even if it does take a bit longer. We do have a breeze here (most of the time, in fact).

The third best garden tool is a good kneeling pad, so those grass roots can be ripped out of the earth, by someone else. Fire ants own my yard, so I have to be VERY, VERY careful.

Back to the garden fork... for prying all kinds of roots loose. It doesn't take the place of a good manure fork. You may need one of those too, for mulch.

Favorite Garden Tool
by Rita Oaks (2005)

Check out a “Stable Fork” available at your local feed store or Tractor Supply. It serves a dual purpose when working with leaves, mulch, etc. You can flip it upside-down for raking, right side up for scooping to deposit in container.

Because it has slanted sides on each side of the fork it enables you to pick up large amounts easily.

It is made of plastic which is a plus. I would never go back to a conventional rake.

I have purchased both the large and small style. I find the large works best for leaves, while the small works best for mulch, which is considerably heavier.

Check out the internet for more details.

Keep your garden tools clean and rust free by keeping a bucket of sand handy. Brush off excess soil, then plunge your tool into the sand. The sand alone will scrub your tool clean. You can add a bottle of motor oil (used is OK) to your bucket of sand to lubricate and protect your tool.
Water! We need it! Don’t we?

By Pat Lamond, Master Gardener (2000)

“Water is the best of drinks when drunk in the best of spirits.” My father gave me this advice a long time ago, and though it was meant to be humorous at the time, it is beginning to strike home these days. As this is being written, Florida is in the midst of the longest and deepest drought since the government started keeping records over 100 years ago.

Of all the chemicals that we take into our body, water has to be the most important. Let’s face it, 70% of our body is water, and we need that amount just to stay healthy. We know when that figure changes. On a hot day outside, we have to replace any removed by sweat or perspiration, and use it for lubrication when we eat. Otherwise we start to feel the effects of dehydration, leading to confusion, dizziness and weakness.

So how do we relate this to our garden and houseplants. In many cases plants are more adaptable to changes in water levels than are humans. They, in most cases, have been here a lot longer than we have, and have learned to adjust accordingly. Michael J. Holsinger, Horticulture Agent in Sarasota County, discusses drought-tolerant plants that are available for the landscape in his article “Tough Times, Tough Plants. (It is available at http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/waterres/drought/articles/tough-plants.htm.) A variety of plants are covered in this article, eg. shade trees, shrubs, groundcovers, perennials and annuals, and fruits. There are more articles and brochures regarding drought-tolerant plants in the Plant Clinic at the Extension Office.

As I see it, water is the most precious natural commodity that we have. While two-thirds of the globe is covered with water, less than 1% is potable, fresh water. Here in Florida, we are getting to the point of having to tap rivers, just to sustain the growth that is expected in the next 10 - 15 years. The aquifers are being drained at a rate that cannot be replenished. It took thousands of years to establish them, and if we continue at the current rate, we can expect seawater to start migrating into them, requiring more processing, and therefore increased costs.

A salt water desalinization plant is being built in Tampa to help sustain the current development growth. We are currently paying 0.3¢ per gallon for our water in Saint Cloud. Desalinized water could cost as high as 12¢ per gallon, about the same as I once paid in the British Virgin Islands. There are two more desalinization plants projected, one in Jacksonville, and another near Miami.

Sooner or later, water will compete with gasoline in pricing. Already bottled water is more expensive than gasoline, but we buy it like there is no tomorrow. Instead of buying bottled water, buy a plastic flask, half fill it with water from the tap, and freeze it. Then when ready to use, add water, and wrap it with an old sock. You will have cool water for the rest of the day. We use this when we go hiking, or on Eleanor Forste’s Woods Walks (see Extension Calendar on page 2). Incidentally, this technique will also reduce the plastic waste clogging our landfills.

Here in Florida, we have a mindset regarding the availability of water. We think it will never run out. Unfortunately, Mother Nature has her own agenda, and when she is in the mood, will open or close the faucet to her taste. Hence we have to conserve any way we can. Whether we use recycled water for irrigation, drought-tolerant native plants, or turf needing minimal irrigation, it is our responsibility to treat water with the respect it deserves.

(Ed. Note: For another strategy to reduce water use, see “The Plant Doctor” on p. 7)

Good Things Can be Turned into Smaller Pieces

By Donn Barclay, Master Gardener (2006)

“The older the boys, the bigger the toys.” The first time I heard that old chestnut I laughed, made a wry face, and thought to myself, “Not to worry; not my style.”

Many years later, and after four years of searching, I had finally found a home in Osceola county with room to garden, lots of trees, more lawn than I wanted to mow, and far enough off the beaten track that I only occasionally hear the sound of passing cars. I had most of the basic yard tools after nearly twenty years of homeowner weekends in Orlando, but my heart beat a bit faster as I thought about what new toys/tools I would need to manage my new, much larger yard.

(Continued on page 8)
A week before the closing I wandered through Lowe’s, my new credit card in my pocket and my mouth dry as I looked over the rows of yard-care machines. A riding mower was a no-brainer, but at the end of one row was a squat, oddly shaped machine that took me back twenty-five years to the days spent with my Upstate NY neighbor grinding branches, twigs and leaves; clearing underbrush around my dilapidated shack of a house; and learning from this eighty-five year old friend about organic gardening, mulching, conserving resources, canning, freezing, and the wondrous taste of home-grown foods and herbs.

The great tools are the ones that we can do without, but which we eagerly choose not to. When they delivered the mower and the chipper/shredder ten days later I already had a pile of branches ready to feed the shredder. Since then I spend many spring days raking, then shredding, huge piles of live oak leaves to make somewhat smaller, but still large, piles of fine mulch for whatever use I can find. Much of it, of course, goes into the compost pile to turn itself into rich, organic material to amend the fine sand that in Florida passes for “dirt.” It’s nice to visit the big-box store for needed items, and to watch others load bag after bag of mulch into their car, knowing that year after year I can make all the mulch that I actually need while recycling nature’s nutrients—all thanks to my long-ago neighbor Charlie’s lessons and the relatively small investment I made four years ago in that one toy-like tool.

(Continued from page 7)
From the Plant Doctor
By Peter Matt, Master Gardener (2004)

**Question:** I’ve decided to use deciduous trees on the east-facing side of my house but I don’t know the difference between a slow grower and a fast grower.

**Answer:** Good planning, putting the deciduous trees on the sunrise side of your house. During the summer months you’ll benefit from the leaves blocking out the sun and its heat, and in the winter, after the leaves drop, you’ll benefit from the sun warming your house as the day begins.

To answer your question, though, we actually categorize trees into three rates of growth. A slow grower means less than 12 inches per year, a medium grower is 13 – 24 inches per year, and your fast growers are 25 inches or more per year.

Keep in mind that, as in all of nature, there are exceptions to the rules—my *Liquidambar styraciflua* shot up 28 inches between February and May.

**Question:** We’re long time Osceola County residents and during that time we’ve enjoyed some delicious backyard citrus, however for the past several years two of our orange trees’ fruit has been exceptionally small and dry. . . why?

**Answer:** In your letter you indicated you’ve had a few of your trees for close to four decades. Though there are documented cases of 80 year old orange trees producing fruit, it is not common.

I’m sure they have plenty of sentimental value and hold a lot of wonderful memories but if you decide to replace them try to locate a local wood carver to give the wood to. In the meantime stop by the Extension Services Bldg. and pick up publications HS-867 “Citrus Culture in the Home Landscape” and HS-85 “Growing Citrus in the Dooryard.” They are packed with the latest and greatest information about Florida citrus.

**Question:** I was watering my gardens the other evening and after about two hours of hose dragging and sprinkler moving I couldn’t help but notice my neighbor’s similarly sized urban landscape is green and verdant. His spring annuals were in their glory, his summer bloomers were coming on strong, and I’ve never seen him watering. Oh yeah, he seemed to be gloating as he enjoyed his second gin and tonic.

**Answer:** I once had a plant pathology professor who professed that some of his most difficult plant problems were solved with a little juniper juice, also known as gin.

It appears your neighbor solved the problem with a drip or micro irrigation system. It’s basically a hose with holes punched in it or a series of very small nozzles usually placed next to the plant. Once installed you can cover it with a few inches of mulch and when the system is turned on, either manually or automatically, your gardens are watered.

There are three big advantages to this system. First off, water is getting directly to your plants and down to their root systems. Secondly, you are decreasing the amount of water used in areas that do not require it, as well as reducing the amount of water lost to evaporation. Finally, by keeping the water off your foliage you are lowering the chance of your plant developing bacterial or fungal problems.

With the time saved from hose dragging and sprinkler moving you may want to plant a Key Lime tree and make a new friend in your neighbor.

Next month the Plant Doctor solves the mystery of Marty’s Magnificent Margaritas.
CENTRAL FLORIDA
GARDENING CALENDAR
JULY - SEPTEMBER PLANTING GUIDE

ANNUALS

Few annuals can tolerate the summer heat and frequent rain showers. In July plant: Celosia, Coleus, Crossandra, Exacum, Hollyhock, Impatiens, Kalanchoe, Marigold, Nicotiana, Ornamental Pepper, Periwinkle, Portulaca, and Salvia.

Refresh your garden with summer color in August by planting Coleus, Kalanchoe, Marigolds, and Salvia.

If you desire cold hardy plants for winter, AUGUST is the time to sow seeds of the following in a germinating container: Ornamental Cabbage, Alyssum, Calendula, Pansy, Statice, Carnation, Petunia, Snapdragon, and Shasta Daisy. When sowing seeds in a germinating container, the growing medium should never be allowed to dry. The soil mix should be moist but not excessively wet. Certain seeds require light in order to germinate. Transplant seedlings to small pots as soon as the first true leaves appear.

In September, plant Alternanthera, Blue Daze, Exacum (Persian Violet), Foxglove, Kalanchoe, and Wax Begonia. All are heat tolerant and will be colorful until first frost, which may be late November.

PERENNIALS AND BULBS

Bulbs for July and August planting include: African Iris, Aztec Lily, Butterfly Lily, Crinum, Gladiolus, Iris, Kaffir Lily, Society Garlic, Spider Lily, and Walking Iris.

Pentas, Verbena and Blue Daze will bloom until frost and usually sprout from the roots in the spring.

Additional bulbs for September planting include Elephant Ear, Amaryllis, Calla, Watsonia, Lilium, Shell Ginger, Zephyr Lily, and Pineapple Lily. Gladiolus will bloom three months after planting.

FRUIT

Fruits grown in containers can be planted year around. Set out strawberry plants in the landscape, garden or containers for winter and spring crops.

Harvest any oranges from last year's crop, which may still be on the tree. Holding fruit on the tree this long will result in dry and tasteless fruit. Bears lemon, Persian lime and Key limes are harvested during the summer. All are very cold sensitive so take special precautions.

Summer fruit harvest includes avocado, figs, guava, mango, pears, persimmon, and pomegranate. Bunch grapes usually ripen in July, while muscadine grapes are ready for harvest in August and September.

If citrus shows symptoms of greasy spot disease (black oily spots on yellowing leaves), spray with a fungicide and rake fallen leaves. Keep grass and weeds away from citrus tree trunk. Check for flaking of the bark, near the soil line and yellow leaf veins indicating "foot rot" disease of citrus.
In July, fertilize first year blackberries, peaches, pecans, chestnuts and persimmons.

Blueberries need only a small amount of fertilizer. Over fertilizing will kill the plants, so limit application to February and July.

In August, fertilize established banana, avocado and guava. Apply the third and final fertilizer for the year on established peaches, pecans, persimmons, chestnuts, and blackberries.

September is the last month of the year to fertilize. Fertilize citrus, pineapples, guavas, loquats, and mango.

VEGETABLES

July heat limits planting. Okra and southern peas are tolerant of summer conditions.

August is the beginning of our fall planting season. Plant pole beans, broccoli, celery, collards, okra, sweet corn, eggplant, onions, southern peas, peppers, pumpkin, summer squash, Swiss chard and watermelons.

In September, plant southern hybrid bulbing onions (Texas Grano, Granex, Excel) to have bulbs for spring harvest. Bulbing onions planted after December yield only green onion tops instead of bulbs. Also in September, cool and warm season plantings overlap. Plant cold sensitive crops which mature before frost: beans, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, summer squash, and tomatoes. Cold hardy vegetables include broccoli, cabbage, celery, endive, escarole, lettuce, mustard, bulbing and bunching onions, peas, radishes, rutabaga, Swiss chard, strawberries, and turnips.

If roots show swelling from nematode damage, treat soil before fall planting. A chemical free way is to solarize using free solar energy to heat sunny gardens and bake soil pests. Cover moist, prepared soil with clear plastic for at least six weeks.

Test soil pH every two to three years and adjust if necessary. It is good to make adjustments when preparing the soil for the upcoming season.

Insects and disease can be major problems in the fall garden. Summer rain and warm temperatures are ideal for disease and insects. Remove old or dead plants. Throw them away so they are not a breeding ground for pests and disease.

Peanuts planted in the spring should be ready for harvest in September.

LANDSCAPE

Prune azaleas before July 4 or you will have few flowers next spring. Do last pruning of other shrubs in September so new growth matures before first frost. Remove old flower blooms to extend flowering. Poinsettias set buds in mid-September so continue pruning poinsettias until Labor Day for best growth and flowering.

Fertilize annuals and perennials during soil preparation and then monthly. Do not fertilize new plants at planting time, wait at least a month. In September, apply fall application of fertilizer to landscape plantings. Occasionally poinsettias need another application of fertilizer in July if heavy rains follow the June application.

Check weekly for lacebugs, aphids (new growth), caterpillars, scale (variegated Ligustrum, camellias, pittosporum, holly, podocarpus, and magnolia), spider mites and whitewash. Check for powdery mildew (crape myrtle, roses, and Gerbera) and maintain frequent rose fungicide spray program during summer rains.
September is the time to root-prune plants to be moved in January or February.

Balled and burlap or bare root field dug palms can be planted during our rainy season. Be sure to purchase from a reputable individual with experience moving palms. Cold hardy landscape plants grown in containers can be planted any time of year. Hold off on planting tropicals, which will need to be protected from frost, and freezing temperatures.

LAWNS

Sow seeds or lay sod for Bahia grass, Bermuda grass and Centipede grass. Plant St. Augustine grass plugs, sprigs, or sod.

Keep mower blades sharp. Leave grass clippings on the lawn to recycle nutrients naturally.

Wait until September to apply the fall application of complete fertilizer to Bermuda, Bahia and St. Augustine grasses. Obtain green-up without applying nitrogen fertilizer by using liquid iron. If fertilizer is deemed necessary earlier in the summer, apply fertilizer containing only natural organic or slow release nitrogen to prevent insect problems.

For the most effective control of mole crickets, apply baits or sprays as soon as the pest is seen. Due to the maturity of the mole crickets later in the summer, control is more difficult.

Watch for brown thinning patches in the lawn, which could indicate chinch bugs in St. Augustine grass, or caterpillars or diseases. Diseases can be severe due to frequent afternoon showers.

The Buzz on “Killer” Bees

Jennifer Welshans, Extension Agent

It may seem like they are only found in the B-grade horror movies ("Killer Bees" in 1974 and "The Swarm" in 1978), however Africanized honeybees are real and have been verified as present in Osceola County. Preferably referred to as “Africanized honeybees” (AHB) rather than “killer” bees, these very defensive bees were first found in Florida in 1992. Within the past year, the number of colonies in Florida has increased substantially.

The Africanized honeybee is the same species as the European honeybees (EHB), which is the bee commonly used in the United States in agriculture and for honey production. The AHB differs from the EHB primarily in its behavior. The AHB defends its nest far more intensely and in greater numbers than does the EHB. Where only 5-10 European honeybees will defend their disturbed nest, thousands of Africanized honeybees respond to defend their nest. The AHB will also chase an enemy up to 300 yards. Their defensive behavior is thought to have evolved because of the many biological competitors in the bee’s native Africa. There, only the most defensive bees can survive.

In comparison, the European honeybees in the United States have been selected by beekeepers for their
manageable traits, including gentleness, reduced swarming, and high honey hoarding. As a result, the EHB is much more gentle and predictable in their behavior than the AHB, making them the ideal bee for U.S. agriculture and honey production.

The survival strategy of the Africanized honeybee is to expend energy into producing large numbers of offspring and generating many reproductive swarms. This behavior was developed due to the frequent destruction of the colonies by predators and the harsh environmental conditions in Africa. These characteristics make the AHB well suited to tropical environments.

The European honeybee’s survival strategy differs from that of the AHB; it defends its nest and swarms to a lesser extent. The EHB expends most of its energy producing and storing honey needed to survive the long winter months when resources are absent. These characteristics make the EHB well suited to temperate environments.

European honeybees need large areas or voids to build a nest so they have space for all that honey. Africanized honeybees will nest in much smaller cavities and sometimes underground. They are not even that particular where they construct their nests. Common AHB nesting sites include abandoned vehicles, empty containers, fences, lumber piles, manholes, water meters, utility infrastructures, old tires, trees, garages, outbuildings, sheds, walls, chimneys, crawl spaces under houses, and any place that has an access hole. An AHB colony was even found in a barbecue grill.

If you accidentally come in contact with an AHB colony, run! Running away is your best defense. Remember that they will defend their colonies up to 150 yards. Also, cover your head and face with your shirt and do not swat at them. Swatting will just make them angrier. You want to run inside a structure, whether it is a car or building. Of course some bees will follow, but that is better than confronting the 1,000 bees waiting for you outside. Jumping in a pool or lake will not help. The AHB, which are agitated for up to 24 hours, will wait until you emerge from the water.

“Common nesting sites include abandoned vehicles, empty containers, fences, lumber piles, manholes, water meters, utility infrastructures, old tires, trees, garages, outbuildings, sheds, walls, chimneys, crawl spaces under houses, and any place that has an access hole”

Individuals that are most at risk for AHB stings are the young, the elderly, and the handicapped. This is because they may have trouble running away from the bees. Tethered, caged, and fenced animals that cannot escape their surroundings are also at great risk. The bees will attack anything moving within their 150 yard territory.

If you notice a suspicious bee hive and believe that they may be Africanized honeybees, contact an experienced and trained pest control company to control the situation. Because of the defensive nature of the bees and possible dangerous outcomes, you do not want to handle the situation yourself. Your local University of Florida/IFAS will have a list of the local specialized pest control companies in your county. The reality is that Africanized honeybees are going to continue to spread throughout the state of Florida. UF/IFAS specialists predict that within 3-5 years they will be found in every county in Florida, so be careful and stay on the lookout for these dangerous pests.

Got a Gardening Question?
There are now three ways to contact the Plant Clinic:
1. Drop in to the Extension Office at Heritage Park, M-F 8-5 Habla Español
2. Phone in: 321-697-3000
3. Email: osmg@osceola.org
Florida Master Naturalist Program
Beginning in Sept.

The Florida Master Naturalist Program (FMNP) was developed by the University of Florida to both inform and prepare persons to share information about Florida’s natural world and environmental history. The program is appropriate for persons of all levels of knowledge including long time residents, newcomers, and seasonal visitors wanting to know more about Florida.

The program includes courses in three subject areas – Freshwater Wetlands, Coastal Systems and Upland Habitats. UF/IFAS Osceola County Extension is offering the Freshwater Wetlands component beginning October 3 and continuing for 6 sessions, through November 7, 2007. Registration deadline is September 19.

Each course consists of 40 educational contact hours and includes a combination of classroom learning, field trips, and practical experience in interpretation. Cost per course is $225. Students receive detailed course manuals and, upon successful completion, University of Florida (UF) certificates, patches, and pins denoting their accomplishment by area of expertise (e.g., Wetlands Naturalist). Master Naturalist graduates are registered in The University of Florida database of Florida Master Naturalists. The FMNP does not provide university credit toward a degree-seeking program, but teachers may receive credit for continuing education hours with approval of school administration.

Register online at http://www.masternaturalist.org and click on the “Course Offerings” link. For more information call Cindy Rutherford at 321-697-3015.

Trivia Answers
1) George Washington Carver 2) Thomas Jefferson 3) Captain Cook 4) John Bartram 5) Luther Burbank

ReLeaf Repeat
Osceola County residents who have completed the ReLeaf Osceola class by June 15th will be eligible to receive a 2nd free tree the last two weekends of July. Call (321-697-3015) for more detailed information. Only one additional tree per registered ReLeaf completer.

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