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Letter from the Editor

You may have noticed that the Extension Calendar usually on this page is missing. It is being moved to the Osceola County Solutions for your Life, a new publication from the Extension Office being sent to the residents of Osceola County.

Recently the Florida State legislature made some budgetary changes. At the county level, this has resulted in needing to cut costs to stay within allocated funds. While these changes are still being determined, what is certain is that county officials need to reduce spending every way. How does this affect us? In order to cut the amount spent on printing and postage, this will be the last issue of Roots & Shoots that will be mailed to our readers. Instead, our subscribers will be mailed the new publication, which will include selected articles from Roots & Shoots. Instead, we will now be available online, at http://osceola.ifas.ufl.edu/mg_archive.shtml.

One major advantage of this change in formats will be that we will now be able to bring you photos and illustrations, which we were never able to provide in print. To receive notification of when we are available on the internet email Cindy at crut@osceola.org with “Roots and Shoots” in the subject line of the message. Then we will be able to send you an email with a link directly to the publication and a short summary of the various articles.

We look forward to keeping you as a faithful reader as we explore new possibilities for Roots & Shoots. This is also an opportunity for you to let us know of any special features which you would like to see in the publication. Bear with us through all these changes, and we will do all we can to provide you with more and better gardening information in the coming years.

Through all these changes, the Master Gardeners are preparing for one of our most exciting Fall Plant Sales in a long time. We have renewed our goal of providing plants grown by our own Master Gardeners in their own gardens. Not only will this bring some unique plants you don’t often see in the big box stores, but since these plants are not grown in the protected environment of a hothouse, the likelihood that they will grow successfully in your garden is greatly increased.

Also for the first time, we will have melaleuca mulch available for sale. See the sidebar on page 14 for more information about this exciting addition to our sale.

If you miss the Plant Sale, stop by to say “Howdy” during Osceola Great Outdoor Days at the end of October.

Thank you for remaining a loyal Roots & Shoots reader.

Barbara Shuman
Roots & Shoots Editor

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Master Gardener
Fall Plant Sale

Old Garden Roses
Fancy Hibiscus
Annuals  Perennials
Herbs
100% Melaleuca Mulch

Master Gardeners available for advice on planting, maintenance
Friday and Saturday
October 5-6
KVLS Building
Heritage Park
Info: 321-697-3000

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During the spring and early summer, the garden is filled with the sound of singing birds. By the time the mockingbirds and catbirds quiet down, the chuck-wills-widows take over. However, by late August there is not much to be heard. Maybe it's just too hot for anything or anyone to feel like singing.

In my yard there is just one bird which continues to sing. The identity of this bird remained a mystery to me for quite some time, since it usually serenades us from a tall pine tree or a thick oak tree. While it has 3 or 4 songs in its repertoire, it most often sings the beginning of Beethoven's 5th Symphony. For lack of a better name, we began to call him the "Beethoven Bird." We imagined him to be a warbler of some sort, since the last note of his song was trilled.

Although we still could not see him closely, we eventually noticed that our bird seemed to hang out in a far corner of the front thicket a lot. I suspected that there was a nest there, and one day noticed some young birds flying around in that area. Later, while cutting out some dead fronds, I finally discovered the empty nest. It was about 2 feet above the ground in a dwarf palmetto plant. A few days later, while on the ground weeding, my husband had a chance to see the bird closely when it landed right in front of him. Shortly after this the bird landed on a fencepost in front of me.

A few days later, while on the ground weeding, my husband had a chance to see the bird closely when it landed right in front of him. Shortly after this the bird landed on a fencepost in front of me.

To this day I have never found any documentation which states that a Towhee can sing Beethoven. I have found only that a White-Breasted Wren can sing this in two other states. While I was surprised to find that my bird is not a rare one, perhaps its song is. When annoyed, the bird will call out ‘To-Wheee, To-Wheee’ to let us know that we have indeed discovered its identity.

One of the fledglings has settled down in the back woods, where it sits in a tree and practices its Beethoven for hours. While it has mastered the timing, the notes are not there, and it comes off sounding like a bird-rap song. "Squawk-squawk-squawk-squaaawwwk" can often be heard from the treetops.

Towhees spend much of their time noisily scraping the thicket floor for seeds, berries, nuts, and insects. While some sources state that they are not attracted to bird feeders, others say that they may be seen scratching on the ground underneath them. However, a birdbath may appeal to them, and they will love a natural brushy or scruffy area with a few trees. The Florida resident Towhees usually have white to pale tan eyes, while birds farther north will have red eyes.

Now that September as arrived, Beethoven is silent, but someday my garden will again be alive with the sound of all kinds of chattering birds.
ROSES: PART VI — CHINA ROSES

By Carolyn Lamond, Master Gardener

In the last installment, Species or wild roses were discussed as being the parent or the beginning gene pool for the successive types of roses we have today. These OGR were naturally pollinated by insects, rain, and wind. Later, after 1867, when genetics was better understood, breeders began artificial hybridization which brought about the modern roses known as Hybrid Teas. The classes we are discussing here are those that came down to us long before 1867. The next oldest group and nearest to the wild ones are known as the China roses.

Because this group originated in the warm climate of China, they did not need a cold dormant period, when starch is stored in the root system, in order to set blooms in the spring. Rather they were able to become ever blooming or remontant. They also have a remarkable ability to shed damaged leaves and replace them quickly without loss of vigor. These characteristics became part of their DNA, thus making them perfect for our Florida climate.

China roses have a rather loose, open shaped bloom with a fruity fragrance. They are in bloom for 3 weeks out of every 6 and the color ranges from crimson to pink to coppery orange. The bushes are quite large, ranging 6 to 7 feet tall and about as wide. They are hardy to Zone 7.

Once established, these roses can tolerate periods of drought. They require little pruning, fertilizing, and water. In other words they are carefree roses. Anyone who has been frustrated by the demands of Hybrid Tea roses should consider growing these.

Roses of this class are especially good for hedges, borders, and containers, and they provide awesome beauty in the landscape. The most popular ones are:

- **Old Blush** 1752 Zone 6/ 5-8 ft. high/ 3-6 ft. wide/ fragrant/ med. Pink/ reliable repeat bloomer.

- **LeVesuve** 1825 Zone 7/ 2-4 ft. high/ 2-4 ft. wide/ slightly fragrant/ pink blend/ reliable repeat bloomer.

- **Cramoisi Superieur** 1832 Zone 7/ 3-6 ft. high/ 3-4 ft. wide/ very fragrant/ medium red/ reliable repeat bloomer.

- **Archduke Charles** before 1837 Zone 7/ 3-5 ft. high/ 2-4 ft. wide/ fragrant/ red blend/ reliable repeat bloomer.

- **Ducher** 1869 Zone 7/ 2-4 ft. high/ 2-3 ft. wide/ fragrant/ white/ reliable repeat bloomer.

- **Mutabilis** before 1894 one 7/ 4-6 ft. high/ 3-5 ft. wide/ slightly fragrant/ yellow pink apricot blend/ reliable repeat bloomer/ known as the butterfly rose.

(Continued on page 5)
The American South is the ideal environment for the Noisette Class of OGR. Our climate is their birthplace. John Champneys of Charleston, SC raised the first Noisette by crossing the fragrant cluster-flowered \textit{R. mushata} with the \textit{remontant} Old Blush. The result was Champneys’ Pink Cluster. Champneys shared cuttings and seeds of this new hybrid with Philippe Noisette, a professional Charleston nurseryman. The influx of \textit{Tea} (a class to be discussed later) parentage in the 1830s produced even larger flowers and expanded the range of colors. The Noisettes are very fragrant and are pale shades of cream, pink, and yellow. Favorites of this class are:

- \textit{Blush Noisette} 1817 Zone 7/ 6-8 ft. high/ 3-5 ft. wide/ very fragrant/ light pink/ reliable repeat bloomer.
- \textit{Champneys’ Pink Cluster} 1811 Zone 7/ 6-8 ft. high/ 3-5 ft. wide/ very fragrant/ light pink/ reliable repeat bloomer.
- \textit{Lamarque} 1830 Zone 7/ climber 15 ft or more/ very fragrant/ white/ reliable repeat bloomer.
- \textit{Marechal Niel} 1864 Zone 8/ climber 15 ft. or more/ very fragrant/ medium yellow/ remontant.

The Bourbon roses have ancestry going back to the Chinas. A French botanist, Breon, discovered these roses growing on the Ile de Bourbon near Madagascar in 1817. He sent seeds to France and the breeders there went to work on it. Today they can be identified by being husky, vigorous shrubs with full richly colored old-fashioned cupped and often quartered blooms with lots of fragrance. They have retained the remontant trait of its China ancestry.

They tend to bloom profusely twice in the spring before the heat of summer slows them down. They then put on another show in the fall before winter in Zone 8. They do very well in the south because of their China background. Due to their Damask influence they can tolerate cold to Zone 6. These shrubs are smaller in growth which makes them ideal for containers, pillars and trellises. Some popular ones are:

- \textit{Souvenir de la Malmaison} 1843 Zone 6/ 3-4 ft. high/ 3-4 ft. wide/ very fragrant/ light pink/ remontant.
- \textit{Zephirine Drouhin} 1868 Zone 6/ climber 8ft. or more/ very fragrant/ medium pink/remontant.
- \textit{Maggie} found (no date) meaning it was discovered in Louisiana and its parentage is unknown but it is classed as a Bourbon because it looks and behaves as one. Zone 6/6-8 ft. high can be trained as a climber/ 3-5 ft wide/ very fragrant/ medium red/ remontant.

In the next \textit{Roots & Shoots} we will look at the final three classes that are appropriate for Florida growing.

Photos: \url{http://www.antiqueroseemporium.com/index.html}
QUESTIONS FROM THE OSCEOLA PLANT CLINIC

Sandi Switek, Master Gardener (2005)

With this, our final print version of Roots & Shoots, we are adding a section that will be a regular feature of our online, electronic, color version (http://osceola.ifas.ufl.edu/mg_archive.shtml). Questions in this column will be taken from inquiries to the Master Gardener Plant Clinic, particularly those which seem to have general interest. If you have any gardening questions, you can submit them by phone at 321-697-3000 or by email at oscmg@osceola.org. Of course, you are also welcome to come into the Clinic in the Extension Office in Heritage Park, M-F from 8-5: Master Gardeners are on duty from 10-2.

Question #1: My yard has been taken over by a terrible vine which has crept over every tree and shrub and has even overtaken the well. Eventually it gets these hanging potatoes on it, and seeds fly everywhere. I am about ready to give up and move out. What can I do?

Question #2: I have this dangerous thorny vine which keeps climbing up my trees. When I sprayed it with a plant killer, it wasn't even injured. Later, when I cut the top off, it grew back to its original size in no time. Do I need to buy a stick of dynamite?

Answer: Although these are two different vines, the control strategies are similar. The first vine is the Dioscorea Bulbifera, or air potato. It is a non-native invasive one. The second vine is a form of Smilax, often called catbrier or greenbrier. It is a native one which can be a pest. Both can spread by creeping stems, creeping roots, and by seeds or berries. Both store supplies of food for themselves in underground "potatoes."

The first step in your war against these vines would be to cut off all of the stems. This can at least prevent the vines from re-seeding themselves. Pulling them loose will make things look better but is not absolutely necessary. In the case of the Smilax, gloves, long sleeves, and goggles will help to protect you from the thorns.

The second step involves spraying the new sprouts which emerge, using a strong brush killer. While this step may go on for years, it is not so difficult as the first step. It just takes patience and persistence. Be sure to avoid hitting any green parts of your good plants with the spray, and of course try not to wait until the vines begin to take over again.

For those people who are really tough and wish to get quicker results, there is always the option of going out and digging up all of the underground "potatoes." In either case, it is not easy, but there is hope for those who are determined.

Question #3: My once-beautiful St. Augustine lawn is suddenly dying. It has brown areas near the driveway and also near the road. Did it burn up from the heat? My grandson says he saw some little bugs crawling around in the grass, but they are too small for me to see. Does that mean that my weed and feed stuff didn't work?

Answer: While it wouldn't be a bad idea to check out your irrigation system, it sounds like you may have chinch bugs. They are especially troublesome in late summer, and are especially bad this year. Your weed and feed product probably only contains a weed killer and not an insecticide. Look for something in the store which is labeled as a chinch bug killer. Then treat all affected areas spreading out to within at least 5' of the sick grass. This should give you control without wasting the insecticide where there are no bugs, and then having it run off into the waterways. The dead areas with no live runners should be resodded.
MORE REASONS TO BEWARE OF GLOBAL WARNING

Barbara Shuman, Master Gardener 2005

According to the National Climatic Data Center, 2006 was the sixth warmest year recorded globally. These rising temperatures, plus increased carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, are producing side effects on plant life. In the Jan 2007 issue of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, researchers at the University of California-Irvine noted that plants with short life cycles adapt more quickly to climate changes than slow growing plants. So basically, weeds will grow faster!

Also scientists at Duke and Harvard report in the same journal that poison ivy, Toxicodendron radicans, grows about three times larger when exposed to the carbon dioxide levels predicted by 2050. Not only will the plants grow more vigorously, but they will have a more potent form of urushiol, which is the compound responsible for the resulting itch. The oily substance, urushiol, is found in poison ivy, poison oak and sumac.

Note that the rule of “leaves of three, leave them be” applies to poison oak and poison ivy but sumac may have 7-13 leaves per branch. Not only can one suffer from the rash after direct contact with the plant, but also from gloves, tools, and clothes that have been exposed. Smoke from burning anything with urushiol will also trigger a reaction.

Dead plants can be harmful for up to five years. Gardeners showing a response to the irritant number about 26 million a year, while only about half as many hikers are exposed.

USDA research reports that higher carbon dioxide levels might double the amount of pollen produced by ragweed which affects allergy sufferers. This has happened over the past 4-5 years. It is predicted to continue this increase in the future.

Sources:

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Open M-F 8-5
Master Gardeners on duty, 10-2
Phone: 321-697-3000
Email: oscmg@osceola.org
Bring plant or insect samples to Plant Clinic at:
Osceola County Extension Office
Heritage Park  Kissimmee, FL
Se habla Español

Master Gardener Fall Plant Sale
Friday (9-6) and Saturday (9-3), October 5-6
KVLS Building  Heritage Park  Kissimmee, FL
Add’l Info: 321-697-3000
Water, Water Everywhere . . . Not!

Donn Barclay (Master Gardener 2006)

The Planet Earth. The Blue Planet. The Water Planet. Two-thirds of the planet’s surface is covered with water.

Comforting thoughts, until the realization dawns that less than one per cent of that water is drinkable, that the planet’s hydrosystem keeps the amount of drinkable water generally constant at less than 2% of the total, and that the population is growing every year—and all those people need water to survive. The drought of the past two years is just a hint of things to come.

Let’s bring it down to Florida. Central Florida, to be more precise. New people moving in every day, new houses going up, new developments springing up where just a year ago herds of cattle munched on the bahia and sought shade from the afternoon sun. Water Authority researchers estimate that fully half the water used residentially goes to the lawns, not the people in the homes. At least half of that is wasted on overwatering, or evaporation, or watering the street, driveway, or sidewalk.

What’s a body to do? The complexity of the problem defies one-step answers, but of the many parts of an overall solution, rethinking irrigation can take us a long way toward sensible, effective water use—without waste. What is usually considered an irrigation system is often as much of a problem as a solution: long arcs of water, snick, snick, snicking across an expanse of rich, green lawn, droplets glistening in the sunlight.

All too often, those glistening drops signal that the timing is off—if the sun is that bright it is too late in the day to water since much of that water will evaporate before helping the plants. If the system is doing double duty and also watering the flower beds, shrubs, trees, or other focused areas even more water is being wasted running through the sandy soil without ever touching a plant’s roots!

Here is where micro-irrigation can save the homeowner money on the water and the maintenance bills, provide him with better plants, and reduce the amount of wasted water significantly. What’s not to love: cheaper, better, greener!

Micro-irrigation is not a universal solution. As Hanson, Clark, and Smajstrla have noted, “Micro-irrigation systems are very suitable for irrigation of trees, shrubs, flower beds and all kinds of small, restricted areas. They are not practical for irrigation of large lawn areas, (Continued on page 9)
because water does not distribute very well in the lateral direction [sideways] in Florida’s typically sandy soils” (Hanson, Clark, and Smajstrla. “Irrigation of Lawns and Gardens”). Ideally, this is a hint to cut down on the expansive use of turf, but it also warns us to water each area of our yards appropriately.

Installing a micro-irrigation system is about a weekend’s work, but it takes some advance planning. Basically, the homeowner is going to lay out a main line of ½” PVC pipe, which is available in lengths from 50 to 500 feet at either specialty or big box stores. He is then going to tap into this line to run “spurs” to specific areas or plants that need watering, using either more ½” or smaller ¼” tubes, to which he will attach a variety of micro sprinklers, drippers, or emitters, depending upon the specific need. Most stores carry pre-designed starter kits, or you can pick up a free booklet with detailed planning instructions and a list of available tubes, pipes, attachments, timers, to use in the system design.

The reason for the variety of attachments is that, generally speaking, each plant is going to get its own water source. Some plants need more water than others, so different gadgets will get used. This way, the roots get fed without getting water on the foliage, which reduces the risk of pests and diseases.

This really is much easier than it sounds, as long as you have some idea of what you are trying to do. I installed two roughly 250’ main lines to a four-way hose bib outlet, ran them down both sides of the yard where the lawn irrigation system was never designed to reach, and added spurs to about a dozen locations on a Saturday afternoon. I put drippers on four old world rose plants, a couple mini sprayers on two small trees I had just put in, and various other emitters on different plants at various distances from the main line.

Of course, the system is never “complete.” Every time I put in a new tree, shrub, or plant I quickly calculate how much water it will need, add a spur to the main line, then put the proper device at the base of the plant to send its roots the life-giving water.

I left the main line lying on top of the ground for the first month or so, mainly to make sure it was doing its job properly. After a couple of adjustments along the way, I spent a few days burying it just below the surface—easy to get at to add new watering stations, but safe from the whirling blades of the lawn mower. Repairing a cut line is a two-minute task, but why go through the bother? I found the easiest way to bury it was just to drive a straight-edged shovel into the ground, open up a “vee,” and push the pipe down in, one shovel width at a time. All the bending was no fun, and I took a lot of breaks to stretch, but eventually the system disappeared except for the occasional, barely visible micro-sprinkler hidden among the foliage.

Before the micro system I used to haul four hoses around to different areas, used three times as much water each week, and gardening was a chore, albeit a pleasant one (usually). Now I turn one knob two or three times a week, have more than doubled the number of beds being watered, and know that all the water being used is going where it belongs—to the plants’ root systems, not into the air or running off to unplanted sections of the yard. The plants look happier than they ever have.

Sources:


All photos by Donn Barclay
From the Plant Doctor  
By Peter Matt, Master Gardener (2004)

Plant Doctor,

The backyard of our new house is as barren as Utah’s Salt Flats. My husband and I have made our tree selections based on what we see growing beautifully in our area. How do we ensure success for our purchases?

The Plant Doctor replies:

Super job on tree selection! Taking the time to see what grows locally will dramatically increase your chances of success and lead to many years of growth and enjoyment.

Now for the downside. Unfortunately most of the new neighborhoods had the beneficial top soils removed during the clearing process. Then, to add insult to injury, fill dirt was trucked in from areas unknown to bring your property up to grade.

Neither of these situations should be showstoppers and I recommend a three phase approach to your tree planting.

First off, a couple of weeks before you purchase your trees you should pre-dig the holes. A month is recommended. Dig a generous hole discarding the removed soil then throw in a shovelful of compost and a handful or two of fertilizer (6-6-6) in the bottom. Leave a small depression at the top to hold a little water and keep the soil slightly moist. If this sounds like those Native American tales of telling the Pilgrims to put a fish in each hole before they planted corn, you’ve caught the concept.

When the month is over dig out the hole and plant your tree. Make sure the trunk flare, that wider part of the trunk, is about 2 – 4 inches above the level of your yard. Refill the hole with the soil you’ve removed. As I plant I allow a hose to trickle water into the hole – this not only keeps the roots moist but helps eliminate air pockets. Finish up by making a berm around the margin of the hole. At least twice a week for the first month after planting fill the basin with water.

You’re almost finished.

Normally you would not fertilize because your trees would be receiving adequate nutrition from the residual lawn fertilizer and the decomposition of grass cuttings. However, you do not have that luxury since your entire lawn is new. On the anniversary of the planting you’ll want to fertilize again. 6-6-6 is fine. Apply one pound for each inch of trunk diameter. A pint of 6-6-6 is about a pound. Broadcast spread the fertilizer out to the drip line of your trees—that’s tree speak for get some fertilizer on the ground under all the branches.

It sounds like a lot of work, but just consider it another part of moving into a new property and remember—proper prior planning prevents poor planting.

Trivia Questions
1. What artist was inspired by a Water Garden which he designed and then painted?
2. What is the botanical name of the water lily?
3. What ancient people revered the water lily and the lotus?
4. Which royal ruler had an Amazon water lily named for her?
5. What flower did Joseph Paxton raise for the Duke of Devonshire in 1849?
CENTRAL FLORIDA
GARDENING CALENDAR
October-December PLANTING GUIDE

Planting Guide

• Set out seasonal annuals: snap dragon, Shasta daisy, foxglove, pansy and petunia plants. In November, also plant statice, carnations, Calendula and Dianthus. All are for December planting.

• Fertilize annual flowers during soil preparation and then monthly

• Plant perennials. Africa iris, African lily, Amaryllis, Anemone, Cyclamen, pineapple lily, Aztec lily, Calla, Crinum daylily, elephant ears, Gladiolus, Iris, Kaffir lily, Lilium, shell ginger, society garlic, spider lily, walking iris, Watsonia, and zephyr lily. In November, can also plant hurricane lily, pineapple lily, Dutch Iris, Ixia and Ranunculus, Montbretia, tulip and voodoo lily bulbs, in addition to the above, can be planted in December.

• Plant cold hardy trees, shrubs and groundcovers and transplant those which have been root pruned throughout the year

• In December, plant bare root apple, pecan, peach, persimmon, pear, grape, and blueberries. Potted trees may be planted at any time of the year DO NOT FERTILIZE AT TIME OF PLANTING.

• Set out strawberry plants in October and November for best fruiting

• Plant beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, celery, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, collards, kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard, onions, English peas, radish, rutabaga, Swiss chard, spinach and turnip.

Landscape Care

• Water during dry spells, especially azaleas and camellias. When rain stops, water 1-2 times weekly.

• To conserve moisture, apply mulch around plants, except citrus, 3’ deep but avoid covering the crowns of low growing plants.

• Replenish mulch in existing areas.

Winter residents only have until the end of October lightly fertilize landscape plants which have been neglected over the summer. It is best to complete regular fertilizer applications by late September to prevent cold damage to new growth.

• Outdoor poinsettias and azaleas have set their buds so do not trim them again until after they flower.

• Remove old flowers from annuals to extend blooming.

Bulbs can be divided and reset after foliage yellows and dies.

• Root cuttings of deciduous plants.

(Continued on page 12)
• Refrigerate Narcissus, daffodil, crocus, tulip and hyacinth bulbs for winter planting. These bulbs require chilling for 60 days at 40 degrees F or 120 days at 50 degrees F.

• Horticultural oil sprays control scale insects on dormant trees and shrubs• Check weekly for thrips and scale insects.

Seasonal Tips

• Harvest mistletoe for decorations. Since it will kill the tree if allowed to grow, remove the parasite by cutting it out of the tree. Contact the Extension Office for proper pruning technique.

• Soak fresh cut greenery in water for several hours before using in arrangements.

• Do not expose Poinsettias, Kalanchoe or Christmas cactus to artificial light at night.

• Clean, oil and store equipment not in use. Drain gas tanks and lubricate engines.

Cold Protection

• Prepare to protect plants from cold weather and frost.

Outdoor tropical plants (Schefflera, croton, Dieffenbachia, pothos, Philodendron) should be protected from temperatures below 55 º F. Have boxes, blankets, hay, plastic, lights, etc. ready for early freeze protection.

• Protect citrus from temperatures below 28 º F. If banking with soil that is free of sticks, leaves and other organic matter. avoid damage to trunks of trees as this can lead to disease and insect damage. Applying a fungicide registered for citrus before banking or wrapping tree trunks will help reduce foot rot disease.

• Move outdoor house plant to warm locations. Clean pots and leaves and control insects and diseases before moving plants inside or into greenhouse

• Continue to fertilize annual flowers monthly.

• Don’t do any major pruning after November to allow plants to harden off for winter. and “Pineapple” oranges, tangelos, “Temple,” Dancy, tangerine and grapefruit.

Other Fruits

• Fertilize banana, avocado and guava in October

• Graft avocado trees through February. Grafted trees produce quality fruit in 3-5 years.

• Harvest avocado, figs, papaya, pecans, pears and pomegranate.

• In December, if it is cool, prune the blueberries for stronger plants and bigger berries.

Vegetables

(Continued on page 13)
• Dig sweet potatoes as needed
• Begin harvest of fall crops. Water during dry weather
• Protect beans, cucumbers, eggplant, melons, okra, peppers, squash tomatoes, and small plants from frost.

Citrus

Rain barrels
Jessica Sullivan
Florida Yards & Neighborhoods
UF/IFAS Osceola County Extension

Many people worldwide harvest rainwater in large cisterns, and depend on it for drinking and household use. In Florida, our rainwater resources are rarely utilized, although we use about half of our potable groundwater for irrigating home landscapes. Over 500 gallons of water runs off of an average roof during a 1” rain. That’s free water that goes down the storm drain. That’s water you could use to irrigate plants, or use after a hurricane when running water is not available. Rainwater is, of course, unchlorinated, so it is better for plants than treated city water.

Rain barrels are a small-scale way to catch and hold rainwater from your roof for non-potable uses. Rain barrels are easiest to use if you have gutters on your house. They can be purchased ready-to-use online, or you can make one yourself from a plastic or wooden food-grade barrel.

Call the Extension office at 321-697-3000 for free rain barrel plans and a “how-to video,” and for local sources of barrels.

Tips for success:

By attaching a hose or pipe to the top of a rain barrel, overflow can be channeled to other rain barrels or to landscape areas.

To prevent mosquitoes from hatching in your rain barrel, use a Bacillus thuringiensis “doughnut,” (a natural larvicide) available at garden centers, or put a few drops of vegetable oil in the water.

You can irrigate nearby plant beds by attaching a soaker hose to the rain barrel; it will take about 24 hrs. to drain the barrel.

To ensure a leak-proof barrel, use plumber’s Amazing Goop for sealing hardware to the barrel.

Rain is a free, high-quality source of water that can easily be captured and used when you need it. Send us a picture of your rain barrel at jsul@osceola.org. Good luck rain-catching!
What’s so Great About Melaleuca Mulch?
By Donn Barclay, Master Gardener (2006)

If you moved to Central Florida from South Florida, you probably already know the answer! In brief, the melaleuca plant is an incredibly invasive species that has done significant harm to the Everglades region, but it makes a great mulch!

In the 20’s, the government thought it had found a natural way to dry up the moisture in the Everglades in a gentle plant from Australia, so planeloads of seed flew over the River of Grass, spreading seed from one end to the other. Unfortunately, while melaleuca grows peacefully in Australia, none of the natural controls, the bugs and birds and animals that feed on its seedlings, leaves, and seed, were brought over here with it. The result has been catastrophic.

At the same time, as more and more people discovered the benefits of mulching their gardens to control weeds and water loss, producers stopped using cypress from land cleared for development and began destroying forests purely for mulch.

In the 70’s, Forestry Resources, Inc. decided to solve both problems by harvesting pure melaleuca and turning it into mulch, thus having reason to destroy the invasive plants while protecting the valuable cypress forests that are Florida natives.

At the University of Florida, testing of various mulches presented the surprising finding that of all the natural mulch options, melaleuca was the least attractive to termites. Thus, unlike other natural mulch products, melaleuca is most resistant to termites, and it is the only mulch with this benefit.

In this win-win situation, both the environment and the homeowner win, and only the termites lose!

Triva Answers

Master Gardener Fall Plant Sale
Old Garden Roses
Fancy Hibiscus
Annuals Perennials Herbs
100% Melaleuca Mulch

Master Gardeners available for advice on planting, maintenance
Friday and Saturday
October 5-6
KVLS Building
Heritage Park
Info: 321-697-3000

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