

FYN News-Press Garden Column 2012 FAQ Summary

January 14, 2012

Question: I'm looking for a fast growing shade tree for zone 10. Would like a nice size tree. Any ideas?
Bill M, Ft. Myers

Answer: Zone 10 is the correct cold hardiness zone for Ft Myers. More specifically, Ft. Myers and its surrounding area is in zone 10a. Plants in this zone survive a winter low from 30° to 35° F. The hardiness zone is one of many factors used to choose right tree for the space you have. Often, localized site conditions or micro-climates play and even greater role influencing whether your yard is a cold or warm spot compared with the 'normal' low temperature. Micro-climates within a yard or neighborhood may differ as much as 5° F higher or lower. To play it safe, select trees for a hardiness zone of 10a and avoid using trees listed for warmer zones (10b and 11). For example, gumbo limbo (*Bursera simaruba*), is hardy in zone 10b (Miami) and 11 (Key West). Finally, decide what total space the tree has to grow to its full height and width. Measure it. If power lines run above the planting area (14' or greater), choose trees that grow to 15' or less. Note: The typical height for a large, canopy tree ranges from 30' to 80' high and 20' to 80' wide at maturity. A few top picks for zone 10a include: 'Florida Flame' red maple (*Acer rubrum*), lychee (*Litchi chinensis*), Southern slash pine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*), live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), bald cypress (*Taxodium spp.*), pigeonplum (*Coccoloba diversifolia*), jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*), gold medallion tree (*Cassia leptophylla*), loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*), wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), wild-tamarind (*Lysiloma latisiliqua*), sea grape (*Coccoloba uvifera*), Florida elm (*Ulmus americana* var. *floridana*), 'Drake' chinese elm (*Ulmus parvifolia* 'Drake') or laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*).

Question: As a year-round Florida resident and gardener in Lee County, I'm frequently asked the same question by snowbirds in my community. 'What plants are now in bloom?' What resources are out there that can help me quickly give them an answer?
From the FloridaYards website.

Right now, there are two websites covering 'What's blooming' in 4 local gardens. These gardens include hundreds of different ornamental plants that are in bloom sometime during the year. They are found in historic, herb, butterfly, FYN concept, native and Florida-Friendly landscape gardens. The Edison-Ford Winter Estate started years ago describing to the public 'what's in bloom' by providing month by month descriptions of their plants. New to the scene is a Lee County Master Gardener website doing the same for 'What's blooming?' at the gardens at Lakes, Terry and Rutenberg Park. The resources available include both posters and corresponding charts and depict 'what's blooming every other month. To see what the master gardener have developed to date, visit <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/What'sBlooming.shtml>

Question. How unusual is it to have a hawk chasing an egret? I live on a large lake in the Cape and was startled one day to find an egret literally hiding out in a closet in my house trying to escape from a hawk perched on a large tree in the backyard.
D. T. Cape Coral

Answer. Finding a small egret in your home trying to escape a hawk is unfortunate. The immature, cattle egret (*Bulbous ibis*) looks surprisingly similar from above to backyard poultry. The hawk in questions has a reputation as a “hen hawk” but naturalists have given it the name, a red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*). A cattle egret’s foraging habits on open, grassy places, small to medium size, mostly all-white color and short legs will tempt this hawk from a distance. Like the egret, the hawk prefers hunting on land and takes little notice to the urban and suburban surroundings. The hawk’s normal food source is small mammals and not frequently birds. Birds typically make up only 3% of a red-shouldered hawk’s diet. With an average wingspan of 39”, the hawk’s hunting prowess is excellent especially perched on a tall tree looking over your yard and home’s walkway looking for food. Learn more about other wildlife in our backyard from native plant and wildlife expert, Susan Scott. She’s a special guest presenter during the 10th Anniversary Florida Yards and Neighborhood’s series workshop planned for Wednesday, January 25 at 9am at the Eco-Living Center at Rutenberg Park. For information on each weekly session, visit <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu>

January 18, Watering the right way in the dry season

January 25, Attract Wildlife, What, Where, How and Why

February 1, Mulching Methods and Products Used in a Florida Yard

February 8, Manage Yard Pest Responsibly

February 15, Plants and Practices for Protecting the Waterfront

February 22, Fertilizing your lawn or landscape correctly

February 29, Composting in the backyard or in a worm box

March 7, Control Stormwater Runoff using a rain barrel or a cistern

January 28, 2012

Question: I’m looking for a landscape plan to makeover a small entryway bed that’s now covered with lawn. Does it have to look a certain way? I’d prefer no lawn at all.

Sherry D., Bonita Springs

Answer: A small entry bed covered with lawn often comes at a high price tag. That being the high cost of water and maintenance required to keep it green. Acceptable alternatives do exist. Take out the lawn altogether and plant a tree or shrub grouping and cover with a layer of mulch. Use a single specimen tree or group shrubs across the bed with a single tree or group of native shrubs. Low-growing clump grasses also would work like dwarf Fakahatchee grass (*Tripsacum floridanum*) or a bed of wildflowers like blanket-flower (*Gallardia pulchella*). I especially like the ‘see through’ quality that small trees and shrubs can offer. Use either of these: weeping yaupon holly (*Ilex x vomitoria* ‘Pendula’) or Simpson’s stopper (*Myricanthes fragrans*). Both grow slowly, are easy on the eye, and are easy to prune and keep small. Each has a natural and narrow vertical form. For a more traditional look and feel, use a small canopy tree. The East Palatka holly (*Ilex Xattenuata*) hybrid is a good one to consider. It has a well-defined trunk and stays open. For the best berry set, make sure the tree you plant is a female tree. Preferably, a male holly pollinator is planted nearby. Hollies are dioecious and have separate male and female trees. For more ideas, attend a Florida-

Friendly landscaping workshop this Wednesday morning, Feb. 1, at Rutenberg Park at 9AM. The focus is on, 'using mulches properly'. Topic for Feb. 8: 'responsible pest management' and Feb. 15: 'protecting the waterfront'.

Question: My neighbor applied gypsum to permanently kill weeds before installing a new patio last summer. He applied it directly to the lawn and then left for several months. Meanwhile, neighboring property borders to his yard showed dead or dying plants.. Our RV community is fairly flat. The wet fall didn't help. Now what do we do?
H. T. in N. Ft Myers

Answer: Agricultural gypsum is not used for weed control. Gypsum is calcium sulfate (CaSO_4). When used correctly it can correct soil acidity and act as a regulator for other nutrients that plants need like iron, zinc, manganese and copper. Gypsum dissolves easily in water. In soil, its use does result in a reaction. Large amounts of gypsum added to the soil surface causes Ca^{2+} (calcium) ions to displace Na^+ (sodium) ions. After a heavy rain, both calcium and sodium salts are flushed out of the soil. Damage to landscape plants can occur. Stormwater easily moves the excess calcium and sodium dissolved salts to adjoining yards. Adding high amounts of gypsum to soil may elevate soil total dissolved salt levels and damage sensitive plants. Plants differ in their sensitivity to salinity, but all plants have a maximum salt tolerance. Most lawn grasses have high to moderate salt tolerance. Shrubs may have high, moderate or low tolerance. Those damaged by high salts include hibiscus, plumbago, crotons, thyralis and copperleaf. More soil damage occurs if the soil surface is left bare. Postpone re-planting till the Spring.. Apply an organic mulch like pine straw now. Before replanting, mix the decomposing mulch cover and amend the soil with compost or organic matter. Finally, plant and recover with a 3-4 inch layer of organic mulch. Salt tolerant shrubs include yucca, inkberry, crown-of-thorns, sea grape, wax myrtle, Florida privet and Pineland lantana. For groundcovers, use perennial peanut, golden creeper, shore juniper, trailing lantana or coontie .

Question. I really think I am seeing more insect pests in my Florida landscape compared to up North in the summer. What do you think?
Monica S., Cape Coral

Answer. .Yes, you may be right. In general, our Florida landscapes have more and different host plants for insects and other pests to damage. That diversity provides plenty of menu choices for plant pests to choose. In addition, new pests become problems quicker. A recent example is the Giant African Snail It was discovered sliming its way through a residential neighborhood in Miami last fall. This eight-inch long snail smuggled into the US began leaving damage on homes and in landscapes. Reportedly, this snail has over 500 host plants. Before their eradication, homeowners literally described the snail as 'taking over' their yards. Like the snail, newly introduced insects turn up unexpectedly in Florida landscapes each year. A few recent examples include the brown marmorated stink bug , the passionvine mealybug, European pepper moth and the ash whitefly. Three years prior came the Rugose spiraling whitefly, an unnamed mealybug, another orchid mealybug, croton scale, ficus whitefly and red palm mite. Of these, several have become a problem here.

February 11, 2012

Question: Is ageratum a native? If not, is it invasive? I recently purchased some tropical sage and this flower has sprouted from within it. I'm wondering if I should get rid of it.

from FloridaYards website

Answer: Depending on your nursery source, *Ageratum houstonianum*, a non-native is not likely to be growing with the native wildflower, tropical sage, *Salvia coccinea*. It is probably the almost identical native, blue mistflower (Hardy Ageratum), *Conoclinium coelestinum*. I'd transplant whatever is growing in the pot to the garden and wait and see what happens. Ageratum and Blue Mistflower look very, very similar. Each has a cluster of blue flowers, triangular leaves and only grow 6-15" high. The more common twin, ageratum, is a cool-season annual called floss flower. It has many cultivars and colors from white to pink to blue to purple. Ageratum here in SWFL will grow under very dry conditions once established while blue mist flower requires continuously moist soil. Ageratum is a prolific seed producer but researchers at the University of Florida have not found it to be invasive in Florida. Ageratum will come up in unexpected places like nursery pots, flower beds and pathways. Use ageratum to add color now to the garden while daytime temperatures stay slightly cooler. Native to Central and South America, use ageratum for a dry border or bedding plant used in water-conserving, Florida-Friendly landscaping™. Fertilize only sparingly. Cover if temperature drop below 35°F (2°C) Our earliest planting month here is normally February. Typical removal time is month of July.

Question: Do tomato plants grow here in the winter? How about in the summer? *E. Ross & G. Neff, N., Ft. Myers*

Answer: Yes, sometimes they grow in winter (keep them warm) and 'Yes' in summer but Fall is preferred. I know our northern visitors were waiting for me to say, "Transplant your tomatoes outdoors after the last killing frost." That's a no-brainer in Ft Myers, FL, right? However, in tomato talk, the real devil is in the details. Think about our typical winter and spring weather patterns. Sometimes even Jan., Feb. and March, stays too cold and too dry for a tomato plant to flourish. Tomatoes need a 2 inch rainfall weekly and temperatures (daytime and night-time) staying between 45°F (7°C) and 85°F (29°C). Our summers are typically too hot and sometimes too wet. Finally, if you least want to gamble, the ideal months for planting tomatoes here by experts is February and September.

Question: What plants tolerate the wet summer and the dry winter?

Un-named in N. Ft Myers.

Answer: The Florida state legislature in 2009 directed all Floridians to use plants tolerating wet summers and the dry winters so as to wisely conserve our water resources. They even gave a name to the right plants, 'Florida-Friendly Landscaping™' selections. Our FFL list has hundreds of trees, shrubs, groundcovers, grasses, vines, palms and even annuals you can choose from. Go to <http://solutionsforyourlife.com/fyn> or the plant database at <http://floridayards.org/fyplants/index.php>. Upcoming FYN classes teaching how to use the right plants and practices include: Protecting the Waterfront, Feb. 15 and Using the Right Fertilizer, Feb. 22.

Question. What's that HUGE thing you see more and more in local community gardens? Why let such a monster grow? Why grow it at all if it can't be tamed?
from S. M.
in Ft Myers

Answer. No, some may think it is the invention of our local KIA dealer. But, the word HUGE does aptly describe many gardener's reaction seeing it for the first time..... call it the 'great' pumpkin of spinach or spinach on steroids. The common name for the plant is, Malabar Spinach (MS). Saying that MS flourishes in the garden is an understatement.. This big tropical vine with thick, fleshy edible leaves is unlike any standard cool-season spinach I've encountered up North. Also called Ceylon or Vietnamese spinach, it comes in two color forms: the ones with fleshy leaves and red stems and the other type with green stems. Unlike its northern cold-season cousin, MS grows best in very warm, albeit hot tropical months.. This one is sure to please if one prefers to let their garden grow HUGE for the *summer. It is extremely heat tolerant, propagates easily by seed and tastes spinach-like.*

February 25, 2012

Question: I have seen monarch butterflies in my garden all winter. Is this unusual behavior? How can I help spot or tag monarchs in my garden?
D. G. Ft
Myers.

Answer. Currently, there is a lack of knowledge about Florida's monarch butterfly population, especially in SWFL where their migratory behavior needs studied.. Questions abound even among local butterfly experts.

Do they migrate to Mexico or to the Caribbean Islands? If so, when? Some local experts contend that SWFL monarchs are struggling. A possible reason cited is, its host plant is now common here. Monarch caterpillar's consume the leaves of the non-native, scarlet milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*). Warm temperatures kept scarlet milkweed growing all winter. Experts would like to know how this non-native milkweed might affect migrating monarch populations seen here. Does the presence of this milkweed species enable monarchs to stay put in SWFL year-round when they would otherwise migrate to Mexico or further south? How might this be detrimental to the monarchs health and reproduction? Here's how you can help.

If you live anywhere in SW Florida and happen upon a tagged monarch, please report it to Lee County Master Gardener, Gayle Edwards at flmonarch@gmail.com or call 239-826-4103. Any information you supply is greatly appreciated— date, time, tag color, shape, tag number, location and the name of the nectar plants being used etc.. Others can do more by learning to properly tag monarch butterflies traversing your yard. To learn more, go to: http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsAZ/SFMMP_Instruction_Form.pdf.

Two final thoughts: From Gayle, "It is fascinating to sit and watch them dip, dive and flutter for long periods without nectaring." Another from local expert, Nick Bodvin. "Visit a public butterfly garden like ones at Manatee, Rutenberg or Terry Park. Photograph each monarch while they rest or nectaring flowers. Keep checking for the monarch tags." The first tagged butterfly sighting is still to come. Stay tuned.....

Question: Do I need to use paint and/or a sealer before installing my recycled rain barrel?

From the FloridaYards website

Answer: Yes, most gardeners prefer their rain barrels a color other than the ever-popular, recycled barrel 'blue' color. (I'm kidding). Plan instead to create a work of yard art that has curb appeal. For example, one clever FMB resident painted their rain barrel a single, base color, 'flamingo pink'. Visible at the front door, the house numbers were painted on its side. Before painting, check your community's standard Rules and Restrictions (Condo, ARC committees or HOA boards, etc.). Painting a rain barrel is like any good work of art, a process (clean, dry, prime, paint, design, decorate, seal & install). A single background color is often used. Properly done, your painted rain barrel will not be a source of neighbor's complaints. Peeling or fading paint does not need to be the norm.

Start your rain barrel project using a food-grade, plastic barrel (55 gallon capacity). See several done by local gardeners at the next rain barrel workshop. (Wednesday, **March 7, 2012** at 9AM at Rutenberg Park. Cost is \$45 per rain barrel). Go to <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu> to pre-register.

Here's how to do it 'right.' Paint adheres better and lasts longer on a properly prepared surface. Use a rotating sander on all exposed surfaces. Follow with a thorough cleaning inside and out. A vinegar/water solution or soap and water or a standard soap pad work well. Before priming, remove tape or barrel labels. Clean and dry before priming with a white, water-based paint (e.g. KILZ 2 Primer® is one brand.) Prime all exposed surfaces. Let dry and follow with a coat of a water-based, exterior house paint. Match it to your house colors. Reuse and recycle leftover house paint. To apply multiple, base colors, use spray paint (e.g. Krylon®) and a stencil or template (a palm frond, etc.). For some, your painted barrel is now done. For others, they are just getting started. Flowers, fish, tropical scenes, birds and native plants often are used for final painting themes. Use acrylic house or craft paint to add your final colors, creating depth and texture. Again, be sure to recycle leftover paint from other decorating projects you've completed. Finally, (this is optional), apply Minwax® type poly-acrylic sealer. Repeat as needed for added glossiness and durability. Do small areas at a time. Turn the rain barrel, and finish the next area allowing time for each to dry.

March 10, 2012

Answers to this week's questions were prepared with the assistance of Lee County Master Gardener, Jake Tomlinson, Ft. Myers.

Question: Visitors planted an orange tree and a lemon tree for me just before I was to leave for the season. Even though my neighbor watered them some, they looked really sad when I returned last fall. My visitors are coming back. Is there anything I can do now to make them do better? What type of fertilizer would help? When is the best time to apply it?

Betty B., N. Ft Myers

Answer. It is just not Florida without one! A citrus tree that is..... It does sound like the trees could use a little TLC. I would start by making sure that the trees are hydrated (kept moist) and not dry and not soggy. Irrigate and apply a granular fertilizer formulated for growing all types of citrus trees like 6-4-6. Read the label carefully before using. Determine how much fertilizer should be applied per tree. Natural or organic fertilizer products for citrus include: Citrus-tone[®] 5-2-6 or Dr. Earth[®] fruit tree fertilizer. A product labeled for fruit or citrus trees will supply all the major (N-P-K) nutrients. These trees also need secondary and minor elements like magnesium (Mg), manganese (Mn), boron (B), iron (Fe) and zinc (Zn). Minor nutrient elements can be supplied to the tree as a foliar spray. The liquid fertilizer is applied as droplets to the plant's leaves, often saving you money. As long as your trees are only deficient in nutrition (no diseases or other pest infestations), they should look great in no time. I hope you enjoy your trees for years to come.

Question: Should suckers be cut off orange trees?

Louise H., N. Ft Myers

Answer: This is a question I often get. On orange and other citrus trees in the home landscape, suckers, sometimes called water sprouts emerge unexpectedly from the lower trunk. Remove these vertical stems and any foliage growth at any time during the year. Suckers tend to grow fast and rob the tree of important nutrition. Different varieties of orange trees are sold on commercially grafted rootstock tolerating SWFL soil. The grafting procedure basically takes the top half of a citrus tree (above ground parts producing the desired fruit) and attaches it to the roots of another citrus tree variety commonly grown here. So, yes, I do recommend that you cut the suckers off. On a grafted tree, there will be a slanted scar or lump (graft union) on the tree trunk. Look for it on the trunk up to a foot or two above the soil. On dwarf trees it is in the first few inches. Any growth that is attached above the scar is not a sucker. Any growth attached below produces no or inferior fruit and should be removed.

Question: I have a gardenia tree in my backyard. It is 3-4 years old. It bloomed the first year and hasn't since. What can I do to get it to bloom?

Myers

Judy G. N. Ft

Answer: Gardenia (*Gardenia jasimonoides*) is a great addition to any landscape. They bloom mostly in the spring,. Sometimes, depending on the cultivar, they flower in the summer. Many factors can cause plants to forgo flowering.. Placing it at the right place in the landscape is very important as well as regularly monitoring for pests. The most common stress factors include: too much to little direct sunlight, alkaline soil conditions, scale pests and other sucking insects. These types of pests coat the leaves with sooty mold, Other problems preventing bloom include: bud-drop from under or over-fertilizing, over or under-watering and nematode-feeding on the roots. Was your gardenia planted in the right place? Well drained sites that are somewhat protected from afternoon and evening direct sun are preferred. Highly alkaline soil also prevents flowering, a soil pH 6.5 or greater. pH testing is offered for FREE at the extension office. Also, a standard laboratory soil test from the University of Florida can determine pH. For a gardenia to thrive, the soil pH should be between 5.0 and 6.5 (acidic to slightly acidic soil conditions). If a soil test finds your soil to be neutral or highly alkaline, supplement with an iron fertilizer to keep the leaves green. Use only fertilizers sold for acid loving plants (the label will say it is acidifying or an acidifier). Fertilizers made for gardenias, camellias, hibiscus, azaleas or ixora will work fine. If your gardenia is still not blooming after checking all these things, consider contacting the horticulture help desk at the extension office between 8:00am and 4:00pm.

March 24, 2012

Question: *Did I miss the Herb Day event held each spring at Terry Park?* Melissa from Estero

Answer. Herb Day Celebrating the Year of the Rose is next Saturday, March 31 from 8:30AM – 3:00PM starting at Terry Park. Planned by the Lee County Master Gardeners, herb day offers a treasure trove of information. Herb Day attracts home gardeners and even some professionals who grow and cook daily with fresh herbs. Vendors will be present selling seeds, herbs used as bedding plants and larger ones used in containers. You will also find citrus trees, crafts and have time to talk and taste herbal recipes. Local chef, Vicki Chelf, will share three easy recipes from her new cookbook, “Vicki’s Vegan Kitchen.” (Tropical Hibiscus Punch, Cilantro Pesto & Quinoa Tabouli) Also, two local Rosarians will describe the best landscape shrub roses for SWFL like the “Knock Outs.” Known as a ‘Earth Kind’ rose, it grows with very little care in poor soil. The keynote topic, “Keeping Herbs Alive” is being addressed by Britt Paterson-Weber, the children’s garden coordinator at Naples Botanical Garden. Herb Day, 2012 ends with a short drive to see a new ‘herb-mound’ being built and free tour in the victory and heritage gardens at the Edison & Ford Winter Estates. Pre-register for this event paying (\$15) until March 30th. Walk-ins pay \$20. Go to <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu> to register.

Question: *Can I acquire a new yard sign recognizing a “Florida-Friendly” cul de sac? Our neighbors and I care for the shared space in the 2800 block of SW 39th Street in Cape Coral. The old sign was damaged and destroyed by high winds.* Marge S. via email

Answer: Yes, the new “Florida-Friendly Landscaping” sign will be delivered. The planting still must meet the official standards established when certified in 2004 using plants and practices recommended on the state’s “FYN Yard Recognition Checklist.” The sign still honors you and your neighbor’s efforts conserving water and protecting water quality. A “standard” level annual sticker will also be attached. This sticker would represent a typical Florida-Friendly yard. A higher level standard sticker is also available designated as “Gold.” The gold sticker shows even greater efforts taken towards conserving natural resources and using greater plant diversity. A gold level landscape must meet five, ‘required’ recognition pre-requisites. (1)The landscape does not contain any plants found on the current UF/IFAS assessment, “Invasive-Not Recommended” list. (2)The landscape contains 10 or more species of plants useful for wildlife habitat. (3)A soil nutrient test has been performed. (4)No high-volume irrigation is used on site. (5)The final requirement is the landscape meets 5 of 5 aesthetic pre-requisites which are: The landscape appears to be actively managed. Appropriate pruning practices are apparent. The landscape, if it has turf, needs to have defined landscape beds. The landscape matches aesthetic of the community and landscape and household debris is properly disposed of or recycled.

Question: *I am building a new house in a golf community in Ft. Myers. The house is located on water (a small man-made lake). What plants/cover would you recommend for near/along the water's edge?* Gordon W. from Canada

Answer: Use species that root in the ground or in shallow waters in the lake's muck (wet mud & sandy bottom). Plant two border plantings or buffers (one in the water and one on the bank). Both should be a minimum 6 to 8 feet wide. Use only Florida native wetland plants getting 2-4 foot high in these borders. Choose ones that grow dense to prevent weeds from taking over. Two types of plants are used..... those that prefer to stay above the water control level and those preferring to stay below. Those growing above need shoreline places where the water level occasionally changes. These places are where your lake's water rises to its high water mark after heavy rainfall. Above plants include: Muhly Grass (3-4' high bunchgrass), Sand Cordgrass (5' bunchgrass), Tickseed (3', a wildflower) and Spider lily (2-3', attracts butterflies). Those that prefer to stay below the normal lake's water level with their leaves and flowers projecting above the water include Pickerelweed (4' tall, attracts butterflies), Spikerush (1-4', dense & clumping sedges), Duck Potato (1-5', easy to grow), Yellow Canna Lily (4'), String Lily (3', fragrant), Blue Flag Iris (1-2', clumping), or Soft Rush (4'). Most littoral plants are excellent habitat and food sources for wading birds, nectar for butterflies and shelter for small animals. Those growing well below the normal lake level do best planted in 6-18 inch deep water. Most grow naturally in the wild with mother nature handling the maintenance. Yours will be planted in a newly constructed lakes requiring significant maintenance (weed control) for the first 6-8 months or more. Both above and below types of vegetation help clean the lake's water, absorbing fertilizer nutrients and chemical stormwater run-off.

April 7, 2012

Question: *Why would a mallard duck nest in a shrub in front of my house so far from our community's lake? I'd estimate 70 feet to the water's edge. It is nesting in a low-growing coontie shrub just a few feet from a shared entrance walkway to our condominium. No other plants are nearby. The duck would have remained unknown to me had I not decided to water the coontie. She immediately flew a few feet away. Her 'stand your ground' behavior was protecting four cream-colored eggs hidden within the coontie. However, I saw no nesting materials. What's up with this duck? What would you do?*
Tony from Ft .Myers

Answer. Apart from its proximity to the front door, a mallard hen using a coontie clump to protect her nest is perfectly normal. Mallards prefer to make a nest in any natural depression right on the ground. Mallards prefer sparse vegetation for nesting within 100 yards from a lake, retention pond, marsh or shallow drainage ditch with water. Coontie plants are clump-forming. With age, mulch builds up around it sometimes forming a natural depression in the center. Your coontie replaced more typical nesting habitat like low-growing grasses and sedges along the shoreline. Congratulations on unwittingly attracting native wildlife to your front yard. All native birds are protected by the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act. It would be illegal to remove or destroy the nest. If people walking nearby disturb the hen, make a temporary pathway around the nest. Or, start using your back door. Ducklings hatch in 23-30 days. Once all hatch, the hen will lead the brood to water. Delay further watering, fertilizing or pest control until after she leaves with her brood. Learn more about attracting wildlife to your yard at this month's Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Introductory Class on Saturday, April 14 from 9AM – Noon at Rutenberg Park. Cost is \$8 per household. Pre-register by using the Webtrac link at the bottom of our homepage, <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu>

Question: *What would be an easy care rose adapted for SW Florida? Madeline from North Ft Myers*

Answer: Our hot and humid weather and sandy, drought-prone soil makes growing any type of rose bush a challenge. Those who like traditional, long-stem rose varieties with large flowers and big fragrance should choose traditional favorites (examples: Belinda's Dream, Mr. Lincoln, Don Juan, etc.) grafted onto the 'Fortuniana' rootstock. Roses grafted on this rootstock grow larger and faster thanks to a more vigorous root system. For other gardeners wanting low maintenance rose care, Antique or newly released 'Earth Kind' shrub roses work best. A few names: Knock Out® (Rosa 'Radrazz'), Double Knock Out® (Rosa 'Radtko') or five other 'Knock-Outs' roses work. This series has significantly improved disease resistance but lacks fragrance. Another rose series useful here has fragrance. The Drift® series (coral, pink, red and several other colors) all are produced from a rose cross made between a larger, stockier rose variety and a miniature rose.

Question: *I am looking for pine trees. Can you tell me the best place to purchase and plant them?
Email from FloridaYards Website*

Answer: Hopefully, Australian "Pine" is not what you are seeking. It is not a true pine species and should not be planted or transplanted into your yard. Two true native pines, southern slash pine and sand pine can be obtained at one of several, local, and mostly native, plant nurseries or garden centers. Pick up a copy of the 2012, "Guide for Real Florida Gardeners" at the extension office or go to: <http://plantrealflorida.org>. Call each source listed for Lee County. Compare prices and available container sizes. If you are looking for bare root pine tree seedlings, contact the local Florida Forest Service at 239-690-3500.

<http://www.floridaforestservice.com> On Saturday, April 21, 2012 at Rotary Park between 9AM and 2PM, Cape Coral hosts a native plant sale. Plant your slash pines in small groups using three or more trees per group. Grouping them improves survival of the trees planted on 'fill' soil. They also prefer less irrigation and fertilizer than other landscape plants. Another true pine choice is the Sand Pine. Rarely seen in home landscapes, it survives best under natural growing conditions in a preserve or shrubby understory. Its long-term survival seems to require a high intensity fire every 20 to 80 years.

April 21, 2012

Question: I have anxiously been waiting for my Louisiana irises to bloom. Last year they started blooming in March and bloomed for 6 weeks. It is the middle of April and still no sign of blossoms. What could be the problem?
H. Halde from Bonita Springs

Answer. (Provided by Louisiana Grower and Lee County Master Gardener, Linda Sheridan) You have chosen a beautiful and hardy Florida native for your yard! I'm inclined to blame the delayed blooming on the weather especially over the last several months (very dry and warm last fall & winter). You have lots of company. None of the Louisiana Iris (*Iris hexagona*), I've seen have started to bloom yet this spring. This includes both public and some private gardens I've visited including the Lakes Park Fragrance Garden, Naples Botanical Gardens and others. Compare your growing conditions to these known LA iris preferences: keep the rhizome covered; they like wet feet- 1-2 inches of irrigation weekly if planted in the ground or in a pot or they can be kept in standing water; planted where no less than 6-8 hours of full sun each day and are growing in acid soil conditions with a pH range of 4.5-6.5. Use pine needle mulch as your preferred cover. If you choose to fertilize your irises this year, select a fertilizer stating on the label "for acid-loving plants." Apply it next November and January. Thank you for your question and happy gardening!

Question: *My neighbor wants to replace his yard with artificial turf. What are some reasons I can give him to advice against it?*
Dolores from a community in Ft Myers

Answer: Synthetic or artificial turf (AT) no longer has the appearance of Astro turf. AT products are now sold and marketed to athletic field and park managers, landscapers and gardeners. 90% of AT products now sold are 'made in the USA' in carpet factories in Georgia. However, AT is not considered to be a Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ product. No plant roots are present to filter and clean rain water of excess nutrients. And, no natural, healthy grass is present to attract wildlife. AT does not cut down on glare and noise life real turf. And, most important of all cannot absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen to our environment. AT has also been found to have a substantially higher surface temperature than a natural lawn. When new, the rubber granules often contain polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) at levels above health-based soil standards. However, the level of PAHs generally decline as the AT ages. Also, in some cases, heavy metal contents of AT exceed limits for natural soil. Higher than normal zinc content may be a concern while lead concentrations appear to stay well below EPA standards.

Question: *I am looking for a vine to climb over a fence to increase privacy when we are sitting on our lanai. What should I plant in front of the vine to also improve privacy?*
Matt from Cape Coral

First, keep it simple. Establish a native vine on your fence like Coral Honeysuckle. It establishes quickly with minimal care and won't damage your fence. It gets woody over time and will produce some weight on top of the fence but fills-in quickly and looks attractive all year. This Florida native blooms well in the early Spring right into the late Fall. If you want to see the amount of space it requires trained on a fence, visit the Eco-Living Center at Rutenberg Park. See it growing on the North facing corner of the center's gardens as part of our Florida Yard and Neighborhood landscaping display. There it is on a chain-link fence surrounding the building's air conditioning units.

In front of the vine, group shrubs or create staggered rows of medium or tall-growing native shrubs. Plant the vine and shrubs during the upcoming rainy season. A few choices include: red-tipped coccoplum, Florida privet, Simpson's stopper, firebush, wild sage, wild coffee, varnish-leaf, beautyberry, golden dewdrop (species or white-growing form), necklace-pod, dahoon holly and others. No matter what you use obtain high quality, nursery-raised plants and space the plants according to recommendations from the extension service.

May 5, 2012

Question: *I am down visiting my neighbor in Upriver Campground in North Fort Myers. The park is infested with a bug that looks similar to Locust bugs up North. Any ideas?*
Email from Lori D.

Answer: The infestation of "locust-like" bugs here are better known as the Lubber grasshopper. The eastern Lubber is similar in size and color to the periodic cicada. In this part of Florida, they are mostly orange or yellow with red and black markings on the wings or body. Their chewing bite is 'big' but their long-term damage to ornamental plants is usually minor. Remove lubbers by hand. They are clumsy and slow. Despite their large size (males are 2 inches, females are 3 inches long), all lubbers eat much less than smaller types of grasshoppers in Florida. In residential communities, watch for lubber damage on amaryllis and crinum

lilies. Lubbers will feed on many other types of garden plants. Communities with open pine-woods, weedy fields and weedy drainage ditches along roadsides are common feeding sites for large numbers of lubbers. Lubbers can be seen marching across rural Florida highways. Flattened lubbers could create a minor bug slick.

Question: *Are there seasonal changes in landscape color in Southwest Florida? Do you recommend adding seasonal color this time of year?*

Pat M., Sanibel

Answer: Yes and Yes! Fall to winter and Spring to summer landscape changes are the most pronounced. But, in late spring, expect to see more vivid flower and fruit colors. Recent rainfall has prompted a flush of flowers like the bright orange flowers on the Geiger trees and the lavender, trumpet-shaped flowers on the jacaranda trees. Frangipani, shell-ginger and jatropa are a few others. When designing with strong flower or foliage color, plant flowers with strong bright colors in front of shrubs also with strong color. A few examples: the reddish-toned, variegated copperleaf growing under silver buttonwood trees or bright red flower spikes of red canna lilies growing next to Duranta ‘Gold Mound’ and surrounded by blooming beach sunflower. Remember to use color to bring harmony to the landscape. If done right, color in the landscape should appear to reveal itself. Garden plantings with color should provide continuous surprise... adding accents. Changing seasonal conditions can produce unexpected results. Flower color might be short lived, delayed or revealed earlier than expected. Watch for color changes when leaf buds break or flower buds begin to open. Rare foliage color these days in landscape beds seems to be pure green. Consider using these natives with pure green foliage: coontie or Florida privet. White is the often the unifying factor. Plants having silver-colored foliage yield similar results as white flowers.

Question: How do I contact a Master Gardener? Would they help plan a community vegetable garden?

Richard, N. F.M.

Call 533-7504. Yes, thirty-three master gardeners recently completed training and can assist communities plan Florida-Friendly landscaping™ and fruit and vegetable gardens. Homeowners have many choices when planting fruits and vegetables instead of just ornamentals. Learn more at this year’s, ‘**Taste of Lee**’ on Saturday, **June 30, 2012**. Congratulations to this year’s graduating class: Sherry Anderson, bonnie Jean Clancy, Susan C. Cox, Deloris Dula Donnelly, Phyllis Faust, Carolyn France, Judy Francino, Fred Geist, Chris Glancy, Peter Gottschall, Martha Grattan, Andrea Guerrero, Venessa Hazelton, Daniel Jergenson, Janine Johns, Sharon Jones, Anne Liebermann, Sher Lucas, Karen M. Maxwell, Deborah S. mcIntire, Patricia moyer, Amy Murphy, Luis Ospina, Virginia Parker, Judith Peltier, Cesar G. Peralta, Benny Pino, Marlene Rodak, Linda Sheridan, Ron Stewart, Mark J. Trask, Dr. Jimmy Whittaker and Sandy Winslow.

May 19, 2012

Question: *Where can I purchase vitex agnus-castus plants? Email from Penny W., Sanibel, FL.*

Answer: One type of *Vitex* is available locally. Commonly called chastetree, this small tree or shrub is difficult, but not impossible to find in a SW Florida nursery. Specifically, ask for the lilac chastetree, *Vitex agnus-castus*. Generally, gardeners don’t recognize this plant. It has been occasionally planted in highway medians or street tree. Gardeners too can grow it in a multitude of ‘Right’ places: sunny gardens, landscapes

or in large planter containers. Train it as a standard used as an accent flowering tree or use multiple plants in a mixed planting border containing other butterfly attracting, woody and herbal perennials. Used by herbalists. Vitex has sage-scented, lavender-colored flower panicles that attract butterflies and bees. Vitex can also be transplanted or grown from softwood cuttings if done this time of year or from grow from seed. When shopping for plants, look for newly improved flower colors like white 'Alba' and 'Silver Spires' or pink, 'Rosea.' Vitex is a non-native plant in North America. Vitex is grown as a deciduous shrub in a large range of hardiness zones including 6a (as far north as South-Central PA). Vitex has many other Florida-Friendly qualities including: tolerance to acidic or alkaline soils, blooms continuously in the high heat of summer and prefers sandy, well-drained soil containing little organic matter or fertility. Unlike its extremely invasive cousin, *Vitex trifolia* 'Variegata' the lilac chastetree is safe to transplant here

Question: *What tree has long, medium-green pods (5" long by 1" wide)? It's seed pods are shaped like a small banana? Old pods still hang on the tree looking black and shriveled. The leaves are round and the tree's bark is rough. The tree is about 15' - 20' tall and can be seen on Pine Island planted in a parking lot oasis. Email from Jennifer T., Alva, FL*

Answer: Glaucous Senna or Scrabbled Egg tree, *Senna surattensis*. To learn more about this flowering tree, read the garden fact sheets on different types of cassias and sennas at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu>. Find it fast. Use the search word, 'senna' in the search box on our home page.

Question: *How and when do I prune and fertilize bleeding hearts? Email from Gerry*

Answer: *(Provided with the assistance of Lee County Master Gardener, Jake Tomlinson).* Bleeding hearts are a large group of spring and summer-blooming tropical and sub-tropical shrubs or twining vines. All are exotic and non-native shrubs or vines in the genus called *Clerodendrum*. Now widely cultivated in South Florida, this plant's showy flower clusters are popular with visitors. For someone trying them for the first time, choose a mostly shady and dappled sunny spot along a foundation wall and well out of reach of intense direct sunlight. *Clerodendrum thomsoniae* is known by two common names, either bleeding heart or glorybower. A houseplant up North, this small shrub has large bloom clusters. Each red flower has a large, bishop's hat-shaped, white cover or sepal. Flaming glorybower, *Clerodendrum splendens*, also develops similarly red sepals and red flower. Plant breeders crossing these two types created an improved sterile hybrid with better vine and flowering habit and rose-purple sepals. Like its two parents, *Clerodendrum Xspeciosum* only flowers on new growth. Trim out crowded or winter-killed woody stems in the late winter or early Spring before new growth begins. Bleeding hearts also require watering in the dry season (regular weekly sprinkler watering is okay in winter) and some cold protection when temperatures dip below 45°F. Prune and fertilize to promote flowering and increase healthy new growth. Use a standard bloom-enhancing liquid or granular fertilizer (6-8-10, 8-8-8, 4-8-12, etc.). Apply in late winter and, if needed, again the following spring. Use a slow or controlled release fertilizer that also contains essential minor nutrient elements like iron and manganese. Do not fertilize again until the following October. Fertilize after Lee Counties' rainy season restricting use of Nitrogen and Phosphorus fertilizer between June 1 and Sept. 30. Trim only as needed in the summer months. If newly planted, train the new shoots to climb on a supporting stake or trellis.

June 2, 2012

Question: *I live near a beach access point along Bonita beach. Sea grape trees grow tall and wide on either side of the foot path. Are these trees growing unusually tall and dense to be safe? Wouldn't a good pruning make them look better?*
Email from Bonita Beach

Answer: Your tall-growing native sea grape (*Coccoloba uvifera*) is a coastal gift worth keeping as is. Native to South Florida's east and west coastline, a mature height can vary tremendously from one beach to the next. Sea grape trees are easy to grow and offer significant dune and coastal protection for wildlife like nesting sea turtles, gopher tortoises and others. Your access point's older and taller trees (up to 35 feet) and wide canopy (10 to 50 feet) perform another critical role providing wind protection holding sand and soil in place during hurricanes. Despite these trees shedding their heavy leaves year-round, no pruning is needed for safety except for removing dead or storm-damaged, broken branches. Sea grapes growing in private yards and landscapes can be pruned, shaped or topped as desired to maintain a short, shrubby hedge along property borders. In hurricane winds as strong as Hurricane Charley or Andrew, sea grapes are an excellent choice for planting in coastal yards or further inland. This tree survives the worst hurricane winds comparable to several others including gumbo limbo (*Bursera simarouba*), strangler fig (*Ficus aurea*), slash pine, (*Pinus elliottii*), bald cypress (*Taxodium spp.*) and live oak (*Quercus virginiana*). University of Florida/IFAS researchers studied and documented these and other tree species with good wind resistance. Their findings are reported at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FR/FR17500.pdf>

Question: *I am interested in having my yard recognized as "Florida-Friendly." My question is only my backyard is ready and not my front yard. I am waiting for the city to complete the sewer project before re-landscaping my front yard. Can the back yard be recognized now?*
Email from Steve M., Cape Coral, FL

Answer: The process we use to recognize yards has some flexibility. Our Florida yards and neighborhood's recognition team can sort out and recognize your initial success making environmental changes in the backyard. A standard-level score can still be issued based on significant landscape improvements and planning before completing the entire yard. Our recognition team is smaller over the summer months and a later in the year site visit is more likely. Each yard normally takes 90 or more minutes to adequately document as meeting the standard now known as 'Florida-Friendly Landscaping™'. Prior to the team's visit, review the FYN Yard Recognition Checklist found on-line and complete a soil test. During the visit, the team will ask questions based on the existing landscape and evaluate your planned changes for the front yard. If possible, provide the team a simple, sketch showing your planned landscape. It should include a working list showing what plants will be removed and what plants will be added.

Question: *We recently moved into a new home and found a mystery tree in the backyard. We have asked a few nurseries what it is and the closest that someone has come up with is a xapote tree. However there are far too many differences to be sure. One of them being the fruit looks too big, the size of a grapefruit! Also, we recently picked the fruit wondering if it was ripe. The flesh was the color and texture of a granny smith apple and was hard like un-cooked squash. Can you help us identify the tree?*
Email from Luba L.

Answer: The extension staff identified your mystery tree as Black Sapote (*Diospyros digyna*), a type of persimmon. The attractive tree is native to Eastern Mexico and Central America and don't bear fruit for the first 5-6 years. Sensitive to cold temperatures, the edible fruit normally ripens in our winter or early spring months and is often smaller (the size of a tennis ball). The rind is inedible, starting out olive-green and ripening to a deep, yellowish-green. Fully ripe, the edible pulp should be completely black in color and have a flavor and texture like chocolate pudding. Fruit is tomato-like and used for custards and ice cream. To learn more about this and other tropical fruits grown in South Florida, attend this year's extension event: 'Taste of Lee' on Saturday, June 30, 2012 from 9AM to 2PM at the First Baptist Church in Ft Myers.

June 16, 2012

Question: *I am seeking help for a hedge that runs the entire length of our yard. Six weeks ago, we started noticing bare areas. No bugs are visible. The problem is getting worse and spreading. Some branches have died. We hate to lose it. Are nutrients needed like 6-6-6? What can we do to save the hedge?*
Email from Cheryl N.

Answer: The damage to your weeping ficus hedge is caused by a small, winged insect called the ficus whitefly. It feeds on the undersides of leaves causing them to yellow, wilt and drop off. If the insect is still present, damaged leaves will appear dotted with small, silver or white spots. Since the hedge has suffered already from a massive loss of leaves, it is important not to over-water or over-fertilize. Check areas along the hedge that still have leaves. Look for both the whiteflies on the undersides of leaves. Also, look for other insects that are natural enemies for the whitefly. Lady beetle predators, parasitic wasps and lacewings feed on whitefly. If you choose to use an insecticide, look for a product labeled to control whitefly on ficus. Products containing the active ingredient, imidacloprid offer long-term control. A good example of one is "Bayer Advanced Garden™ Tree and Shrub" Insect Control. Products to use that are easier on the environment include insecticidal soap and horticultural oil spray. Follow all labeled instructions for mixing and applying. If no sign of the pest remains and the twigs are still supple and bendable, your hedge may produce new leaves and recover on its own. Learn more from the University of Florida/IFAS fact sheet:

[http://trec.ifas.ufl.edu/mannion/pdfs/Ficus%20Whitefly%20\(Feb2010\)%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf](http://trec.ifas.ufl.edu/mannion/pdfs/Ficus%20Whitefly%20(Feb2010)%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf)

Question: *I see a small bug chewing on the leaves of my key lime and other plants in my yard. It's the size of a ladybug except it is white and grayish colored with small black spots. How do I rid myself of them?*
Spraying them didn't work. Chuck from Cape Coral

This sounds like the Sri Lanka Weevil. This insect has become a persistent landscape pest in South Florida. This weevil damages new leaves on over 100 different plants. Feeding damage by this insect leaves tattered, gnarly-looking new leaves on plants. This insect goes unnoticed until it is disturbed by shaking branches. The most environmentally-friendly way to control them on trees and shrubs is to open an umbrella, turn it upside down, and shake the plant above the umbrella until the weevils fall out. Then dump the weevils into a bucket of soapy water. Damage to garden plants is usually only aesthetic. Key limes that are well established will recover from their feeding without any treatment. However, damage on younger plants can look quite severe. If this method does not get them under control, insecticides with the active ingredients,

acephate or one containing a pyrethroid provide some relief. These little guys can fly. Be sure to apply the insecticide spray in such a way that it comes in contact with all the weevils present. Plan to repeat your spray every 10-14 days until feeding subsides. *Thanks to Lee County Master Gardener, Jake Tomlinson for this answer.*

Question: *What is this plant called? It looks both like an octopus and a cactus. I saw it growing at a golf course. It reminded me of the plant, mother in law's tongue, with long, dark-green blades and a wide, yellow stripe down the center. The tall, swirling leaf blade forms in the center and is surrounded by spiraling spiny leaves about 3-5 feet long. Dan from Ft Myers*

Answer: The plant is probably one of the cultivars of *Agave americana*, also known as the Century Plant. These huge, spiny succulents start out as a small, basal sucker growing from a runner from a larger, parent plant. Eventually, a mammoth rosette of octopus-looking leaves grow to fill a space, 15 by 20 feet. In the center, a single, odd-looking, long and wide leaf appears. After waiting 10 to 30 years or longer (every 100 years as its name implies is unlikely), a tall flower stalk grows with yellow flowers. After a plant blooms one time, the stalk fades and the entire plant dies. Century plants are well suited to grow in our sandy, well-drained soil. A single plant can easily deter unwanted visitors, both wildlife and human. The variety you saw was probably, *Agave americana 'medio-picta aurea.'* Learn more from the fact sheet, 'Agave and Yucca, Tough Plants for Tough Times' at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/EP/EP41900.pdf>

June 30, 2012

Question: *I purchased and planted a pipevine last spring. I wasn't expecting ANYTHING to happen so soon but it bloomed 4 weeks later. What a shock!!! This vine is going crazy – with much bigger blooms than expected. Why are they so large? Email from Sara D.*

Answer: Beautiful choice! This may be the vigorous-growing, Giant Dutchman's Pipevine (*Aristolochia gigantea*). It will bloom both spring and fall in South Florida. *A. gigantea* produces huge, lobed or notched flags rather than blooms with long tails that's produced on the more common pipevine (*A. grandiflora*). The giant also has pointy leaves rather than rounded leaves seen on Calico-Flower.

Question: *I raised, tagged and released a monarch on 5/15/12. When I photographed the monarch two weeks later, I saw circular bare spots where scales were missing on the butterfly's right wings. One week later when I photographed the same monarch the wing membrane had torn at the tip of the forewing and was now a hole. I see no evidence of this on the left wings. What do you think happened? Email from Bill. R.*

Answer: (from monarch experts, Jim and Kel Dunford & Dr. Lincoln Brower) The missing wing scale spots are undoubtedly due to injury while the monarch's chrysalid underwent rapid metamorphosis (it's transformation from a caterpillar to adult butterfly). Usually, in the fall in colder parts of Florida, monarch chrysalids get lightly frozen and exhibit similar wing damage as yours. Your monarch in south Florida may have received excessive heat causing damage to its chrysalid. I am sure the scale loss was not due to the tagging process done locally to monitor adult monarchs. **Note:** You can still help tag and track monarchs. Local experts are studying the residential longevity and survival rates of adult monarchs in our part of

Florida. ID tags and data sheets are available. Send an email to Master Gardener, Gayle Edwards at Flmonarch@gmail.com.

Question: *Where can I sample tropical and native edibles like fresh fruits, veggies, ice cream and drinks. I also want to learn how to grow, harvest and prepare garden fruits and veggies? via phone request*

Answer: A fun and family-friendly event is today. Called, 'Taste of Lee,' it is worth each flavorful, educational and budget-wise minute. Organized by the Caloosa Rare Fruit Exchange Club and assisted by the Lee County Extension Master Gardeners, the event has only a \$1 per person entrance fee (kids are free).

Location: River District of Ft Myers, the First Baptist Church, 1735 Jackson Street. Hours are 9AM-2PM today only.

http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/HortClasses/2012_Taste_of_Lee.pdf

Question: *Can I obtain a 'free' Florida butterfly and wildflower identification brochure? Susie C. from Ft Myers*

Answer: *(from Stephanie K. at the Florida Museum of Natural History)* Yes. Our Florida wildflower and butterfly (tri-fold) brochure is on-line as a PDF document. Feel free to print as many copies as you would like. See it at: <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/wildflower/books.asp>

Question: *Which stopper would you suggest planting in a Florida-friendly yard? Marlene R. from Estero*

Answer: Under-used in south Florida landscapes, the common name, stopper, is derived from their historical uses, meaning to stop diarrhea. The tropical native plant Stoppers include many pioneering species: Spanish, Red, Redberry, Simpson's and White. Stopper. Seedlings often emerge from fruit spread by birds resting in open, shady places under large live oak hammock trees. Large clumps or tree thickets form providing shelter for more wildlife. Two stoppers, Simpson's and Spanish, are very suitability Florida-Friendly landscaping™ species for coastal backyards. These stoppers grow into attractive evergreen trees or shrubs, 15 feet tall and 6 feet wide. Fragrant flowers attract pollinating insects and the berries are consumed by both birds and other wildlife. Stoppers can be sheared into hedges and work well on property borders. Their bark is grayish or reddish brown. Leaves are small, dark green and leathery. Flowers appear in the late Spring as white fluffy, puffballs arranged delicately on the stem. One improved type, Simpson's Stopper 'Compacta' is available as a mounding, dwarf shrub. It grows five feet tall and wide. It is drought-tolerant and requires very little maintenance during the year.

July 14, 2012

Question: Can I save my big, old powderpuff tree? It seems to have a fungus-like, bulbous growth along some branches. They aren't mushroomy, but look like dark extensions of the bark. Some parts of the tree have died while other more central branches continue to grow leaves and flowers. Even though we had the tree cut back right after Hurricane Charley in 2004, the problem didn't appear until after Hurricane Wilma in 2005. (I'm a fifth generation native Floridian. My grandmother could grow anything, and knew every plant you could show her, My great-uncle was a horticulturist for Thomas Edison. That said, I can't seem to grow a philodendron successfully.) Can I help my tree?
Martha M., Ft Myers

Answer: It is unlikely that your powderpuff tree's slow decline since 2006 was caused by these disfiguring, bulbous growths. Your description makes me think you have a secondary problem known on many types of trees as tree burls. Burls often appear as random, abnormal swellings along a trunk or major branch. In your case, large sections of a branch may be affected. Causes of burls are poorly understood but branches broken after a hurricane, insect damage, and any other sorts of distress to a tree may be their cause. Consult with an ISA Certified Arborist. A tree professional may see a primary cause for the old tree's decline. Other causes include: a winter freeze or sustained cold injury, over-pruning or root problems like circling roots hidden underground.

Question: I recently lost a large Canary Island date palm. When removing the tree, we found hundreds of larvae and mature red & black palm weevils. I live in Lehigh on the north and west side. I have seen other Canary Island palms in Lehigh die with similar symptoms. healthy fronds break, new growth is stunted and creates debris that looks like nesting material. The palms die in just a matter of 2-3 months. There were no weevils evident until I cut it down. Holes had been bored into the trunk on the inside.
 Rosie S. via email

Answer: The palmetto weevil (*Rhynchophorus cruentatus*) is a very destructive, one-inch long beetle. The adult weevil's coloration varies from mostly red to all black. This insect prefers feeding in landscape palms, especially the Canary Island Date palm and other date palms, cabbage palmetto and saw palmettos. Attacking a Canary Island palm, the insect causes the older fronds to droop and collapse followed by the top plopping over. Less frequently affected palms include the bismarck, caryota, coconut, royal, latania and washingtonia palm. The palmetto weevil adult, grub or pupa are all hard to detect. The larvae feed inside a bored out hole at the base or boot of a palm frond. They eventually reach the heart or bud of the palm tree. Treatment is often futile and at best expensive. The best recourse for an infected tree is cutting it down and destroy all parts before the adult weevil emerges. To learn more, go to: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IN139>. The debris you see dropping from the palm is actually the normal sisal-like, palm trunk fibers coming from dying leaves.

Question: *Any new rain barrel workshops planned?* *request from Carrie*

Answer: Yes, the next FYN-rain barrel workshop is Saturday, July 28 at Rotary Park in Cape Coral at 9AM. The class is one hour long. Afterwards, you can shop at the native plant sale until 2PM. Prepay online or by sending a check for \$45. Go on-line to register at: <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu>.

Question: *Do frequent rains and higher water levels in my yard create more or less habitat for snakes? My newly-constructed home abuts a wetland preserve?* Rodney via phone

Answer: With more rainwater covers our yards, some wildlife, including many snakes, get displaced and move to higher ground. As a result, your chance encounter with a snake seeking dry land will increase. To stay safe, learn how to tell the difference between harmless, non-venomous snake species and potentially dangerous, venomous ones. Killing or attempting to kill snakes around your home greatly increases your chances of being bitten. Make sure gaps under doors, holes in walls, or openings on your roof or pool screen are sealed. In your yard, reduce tall grass and prune overgrown shrubs. Learn more about snake-proofing your yard. Visit the website, Florida Wildlife Extension. <http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/>

July 28, 2012

Question: *I'd like to add color to my garden right now? What flowering annuals or perennials should I plant? What would keep them blooming?* Vince, Cape Coral

Answer: There are several sun-loving choices for late summer planting. All have some heat tolerance and establish quickly. Several are native. Most will keep blooming continuously through this year and next. African blue basil is an attractive annual herb with purple and pale green leaves and purplish flower spikes. *Lantana camara* 'New gold' has a mounding habit, produces abundant flowers and nearly sterile seeds. A similar looking Florida native, *Lantana depressa* blooms with a profusion of cream colored flowers on mounding plants. Other summer planting choices include several with daisy-like flowers. Gallardia and Dune sunflower are natives, the later a vine. Plants for both drop seeds now for blooming in the fall and for next year's display. Globe amaranth is a long-lasting summer and fall bloomer. Pentas, tropical sage, scarlet milkweed and blue porterweed are all good summer starters. All these choices have significant heat tolerance. And, they prefer less irrigation than most other annuals commonly used once established. Turn off your flower bed's sprinklers to save water. Rely on summer and fall rainfall only. Collect rain water in barrels or cisterns and hand water or use a drip irrigation system. Use transplants grown locally. Keep the distance between each new transplant the same. Proper spacing reduces the chance of fungal diseases becoming established causing premature plant death. Lastly, keep weeded. **Obtain native plants at Rotary Park today during Cape Coral's summer native plant sale and rain barrel workshop.**

Question: *I miss having hosta lilies that frequent gardens up North. Someone mentioned there is a hosta sold that survives here? If so, where can I see or obtain it?* Murray via email

Answer: The normal rule of thumb in Florida is..... **Don't try growing hosta where orange trees flourish.** In SWFL the controlling factor is our lack of winter cold. Hostas are out of their normal hardiness range south of Jacksonville. However, they can be grown as annuals in containers or flower beds. Hosta require a winter cold dormancy period. Daytime temperatures need to average 43°F for 30 days. Even the so-called, 'tropical' hostas rarely survive multiple winters. *Hosta plantaginea*, the August lily, is the one most heat tolerant. One exception to the rule is a medium-sized (10-18"), variegated hybrid called SunHosta™. Its leaves have a green stripe in the leaf center and white variegation stripe on either side. SunHosta™ require less cold requirement compared to other variegated hosta varieties. Plant it in full sun. And, keep the soil moist but not constantly saturated. Horticulturists at the Edison Estate are growing it.

They may have plants for sale. If you try it, let us know your results. If possible add peat to the soil before planting. And, avoid fertilizing it in the heat of summer. In place of hosta lilies here, gardeners substitute hardy caladiums or large leaved begonias like 'dragon-wing', and rhizomatous-rooted types (other than tuberous types like Begonia 'Rex').

Question: *What's your secret to growing the herb, rosemary? You have a large plant in the ground in front of your house. What do you do to keep it alive? Frustrated in the Cape*

Answer: Finding the right spot took some trial and error. I worked the rosemary into an existing landscape bed and did not plant it on an herb mound. Nor did I amend the soil or add organic matter or fertilizer. It is surrounded by other drought tolerant, Florida-Friendly plants. The soil is well drained. Also, I planted it towards the front of the landscape bed with taller plants behind it. It receives continuous sun every day all year. It likes growing undisturbed. I cut a few stems occasionally for cooking or for making wreaths. Rosemary prefers minimal watering by hand or by regular irrigation even in the dry season. Initially, I also kept competing plants surrounding it (shade, root competition, etc.) at a distance. I prune off older or dying growth spikes only. The key to success I believe is not over-watering. I also made sure rain water off the house drained away from where it was planted.

August 11, 2012

Question: *What type of fertilizer should I use on my firebush? When and how much? I live in Lehigh Acres. Jo V.*

Answer: A good Florida-friendly landscaping shrub like firebush (*Hamelia patens*) requires minimal water or fertilizer to maintain and keep healthy. A Florida-native, Firebush has striking clusters of reddish-orange flowers and pearl-like, red & black fruit attractive to wildlife. Expect to see plenty of birds, hummingbirds and butterflies right now. Left to grow natural without a lot of pruning, Firebush grows rapidly in the heat of summer. Even in natural surroundings like a wet forest floor or swamp, firebush will regularly drop older leaves. Their dead leaves decompose rapidly, eventually becoming compost and plant food for the forest floor. Firebush growing in landscaped beds also show little benefit from any added fertilizer. For butterfly gardens where many firebush are planted, only a single fertilizer application of organic compost, mulch and/or 8-8-8 fertilizer in the Spring is warranted. When fertilizing, follow county guidelines. Learn more at: <http://fertilizesmart.com>. Since nutritional problems are rare on firebush, what else could be going on? In Lehigh Acres, firebush might exhibit thinning, leaf wilt and poor growth caused by three other problems: too much shade, cold damage and improper transplanting. All three problems mimic symptoms showing a lack of nutrition. Lehigh Acres is considered marginal for raising firebush. Cold damage is exhibited at temperatures below 40 °F. One positive note is cooler weather forces firebush to show its fall colored leaves of red, yellow and dark grayish purple. On over-pruned or cold-damaged firebush in the spring, expect a slower than normal recovery. Even if newly planted, firebush prefer supplemental water from irrigation. Finally, keep your plants mulched throughout the year with a 3" layer of recycled, organic mulch like Melaleuca or pine straw. Apply the mulch once or twice a year to keep soil moisture constant or to add well decomposed compost.

Question: *Can I grow a dwarf banana in a planter under my pool cage? Can I trust that the banana plant I buy will be truly dwarfed?*
Sonia O., Ft Myers

Answer: Yes, virtually all banana varieties have an expected or predictable height range. Choose a dwarf banana variety when growing under an enclosure. For example, Dwarf Cavendish stays between 6 and 10 feet tall. However, to make sure you want to guarantee having a shorter, patio form, choose those selected for their trunk size “Super Dwarf Cavendish” stays 2 to 4 ft tall. Another is called “Truly Tiny.” It has wide, medium-green leaves and produces a small hand of bananas while max-ing out only 2 feet tall. Another extreme shorty is called, “Little Prince.” It has red-flecked leaves. Other types sold, called ornamental bananas offer even more unique colorations and trunk forms. Improvements are made in size and color on the leaves, bract, terminal bud, flower and fruit. For example, a red banana sold might be selected to stay shorter like the “Dwarf Red Jamaica.” It has a reddish-colored, 8 foot high trunk and softer and sweeter, reddish fruit. Some other ornamental banana forms have yellow or orange flowers and stay 3 to 8 feet tall while displaying extremely upright-growing fruit. A few named selections include: “Bronze” or “Milky Way.” One with blue-toned, colored fruit is called “Ice Cream.” Another is called, “Siam Ruby” with its bright red leaves containing flecks of green.

Follow-up to a previous question about growing the new SunHosta™. *Horticulturist, Todd Roy at the Edison-Ford Winter Estate has plants to sell and suggests homeowners visit and see several growing in the moonlight garden. The plants look surprisingly good right now including ones in the nursery. Todd recommends keeping your new SunHosta™ lily out of the full sun as well as full shade. For these heat-loving hostas to look their best, find a partly-sunny or partly-shady spot, maybe on the east or north facing side of the house. Even the intense sun, high heat and humidity the last few weeks has only left a few with a light leaf burn. Full shade is no better. It too showed a leaf problem with some loss of variegation on each leaf.*

August 25, 2012

Question: *Thank you for the ID on my tree..... woman's-tongue, Albizia lebbek. I liked its perfect shape, size and fragrant blooms. Thanks to your office, I now know it is highly invasive and cannot be planted. Can you suggest a similar tree growing 25'-30' tall and have umbrella-like, spreading branches? Blooms should be fragrant, although size and shape is much more important.*

Ann P. via email

Answer: Consider Florida-Friendly alternatives that grow into small trees. Sweet acacia and fiddlewood are Florida natives, keep their leaves all year and max out at 15-20 feet. Sweet acacia is very thorny and in the same family as woman’s tongue. It has tight, ball-like, fragrant yellow flowers in the late Fall. Birds love the protection sweet acacia’s thorns provide. Otherwise, sweet acacia creates dappled shade from an open leaf canopy. The other choice, fiddlewood blooms continuously in the Spring, Summer and Fall. Look for its lilac-like, white tubular and fragrant flowers that attract butterflies for nectar. After flowering, golden berries attract birds. Use either type of tree in full sun. Other tree possibilities include Gumbo Limbo, Pigeon Plum, Geiger Tree and Cinnamon Bark. The gumbo limbo tree has artistic, open branching, often

with peeling bark. Cinnamon bark has thick wind resistant, leathery leaves and multi-colored flowers. Growing slowly, it has virtually no maintenance. All these trees and others like them can be seen at the FYN demonstration garden at Rutenberg Park. They also appear online in the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Design Guide at: http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/publications/files/FFL_Plant_Selection_Guide.pdf.

Question: *What can we do to solve short and long-term problems with our communities' stormwater pond? Our pond recently had an algal bloom and I was told an aquatics company came in and managed it using herbicides and algaecides. Will our pond now stay healthy? JP*

Answer: The proverbial 'WE' in your question makes all the difference caring for your lake. Without further servicing by a contractor, expect seasonal lake water changes needing addressed. First and foremost, do test and trial planting natives along the water's edge. Even better, plant native plants AND start monitoring the lake's water quality. Sample and test monthly or at least seasonally. In the meantime, talk with several experts about possible long-term solutions. Volunteer with a local community 'watch' program like Pondwatch or CanalWatch to gain further incite. At any time of year, install new native plants on the water's edge by planting them in wide (8-15') bands or in small compact groupings. Overtime, nature will create an attractive and natural-looking border. Unlike lawn grasses growing right along the water, these recommended littoral natives require minimal maintenance like mowing, weeding and pest control. Avoid having lawn grasses growing right up to the water's edge. A plant buffer of 6 feet or more keeps significant lawn clippings getting deposited in the water. Littoral natives include bulrush, soft rush, pickerelweed and duck potato. To stabilize the bank, consider tree species like bald or pond cypress, pond apple, wax myrtle, green buttonwood, popash, swamp bay, elderberry, or winged elm. Finish off your native plant border with pine straw mulch.

Question: *We need help identifying the attached photo. It was seen on the boardwalk at 6 Mile Cypress Slough. It looked like some kind of caterpillar using dried leaves as camouflage.*

Thanks for your help.

Suzy

Answer: The plant used as camouflage looks like elm tree *leaves*. What you are seeing is a bag of stuff the caterpillar forms around itself and keeping it hidden from bird predators. Called a bagworm, *Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis*, it feeds on elm and hundreds of other plant types both in the slough and nearby yards. Other plants bagworms prefer feeding on include seagrape, pine and even palm fronds. The bags are created by combining silk with leaf pieces, sand, soil, twigs, bark, bird droppings, etc. Bagworms often go unnoticed until a single tree or branch is completely defoliated. In a yard, bagworms can be removed by hand and destroyed. Or, destroy using a high pressure stream of water which tears apart their bags. This pest is only controlled with sprays like Dipel, Thuricide or Bt when the bags are very small and green.

September 8, 2012

Question: *What is the large black swallowtail I've seen flying at the butterfly garden at Terry Park? It has strikingly similar markings to the much talked about Schaus Swallowtail found only in the Florida Keys.*

Steve via email

Answer: You've likely seen either the Polydamus Swallowtail or its larger cousin, the Giant Swallowtail. Both have been seen at Terry Park. The Polydamus is the more likely of the two. Their caterpillars are prevalent in this garden thanks to the host plant, Dutchman's Pipevine. The Polydamus wing span is 3.5-4.5 inches compared to the Giant's 5 -7.5 inches. Both have distinct yellow spots or banding running across their fore and hind wings. The Polydamus looks browner in the sun and does not have the signature swallow "tails" on their hind wings. Also, the Giant Swallowtail looks completely yellow when their wings are folded up while resting. The much endangered Schaus swallowtail looks very similar to both. It has tails like the Giant but is not known to reside here. The Schaus is so rare, only four were found in the wild last spring in the Florida Keys. A last ditch effort to keep them from extinction is underway. Learn more about butterfly habitat in our area at our upcoming SWFL Butterfly Conference planned for Saturday, November 3 at the extension office. Cost is \$15. This year's keynote speaker is Dr. Roger L. Hammer, an award-winning naturalist and native plant expert from Miami-Dade County. Learn more at www.lee.ifas.ufl.edu. Or, call the Horticulture Help Desk at 239-533-7504.

Question: *We have a tree in our backyard that is HUGE (not a live oak variety) and has now invaded the house and lanai area. We would like to trim it down away from the house or remove it completely. When we first moved in 20 years ago someone told us it was a protected species. Does it need trimmed down now because it is out of control! I have looked on the ID databases but cannot seem to identify it. I do have photos I can email you. —Nancy L., Cape Coral--*

Answer: Your tree invasion probably needed addressed 20 years ago or at planting. Large tree species often need removed early because they were planted too close to homes. Called a hazard tree with overhanging branches, removal may be your best option. Many different types of large trees are still being incorrectly planted too close to residences. Trees I've seen planted too close to newly built homes include mahogany, Southern magnolia, Bismarck and royal palms, live oak, laurel oak and gumbo limbo. No large tree species should be planted closer than 20 feet.. Seek advice from extension or ISA-certified arborists about hazard trees. Prune out overhanging branches over several years. A better solution is to remove and replace with a smaller tree species like the Geiger tree, willow bustic, wax myrtle, fiddlewood, Florida privet, jatropa, weeping yaupon holly and many others. The extension office can help identify your tree. Send an email with two or three photos of your tree and its parts. Or, bring samples to the extension office. The address and hours are posted at: <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/HorticultureHelpDesk.shtml>

Question: *Our red maple has a moss-like covering on the trunk and appears to be dying. Are the two connected?*
Wendell via email

Answer: The covering is not moss but a flaky or feathery organism called lichens. Living on rocks, branches and bark, lichens can be grey, white, black, red, gold or yellow. Covering rocks like moss or coating a trunk of a tree, all types of lichens mutually co-exist on any plant without harm. Consider other possible causes for the maple's poor growth. I suspect root or a transplanting problem. Lichens are not a pest and no chemical spray legally controls them. Lichens exist everywhere on earth. Most similar to algae, lichens have fungal hyphae, called rhizoids, used to stick itself firmly to a surface. Lichens obtain any minerals needed for survival from rain water, organic debris blowing in the wind, plant parts, bird excrement, etc. Despite their light fuzzy look, lichens live in extreme heat, cold and drought, sun or shade. On rocks, lichens adhere so tightly that they literally make soil by breaking away tiny fragment pieces.

September 22, 2012

Question: *What flowering shrub makes a nice border for a pool cage? We are seasonal resident living in a large, Ft Myers, master-planned community restricting our choices to only an 'approved' list. However, we have had to replace the pool border twice with plumbago and four years later using ixora. Despite fertilizing and using an in-ground sprinkler timer set for twice weekly watering, both types failed to thrive. We like the privacy of a low border plant and and like to see it trimmed to 4 feet. Our community has a hired landscape contractor who maintains the lawn and keeps our shrubs trimmed. Our neighbor's hibiscus hedge looks good but the flowers are always getting cut off. What better plant choices do we have?*
Candy W. Ft Myers

Answer: Your search for the right plant for a low privacy border requires review of your communities 'Approved' landscape plant list. Depending on the age of your community, the list could be short, One community nearby had just fifteen different shrubs allowed. Plumbago, ixora and hibiscus didn't work. Finding the right alternative requires ruling out those unsuitable for the site. After screening out other least suitable types: croton "Mammy", dwarf bougainvillea, foxtails, dwarf allamanda and xanadu. your location and soil conditions dictate picking from just a list of three: Lantana depressa, Indian hawthorne and Thryallis (Rain-of-Gold). Two others, variegated arboricola and Ilex "Schellings," lacked the strong flowering habit you would like. With only three left, how short does the border need to stay? All three are used in Florida-Friendly Landscaping™, require little maintenance pruning, fertilizer or extra water. Of the three, Pineland (yellow) or 'gold-mound' lantana produce the shortest plants, only 2 to 3 foot high. However, lantana also needs replanted most often, every 3-5 years. Indian hawthorn is more woody, evergreen, fast-growing and thrives in poor soil. This shrub stays dense and dark green in sun or shade and tops out at 4 feet. Its mostly white blooms show early each spring. Thyrallis grows slightly taller (4-5 ft), has cascading, golden-yellow blooms year-round. Of the three, thryallis has the highest requirement for regular weekly, irrigation off-season.

Question: An uninvited guest sprung up again in one of my mulch beds. It looks like a bulb about the size of a medium onion with a long flower stalk and miniscule leaves. Should I destroy it? Last year I pulled up several without knowing what it is. I'm sure I didn't plant them but wonder where it came from? —
Tom C. N. Naples--

Answer: Keep an eye out for this alien invader, still rare but becoming more a problem. Classified as a newly naturalized, ground orchid in Florida, called *Eulophia graminea* (no common name yet), it is thought to be a possible escapee orchid from hobbyists growers. First discovered on the east coast in a residential garden in Miami in 2007, we've seen several spring up unexpectedly in Lee County this year, including one found growing in the herb garden at Terry Park. Look for a bulb-like stem between two leaf nodes, called a pseudobulb. The orchid favors open, warm and sunny spots, often seen partially buried in a thick woodchip mulch layer. Once mature, the psuedobulb produces a long, single shoot or stalk with three to five grass-like leaves and multiple tiny orchid flowers. By growing this plant you might be growing a future menace to your garden. Pull it out by hand to control. You may need to remove more plants as they sprout up.

Question: *Why can't a supermarket tomato taste more like an heirloom tomato?* via email

Answer: That reality is closer than first thought thanks to a discovery from University of Florida researchers. Heirloom tomatoes are old varieties gardeners and swear by their perfect, tomato taste. With names like Brandywine Red Landis Valley, Abraham Lincoln, Big Raspberry, Red Plum or Boxcar Willie, prized gardening heirloom varieties have true tomato taste but few other advantages like high yields and better disease resistance. However, few if any, named heirloom types ever make it onto supermarket shelves. Researchers examined over 100 heirloom types using over 100 volunteer taste testers. Results showed newly discovered chemistry produced the superior tomato taste. The results surprised researchers. The research showed that some chemicals that scientists previously thought were important were not. Researchers are now focused on finding ways to transfer these ‘flavor’ chemicals into commercially grown tomato varieties in Florida.

Common heirloom varieties growing in South Florida, **Monica Ozores-Hampton**, from fact sheet EDIS HS921, Title: Growing Heirloom Tomato Varieties in Southwest Florida.
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/HS/HS17400.pdf>

Tasti-Lee™ :A tomato grown commercially under Florida summer weather conditions and available in local Supermarkets in Southwest Florida, (A tomato resulting from years of testing by UF researchers),

October 6, 2012

Question: A friend suggested I apply to become a Master Gardener volunteer. Despite my gardening experience, there are still flowering plants in SWFL I can't identify. What resources can help me identify plants? Shirley W., Ft Myers

Answer: During 14 weeks of intensive classroom training and guided tours, Master Gardener trainees learn ‘how to’ identify over 100, commonly used landscape plants. The fourteen weeks of training consists of both subject matter (botany, plant propagation, etc.) in a classroom as well as weekly, ‘hands-on’ plant and pest identification exercises. For those interested, training will start Friday, January 11, 2013 and continues each Friday till the end of April. Classes are from 9AM-3:30PM at either Terry or Rutenberg Park. Apply by using a form online at: <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNElectronicForm/MGApplication.pdf> . After completing the mandatory classes and tours, each trainee completes 75 volunteer hours by speaking or working in a public demonstration garden. Another good way to learn ‘SWFL plants Id. is by visiting ‘local’ demo. gardens when Master Gardeners are present. Each garden schedules regular guided tours for the public. One final way is using new, “What’s Blooming?” posters and charts on-line at: <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/What'sBlooming.shtml> . A total of eighteen posters each show 20 or more photos of flowering plants taken over the year at Rutenberg, Terry or Lakes Park. A companion descriptive chart for Identifies plants on each poster.

Question: My royal palm is 20 feet tall and looks mostly healthy except for the newly emerging leaf. The leaf itself looks normal in size and shape but instead of being green, it is bright yellow. Another royal palm within a few feet of this one had to be removed from a lightning strikie. What’s wrong and should it too be treated or removed? Tom S., Cape Coral

Answer: Royal palms (*Roystonea elata*) are native to Florida and grow rapidly this time of year. So fast, in fact, that one new leaf develops each month. I expect your affected palm leaf or frond may look greener as it emerges fully. But first, let's rule out a few common problems with royals. First, the royal palm bug causes scattered yellow spots only on the lower surface of new leaves. Second, distorted new leaves with frizzle top have new growth emerging looking small, stunted, streaky, chlorotic and grayish looking. Since none of these problems fit your description, I suspect a problem occurred last summer causing poor iron uptake from the palm roots from the surrounding soil. If new leaves continue to emerge yellow in color, use a suitable palm fertilizer containing 2% iron with other nutrients like manganese, magnesium & potassium. Also, check the soil pH. Bring a soil test to the extension office for free testing.. Your palm may be growing in very alkaline soil with a pH greater than 7.5. Correcting any problems now using fertilizer won't green up the affected leaf. However, subsequent leaves should eventually emerge looking healthy. My guess is root injury might have triggered your problem when the adjacent palm was dug up. Use a palm-blend fertilizer with roughly an analyses of 8-2-12-(4Mg), containing iron and manganese (sulfate) and one that has 100% of its nitrogen, potassium and magnesium in a slow release form. One example is a product labeled as Nurserymen's Sure-Gro. Lastly, eliminate any turf growing under the canopy of the palm and apply three inches of fresh mulch (no deeper).

Question: I want to plant a tree or shrub in a large container beside our porch. I would prefer something that flowers and does not reach more than 15 feet after trimming. What about a crape myrtle?
Sandra M., Ft Myers

Answer: The plant selected is limited only by how large a container you can obtain. Seek out dwarf plant forms and/or only trees known to stay small trees. Secure a container slightly larger in diameter than the original tree's nursery pot or shrub root ball. A few large container plants that have done well for me under different light levels include the traveler's-tree, Bird-of-Paradise, Frangipani, Christmas Palm, Bottle Palm, Crotons, Pitch Apple, (Autograph tree), dwarf banana, and others. Use only crape myrtles that stay small, either as a large shrub or small tree (not Queen crape myrtle). Remember that no crape myrtle likes extensive hard trimming.

October 20, 2012

Question: I like the look of border grass planted in a narrow strip along our front sidewalk. What would you use?
Sam via email

Answer: The phrase 'border grass' refers to any plant, usually a groundcover species, used in a long, narrow strip along the front edge of a landscape bed. Plants used as border grasses are often less than 2 feet tall, clump-forming in growth habit and look grass-like. Most border grasses are **not** true grasses. By selecting the right one for your yard, border grasses are easy to maintain once established. One easy way to preserve them year after year is mowing or cutting back old growth in the late winter or early spring. The most common one, liriopé (*Liriope muscari*) whether with solid green or variegated leaves, needs planted with some shade. It creates an attractive solid green or variegated sidewalk border. Ask a sales clerk at a garden center to show you border grass. Most likely they will show you liriopé or another that looks similar,

mondo-grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus*). To confuse you even further, these two types of plants might be called monkey grass or Aztec grass. Despite these two border grasses widespread use here, a better one to use in full sun is called flax lily (*Dianella tasmanica*). Also called blueberry flax, this clumping groundcover has green and variegated forms with wide, strap-like leaves and bold white stripes. The flowers are blue and less prominent than flowers on liriopse. Sometimes, other plants are used as border grass including: bulbine (*Bulbine frutescens*) and several good native plants like spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohiensis*), Elliott's love grass (*Eragrostis elliottii*), golden creeper (*Ernodea littoralis*) and pencilflower (*Stylosanthes biflora*).

Question: *I would like to purchase 1-2 barrels of the size used to make rain barrels? Where can I buy them?*
Ann P., Ft Myers

Answer: Rain barrels can refer to any container that captures rainwater. They are usually large containers (55 gallons or larger) placed permanently under downspouts to catch roof runoff. The stored rainwater is used to water plants year-round. Rain barrels are fitted with overflow valves and a screen or rain head placed over the downspout opening catching debris and mosquito larvae. Rain barrels also have a tap, hose bibb and/or a pump to distribute the water by gravity feed or used for hand watering. How much water can you expect to collect? Use this formula: One inch of rain water per 1,000 square feet of roof area will result in about 600 gallons of collected water. Today is your last chance in 2012 to get a basic rain barrel from extension. These rain barrels hold 55 gallons. Site is Manatee Park. An informational meeting starts at 9AM in the administration building. Cost for a rain barrel is \$45 each. A native plant sale is also in the park. Rain barrels are constructed by our Lee County Master Gardener volunteers.

Question: *What is this weedy vine covering our coral honeysuckle? How do we get rid of it? —Marjorie in Ft Myers*

Answer: This high-climbing vine competes with other vines by growing right through and over top of other plants. An old world tropical vine called balsam-apple (*Momordica charantia*), its leaves and fruit look like a wild cucumber. Each weedy seedling roots from a seed dropped this year or last. On any fence, it easily scrambles over other vines of fences or hedges. Fortunately, if you catch it early, you can just pull it out of the plant it covers. Its clinging tendrils break free fairly easily. Physically pull out the corky stems and roots before they set any flower or fruit. Any of the green or yellow cucumber-like fruit should be harvested and destroyed before seeds fall to the ground. Most of its fruits are broadly egg-shaped and ribbed or bumpy-looking. Once the fruit opens, beware! The seeds are mature enough to germinate extending your problem. If you see sticky orange and bright red pulp, you are too late to catch all the released seeds. Any seeds that come in contact with the soil seem to germinate without fail in warm weather. Once balsam-apple covers another vine, shrub, wall or fence, it is going to be more difficult to pull off by hand. Be sure to wear gloves

November 3, 2012

Question: *What part of our yard needs to use Florida-Friendly landscaping? Do these areas look a certain way? I walk my dog at night and have seen a strange insect that looks like sticks on my driveway? Could they be coming from my yard and cause any harm to my dog?*
Karen from Pine Island

Answer: Florida-Friendly yards on Pine Island often look a certain way. Many lots had the native trees like pine trees preserved. Sometime, with native flora underneath (saw palmetto, goldenrod, etc.). Yards planned for pets or children need a minimum of 250 square feet of lawn best kept in full sun. If starting out new, plant shade trees on the east, west or south facing sides of the house. Slash pine, live oak, red maple, sea grape and gumbo limbo are a few possibilities. Follow up with a few native shrubs like horizontal cocoplum, buttonwood or dwarf yaupon holly. Your driveway insect is probably a particular type of walking stick, brownish-black in color and relatively small in length 1 to 2½ inches. If it has two, long yellowish stripes running down its back, it is, the two-striped walking stick (*Anisomorpha buprestoides*). The smaller, pint-sized male can often be seen sitting on the back of the larger female. “If you see a live “dead” stick in your Florida yard, observe it if you wish, but don’t “bug” it.” This good advice comes from Dan Culvert, the Okeechobee County extension agent. Avoid any close contact between this insect, you and dog. With nicknames like the spitting devil, devil’s riding horse and musk mare, avoid being closer than a few feet away. When disturbed, this walking stick sprays a foul smelling fluid which is especially painful if it gets in you or your dog’s eyes. This walking stick feeds on oak, rosemary, roses, crape myrtle and ligustrum.

Question: *Do all native plants attract butterflies? What about perennial peanut?* Via email

Answer: In general butterflies are attracted to many different flowering plants, mostly natives as nectar sources. Not every native wildflower is preferred by every butterfly nor supplying easy access to its nectar. Of those that do, choose only those plants recommended for landscapes here. In some cases, non-native plants like perennial peanut (*Arachis glabrata*) grow well here and will attract certain butterflies. Perennial peanut is both a host plant for the barred yellow and the barred sulphur butterfly and a nectar source for swallowtails (all types). But, butterflies need to find more than just nectar plants. For the species to survive, “Host” plant types must be present mostly in preserved areas and butterfly gardens. Each type of butterfly selects a certain host plant in order to lay eggs for the next generation. Host plants become the ratty-looking food sources for a butterfly’s larval caterpillar. Expect to see some host plants stripped bear in a butterfly garden. Examples include monarch caterpillars feed only on milkweed, and Zebra Longwing feeding on passionvine. Gulf fritillaries also use passionvine exclusively. If you want butterflies to visit your butterfly garden, you will need both host and nectar plants. Learn more at today’s Southwest Florida Butterfly Conference starting at 9AM at the extension office at Terry Park.

Question: I’m a new resident in Cape Coral from Minnesota. I want to plant natives only in my yard. Is there a guided tour in the Cape featuring only native plants? *Vanessa from Cape Coral*

Answer: Yes. Several years ago, Master Gardeners Joan and Warren Bush installed a native plant landscape surrounding the Cape Coral Historical Museum. Now a Florida Yard and Neighborhood demonstration garden, it features dozens of different native plants requiring no irrigation or fertilizer. One beautiful example in the garden right now is a small endangered tree called Bahama Strongbark (*Bourreria succulent*). The Lee County Master Gardeners now provide a monthly guided tour on the second Wednesday of each month (between 1-4PM). Upcoming tour dates are Nov. 14, Dec. 11, Jan 9, Feb. 13, Mar. 13 and Apr. 10. There is also a tour of the historic rose garden sponsored by the garden club. The Florida Yard tour will teach you how to use plants to conserve water, improve water quality in the Cape Coral canals and restore our environment. For more information, contact the extension office.

November 17, 2012

Question: *What tree produces a seed pod resembling an ear? The pod is dark brown, curved into a circle and is about 3 inches long.*

Chris from Pine Island

Answer: Aptly named for its mammoth size, the Elephant tree is an exotic, non-native tropical tree that produces a hard, circular seed pod that's curled just like a human ear. Also called the Ear Tree, *Enterolobium cyclocarpum*, the tree easily reaches a height of 100 feet and spreads 70 feet wide. The trees compound leaves look and feel feathery. Over time, the tree produces a wide canopy of good shade. However, other qualities of this tree are much less desirable. The tree is prone to dropping small and large branches & twigs. Storm winds make the problem even worse. This tree needs regular attention at and above ground level. To have this large tree pruned properly, hire an ISA certified arborist. Finally, regularly maintain the landscape underneath by cleaning up fallen branches as well as its messy seed pods.

Question: *What is the Alva flower? Is it present at Lakes Park?*

P. Myers

Answer: Named by its town's founder, a Dutch botanist named Captain Peter Nelson, the small white flower people refer to 'the Alva flower' once bloomed along the banks of the Caloosahatchee River one hundred years ago. A native wildflower that is now commonly called short-leafed rosegentian or white marsh pink, *Sabatia brevifolia* has flowers similar to its cousin, *Sabatia decandra* or Bartram's rosegentian. Bartram's also prefers un-disturbed soil and marshy places like those along the CREW Marsh Trails. To my knowledge, the Alva flower is not in cultivation and by law it cannot be collected from the wild. However, you can photograph it if found in somewhat drier, occasionally wet places like preserves, pinelands and dry prairies. See it growing near Alva at Hickey's Creek Mitigation Park. At Lakes Park, it should still be present in the northern, habitat places and be visible on the edges of woodland clearings. Unfortunately, other more aggressive and prohibited invasive plants like wedelia may keep you from finding it quickly.

Question: *I have a question about using pine straw mulch. Is it a greater fire hazard than other mulches? Are there any regulations on using it? In Colorado, where I'm from, it was a real concern. Thanks. Fred*

Answer: The last state forester I quizzed about using pine straw mulch saw its fire risk much less than leaving highly flammable plants near your home like dried grass, and scrubby undergrowth such as wax myrtle. To prepare for the dry season and decrease your home's fire hazard, remove first any dead trees, limbs, remove brush piles and clean up dead leaves. Also, remove fences leading right up to a structure. Under mature pine trees, remove tall shrubs, woody vines, Spanish moss, etc. and avoid planting any additional ladder fuel. Concentrate on removing climbing plants, loose leaf litter and dead palm fronds. After speaking to a Lehigh Acres fireman, Master Gardener, Dan Jergensen provided this information. There are no fire code restrictions regarding the use of pine straw as mulch in Lee County. Pine straw fires are much worse if you live in a pine forest where pine needles accumulate 3-4 feet deep rather than spread out as a 3-4 inch mulch layer. However once ignited, pine straw fires do produce a lot of smoke and can be difficult to extinguish. In the future, consider using a stone mulch or lava rock in your landscape beds immediately bordering your house.

Question: *Are dead tree snags hazardous to a neighborhood? My lot next door has a dead pine tree that has not been removed.*
Emily from Cape Coral

Answer: Dead tree and palm snags are usually left in wooded areas to increase bird and other wildlife habitat. The top of dead trees in your yard can be cut to a lower, more stable size and left for vines to climb like Virginia creeper. A tall tree snag in a firewise landscape would be at a minimum distance of 30 feet or more from any structure. In place of a snag, consider using bird and bat boxes fastened to live trees. I do recall, several years ago in the Cape, damage occurred to houses and cars in one neighborhood after a dead tree was struck by lightning and exploded on impact.

December 1, 2012

Question: *I am interested in having my yard recognized as "Florida-Friendly." My backyard is ready for recognition based on the on-line checklist. However, I am waiting for the city to complete the sewer project before installing new landscaping in the front yard. Can the back yard be recognized separately from the front?*
Steve M., Cape Coral

Answer: Using the on-line FYN Official Yard Recognition Checklist to make water conservation and water quality improvements in your backyard is a great starting point. However, I'd recommend waiting till the entire yard is ready before having it recognized. Also, I'd wait to plant out front in or near the road's right-of-way. Construction damage may occur to any trees or shrubs when a sewer line gets dug to the house. Newly planted trees or palms will have roots in the top three inches of soil that are easily damaged physically or by the weight of wheel tracks from heavy construction equipment. Any tree wounding to the trunk of a tree could lead to problems later. Often, injured trees injury take up to five years before symptoms appear from construction damage. Sometimes, secondary pests like borers or canker diseases kill the tree. Refer to this IFAS fact sheet: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/IFAS/IFAS08900.pdf>

Question: *Who leads the weekly tour at the Florida yard demonstration at Rutenberg Park? Can I bring my landscape committee for the next tour?*
Gwen P., Ft Myers

Answer: The Florida Yard & Neighborhoods extension agent or a Lee County Master Gardener familiar with the nine Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles provide the free, informational tours. Landscape committees are welcome to arrange with the extension office to come on a Wednesday morning. Or, you can arrange a special date or time just for your committee. Landscape committees from homeowner associations can also request additional on-site education to their full membership after first taking the guided walk. Tours at Rutenberg Park start each Wednesday at 10:30AM. Garden address is 6490 South Pointe Blvd., Ft Myers just off of College Parkway. Other weekly or monthly garden tours are offered to communities at other garden demonstration sites including the botanical gardens at Lakes Park, the gardens at the extension office at Terry Park or the native plant and rose garden at the Cape Coral Historical Society Museum.

Question: *Can I still get in next year's Master Gardener training class.* Karen H. Lehigh Acres.

Answer: This is the last week to apply for the Lee County Master Gardener training classes which starts in January. Weekly classes start at Terry Park and later move to a classroom at Rutenberg Park. Start date is January 11. Classes end April 26. Cost for the 15 week horticulture and gardening series is \$130. Use an application online at: <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNElectronicForm/MGApplication.pdf>.

Question: *Are dead tree snags hazardous to a neighborhood? My lot next door has a dead pine tree that has not been removed.* Emily from Cape Coral

Answer: Dead tree and palm snags are usually left in wooded areas to increase bird and other wildlife habitat. The top of dead trees in your yard can be cut to a lower, more stable size and left for vines to climb like Virginia creeper. A tall tree snag in a firewise landscape would be at a minimum distance of 30 feet or more from any structure. In place of a snag, consider using bird and bat boxes fastened to live trees. I do recall, several years ago in the Cape, damage occurred to houses and cars in one neighborhood after a dead tree was struck by lightning and exploded on impact.

Question: *I live in a deed restricted community in Lee County. What trees in our community can be legally cut down and removed? We plan to replace trees that are native with a similar native tree. Trees like live oak or sea grape.* Bob from Ft Myers

Answer: Lee County land development codes and tree protection regulations exist to protect and preserve the benefits of a communities' native tree canopy. Compliance and enforcement standards apply for preserving trees listed as protected and native tree species.

<http://www.leegov.com/gov/dept/dcd/EnvSciences/TreeProtection/Pages/ProtectedTreeList.aspx>

Live oak and sea grape are both listed as protected. Removing these and any other trees identified and listed as protected in your community without a previously obtained Vegetation Removal Permit may violate Lee County codes. Talk with Community Development & Environmental Sciences staff in Lee County before proceeding to prune or cut down any community trees. In most situations, replacement tree species must be planted on the same site from which they were removed.

December 14, 2012

Question: *I thought the native coontie would be easy to grow? My perfectly healthy plant suddenly collapsed and died after just a few years in the ground. As the leaves dieback, bright orange seeds are falling from the now collapsing center cone. Is this normal?* Why me in Cape Coral?

Answer: This phenomena is common enough that diagnosticians have dubbed it with a name CSDS, Coontie Sudden Death Syndrome (CSDS). CSDS may neither be fatal nor necessarily real. But probably something caused by environmental or cultural factors and not induced by a pathogen or disease. However like most 'conditions' in the plant world, environmental stress is likely: foot traffic damaging roots, planting in low spot that's too wet, originally planted too deep or insects are damaging the leaves like scale or mealy

bugs, Is the coontie dead or just resting? Dig down with your hands and see if the main stem (or caudex) is hard. If it is mushy or rotted totally your coontie is dead. If the stem is firm, it is just fine. Fertilize with worm castings in March and April prior to a good flush of new growth in May. Turn off the sprinklers and let mother nature water it. Overwatering a weakened coontie with CSDS could make the condition terminal by Spring.

Question: *I want to plant a ground cover between stepping stones in my southern exposure garden? I came across a plant called stonecrop. Is this something that can take our summer heat & remain evergreen? Although this doesn't flower do you have any suggestions for a flowering ground cover that would fit that description? I originally thought mimosa would work. I tried it in another part of the garden (mistake as you know) & decided the "runners" could be a danger along a foot path. .Davie., Cape Coral*

Answer: What you are looking for is a well behaved edge plants staying six to 12 inches tall. Stonecrop usually refers to low-growing, pathway or container plants known as a group as sedums. The most common ones here are chartreuse-gold in color and use the names Sedum acre, golden carpet or gold moss. Sedum rupestre hybrids are also sold like 'Florida Friendly Gold'™ or Proven Winner 'Lemon Coral'™. Sedum rupestre has proven to be the tougher of the two when used farther south.. However our heat and humidity with full sun here pushes it out of its normal tolerance range. I'd treat a stonecrop planting as annual plantings. A more permanent solution for edge planting include the popular, rhizomal-type Ecoturf perennial peanut. Avoid purchasing the stoloniferous type like Repens Golden Glory. Also consider using native plants along pathways and stepping stones. Ruellia caroliniensis or Carolina Wild Petunia has worked with a northern exposure for me. It has violet, trumpet-shaped flowers on short hairy stems. A few other ideas: spiderwort, pencilflower, gaillardia and tropical sage. Several smaller, Florida bunchgrasses might work. Most are 16" to 24" high. Muhly grass and Elliott's lovegrass like to both sunny and dry. To see more native groundcovers, take a guided tour with a Master Gardener on Wednesday mornings starting at 10:30AM at Rutenberg Park, 6490 South Pointe Blvd . Ft Myers.

Question: *We have looked at your website and really think it is great. We are trying to re-landscape the entire yard but really don't know where to get started. Can you help? Bob from Ft Myers*

Answer: An important first step is to assess what you have in the yard right now. Is there a working sprinkler system? What landscape plants are planted too close to the house? A critical first step missed by many new homeowners is determining what invasive exotic plants (trees, shrubs and groundcovers) are best removed before installing Florida-Friendly landscaping. If not sure what plants you have, bring a sample to the extension office for identification. Once you know what should be removed first, then go to local garden centers and ask about suitable replacement plants. Transforming your yard is a process so start small. Choose one section of your yard to begin plantings. Side or back borders and lawn areas along waterways often get chosen first to redo. For any plantings along the water, a 10-foot maintenance-free buffer zone using trees, shrubs and groundcovers can work in place of turfgrass. Decide first what trees and shrubs you like that would not impede your view of the water. Choose plants suggested to thrive with less fertilize, pruning and irrigation. Use the plant selection tool for more plant ideas at <http://www.floridayards.org/>. The website quickly gives you plant alternatives for the yard conditions you have.

December 14, 2012

2012 IN REVIEW

Prologue: *Greetings and thank you for your many and varied questions for this column, The high volume of questions our horticulture help desk staff and Master gardener volunteers respond to helps getting answers to as many of you as possible. In the end, 18,300 words were used for the column to give readers a snapshot of what's being asked. In total, we received and responded to 4,700 gardening questions, 80 of which made it into this garden column in 2012.*

After reviewing this past year's columns, a strong theme emerges asking gardeners to plant more and a greater diversity of trees to improve our surroundings and the environment. The past year's columns recommended over 53 different trees, many of which are Florida-Friendly and/or SWFL native including: slash pine, live oak, sea grape, gumbo limbo and wax myrtle.

Another theme running through these pages surprised even me... the use of the color 'black.' Black appears more frequently in nature than given credit. For example, black described the color of pods on the scrabbled egg tree and the edible pulp inside the fruit of the Black Sapote tree. Black also describes the spots on a frequently seen pest, the Sri Lanka weevil as a dominant color variation for a pest known as palm weevil. And finally, black was the key color describing several swallowtails, lichens and even the two-stripped walking stick.

"People can have the Model T in any color - so long as it's black." -- Henry Ford

For 2013, wishing all a peaceful New Year! Tom Becker

Question: I can't remember what you told me about growing hosta? You mentioned your answer would appear in an upcoming column. I left town before seeing it last Spring? Is your answer to my question available on-line?
Murray

Answer: *Yes. We placed your answer along with all FAQs on an extension webpage. Use the A to Z index and search by the subject matter. All are posted at http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/News-Press_Q&A.shtml.*

Question: There is a plant growing next to my cactus? It wasn't there when I left last May. Now it is over 6 feet tall. It is sort-of pretty but I can't let it grow taller. What is it? What should I do with it? D. G., St. James City

Answer: *Your newly discovered plant is saltbush, *Baccharis halimifolia*. Female plants have bristle-like, white flower that look like worn out paint brushes. Once open, these flowers in mass look like a thick blanket of snow weighing down each branch. Common along Pine Island roadways, drainage ditches and field edges, saltbush seeds blow easily into residential areas and lay dormant until summer. In the right place, saltbush trees can be pruned severely to form a dense shrub or pruned more severely to keep as small tree rising 10 to 14 feet high. Growing in the wrongs place, saltbush quickly crowds out nearby plants. It's a survivor under extreme conditions (wet or dry). Learn more at http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsAZ/Saltbush_Baccharis_halimifolia.pdf*

Question: Someone said this plant growing in a Pine Island park is not a weed but perhaps a wildflower? I love how it looks this time year. It has burgundy stems and leaves with small white flower accents. Someone said it is called, 'Forget me not.' What is it and would you grow it here? A Master Gardener

Answer: *This attention getting plant is Alternanthera brasiliana. It was introduced into Florida from tropical places far south of here. You will find it growing naturally throughout the Caribbean and in Brazil. A common name is, 'live-forever'. Its name comes from the Portuguese word, perpétua-do-brasil (live-forever in Brazil). Another common name, bouton blanc, uses the common names bachelor's button or white button because of its pom-pom-like flowers. Because of its hot tropical burgundy color each fall, this plant appears perfect for the landscape when covered with white blossoms. But, like many tropical herbs, this one looks perfect until soil dries out and climate turns cold. It begins looking ragged and unruly fairly quickly.*

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service.

Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by emailing Extgardener@leegov.com.

Visit Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtm>

FAQ Source Locations on the web:

Extension Service - http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/News-Press_Q&A.shtml

Newspaper - @ Home Improvement and Gardening: <http://www.news-press.com/section/homeandgarden>

