

# Green Garden News

## Bring Color to Your Garden

If you feel like spring is racing by and you haven't planted anything, don't fret. Today's annuals can give flowerbeds the pick-me-up you need. No other group of plants provides as much color as quickly and economically as annuals.

Prepare beds by adding 3 to 4 inches of organic matter such as compost, humus, pine bark or peat moss.

Get a soil test before adding fertilizer. If you cannot get a soil test, try broadcasting 2 pounds of a slow-release, 12-6-6 fertilizer containing minor nutrients per 100 square feet of bed space, and till it in with the organic amendments.

Transplants are the way to go. The dilemma may be deciding which annuals to choose. I have listed some of my favorites here, including a few that could be perennial in some areas.

### **Ornamental sweet potatoes (Ipomoea batatas)**

The ornamental sweet potato has become a tremendous success story in just a few short years. It brings color and pizzazz to the landscape the entire season and covers space almost as quickly as kudzu.

Other than an insect or two, the ornamental sweet potato is foolproof.

Whether cascading over a wall or trailing down a slope, you can't beat the ornamental sweet potato. They often return from underground tubers. My favorites are the Sweet Caroline series and Margarita.

### **Coleus**

#### **(Solenostemon scutellarioides)**

The coleus is a tropical plant that can give a carnival-like atmosphere to the garden. The colors are rich and highly variegated, and many varieties are able to withstand full sun throughout the growing season.

New vegetatively produced varieties of coleus are vigorous, reaching 3 feet in height and width. They are resistant to blooming, which allows for non-stop, vibrant, colorful foliage from spring until frost.

Plum Parfait and Burgundy Sun were chosen as Texas Super Stars. Other great performers include New Orleans Red, a Louisiana Select winner, and Mississippi Summer. The Solar series, with several variegated selections, is truly outstanding.

### **Verbena**

#### **(Verbena canadensis, V. tenuisecta and hybrids)**

In this case I am not referring to annual verbenas, but to those we

*(Continued on page 6)*

Volume 3, Issue 5

June 2005

#### Inside this issue:

June Gardening Tips	2
New Lawn Handbook Available	2
Mowing Safety	3
Upcoming Events	4
Spittlebugs are Back	4
Questions & Answers	5

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Employment Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, age, handicap or national origin.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, IFAS, FLORIDA A.&M. UNIVERSITY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PROGRAM, AND BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COOPERATING

The use of trade names is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product names.

# June Gardening Tips

## Flowers

- Annuals to plant include celosia, coleus, crossandra, hollyhock, impatiens, kalanchoe, nicotiana, ornamental pepper, portulaca, salvia, torenia, vinca and zinnia.
- Sow seeds of sunflowers. They are easy to grow if you have a sunny spot. Look for some of the new, dwarf varieties that can also be used as cut flowers.
- Remove old blooms (deadheading) to make flowers bloom longer.
- Allow the foliage on spring bulbs to grow. Do not cut it off until it turns yellow and falls over.

## Trees and Shrubs

- Do any necessary pruning of junipers this month.
- Finish pruning the spring flowering shrubs by early June such as azaleas, camellias, spiraeas, wisteria and forsythia.
- This is the month to reproduce plants by budding.
- Check the mulch around your ornamental plants to be sure it's two inches thick and add mulch as needed to help keep weeds down and conserve water. Keep mulch one to two inches away from trunk or stem.
- Inspect maple trees, especially silver maple for infestations of maple soft scale. Look for a white substance with some black on one end. Individual maple scales are about 1/4 inch in diameter and resemble bird droppings. They occur mostly on leaves and can cause defoliation unless controlled.
- Inspect the undersides of azalea leaves for spider mites and lace bugs. If dry weather conditions exist, these insects can do some serious damage if heavy infestations are not controlled.

- Check conifers for signs of bagworms. Call your local Extension Service for control measures.

## Fruits and Nuts

- Harvest peaches, nectarines and plums as soon as they mature, before the squirrels and birds get to them.

## Vegetable Garden

- Sidedress vegetable gardens with fertilizer containing nitrogen and potassium. A fertilizer such as a 15-0-15 can be used. Use approximately 2-3 cupfuls (1 to 1½ pounds) per 100 feet of row.
- Increase watering frequency and amount as tomatoes load up with fruit.
- Vegetables that can be planted outdoors include eggplant, lima beans, okra, southern peas, peppers and sweet potatoes.
- Sweet potatoes are started from plants or "draws". Be sure to purchase only certified weevil free sweet potato plants.
- Check for and control pests such as the tomato fruitworm, stinkbugs on vegetables and aphids on all new growth.

## Lawns

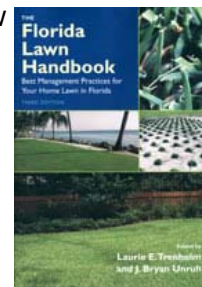
- Check for spittlebugs in centipedegrass. They are more attracted to especially lush areas of the yard such as along septic drain fields and in areas where excessive nitrogen fertilizer has been used.
- Check for chinch bugs in St. Augustinegrass and sod webworm in all turf. Control if needed.
- Start monitoring for mole cricket infestations and prepare for treatment.

## New Lawn Handbook Now Available

### The Florida Lawn Handbook: Best Management Practices for Your Home Lawn in Florida

Written in practical language by turfgrass experts, this new, highly-anticipated edition is completely up-to-date, with the most current lawn management information. Color plates identify various grass types, weeds, diseases, and insects, including those insects that are good for your lawn!

This lawn reference book is now available for \$19.95 through the University of Florida. You may order online through the Extension Bookstore at <http://www.ifasbooks.ufl.edu/merchant2/> or by calling 352-392-1764



# Mowing Safety

This season is usually hectic. First of all, there are a lot of chores to complete. And then thrown into the mix are the various holidays, graduations, maybe even crop planting. There is also the abundant grass to mow. While too much rain can postpone the planting season a little, nothing really prevents grass from growing. And so the mowers come out. Since it is such a common activity, there is a tendency to view lawn mowing as being less hazardous than is really the case. The following is a safety guide explaining how to minimize risk while using a lawn mower.

The blade on the common lawn mower rotates to provide approximately 52 cuts per second. Translated into feet, the tip of the cutting blade of the mower travels about 300 feet in the same second. This is not an amusing fact. Each year, it is not uncommon to read or hear about the individual's foot that was caught underneath a walk-behind mower or a passing car. Or about the person whose eye got hit by an object thrown by a mower. Or the child that was backed over by a riding lawn mower. Increasingly, there seem to be more instances of the larger riding lawn tractors overturning and pinning the operator. Here are a few reminders of techniques for safe operation with a walk-behind mower:

1. READ the owners manual—it contains information about your specific mower.
2. Wear proper clothing—close fitting clothes and shoes with toes and traction soles (preferably leather). Eye protection is always recommended. Ear protection will reduce the level of noise heard.
3. Clear the area to be mowed of debris that may be thrown—the same updraft that helps raise the grass for better mowing also helps to pick up objects.
4. Keep children and other bystanders away from the mowing area.
5. Mow in a FORWARD direction—more difficult at times but safer.
6. When mowing on a slope, mow ACROSS the slope with a walk-behind mower—this keeps a

better distance between you and mower in case of a slip.

7. Wait till the grass is dry before mowing—very difficult to do in years such as this. When the grass is growing rapidly, there is typically more grass left from the previous cutting. This retains moisture and causes slips. This is in addition to the lack of traction normally available on wet grass.

8. ALWAYS shut off the mower before adjusting or clearing clogs.

9. Allow the mower to cool before refueling. Use only approved safety containers to store fuel.

For riding mowers, follow the above recommendations except for #6. For riding lawn mowers, always mow UP and DOWN the slope. The other considerations that need to be followed with riding mowers, in addition to the above, are:



10. NEVER carry passengers.

11. Remove the ignition key after each use.

12. Use age 10 as a guideline to allow youth to operate riding mowers. It is not until this age that many youths have developed the cognitive and motor abilities needed for safe operation. Even at this age, adult supervision is a necessity. The experience gained by safely and

successfully operating a riding lawn mower can provide a solid base for operating larger equipment and vehicles in the future.

13. Use a 15% slope as the maximum to attempt to mow. For a man of 5'8", this would translate conservatively into three average steps and the height of the knee. If after taking three steps, you have risen more than the height of your knee, the slope is too steep.

14. Keep all safety devices, switches, guards, and shields in place and working.

15. Before dismounting, shut off the engine and allow attachments to stop moving.

—Florida Agsafe Network, April 2005

# Upcoming Events

**Every Tuesday in June: 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 a sample in and an Extension Horticulturist or Master Gardener will be available to discuss your gardening questions. For more information about what type of sample to bring visit our website at <http://www.santarosa.fl.gov/extension/horticulture/diagnostics.html>.

**June 13, 2005: Are You Prepared for a Storm?** This FREE program will be held in two locations: in Niceville on Thursday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5:30-8:30 p.m. at the Niceville Community Center; and in Gulf Breeze on Monday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 5:30-8:30 p.m. at the Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church.

Topics include homeowner's insurance, storm resilient landscapes, preparing your house, valuable papers and home inventory, managing pets during a hurricane, and activities for children.

The program is free, but you are asked to pre-register by calling 850-623-3868. This will insure that there are take home materials for all.

**June 15, 2005: Turfgrass Expo and Field Day.** Dr. Bryan Unruh, UF/IFAS Turfgrass Specialist will host this annual event at the University of Florida's

Research farm in Allentown. Registration is \$25 and you can register online at <http://wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/center/events.htm#> or by calling Robin Vickers at (850) 983-5216 x 113 or emailing her at [rvickers@ufl.edu](mailto:rvickers@ufl.edu). This is always a well-organized day full of educational opportunities. This is a great opportunity to see the many different types of grasses grown at the UF/IFAS North Florida Research and Education Center.

**June 16, 2005: Gulf Coast Gardening From the Ground UP: Container Gardening.** 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 program will start at 6:30 pm. Linda Miller, Santa Rosa County Master Gardener Intern, will be presenting a program on how to choose an appropriate container, what soil to use and how to design a container garden.

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

# Spittlebugs Are Back

If you suspect that you have a spittlebug problem in centipedegrass, look for these clues. First, damaged areas start out as wilted or yellowed patches 2 to 4 inches in diameter. Secondly, lawns heavily infested with spittlebug nymphs may actually feel squishy when walked on, as if shaving foam were underneath. Examine these areas or wilted spots for nymphs. Lastly, spittlebug adults are easy to see, especially when mowing the lawn. They tend to jump up in front of the mower and fly away.

Since spittlebugs require high humidity conditions for optimum development, some cultural con-



trols may be helpful. First, control the irrigation. Nymphs cannot survive dry conditions. Secondly, excessive thatch increases humidity at the soil level. Follow recommended cultural practices to reduce thatch buildup. If a thatch problem exists, dethatching may help in reducing spittlebug problems. The best time to dethatch is in early spring. Do not dethatch in the summer because it is too stressful on the grass.

Recommended insecticides contain the active ingredients bifenthrin, carbaryl, cyfluthrin, deltamethrin, imidacloprid and lambda-cyhalothrin. Be sure to read and follow all label directions.

For more information, visit

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH077>

# Questions and Answers

**Q: The leaves of my rose are covered with black spots. The leaves then turn yellow and fall off. What's wrong?**

**A:** Black spot is the most important infectious disease of roses. It occurs only on roses (*Rosa* spp.), and is widespread among rose species and cultivars, although some of the shrub roses and rugosa roses show more resistance. Many hybrid tea roses are very susceptible.

There are several things that must be done to control black spot.

1. Keep foliage dry. Plant roses in sunny locations to encourage drying after rains. Avoid sites with dense surrounding vegetation, so that good air movement will dry leaves. Avoid overhead irrigation, especially late in the day. Black spot is most severe in summers with sustained rainy periods.
2. Good sanitation. Remove all black spotted leaves from and around plants. This should be done throughout the season. Before winter, remove and clean up all diseased leaves and remove diseased canes where possible.
3. Try to plant black spot resistance roses.
4. Use preventive fungicide applications. Fungicide controls are not successful if cultural and sanitation practices listed above are not followed. For fungicides to work, applications must be made preventively, providing a protective fungicide barrier which kills germinating fungal spores that have landed on plant tissue. If conditions for infection are present and a high level of control is desired, preventive spray programs often start as soon as rose foliage emerges in the spring and continue throughout the summer at frequent intervals (as frequently as every 7 to 10 days in wet weather). Frequently used fungicides for black spot control include chlorothalonil (Daconil), azoxystrobin (Heritage), mancozeb (Dithane) and/or myclobutanil (Immunox). It is best to rotate between two or three different types of fungicides.

There is a new product by Bayer Advanced Garden that contains the systemic fungicide tebuconazole. One product brand name is All-in-

One Rose and Flower Care and contains an insecticide, fungicide and fertilizer. There is also Bayer Advanced Garden Disease Control for Plants. If you use either of these, let me know how it works for you.

**Q: I have the new Encore azaleas. When do you prune these repeat bloomers?**

**A:** According to the Encore Azalea official website, if you think that your Encore Azalea needs pruning, do so immediately after spring flowering for maximum bud set.

More care instructions are available at <http://www.encoreazalea.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=about.encore>

**Q: When is the best time to treat for mole crickets?**

**A:** Late June or early July is considered to be the most ideal time to apply control measures. This timing is based on extensive research and knowledge of the mole cricket life cycle. Mole crickets have one generation a year. In spring, the adults fly, mate and begin laying eggs. Most egg laying occurs between early May and mid-June.

It's important to treat when the young mole crickets begin actively feeding in early summer. The longer you allow them to feed and grow the more difficult the task of managing them. Adults can be very difficult to control because of their ability to tunnel. Tunneling allows the adults to avoid contact with many conventional pesticides.

There are a number of products on the market to control mole crickets. Look for products that contain bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, deltamethrin, fipronil, imidacloprid or lambda-cyhalothrin. Some insecticides should be watered in after application to move them into the root zone of the grass. Be sure to read and follow all label directions.

## Bring Color to Your Garden

*(Continued from page 1)*

consider perennial to short-lived perennials. The verbena has undergone quite a revolution in the past decade, giving the gardener a plant that is durable, disease-resistant and almost ever-blooming, from spring through frost.

The moss verbena has become one of the top performers with its blooming, groundcover-like habit. The moss verbena chokes out weeds, shades and cools the root zone, and blooms profusely. The rose verbena is equally vigorous but taller. For immediate impact, plant a blooming basket in the bed.

The rose verbena variety Homestead Purple was a Louisiana Select and Georgia Gold Medal winner. Biloxi Blue was a Mississippi Medallion winner and Texas Superstar (under the name Blue Princess). Aztec, Wildfire, Tukana and Superbena series offer several colors and are very impressive. Great selections with the moss verbena look are the Tapien and Babylon series.

—Norman Winter, MSU Horticulturist  
Central Mississippi Research & Extension Center



### **Santa Rosa County Extension Service**

6263 Dogwood Drive  
Milton, FL. 32570-3500

Newsletter compiled by:

---

Theresa Friday  
Extension Agent I  
Environmental Horticulture  
Phone: 850-623-3868  
E-mail: [theresaf@co.santa-rosa.fl.us](mailto:theresaf@co.santa-rosa.fl.us)  
Website: <http://www.santarosa.fl.gov/extension/horticulture/index.html>

**SANTA ROSA COUNTY EXTENSION SERVICE**  
**6263 DOGWOOD DRIVE**  
**MILTON, FL 32570-3500**

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE PAID  
MILTON, FL  
PERMIT NO. 68