

THE MANATEE COUNTY MASTER GARDENER E-NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2022  
VOLUME 21 - ISSUE 10

# Native Color Now: Little Bahama Strongbark

Photos & text by Sally Herb, Master Gardener Volunteer



Little Bahama strongbark shrub

*Bouyeria cassinifolia* is a delightful evergreen shrub that provides year-round interest in your landscape. Growing 5-8 feet in full sun to partial shade, strongbark has petite, fragrant white flowers summer through fall, attracting hummingbirds and a variety of butterfly pollinators including zebra longwings, skippers, and sulphurs. The orange red berries ripen in late fall, lasting into winter and attracting birds. The little Bahama strongbark grows primarily in Zones 10-11, is not too fussy about soil, and can be drought tolerant. Because it is listed as endangered in Florida, please source from a reputable native nursery. As the holidays approach, most of us think of holly when we consider a color pop of berries. The little Bahama strongbark is a suitable alternative with the added benefit of attracting many pollinators the rest of the year.

**Visit:**

- [fnps.org/plant/bouyeria-cassinifolia](https://fnps.org/plant/bouyeria-cassinifolia)
- [sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/media/sfylifasufledu/miami-dade/documents/landscapes-amp-gardening/Native-Florida-Groundcovers-for-Open-Sunny-Sites.pdf](https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/media/sfylifasufledu/miami-dade/documents/landscapes-amp-gardening/Native-Florida-Groundcovers-for-Open-Sunny-Sites.pdf)



Little Bahama strongbark flower

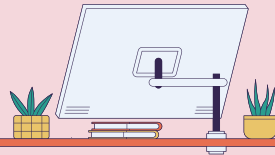
*2022 Farm City Week Agricultural Tour*

Come join us in celebrating the 31st year of Manatee County's Farm City Week by visiting a few of Manatee County's finest agricultural operations! This is a fun-filled, day-long tour.

Learn more here: [bit.ly/3GgTocp](https://bit.ly/3GgTocp)

# Ask a Master Gardener

By Karen Holleran, Master Gardener Volunteer



**Featuring 3 Ask a Master Gardener Questions!**

**Dear MGV,**

I wanted to get a diagnosis from you on my hibiscus. Is there a natural way to treat this as I prefer not to use chemicals? I've cut off all of the new blooms to try to get rid of the infestation. What types of ants are these? Are they feeding on the bugs?



Resident submission

**Dear reader,**

What is depicted in your picture is a symbiotic relationship between ants and aphids. Aphids are piercing, sucking pests that insert their mouthparts into plant tissue and suck the sap. On their other end, they excrete a sugary substance called honeydew, a sticky byproduct that the ants feed on. This is a farming relationship: the ants move aphids around to un-infested parts of the plant to give them new feeding grounds, and they protect their "livestock" from aphid predators such as ladybug larvae. The ants protect the aphids, and the aphids keep the ants well-fed and happy. Although fascinating, this relationship is not beneficial to your plants.

Aphids feed on new, tender growth, which is why you find them on flower buds. Removing the buds is an effective treatment but at the expense of flowers. Insecticidal soap is an organic, non-toxic (to humans) treatment that works on soft-bodied insects like aphids. Once the aphids are gone, the ants will disappear. Insecticidal soap is available in most garden centers at a low cost.

<https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/pascoco/2017/04/20/aphids-vs-ants-world-garden/>

These worker ants look like Florida carpenter ants, *Camponotus abdominalis floridanus*. Aphid farming is not limited to a particular species; any ants scavenging in the landscape are apt to take advantage of an aphid infestation.



Master Gardener Volunteer Karen Holleran answers your email questions. Send questions and/or photos for identification or for diagnosis of residential gardening problems to [ManteeMG@gmail.com](mailto:ManteeMG@gmail.com). Or call us at 941-722-4524 weekdays from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. and press 1 to speak to the Master Gardener Diagnostic Plant Clinic.

*The University of Florida is committed to providing universal access to all our events. For disability accommodations such as alternate formats of written material, please contact Katie Granberg [katiebg@ufl.edu](mailto:katiebg@ufl.edu) at least 1 week in advance.*

## Dear MGV,

These “worms” are eating the roots of my plants!

## Dear reader,

These are yellow-banded millipedes, *Anadenobolus monilicornus*, a beneficial garden insect. They do not eat live plant tissue but feed on detritus (decomposing plant material), thus recycling organic matter in the garden.



Resident submission

<https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/sarasotaco/2020/06/24/millipedes-annoying-but-important/>

## Dear MGV,

I've attached a picture of the many, crusty, black spots on the side of my house that won't wipe off. Do you know what it could be?

## Dear reader,

What I see in your picture are the spores of a shade-dwelling fungus called *Sphaerobolus stellatus*, “artillery” or “shotgun” fungus. The name is derived from the method the fungus uses to spread its spores. The spores are “shot” up and away into the air, sometimes as much as 15 feet, landing on the nearest surface. Your siding becomes a target when mulch, used in shady, moist areas near your house, becomes the

ideal spot for the fungus to grow. Related to the bird's nest fungus, although much smaller, artillery fungus is harmless in mulch, breaking down the dead wood (mulch) and converting it into soil. Once the spores attach and dry on a surface, they can be difficult to remove. While no chemical controls are labeled for this fungus, adding new mulch on top of last year's mulch, raking and turning over old mulch, or using pine bark nugget mulch can help reduce the favorable conditions where this fungus grows.

I've included a link to an article about these fungi for your reference.

<https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/sumterco/2019/10/29/artillery-fungus-small-but-mighty/>



Resident submission



Master Gardener Volunteer Amy Stripe & Joy Dersken, Co-Editors Contents reviewed & edited by Alyssa Vinson, Extension Agent



# Amaryllis: Bigger is Better!

By Jim Haupt, Master Gardener Volunteer



Amaryllis bulb  
Photo: ifas.ufl.edu



Amaryllis flower  
Photo: ifas.ufl.edu



Potted Amaryllis  
Photo: ifas.ufl.edu

Many tropical and subtropical flowering perennials are grown from bulbs in Florida. One of the true bulbs, hybrid Amaryllis (*Hippeastrum x hybridum*), is a hardy, reliable plant for your sustainable landscape. Because an amaryllis bulb can be forced to emerge and bloom early, it has become a popular holiday plant. Sensitive to harsh, cold temperatures, amaryllis is usually grown as a container plant in northern regions of the United States. However, in Florida, these plants can grow and flower successfully in the ground. By placing it in partial shade and exercising proper care, your amaryllis can live for many years and produce large stunning flowers up to 10 inches in diameter.

Amaryllis bulbs produce bold colors with many dazzling features. While reds and whites are popular as holiday gifts, others may be rose, apricot, salmon, and light green. Some are a combination of colors, such as bi-color green, purple, and picotee (petals with edge colors). The bulbs sold today have been hybridized and produced in North America, South Africa, South and Central America, and Israel.

Amaryllis form new bulbs or offsets within the base plate of the mother bulb. Once flowers die back, offsets attached to the main bulb can be dug up, divided, and replanted. Small offsets or bulbs can be used as container plants while the larger ones are best for the landscape. Bulbs can then be replanted in two-week intervals from November to February.

To keep amaryllis blooming year after year, UF/IFAS recommends removing stalks after flowering to keep plants from forming seed pods. Completing this simple task will enable plants to produce large flowers. It is important to remember that when growing amaryllis, "bigger is better!" Size and condition impact performance. Large bulbs produce more stalks and more flowers during their first year in the ground. When shopping for bulbs, look for large, dry, firm bulbs with no indication of injury, bruising, mold, decay, or red spots/streaks.

Occasionally, amaryllis becomes susceptible to a fungal disease called "red blotch." Red blotch can occur when the plant is in shady, wet areas. As you scout, look for any sign of leaf deformity or red spots on leaves and stems. Because all parts of an amaryllis are toxic it is important to keep them a safe distance from pets and young children.

The joy we receive from these lily-like beauties not only comes from their large, stunning flowers, but also from watching long, stout stalks grow from bulbs into tall, blooming plants in a few short weeks. Because they are large and easy to handle, these bulbs present a wonderful opportunity to introduce older children to gardening with hands-on learning.

For additional information visit

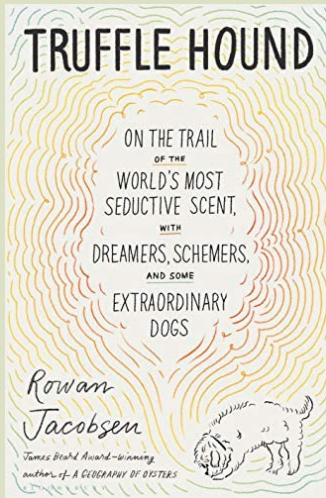
- [edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/ep/EP060/EP060-Donak82c9l.pdf](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/ep/EP060/EP060-Donak82c9l.pdf)
- [sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn-and-garden/bulbs-in-florida/](https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn-and-garden/bulbs-in-florida/)
- [edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FP255](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FP255)

# Holiday Book Review for Gardeners & Naturalists

By Amy Stripe, Master Gardener Volunteer



*I usually devour books at the rate of one per day. But the three books below gave so much food for thought and fascinating facts, that I lingered for at least two! Some intelligent skepticism slows your digestion but makes it no less enjoyable a repast!*



## **Truffle Hound: On the Trail of the World's Most Seductive Scent, with Dreamers, Schemers, and Some Extraordinary Dogs**

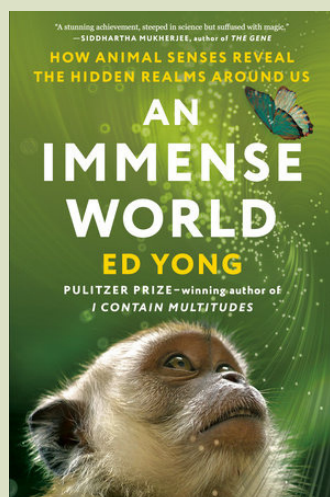
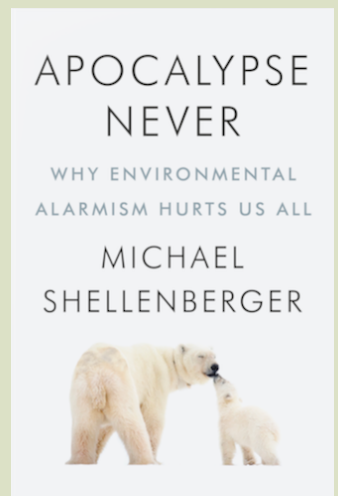
*By Rowan Jacobsen (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021)*

The author, a food journalist, takes us on a fascinating journey from Italy to Croatia and to the Carolinas and Oregon in search of the world's best truffles which cannot be, frankly, described by taste but rather by scent. We are schooled on the world's most popular truffle species as well as how dogs are uniquely equipped to find them. We visit commercial operations inoculating trees with truffle spores and learn the surprising cultural conditions (high pH) in which truffles grow. I read it in one sitting! (And I don't even like mushrooms!)

## **Apocalypse Never: Why Environmental Alarmism Hurts Us All**

*By Michael Shellenberger (Harper Collins, 2020)*

Shellenberger is a California environmental scientist and writer, an early adopter of "green" causes who has since taken issue with non-science-based movements such as Extinction Rebellion, Greenpeace and PETA (amongst many others) to challenge the bases upon which they make claims to saving the environment whilst making things worse. His underlying premise is that economic improvement of the human condition around the globe will in turn lift the security of the environment and wildlife. No matter how you feel about fossil fuels and eating meat, you should read this book!



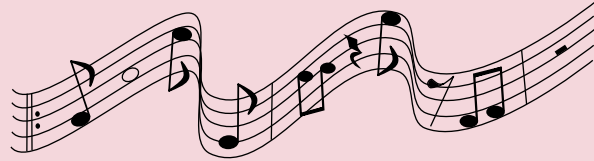
## **An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us**

*By Ed Yong (Random House, 2022)*

Disabuse yourself of the theory of just five senses and how these senses are received. Scallops with multiple eyes around their shells, butterflies that taste with their feet, the highly developed sense of smell in dogs and snakes, and the detection of heat, UV light, surface vibration, echoes, and magnetic fields add up to a fascinating read. Rather than thinking of animals and insects as less intelligent than us humans, consider that every species has the senses and interpretive abilities it needs for survival. This book is a hefty read, but so rich in nerdish nature and philosophical facts that your time is well invested.

# STATE SONGSTER: THE NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD

By Maureen Hirthler, Master Gardener Volunteer



Some days, I think I hear a dozen different birds singing in my yard, but when I look up in the trees, I see only one, the Northern mockingbird. It has a perfect scientific name, *Mimus polyglottos*, meaning "many-tongued mimic." This mockingbird can copy 200 songs, as well as dog barks, musical instruments, and sirens. It sings to attract a mate or defend its territorial area.



Northern Mockingbird  
Photo: Audubon.org

In the nineteenth century, people kept so many mockingbirds as cage birds that the birds nearly vanished from parts of the eastern United States. Now, mockingbirds are so common that they are the state bird of Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas.

The Northern mockingbird is a medium-sized songbird with a wingspan of 12-13 inches. It has a gray to brown body coloration with a lighter underbelly. The wings are rounded with flashing white patches which are frequently displayed on outstretched wings during the mating season. The long tail is another noticeable characteristic, bearing oblong white patches on the edges that are easily seen in flight.

Northern mockingbirds feed on insects, fruits, and seeds. They like open habitats such as lawns, farms, and the edges of hedges.



Northern Mockingbird  
Photo: Audubon Society of North Virginia

Mockingbirds can be extraordinarily territorial. They have been known to swoop and dive at pretty much anything (in the urban landscape that includes people, cats, dogs and other birds) that gets close to their nests, which are usually placed between 3 and 10 feet off the ground. Last season a mockingbird nested in our Podocarpus hedge and dive-bombed me whenever I walked by!

This bird's famous song, with its varied repetitions and artful imitations, is heard all day during nesting season (and often all night as well). Enjoy the beauty and variety of the natural soundtrack provided by the Northern mockingbird. For more information:

<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/Northern-mockingbird>

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern\\_Mockingbird/overview](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Mockingbird/overview)

# WHAT'S THIS?: BULIMULUS SPORADICUS

Text and photo by Maureen Hirthler, Master Gardener Volunteer



The Giant African Land Snail (GALS) receives much attention in Florida, as it should. This invasive species eats almost everything green and causes millions of dollars in damage throughout the state. But it is not the only invasive species of concern. My husband spotted this interesting snail on a recent walk through Robinson Preserve. We identified it as *Bulimulus sporadicus*, an invasive species that likely arrived by train!



*Bulimulus sporadicus*

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) has this snail under observation and has an area of quarantine to prevent its continued escape into communities. If you suspect you see one, go to this FDACS webpage (<https://www.fdacs.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Pests-and-Diseases/Plant-Pests-and-Diseases/Invasive-Mollusks/Giant-African-Land-Snail>) for identification tips and contact information to report the sighting. See: <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/escambiaco/2021/05/05/edrr-invasive-species-of-the-month-bulimulus-sporadicus-obrigny-1835/>

## Manatee County Master Gardener Volunteer Mobile Plant Clinics

Location	Address	Day(s)	Time
Crowder Bros. Ace Hardware	5409 Manatee Ave W., Bradenton	Third Saturdays	9AM – 12PM
Central Library	1301 1st St. W., Bradenton	Third Saturdays	11:30AM – 2:30PM
Lakewood Ranch Farmers Market	Waterside Place, 7500 Island Cove Terrace, Sarasota	First Sundays	10AM – 2PM
Robinson Preserve	840 99th St. N.W., Bradenton (South entrance, near pavilions)	Fourth Sundays	9AM – 12PM
Rocky Bluff Library	6750 US Hwy 301 N., Ellenton	Second & Fourth Saturdays	10AM – 1PM
St. George's Episcopal Church	912 63rd Ave. W., Bradenton	First and Third Thursdays	9AM – 12PM
Island Library	5701 Marina Dr, Holmes Beach	First Saturdays	10AM – 1PM
Bob Gardner Park	2710 White Eagle Blvd., Lakewood Ranch	Third Sundays	9AM – 12PM

## NOVEMBER/DECEMBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Time	Event
Saturday 12/3/22	9:00AM	<b>Emerson Point Preserve Tour</b> Casually stroll through the beautiful Emerson Point Preserve and learn about Florida's native plants and inhabitants of a coastal environment. <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/desotoriverview-pointe-preserve-tour-november-may-tickets-441206910747">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/desotoriverview-pointe-preserve-tour-november-may-tickets-441206910747</a>
Monday 12/5/22	1:00PM	<b>Climate Smart Series: Water</b> The Climate Smart Floridians Program, run by University of Florida IFAS Extension, aims to educate people about climate change, and engage them in activities in their household and community. <a href="https://manateelibrary.libcal.com/event/9363763">https://manateelibrary.libcal.com/event/9363763</a>
Tuesday 12/6/22	12:00PM	<b>Mangrove Cleanup &amp; Restoration: Recommendations for Volunteer Leaders</b> Join Florida Sea Grant and UF/IFAS Extension to discuss recommendations for clean up and restoration of mangroves following storm damage. <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mangrove-cleanup-and-restoration-recommendations-for-volunteer-leaders-tickets-465098360717">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mangrove-cleanup-and-restoration-recommendations-for-volunteer-leaders-tickets-465098360717</a>
Saturday 12/10/22	9:00AM	<b>DeSoto/Riverview Pointe Preserve Tour</b> Casually stroll through the beautiful Riverview Pointe Preserve and learn about Florida's native plants and inhabitants of a coastal environment. <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/desotoriverview-pointe-preserve-tour-november-may-tickets-441206910747">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/desotoriverview-pointe-preserve-tour-november-may-tickets-441206910747</a>
Friday 12/16/22	8:00AM	<b>2022 Farm City Week Agricultural Tour</b> Come join us in celebrating the 31st year of Manatee County's Farm City Week by visiting a few of Manatee County's finest agricultural operations! This is a fun-filled, day-long tour. <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2022-farm-city-week-agricultural-tour-tickets-439007211387">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2022-farm-city-week-agricultural-tour-tickets-439007211387</a>
Saturday 12/17/22	9:00AM	<b>Perico Preserve Tour</b> Explore one of Manatee County's newest preserves and learn about Florida's native plants, how they benefit wildlife, and how they can be used in the home landscape. <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/perico-preserve-tour-december-tickets-446074058517">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/perico-preserve-tour-december-tickets-446074058517</a>
Saturday 12/17/22	9:00AM	<b>Rye Preserve Tour</b> Take a hike through upland habitats along the beautiful Rye Preserve and learn about Florida's native plants, natural history, and early settlement of the area. <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rye-preserve-tour-december-april-tickets-446062233147">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rye-preserve-tour-december-april-tickets-446062233147</a>
Monday 12/19/22	1:00PM	<b>Climate Smart Series: Landscape &amp; Conservation</b> The Climate Smart Floridians Program, run by University of Florida IFAS Extension, aims to educate people about climate change, and engage them in activities in their household and community. <a href="https://manateelibrary.libcal.com/event/9363764">https://manateelibrary.libcal.com/event/9363764</a>

**University of Florida IFAS Extension - Manatee County**

1303 17th St. W., Palmetto, FL 34221

**Telephone:** (941) 722-4524

**Website:** <http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/manatee/> **Email:** [ManateeMG@gmail.com](mailto:ManateeMG@gmail.com)