What does it mean for us that we are in one of the most vibrant real estate market in the country? It simply means that our gardens communities will inevitable grow and that our service will be more valuable than ever. As people, housing and cultivated plants become more numerous, more will be demanded of our service. It has now become somewhat routine for newly installed landscapes to cost as much as some houses did 20 or so years ago. Many new gardeners are fascinated by the plants they see in southwest Florida but are perplexed by what to do with their new charges. We would hope that a little water, mulch and perhaps some fertilizer would be all that is needed to grow healthy plants. But our local conditions often do not cooperate with our best efforts. For this reason, our homeowner gardening classes has drawn a group of fine citizens. As we go forward, we must develop innovate programs to meet this new and changing customer. That’s means we can never stop learning. It also means that we must do more to have innovative programs. I welcome your suggestions on how to do this. Your ideas are valuable so let’s talk. I look forward to seeing you on Monday. We’ll have a good program that is sure to help us move forward.

Stephen H. Brown, Master Gardener Coordinator
Dear Volunteer Gardeners,

We visited from the University of Florida in Gainesville to find out about water issues from the extension agents and couldn’t help but stroll through the gorgeous garden. The plants and flowers are amazingly healthy and beautiful. Well done!

UF Graduate Students,
Monica Morris,
Tess Kulstad,
Sebastian Galindo

Dear Mr. Brown:
The members of the Gardenia Garden Club were privileged to have Richard McConville as their guest and speaker at their meeting on April 7, 2005.

Mr. McConville’s subject Cacti Gardens and Succulents, together with his projected slides, proved to be most entertaining and educational. He was well versed in his subject and very gracious in answering the questions posed by some of our members.

It was a most enjoyable session and we would welcome a return visit by Mr. McConville at a future meeting.

Sincerely,
Ruth M. Hilger, Secretary

Hi Stephen,

Gerry Sanzone, gave a program here at North Fort Myers Library on April 22. I have attached the compilation of the surveys we received from the attendees.

Gerry was fantastic. We feel fortunate that we have these great speakers in our community.

Regards,
Joan O'Brien, Librarian
North Fort Myers Public Library

Stephen:

Just wanted to let you know how much we enjoyed Terry’s class on PowerPoint. He did a wonderful job and I can hardly wait to get started. Several folks in the class are interested in learning about digital photography and more about PowerPoint. Hope you’ll give it some consideration. Terry is a very patient and thorough teacher.

Sonja Smith

Dear Mary Ann,

Thank you very much for your professional FYN presentation on Monday. I really enjoyed the class!! My husband and I will be integrating the xeriscape philosophy into our backyard patio design.

Sincerely,
Vin Brennan
Master Gardener Pictured Activities

FYN Agent Tom Becker and Master Gardeners toured the very native yard of Fran and Ray Lever.

Barbara Meyer and Mary Ann Parsons spoke on FYN Principles at the Cape Coral Garden Club meeting.

Part of the audience at the Cape Coral Garden Club meeting in April.

Master Gardeners, Helen Novella, Peggy Cruz, Barbara Meyer, Victoria Masiog, and Joe Masiog, flanked by two visitors at this year’s International Flower Show at Epcot.

Master Gardener instructors at the first session of the Homeowner’s Introduction to Florida Gardening. From left to right, instructors are; John Sibley, Randy Rausch, Mary Ann Parsons, Barbara Meyer, Terry Wolfley, and Agent Stephen Brown.

Part of the audience of more than 50 at the Homeowner’s Introduction to Florida Gardening class. This four week course was held on Friday afternoons. John Sibley is seen instructing.
New Queen Palm Disease

Comparison of dead and ‘healthy’ Queen palms. The palm on the left is affected by the new disease.

Over the last year or so, I have been called out several times to examine Queen palms in sudden and irreversible decline. The disease appears to be getting more prevalent and has been observed from Palm Beach, Collier and Lee Counties and even around the Orlando area.

Monica Elliott, University of Florida Plant Pathologist at the Research and Education Center in Fort Lauderdale posted the following information in the Center’s site at http://Flrec.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/Plantpathology/plant.htm

Here’s her report:

The symptoms are as follows. The lowest (oldest) 2-3 leaves turn brown but do not break or hang down. The next 2-3 youngest leaves in the canopy will turn varying shades of yellow. The yellowing leaf symptoms alone are not indicative of the disease, as these symptoms would be similar for natural senescence, especially when potassium deficiency is present. What makes the disease different from natural senescence is that usually within two months of initial symptoms, the entire canopy has turned brown, as if freeze-dried in place. The leaves do not break nor do they hang limply parallel to the trunk; they simply turn brown in place within the canopy.

The bud of the palm is not killed until sometime (Probably a week or so) after the canopy turns brown. When cross-sections are made through the crown of a dead queen palm, the bud is still clean and white, but older leaf and inflorescence bases are discolored and usually rotted. The symptoms and their development suggest a pathogen, probably fungal, that is producing a toxin.

Hopefully, we’ll soon find out what’s killing these palms. In the meantime you may want to consider diversifying your palm palette. Remember monoculture are more likely to go down big time.

Stephen Brown

Pink Hibiscus Mealybug Update

Pelican Landing in Lee County now has Pink Hibiscus Mealybugs (PHM). I released parasites Friday at four homes on Ascot Bend Court. Last year this street had severe Papaya mealybug infestation. You will often find both together. There is still some papaya mealybug on Jatropha. Looks like this will be the summer that PHM pops up everywhere. I just randomly did a spot check in Falling Waters in Collier County and found two plants infected. The manager of Falling Waters just called to say it is all over the community.

Looks like land care companies are in for some difficult years ahead. Nearly every land care guy has told me when they first encountered PHM they thought the leaf curling and bunchy top was a result of mixing the spray too strong and caused a plant reaction.

People that don’t know better try to spray and can’t kill it so they take a sample to the nurseries without putting it in a plastic bag and potentially infect the nurseries.

E-mail from Scott Krueger
Department of Plant Inspection

Q-Biotype Whitefly

There is a new mutant whitefly with increased resistance to most common pesticides used for its control. To learn more about this pest visit the DOACS website:

http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pj/enpp/ento/b.tabaci.html
Ganoderma Goes to New Height

Ganoderma conches found above seven feet on trunk of Native Sabal palmetto.

The same Sabal with ganoderma symptoms.

Recently, several cases of ganoderma infested Sabal palmetto palms were found with conches above 72” high. These were unusual finds since the conches almost always are within two to three feet of the soil.

Volunteer Opportunities

1. Teacher Jackie Whitiker from San Carlos Elementary School in Estero is looking for a Master Gardener or two to assist her in developing a faltering school garden. The hope is to get the kids involved. You will work as an advisor and not in garden maintenance. Help is needed about once or twice a month for at least four months. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated.

2. Ada Natural Food Market will be opening up a huge new store in the Jo Ann Fabric Plaza on US 41. They need assistance in establishing an in-store Butterfly House. The theme of the store will be a rain forest, a.k.a jungle Motif. If you would like to devote your expertise in this unique endeavor, let me know.

Master Gardener PowerPoint Training

Last Chance! Letha will have one more training class for PowerPoint! If you would like to learn or either have a refresher course contact her at 461-7513. Space is limited so please let her know ASAP. The date isn’t known at this time.
Volunteer at Edison-Ford Estate

Barbara Meyer served on a committee to select a landscape designer for the Moonlight Garden at the Edison-Ford Estate.

Master Gardeners Joyce Comingore, Helen Novella, Joe Maisog and Vicky Maisog are assisting the Edison-Ford Estate in plant propagation.

Dr. Schoellhorn Resigns

Many of you know Dr. Rick Schellhorn from attending the Statewide Master Gardener meetings. Here, in part, is a recent statement from Dr. Schoellhorn.

With great regrets, I would like to announce my departure from the University of Florida’s Environmental Horticulture Program. I have accepted a position with Proven Winner’s, an international plant marketing and introduction firm as Director of New Products, which means in layman’s terms that I will be working to help find and introduce new, and better plants, for the floriculture market. My last day with the department will be May 20, 2005. I will remain on adjunct status to help my graduate students through their degrees until fall semester 2005. My family and I will continue to live in Gainesville, so I hope to remain in contact with you all.

For more information go to our web page at http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu
Master Gardener Bi-monthly Meeting
Agenda for Monday, May 23

2:00 p.m.    Introductions
             Including Fitzroy (Roy) Beckford, Agriculture/Natural Resource Agent

2:10 p.m.    FYN Report, Tom Becker

2:20 p.m.    Meet the Invasive, Gayle Edwards

2:25 p.m.    Reports on Activities and General Discussions

2:50 p.m.    Break

3:00 p.m.    Insect Problems in the Urban Landscape, Dr. Fred Santana,
             Sarasota County Extension Service

3:30 p.m.    A comparison of Soil Nutrients in 3 types of Local Soils, Stephen Brown

3:40 p.m.    New Queen Palm Disease, Stephen Brown

3:50 p.m.    Horticulture Desk Update, Peggy Cruz

4:00 p.m.    Additional Comments

4:15 p.m.    Adjourn