WELCOME CHANGE OF SEASONS

Fall is here and colors are beginning to splash across the landscape. Yellow blooms of trees, shrubs and vines are attractive in the landscape, but yellow lawns are a sign of problems. Golden rain trees are spectacular in bloom, sending up panicles of yellow flowers. The medium-size, umbrella-shaped tree will soon be topped with salmon-colored, papery seed pods. Branches are attractive in dried flower arrangements. The trees are most attractive from a distance and less desirable in your own yard. The winged pods blow easily in the wind and scatter seeds a great distance. They sprout almost anywhere they land, whether you want them or not.

Several cassia shrubs bloom in the fall. Butterfly cassia has small, yellow, butterfly-shaped flowers. They are especially attractive to sulfur butterflies, which produce lime-green caterpillars. Don't worry; the caterpillars eat some leaves but don't damage the shrub's health.

Candlestick cassia is a large, spreading shrub growing to 8' tall. It gets its name from the yellow flower spikes that stand above the leaves in the fall. They grow early from seeds, which are shared among hobby gardeners. Both cassias are sensitive to cold and are damaged by freezing weather some years. Cassias grow best in full sun.

Yellow-flowering Gold Mound lantana is an attractive groundcover plant that attracts a variety of butterflies. This plant is common at garden centers now. It is quite drought-tolerant but does not do well in wet landscapes. When overwatered, it develops leaf spots and root rot and thins out.

Golden dewdrop is a large shrub that has weeping spikes of blue flowers followed by yellow-orange fruit. I call it the "gator bush" because it cheers the football season with orange and blue, the University of Florida school colors.

Yellow allamanda grows as a sprawling vine that twines on a trellis, fence or arbor. Dwarf selections are also available at nurseries.

Many wildflowers are blooming in the woods now. Partridge pea is a low-growing plant with pale green, delicate leaves. The small yellow flowers attract sulfur butterflies. Grass leaf golden aster and goldenrod are also blooming now.

While yellow flowers are colorful, yellow lawns are ugly. Heavy rains contribute to leaf and root disease resulting in yellow grass.

Waterlogged soils don't have enough air space to provide oxygen to plant roots and roots die. Frequent heavy rainfall or irrigation washes needed fertilizer out of the root zone so plants don't get enough nourishment.

Moisture on the leaves contributes to leaf spot diseases that thrive during warm, wet weather. Spotted leaves soon turn yellow, signaling turf trouble. Spots on St. Augustine grass are usually caused by gray leaf spot fungus.

Low plant nutrition shows as a pale color in a general pattern in the entire lawn. If the roots are diseased, adding fertilizer does not solve the problem. A poor root system cannot support the leaves so the plant yellows and thins.

How do you know if it is just a lack of fertilizer or a disease problem? Check the root color. Diseased roots are brown, but healthy roots are white.

Are you are looking for yellow or want to get rid of it? Whether you are having turf trouble or are looking
for colorful plants for your landscape, contact the University of Florida's off-campus branch in your neighborhood, the Osceola County Extension Office. Master Gardeners are on duty Monday to Friday from 10 am to 2 pm to help you with a variety of plant care questions. Call (321) 697-3000 or contact them by email at epabon5@ufl.edu.

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**Basic birding class**

The Kissimmee Valley Audubon Society and Osceola County Extension Service are sponsoring a three-night class on basic birding beginning Tuesday at the Agricultural Center next to the rodeo arena between Kissimmee and St. Cloud. Learn what birds to look for, how to find them, how to attract them to your landscape and what gear to carry with you, and take a field trip to practice your skills. Call Norm and Betty McKeown for details at 407-892-6598.

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Eleanor Foerste  
Natural Resources Agent  
Osceola County Extension/University of Florida  
1921 Kissimmee Valley Lane  
Kissimmee, FL 34744  
(321) 697-3000  
Fax (321) 697-3010  
efoe@osceola.org  
osceola.ifas.ufl.edu  
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