Carrotwood Problem Tree  
March 8, 2008

**Question:** We have a carrotwood tree in our front yard. I think it is quite attractive, but I also know it is an invasive plant. Due to the drought and cost, we are not ready to have it removed and replaced, but I do wish to do all that is possible, outside its removal, to keep it from propagating. It is presently in flower. Would it be good to have it trimmed and the flowers removed now, or wait until the seeds/fruit are apparent and have that done then?

- Christine A., Cape Coral

**Answer:** If you keep the tree, this will be an annual quandary. Every year the tree is likely to flower and fruit. Like many tropical plants, it flowers on new growth. Trimming the tree while it is in flower is probably best. However, trimming or pruning should not be delayed beyond early fruit-set so as to prevent birds and other animals from feeding on the fruits and depositing the seeds in your neighbor yards. If it is to be pruned, it should be done correctly. If the tree is hat-racked, numerous shoots will emerge from a single stem. This will increase the surface area of the canopy, resulting in more inflorescence and abundant fruiting. Selectively removing branches back to their points of origin may reduce foliage mass and areas for flowering and fruiting. Mid-June is usually the start of our rainy season and it is an excellent time to replace your carrotwood with a more appropriate species.

Stephen Brown is a horticulture agent with the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the horticulture desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by e-mailing brownsh@leegov.com. Visit his web page at [http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/GardenHome.shtml](http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/GardenHome.shtml)  “Garden Doctor” video clips [http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/Video.shtml](http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/Video.shtml)  and flowering trees information at  [http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsA_Z.shtml](http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsA_Z.shtml)