

# Green Garden News

## Powis Castle artemisia is gardeners' dream

One of the most beautiful plants for the spring and summer garden is the artemisia. Many are convinced it is not being used enough, especially the hybrid known as Powis Castle.

One combination planting everyone will admire has Powis Castle partnered with Purple Heart. Powis Castle -- which most consider our best artemisia -- has feathery gray foliage and is very showy against the deep, dark purple-leafed Purple Heart, also commonly called *Setcreasea*.

Another irresistible combination in the garden partners Powis Castle and the heirloom plant—rose campion which in addition to the colorful, iridescent rose flowers, has gray, fuzzy, silky leaves.

Artemisias offer gardeners a wide array of species to choose from for adding a gray foliage effect to the flower garden. The gray foliage seems to intensify the color of nearby flowers and other foliage, and ties together almost every color com-

bination imaginable.

Consider planting it with the bright purple balls of All Around Gomphrena or Purple Coneflowers, Indigo Spires Salvia and Shasta daisies.

All artemisias share the same cultural requirements, which are plenty of sunlight and well-drained soils. Artemisias are native to the Mediterranean and while they don't need a luxurious soil, it has to be well drained. Raised beds, composed of soil and compost, are ideal.

Water to get them established, but then only sparingly. Overhead irrigation is not recommended. When new growth resumes in the spring, cut back mature plants that have become woody with a spindly look. You can divide the artemisia in the fall or early spring.

Powis Castle is perennial in zones 6-8 and reaches about 3 feet tall. Late spring and early summer is a great

time to plant the Artemisia. When planting, make sure to plant at the same depth it is growing in the con-

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Powis Castle artemisia partners well with Purple Heart. Powis Castle has feathery gray foliage and is very showy against the deep, dark purple-leafed *Setcreasea*.

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# 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

- Mature palms should receive an application of granular fertilizer. Use a special palm fertilizer that has an 8-2-12 +4 Mg (magnesium) with micronutrients formulation. Apply one pound of fertilizer per 100 sqft of canopy area or landscape area.
- Do any necessary pruning of junipers this month.
- Finish pruning the spring flowering shrubs such as azaleas, camellias, spiraea, wisteria and forsythia by early June.
- This is the month to reproduce plants by budding.
- Check mulch around ornamental plants to be sure it's two inches thick. 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 not controlled.



Ornamental peppers add vibrant color to the landscape

## Fruits and Nuts

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

## Vegetable Garden

- Side-dress 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 1 ½ 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 the tomato fruitworm, stinkbugs and aphids—control if necessary.

## Lawns

- Check for the following lawn pests and control them if necessary:
  - \* 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.
  - \* Chinch bugs in St. Augustinegrass
  - \* Sod webworm in all turf
- Start monitoring for mole cricket infestations and prepare for treatment.
- Apply iron to St. Augustinegrass (if desired) to provide dark green color without stimulating excessive growth.

# Be sure to harvest no vegetable before its time

Determining when to harvest vegetables at their peak in taste and freshness can be tricky.

Harvesting too late can result in less tenderness and poor quality. In some cases, leaving vegetables on the plant too long will drain the plant, causing less production.

It's not a bad idea to pick and taste a few of the vegetables for readiness. Harvesting too early may result in smaller vegetables and less flavor.

Before planting always read your seed packet to check and see how many days it takes for the vegetables to mature. This will give you an idea of when your crop will be ready to harvest. If you are using unpackaged seeds or transplants, you can check with your local extension office to determine the days to maturity.

The following list is taken from an extension publication in Georgia and is helpful in harvesting vegetables at their peak.

- **Asparagus:** Can be harvested when spears are 6 to 9 inches tall.
- **Snap beans:** Can be harvested while pods are still smooth.
- **Lima beans:** Can be harvested when pods are full but seeds are green.
- **Beets:** Can be harvested when 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 inches in diameter.
- **Broccoli:** Can be harvested before flowers show yellow color. Remove the center head and allow side shoots to form and harvest them.
- **Cantaloupe:** Can be harvested when melons can be removed from the vine without pressure
- **Cabbage:** Can be harvested when head is firm and heavy.
- **Cauliflower:** Can be harvested before curd loosens and discolors. After head is removed, discard the plant.
- **Carrots:** Can be harvested anytime roots are firm and brittle.
- **Corn:** Can be harvested when kernel juice is milk, silk begins to dry, and ears are full to end.
- **Cucumbers:** Can be harvested while seeds are small, flesh is firm, and color is green.
- **Eggplant:** Can be harvested before color begins to dull: firm to touch.
- **Lettuce:** Can be harvested while tender and milk-flavored before seedstalk begins to form.
- **Okra:** Can be harvested when pods are 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 inches long.
- **Onions:** For green bunching-can be harvested when bulbs are 3/8 to 1 inch in diameter. For storing-

after the tops have died down.

- **English peas:** Can be harvested after the pods have filled out before they turn yellow.
- **Sugar snap peas:** Can be harvested after pods form but before yellowing.
- **Southern peas:** For fresh or frozen use: Can be harvested when pods shell easily. For drying: after pods are dry and brittle.
- **Pumpkins:** Can be harvested after they are full size.
- **Bell pepper:** Can be harvested when pods are full size and firm.
- **Hot peppers:** Can be harvested after pods reach full size.
- **Irish potatoes:** Fresh use-Can be harvested after tubers are one inch in diameter. Storage-After vines have died down.
- **Sweet potatoes:** Can be harvested after reaching desired size but before frost or cold weather, approximately 120 days.
- **Radish:** Can be harvested while firm and brilliantly colored.
- **Summer squash:** Can be harvested when large end is one to 2 1/4 inches in diameter.
- **Winter squash:** Can be harvested when rind is not easily dented by fingernail.
- **Spinach:** Can be harvested while leaves are crisp and dark green.
- **Tomatoes:** Can be harvested when full colored but still firm.
- **Turnip greens:** Can be harvested while leaves are crisp and green.
- **Turnip roots:** Can be harvested when 2 to 2 1/2 inches in diameter.
- **Watermelon:** Can be harvested when tendrils die, rind on ground becomes yellow and netting thickens.

For additional information on vegetable gardening in Florida, review the UF/IFAS publication "Vegetable Gardening Handbook." It's available online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH021> or by calling your local Extension office.

There is also a book, "Vegetable Gardening In Florida," available through the University of Florida. This 143-page book covers everything from selecting the garden site to canning and freezing your produce. The book offers full-color photographs and expert advice on garden pests, vegetable varieties for Florida and garden care. It's available through the UF/IFAS bookstore at <http://www.ifasbooks.ufl.edu/merchant2/>.

—by Larry Williams, Extension Faculty-Horticulture, Okaloosa County Extension Service.

# Upcoming Events

## Every Monday in June: *Plant Diagnostic Clinic*.

This free clinic is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Monday at the Extension Office located at 6263 Dogwood Drive, Milton.

## Every Tuesday: *Plant Diagnostic Clinic*.

This free clinic is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesdays at the South Santa Rosa Service Center at 5819 Gulf Breeze Pkwy.

**Thru Sept 4th: *Butterfly House*.** Tuesday through Sunday 11 to 4. Closed on Monday .

Navarre Park, 8543 Navarre Pkwy (Hwy 98), Details: (850) 939-3267.

## July 21, 2006: *Gulf Coast Turfgrass Expo and Field Day*.

For more information visit the UF West Florida Research and Education website at <http://wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/center/events.htm>.

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

# Insect of the Month

The **crapemyrtle aphid** is an interesting pest. Crapemyrtle aphid is host specific to crape myrtle so it does not feed on any other plants. These aphids reach high populations during mid summer. They excrete honeydew copiously as they feed on the plant sap which in turn serves as food for the fungus, sooty mold. Sooty mold colors crape myrtle foliage and wood black, prompting many people to apply insecticidal controls for the aphids. **STOP** and consider the following before you control the aphids!

Crapemyrtle aphids and their sugar laden honeydew serve as food for twenty to thirty species of beneficial insect predators (good bugs that feed on other bad bugs) and countless bees and wasps.

The crape myrtle flowers also attract and provide nectar and pollen to many important pollinating bees. Crape myrtle and its aphids attract these beneficial parasites and predators to crape myrtle and other plants in the surrounding area.

The large numbers of aphids encourage the beneficials to remain in the area. Because the aphids are not native to the U.S., most of our native predators do not prefer these aphids over the native species. The predators will leave crape myrtle periodically to search the surrounding vegetation --

your yard and garden -- for their more preferred prey, your other plant pests, thereby, enhancing natural biological control. However, since the crapemyrtle aphids build up to such high populations, the predators usually cannot control them on the crape myrtle. To enjoy this biological pest control you have to tolerate some crapemyrtle aphids.

Aphid populations are predictable and peak in most years during July in north Florida and south Georgia (later further north and sooner further south). However, aphids in different locations peak at different times making the aphids much more important for predators over a larger area of landscape. During excessive drought periods crapemyrtle aphids may be the

only food available to many beneficial insects. Cultural practices promoting crape myrtle growth such as irrigation, fertilizer and light pruning seem to stimulate aphids and maintain them longer on the plant.

Plant some crape myrtles, tolerate the aphids and the sooty mold, enjoy the beauty, and help nature take its course by enhancing natural biological control of pests.

—by Dr. Russell F. Mizell, III, Professor of Entomology, and Dr. Gary W. Knox, Professor of Environmental Horticulture, NFREC-Quincy



# Questions and Answers

**Q: I have a little mimosa-like weed coming up in my flower beds. There are hundreds of them, what do I do?**

**A:** The weed that you are seeing is probably **Chamberbitter**, also known as gripeweed, and leafflower.

These weeds are summer annuals that require warm soil conditions to germinate. Their most recognizable and distinct feature are the numerous, small, smooth, round fruit attached to the undersides of the stems.

There is very little information on the biology of this weed; therefore, there is very little data on the control of this troublesome weed. It is known that chamberbitter is very shade tolerant, has high seed production and viability, takes very well to mowing and has an extensive fibrous root system that makes it an excellent competitor. It prefers wet conditions, but once established, can tolerate drought just as well. Early detection and action is very important in controlling this weed. It is very important that this weed **not** be allowed to set seed by using all appropriate methods.

According to information from the University of Georgia, the following **pre-emergent** herbicides are useful in controlling chamberbitter in ornamental beds: trifluralin + isoxaben (Snapshot TG), prodiamine (Barricade) and isoxaben (Gallery).

Unfortunately, once the weeds have germinated, your only **post-emergent** options are the glyphosate, non-selective herbicides, such as Roundup. Again, when using a non-selective herbicide, be sure to protect your desirable plants. One method that works well is to use an empty coffee can. Remove both ends so that you have a hollow tube. Place the can over the chamberbitter and spray your herbicide into the can. This directs the spray to the weed and prevents it drifting onto your desirable ornamentals.

**Q: I have a spot in my yard where the grass always looks dry. What insect is causing it?**

**A:** Many people wrongly blame pests (mole

crickets, brown patch, etc.) for dry spots in their lawns. Dry spots are usually the result of imperfections in an irrigation system. They're revealed during extended dry weather. During times of adequate rainfall, rain masks the irrigation system's imperfections.

A couple of simple tests can help confirm that the problem areas are to be blamed on lack of water versus some mysterious pest. First, check affected areas by taking a soil sample in the root zone. Take a slice of soil with a shovel or trowel to a depth of six to eight inches. Visually inspect and feel the soil in the root area for moisture. Then do the same in an adjacent area of the lawn that looks normal and compare the difference. It should be obvious if there's a difference in moisture between the areas tested.

The second test involves placing several empty straight-sided cans (such as soup or tuna cans) in the affected area and several in a normal area of the lawn. Then turn on your irrigation system and let it run long enough to collect some water in the cans. Compare amounts of water collected in the two areas. Again, it should be obvious if there's a difference in the quantity of water applied in the areas tested.

These tests are cheaper, less trouble and more environmentally friendly as compared to purchasing and applying pesticides for nonexistent pests. Many people treat for mole crickets, a disease or other lawn pests as a result of incorrectly diagnosing the problem.

**Q: I just found what looks like a green cockroach in my flower bed. What is it?**

**A:** It's probably the Cuban cockroach. It is about 3/4" long as an adult. Males and females are pale-green, whereas the nymphs are dark-brown. It is an outdoors, tropical species that usually is not found north of Florida. Adults are attracted to light and are adept fliers.

# Artemesia

*(Continued from page 1)*

tainer.

If you read an herb book, you'll be surprised at how the plants have been used for centuries to treat just about every affliction imaginable. Other than the one known as French Tarragon, most have less enticing common names such as wormwood and mugwort. The wormwood is used to flavor the liqueur, or should I say wine, known as vermouth.

In addition to Powis Castle, take a look at specimens of Silver Mound, Silver King and the ground cover Oriental Limelight, with its cream and green variegation.

While every garden needs the color green, once these are in place, the real garden fun can begin by using gray foliage plants like the artemisia.

—by Norman Winter, MSU Horticulturist,  
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