

# The Backyard Gardener

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## Coordinator's Corner

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There is no time like spring to bring renewed excitement outdoors and in our gardens. Winter is over and now it is time to assess the damages of Jack Frost.

Many of us are preparing to prune away the damage and give way to the new growth that will once again flourish in this prolific state.

Spring also is providing a rebirth in the Master Gardener program. We are so excited meeting the new Class of 2010. They are full of energy, new ideas, and passion that the Volusia County Master Gardeners are known for.

These 25 trainees are well traveled, full of great stories, and are good cooks as well!

We are honored to have them as a part of our family. Let's all welcome them!

The Plant Faire committees have been actively preparing for the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Master Gardener Plant Faire. It is sure to draw large crowds due to the large loss of plants from this previous winter. Start saving up for some unbelievable plants! For more information, contact our office (see page 2).

We are preparing for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Master Gardener picnic this July. Stay tuned for more information. Also, we will be celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Volusia County Master Gardener anniversary. We are tentatively planning an October event.

Contact Linda Evans or Jackie Jones for your ideas or offers to help.

Finally, October is the month for the Master Gardener State Conference slated for October 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> in Destin. Keep your schedule open to enjoy this fun-filled, three-day event. We will keep you in the loop.

Enjoy the warmth and renewal of spring and of course, plant something new!

Karen Stauderman  
Master Gardener Coordinator  
Residential/Urban  
Extension Agent

## A Community Vegetable Garden for a Local Church



This is a section of the property owned by a church in DeBary. The parish asked us for some information about gardening with edibles.

### Description of the area:

- It comprises around 5,000 square feet with no fencing or containment.
- Only about one-half of it receives the minimum of six to eight hours of sun for edibles.
- There is an available water supply for irrigation.
- It is heavily surrounded (but moderately shaded) by pine trees.
- The church is considering wildlife-attracting plants and a meditation area.

(article continued on page 4)



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Smiling MGs at the 2009  
Semi-Annual Holiday  
Meeting & Potluck



## THE BACKYARD

## What's in a Name?

The botanical name given to a plant is important because it ensures that we are identifying plant material precisely, unlike common names which are often regional and may change from one area to another.

The botanical name has two parts: the first identifies the genus (the group the plant belongs to) and the second identifies the species (a specific plant within the group). Normally these are written in *italics* with the genus being capitalized. This may be followed by another word identifying the cultivar, written in plain

type and in single quotation marks. Thus, the Asparagus Fern is written *Asparagus densiflorus* 'Sprengeri.' If you buy this plant in Cleveland, you probably will ask the clerk for an "Emerald Feather."

Other words identify the person who discovered the plant or where it comes from. If named for a person, it will end in "i" or "ii" for a man and in "ae" for a woman. The *Phlox henryae* is named for the botanist Mary Henry. Also, if a plant originated in China, "chinensis" may appear in its name, and from Japan, "japonica."

There are additional words in a plant's name which identify specific traits, such as:

Alba. . .white  
Grandiflora. . .large flowers  
Edulis. . .edible  
Grandifolia. . .large leaves  
Nana. . .dwarf  
Odorata. . .scented  
Orientalis. . .from the East  
Repens. . .creeping  
Scandens. . .climbing  
Stricta. . .upright

The classification system is much less complicated once we understand it.

Brian Chesher ('95)

## From the Clinic...

**Q:** Are undamaged citrus still hanging on the tree after the freeze safe to eat?

**A:** In general, fruit that has not dropped has less food safety risk than fruit that has dropped to the ground. If fruit has split, that also increases the risk, and I would recommend against its consumption; the same is true for fruit with any sort of mold growth.

Ryan Atwood,  
Fruit Crops Ext. Agent

## Important Dates to Remember

- ◆ April 17, 2010 - 13th Annual Master Gardener Plant Faire
- ◆ June 9, 2010 - Master Gardener Semi-Annual Meeting.
- ◆ July 23, 2010 - 2nd Annual Master Gardener Picnic
- ◆ October 25 - 27, 2010 - 30th Annual Master Gardener State Conference

## Containerized Water Feature

A good idea that keeps coming around is the concept of using unique plants in containers as landscape features. An interesting variation on that theme is putting a water feature in a container and using it as a landscape accent.

To create one, simply:

**1.** Plant a selection of aquatic plants in individual plastic baskets (dwarf cat-

tails and papyrus, water lilies).

**2.** Position the container level and add two inches of washed gravel at the bottom.

**3.** Add the plants in baskets. Place the waterside plants on bricks around the sides of container and position water lilies on top of the gravel base in the center of the tub.

**4.** Slowly fill the tub with

water being careful not to disturb the potting mix in the baskets.

**5.** Rapid growth by the water lilies and the papyrus will quickly hide the baskets and the inside of the tub.

**6.** Add water as needed and feed with a good liquid fertilizer according to the label directions.

Brian Chesher ('95)

## Festive Red Flowers

Red flowers attract more than butterflies and hummingbirds. They attract the eyes and fix them to the color. That's why they are perfect near the front door or as a lone accent among plants of other colors. They definitely bring a festive quality to landscaping.

Celebrate fiesta in your yard this spring with such perennials as turks cap, the "sleeping hibiscus" which blooms summer through fall. It tolerates alkaline soil and is drought resistant. Red porterweed (*Stachys tarpheta*) is another faithful bloomer. It grows two to four feet and self-sows. Red pentas also flowers continuously (plant in full sun or part shade), and the red firecracker show off from spring to fall. It grows to four feet, sun to part shade, and is a terrific accent shrub. Of course, a red rose,

though it requires a little more care, will be well worth the effort in your landscape. A rose can be on a shrub or climbing vine.

More beautiful flowers are on the red passion vine, a warm weather bloomer late spring through summer. Also, it is drought tolerant. The bleeding heart vine, a tender perennial, flowers in late spring. It is fast growing and will come back after a freeze if not protected.

A red-flowering shrub for shade would be the camellia, whose blooms resemble roses. Camellias like acid soil, moist but well drained. It is showy in winter.

Accompany your perennials with a host of bright annuals such as "love lies bleeding" (*Amaranthus caudatus*) or "cockscomb", lots of red salvias or

scarlet zinnias, and everyone will be sure to take notice of your garden.

*Rebecca Turner ('06)*



**Red Pentas**

Photo by *Michele Kelley ('07)*

## Spring Clean-up With Bleach

Every spring I buy a gallon of bleach for the tool shed. It comes in handy getting both my garden and my tools in shape before the growing season. The brand name isn't important; use whatever is cheapest. My standard measure is two tablespoons of bleach per one quart water.

To clean flowerpots, wash the pot with soap and water and soak it in the bleach solution for an hour or overnight to sanitize it before potting up

plants. Clean outdoor furniture, greenhouse benches, and the potting table with the same bleach mixture to remove mildew and stains.

For brick and pavers, use a stronger measure of one part bleach to one part water. The bleach will kill algae and moss and kill or slow down weeds growing between the pavers.

If you put a couple of drops of bleach in the water of cut flowers, it will prolong the life of the flowers and

help keep the water and vase bacteria-free.

Last, but not least, when trimming dead or diseased branches from trees and shrubs, dip your shears' blades in undiluted bleach to prevent moving disease from plant to plant. This also applies to shovels and rakes, so soil-borne diseases aren't transferred from one bed to another. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

*Brian Chesher ('95)*

## Waste Not - Want Not

Adding coffee grounds in the planting hole of new shrubs will encourage bacteria that speeds the establishment of acid-loving plants like azaleas and gardenias. On the other hand, coffee grounds do not make a good mulch as they tend to clump. They do work well though, mixed with pine straw or ground leaves.

If you need chopped leaves, fill a garbage can about one-half full of

leaves and stick a weed whacker down in the pile. It's noisy, but it works great, and adding coffee grounds to the compost pile does not seem to make the finished compost acidic.

Putting eggshells in your compost mix will add calcium, or you can break up the shells and sprinkle them directly in your beds. Eggshells discourage cutworms and slugs, and some say ground eggshells sprinkled over rows

of new seeds protects them from birds.

If you want a fun project for the grandkids, put a couple of tablespoons of starter mix in an eggshell and plant seeds directly in these mini-pots. When it's time to transplant the seedlings, squeeze the shell enough to crack it and plant shell and all. The shell will decompose just like a peat pot.

*Brian Chesher ('95)*

## White Bloomers

Give your yard panache this year with white blooming plants. Their beauty is striking, almost shocking, and if they are not all scented, they give off the illusion of scent.

Consider planting spring-flowering star jasmine with its fragrant clusters, a heavenly smelling gardenia, or the bleeding heart vine with its draping blooms. Into summer, white plumbago has a continuous show, as does the pentas - both shrubs and white hibiscus is a wonderful choice for an accent. Cat's whiskers bloom periodically through the summer, and night-blooming jasmine, fast-growing to 12 feet, will perfume your yard well into fall.

You can also scatter groundcovers

such as sweet alyssum (summer, spring, and fall) and white impatiens (shade to partial sun). White lantana is a reliable bloomer as well.

For fall, think bushy white mums and white camellias with their stunning rose-like blooms. Annuals like sweet alyssum and white stock (*Matthiola*) will like the cooler weather, and don't forget a show of white blooming Christmas cacti (*Schlumbergera*) for the holiday season.

Many of these plants will overlap in their bloom times, so your garden can be a show stopper all year. If some perennials are tender, such as the bleeding heart or the hibiscus, they will come back the following spring. Annuals

may need to be replanted twice a year, but the main thing is you and your neighbors' enjoyment of the stunning beauty of white bloomers.

*Rebecca Turner ('06)*



White Stock (*Matthiola*)  
Photo by *Michele Kelley ('07)*

## A Community Vegetable Garden continued from page 1

Below is a list of my suggestions and recommendations:

- UF/IFAS bulletins on vegetable, herb, container, butterfly, and citrus gardening were provided.
- A crop-coded, mineral-analysis soil test before planting in the native soil was recommended.
- Containment, mulching, staking, trellising, fertilizing, seasonality, and watering requirements and scheduling for in-ground plantings of vegetables, herbs, or citrus was reviewed.

- I recommended that the watering be set up for drip, low, or micro, timed irrigation.
- I described the pests associated with in-ground plantings, and contrasted all of them with container or raised bed plantings.
- For raised bed plantings, I described an ideal "recipe" for the soil; and a superior-quality potting soil for container planting. For containers, I specified reduced-rate fertilizer applications.
- I advised that any meditation area

be protected from potential harm from trees, even if some trees had to be removed.

- While the current area will provide enough sun to start out with edibles, there would need to be some tree removal in order to expand.

I revisited the clients a few weeks later and learned that they are planning to start out with container plantings, then gauge how the parish reacts to the gardens. They had started seeds and were excited to have seedlings to set out soon!

*Linda Anderson ('06)*

## Ivy Geraniums

Ivy geraniums, named for their ivy-shaped leaves, are mainly featured in hanging baskets or planted in containers with mixed flowers. They grow best in sunny, but cool temperatures. Because they are sensitive to heat and humidity, in the full sun and heat of summers in Central Florida their leaves will curl and the flowers will be reduced in size. They prefer temperatures of 70 degrees in the daytime and 50 - 60 degrees at nighttime. So when the weather becomes warmer, move them to a cooler location for

about two months, then prune them like roses and you should have blooms in two to three weeks. Some stems grow to three feet.

Ivy geraniums need more water than zonal geraniums. They can be fertilized weekly once they become large and established, but keep them out of the rain. Treat with rose fungicide and spray for insects if needed. See IFAS publications for cultivars developed for Florida climates.

*Marty Borkosky ('80)*

## My Grateful Garden

*My grateful garden,  
so lovely and wild,  
A rainbow of color,  
you are my child.  
A bed of flowers,  
windswept grass,  
Brings days of splendor,  
I hope will last.  
A sunset of dreams,  
A night of sleep,  
I awaken again  
to a garden I keep.*

*Jennifer McGouran ('10)*