

Green Garden News

Volume 3, Issue 4

April 2005

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2005 Plants of the Year

Hurricane Ivan had a devastating impact on many local landscapes. As spring begins, many people are looking at having to replant or repair their yards. So if your yard is ready for a makeover you may want to try some of the 2005 Florida Plants of the Year.

For the past eight years, the Florida Nursery Growers and Landscapers Association has named a number of ornamentals as "plants of the year." Selected plants are nominated by nursery growers and landscapers, then reviewed by a committee of growers, horticulturists, retailers, landscape professionals including University of Florida faculty.

Florida Plants of the Year selections have good pest resistance and are fairly easy to propagate and grow. These award winning plants must also exhibit some superior quality, improved performance or unique characteristic that sets it apart from others.

This year's selection includes:

Nun's Orchid, *Phaius tankervilleae*
Mature Height and Spread: 3' by 1.5'
Classification: Orchid-ground cover
Landscape Use: Perennial for mass use or as specimen in part shade. It is also good used as a potted plant.
Characteristics: Leaves are sword shaped. Flowers have yellow-brown petals with a white back, rose lip with a dark throat and bloom in late spring. Goes dormant in North Florida.

East Indian Holly Fern, *Arachniodes simplicior variegata*

Mature Height and Spread: 18-24" by 16-20"

Classification: Fern

Landscape Use: Ground cover in part shade to shade

Characteristics: Features evergreen leaves with yellow variegation along midribs. Is best in light shade of trees but is able to take sun if well watered.

Yellow Elder, *Tecoma stans*

Mature Height and Spread: Can be kept 5-10' tall by 4-6' wide

Classification: Flowering large shrub
Landscape Use: Specimen for long-lasting blooms

Characteristics: Light green leaves with large bell-shaped flowers. Blooms almost constantly during warm weather and is a hummingbird attractor. May die to the ground in our area but emerges in spring.

Princess Flower, *Tibouchina urvilleana*

Mature Height and Spread: 5-8' with similar spread

Classification: Large flowering perennial

Landscape Use: Used as an accent plant

Characteristics: Silver-green foliage shows off the purple flowers, which are three to four inches across.

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Oak Becomes America's National Tree

America has the grandest trees on earth--the largest, the oldest, and some of the most magnificent. Now, with Congressional passage and presidential signing of a historic bill, America has an official National Tree--the oak. Congress passed legislation so designating the oak in November. The official recognition of oak as America's National Tree reflects a vote hosted by The National Arbor Day Foundation at its website, arborday.org, in which Americans helped choose the country's newest national symbol.

According to John Rosenow, president of The National Arbor Day Foundation, "The United States is blessed with a wealth of tree species--more than twice as many as all of Europe--and trees have played a key role in our nation's history. Naming a national tree is a cause for celebration for us all.

"The oak tree will now be as much a symbol of America as Thanksgiving Day, Old Glory, the Star Spangled Banner, and the bald eagle," Senator Nelson said. "It is a fine choice to represent our nation's strength, as it grows from just an acorn into a powerful entity whose many branches continue to strengthen and reach skyward with every passing year."

The oak was selected during a four-month-long open voting process hosted by the Arbor Day

Foundation. From the first day of voting, oak was the people's clear choice, finishing with more than 101,000 votes, compared to almost 81,000 for the magnificent runner-up, the redwood. Rounding out the top five were the dogwood, maple, and pine.

Advocates of the oak praised its diversity, with more than 60 species growing in the United States, making oaks America's most widespread hardwoods. Throughout America's history, oaks have been prized for their shade, beauty, and lumber. They have also been a part of many important events, from Abraham Lincoln's use of the Salt River Ford Oak as a marker in crossing a river near Homer, Illinois, to Andrew Jackson taking shelter under Louisiana's Sunnybrook Oaks on his way to the Battle of New Orleans. In the annals of military history, "Old Ironsides," the USS Constitution, took its nickname from the strength of its live oak hull, famous for repelling British cannonballs.

More information about America's National Tree and all of the other candidate trees is available at arborday.org, the official website of The National Arbor Day Foundation. The Arbor Day Foundation is a nonprofit educational organization that inspires people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees.

2005 Plants of the Year

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Weeping Yaupon Holly, *Ilex vomitoria 'Pendula'*

Mature Height and Spread: 20-30' by 10-15'

Classification: Multi-trunked tree

Landscape Use: Striking accent plant

Characteristics: Features small white flowers in spring and red berries in fall and winter. Drooping branches give a narrow profile and distinctive appearance to this small evergreen tree.

Golden Dewdrop, *Duranta erecta 'Gold Mound'*

Mature Height and Spread: 22-24" by 30"

Classification: Dwarf Shrub

Landscape Use: Low mounding shrub used for a good splash of color in low borders.

Characteristics: Has golden-yellow foliage that keeps color in full sun.

'Mona Lavender' Plectranthus, *Plectranthus*

'Mona Lavender'

Mature Height and Spread: 2' by 2'

Classification: Annual in North Florida

Landscape Use: Massed for color in a low border in full sun to part shade

Characteristics: Compact, annual with handsome purple-backed leaves that produces multitudes of short stalks of lavender flowers April through October.

I can't promise that you'll readily find these plants at every nursery or garden center. But consumer awareness can help encourage better availability of these plants. So begin looking for some of these plants at a garden center near you.

You can view the plant selections at www.fnga.org, which is FNGLA's website.

—by Theresa Friday, Residential Horticulture Agent

April Gardening Tips

Flowers

- Begin watching roses for black spot fungus disease (small black spots on the leaves that quickly worsen). Control it by spraying every seven to 10 days with a fungicide.
- Annuals to plant include celosia, coleus, dusty miller, gaillardia, geranium, hollyhock, impatiens, marigold, nicotiana, ornamental pepper, pentas, phlox, portulaca, rudbeckia, salvia, sweet William, torenia, verbena, vinca and zinnia.

Trees and Shrubs

- Fertilize shrub beds, if necessary. A landscape/garden type fertilizer that is low in phosphorus (the middle number) can be used on most species of shrubs. Keep lawn “weed and feed” type products out of shrub and flowerbeds. Some contain chemicals that are dangerous to woody and herbaceous ornamentals.
- The “acid loving” shrubs such as azaleas, camellias and gardenias should be fertilized with an “azalea-camellia special.” The nitrogen source in these fertilizers is safer on these ornamentals.
- Evergreen and semi-evergreen trees such as live oak and laurel oak shed most of their leaves during March and early April. Make plans to recycle these leaves on your property by composting or using them as mulch in vegetable, flower and shrub beds.

Vegetable Garden

- Vegetables that can be planted outdoors include bush beans, pole beans, cantaloupes, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, lima beans,

okra, southern peas, peppers, pumpkin, summer squash, tomatoes, and watermelon

- Plan and plant an herb garden. They can be grown under the same conditions and cultural practices that are used for vegetables.
- Sweet potato plants (slips, draws) can be set out from now through June.

Lawns

- Remove fallen leaves from the lawn before the first mowing. Remove excessive leaf cover from the lawn by raking, blowing or bagging.
- Recycle grass clippings by not catching them when the lawn is mowed. Removing the clippings carries off fertilizer that has been applied to the lawn.
- Service the lawn mower, which includes sharpening the blade and setting the correct cutting height for your kind of grass.
- Make a spring fertilizer application. Use a slow release nitrogen product with a 3-1-3 ratio (like a 15-5-15) or a 1:0:1 ratio such as a 15-0-15
- Centipede is especially sensitive to excessive amounts of nitrogen. Lawns of this grass “crash” after 2 or 3 years of heavy fertilization. High soil nitrogen is believed to contribute to centipede decline – a major problem in our area.
- Spring dead spots may be present. Before treating these areas, get a diagnosis. Treat, if necessary, and then patch these areas before weeds invade the bare spots. Sodding, plugging or sprigging helps them to fill in quicker.

Gardening Website

Looking for a source of local information on gardening? Look no further. The Santa Rosa County Horticulture website is full of articles written specifically about gardening in Santa Rosa County.

Serving both the commercial and the residential horticulture community, this website is



continually updated and includes a list of upcoming events, monthly newsletters and UF/IFAS publications.

Visit us today at:

<http://www.santarosa.fl.gov/extension/horticulture/index.html>

Upcoming Events

Every Tuesday in April: *Plant Diagnostic Clinic.*

This free clinic is open to the public from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm on Tuesdays at the South Santa Rosa Service Center at 5819 Gulf Breeze Pkwy. If you are having problems with your lawn or plants, bring in a sample and an Extension Horticulturist or Master Gardener will be available to discuss your gardening questions.

April 1, 2, and 3, 2005: *Emerald Coast Flower and Garden Festival.*

The PJC/UF Milton Campus hosts this 8th annual festival the first weekend of April. The festival includes an indoor flower show competition, vendors that sell plants and garden related items and educational displays. The Santa Rosa County Master Gardeners will be having a plant sale to raise money to support their many community projects and local scholarships.

April 16, 2005: *Spring Thing, A Garden Expo.*

The Bay County Master Gardeners and the Panama City Garden Club join together to host a day of gardening events including gardening lectures, flower arranging demonstrations, vendors, food and a free plant clinic. Bay County Fairgrounds, 2230 E. 15th Street, Panama City. For more information call 850-784-6105 or visit <http://bay.ifas.ufl.edu/Spring Thing/index.htm>.

April 16, 2005: *Gulf Coast Gardening From the Ground UP: Lawns.* This free program is open to the public and will be presented at the Navarre Library at 8484 James M. Harvell Road, Navarre, FL. Registration will open at 9:00 am and the class will start at 10:00 am. Theresa Friday, Santa Rosa County Horticulture Agent, will discuss how to repair and maintain our lawns for maximum success. The program will last approximately 2 hours followed by a question and answer period.

April 21, 2005: *Gulf Coast Gardening From the Ground UP: Lawns* This free program is open to the public and will be presented at the Milton Library at 5541 Alabama Street, Milton, FL. Registration will open at 6:00 pm and the class will start at 6:30 pm. Theresa Friday, Santa Rosa County Horticulture Agent, will discuss how to repair and maintain our lawns for maximum success. The program will last approximately 2 hours followed by a question and answer period.

For persons with disabilities requiring special accommodations, please contact the SRC Extension Office at least 5 working days prior to the program so that proper consideration may be given to the request.
(850) 623-3868

The Easter Lily

The Easter lily (*Lilium longiflorum*) is the traditional flower of Easter and is highly regarded as a symbol of beauty, hope and life. While most bulbs that are grown for their beautiful flowers will not grow in Florida, the Easter lily is an exception.

In the home, potted Easter lilies prefer moderately cool temperature around 60 to 65°F. Place the lily near a window that receives bright, indirect natural light but avoid direct sunlight. Water the plant thoroughly when the soil surface feels dry. Avoid overwatering by removing the decorative pot cover and water until it seeps out of the pot's drain



holes. Allow the pot to drain for several minutes before putting it back into its decorative cover. Never allow the plant to sit in trapped, standing water. As the flowers open and mature, remove the yellow anthers before the pollen sheds. This will give the flower longer life and prevents the yellow pollen from staining the white petals. When a flower starts to decline, cut it off. As soon as all the flowers have faded, you will want to get the plant out of the house and into the ground.

In our landscape, Easter lilies prefer a sunny location in a well-drained soil that

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Questions and Answers

Q: I seem to have a lot of moss in my yard. How can I get rid of it?

A: Moss is a common problem for many homeowners. It is usually associated with problems with the soil or site characteristics. Mosses are small plants that can grow and out compete turfgrasses when one or more of the following occurs: high soil acidity (low soil pH), low soil fertility, shade, poor soil drainage and/or soil compaction.

Soil pH: The first step in controlling moss is to determine the pH of the soil. Soil samples should be submitted for analysis.

Shade: Turfgrasses have difficulty growing where sunlight is limited or non-existent, even St. Augustine. If heavy shade is a problem, trees may need to be pruned to allow more sunlight to reach the grass. If tree trimming is not an option, then a shade-tolerant groundcover should be considered as a replacement for the grass.

Poor soil drainage: If moss is present in low areas of a yard or if soil drainage is a problem, it is important to address and remedy this issue.

Compacted soil: If the area where the moss is growing is difficult to dig in, then you may be dealing with compacted soil. And, yes, even sand will compact. Compacted soils must be mechanically remedied by tilling or aeration.

Moss can be physically eradicated by mechanical removal and hand raking with a stiff-tined rake. However, this control may be only temporary. To resolve the moss problem, the environmental conditions that favor the moss must be corrected.

Q: I've heard that Sevin® dust is poisonous to bees. Is that so?

A: Sevin®, or carbaryl, is one of the nation's most widely used insecticides for a wide variety of insect pests. It is commonly used in the home vegetable garden. It is also one of the most toxic to honey bees in certain formulations.

Often Sevin® does not kill field bees immediately, but allows them time to take contaminated nectar and pollen back to the colony.

Some crops treated under the wrong conditions (i.e., in bloom using a dust formulation with large numbers of bees in the field) have been responsible for disastrous bee kills.

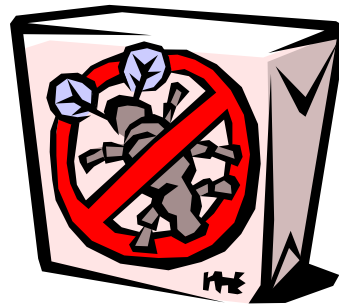
For more information, read the UF/IFAS publication entitled "Protect Honey Bees From Pesticides" available online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AA145>.

Q: I've got some old bottles of pesticides and I want to get rid of them. Can I just throw them in the garbage?

A: No, it's not a good idea to throw pesticides in the garbage. It's best to take your pesticides to the landfill on an "amnesty" day.

The Santa Rosa County landfill's next amnesty day is Saturday, April 9, 2005 from 8 am to 2 pm. During this one day event, residents may bring household hazardous waste such as oil, gasoline, antifreeze (up to 5 gallons), oil filters, lubricants, greases, paint, solvents, pesticides, batteries, propane bottles, pool cleaners, household cleaners and computers in for free disposal. Residents may drop off their hazardous waste at two locations. The southern disposal site is at the South Santa Rosa Service Center located at 5819 Gulf Breeze Parkway. The northern disposal site will be at the Santa Rosa County Auditorium located at 4530 Jimmy's Way in Milton, right behind the Public Services building.

This special amnesty day does not include tires of any type, general debris or household garbage. For more information, call 981-7135.



The Easter Lily

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has been amended with organic matter. Good drainage is the key for success with lilies. Our sandy soils usually have good drainage but you will have to add compost, composted manures or other organic amendments to your planting bed. Adjust the soil to a pH of 6.2 to 6.5. Avoid planting the bulb too deeply by keeping it at the same level it was growing in the pot and water immediately after planting. Lilies like their “feet in the shade and their heads in the sun,” so be sure to mulch with a 2-inch layer of compost, pine straw, or leaves.

Eventually, the leaves will die back. Once they have died completely, you can cut off the stem at ground level. The following spring, fertilize with a light application of 6-6-6 or 8-8-8 when the new shoots emerge and again about six weeks later.

Easter lily producers use a complex set of planting dates and chilling methods in order to get the bulb to bloom around Easter. Don't expect your garden planted lily to bloom exactly at Easter. But, it will rebloom sometime in late spring.

Just an added note, Easter lily leaves, stems and flowers have a high toxicity rating but the only reported toxicity is in cats

—by Theresa Friday, Residential Horticulture Agent



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