

Green Garden News

It's a Snap to Grow Fall Snapdragons

The snapdragon is one of the most beautiful plants for fall color, and it thrives right through winter until late spring heat arrives. Snapdragons love those times when night temperatures are in the low 40s and day temperatures reach the low 70s, which makes them ideally situated for fall in the South.

Many gardeners don't realize snapdragons are very cold hardy. Once established in the bed and hardened off, they can take sub-freezing temperatures. Make sure they stay well watered during these cold spells, but with a layer of pine straw during extra cold spells, they can last for quite some time.

Snapdragons prefer well-drained, organic-rich beds prepared much like what you do for pansies. Till three to four inches of organic matter to a depth of eight to ten inches. While tilling, work in two pounds of a slow release, 12-6-6 fertilizer per 100 square feet of bed space.

Colors include red, yellow, pink, burgundy, bronze, orange, white and multiple colors. For the most effective landscape display, I still believe massing the beds in single colors is the way to go.

Don't forget that as these fragrant spikes get larger, they are also good for cut flowers, particularly the old-

fashioned Rockets. Sonnets and Liberty that get about 18 to 24 inches tall have been my favorites, but the Freesong and the Crown Series are gaining recognition. The Terra Cotta mix in the Crown Series may be among the prettiest snapdragons I have ever seen. The colors are rust and orange with a little creamy yellow.

Trailing varieties have really caught on with gardeners for use in the landscape, baskets and mixed containers. The Chandelier and Lamplion series have been the most popular, but the newer Luminaire series under the BallFlora Plant label should satisfy a lot of gardeners. As is typical of the large varieties, the trailing types come in several colors.

Miniature varieties have always been popular, particularly the Tahiti, Bells and Floral Showers. These are great in the landscape but also super for growing in containers. There is a new group called Montego that will turn heads with its more erect growth habit.

Snapdragons work well in combination with pansies and ornamental kale or cabbage. Plant in bold drifts in front of evergreen shrubs to show off their color. Try planting them close to beds of spring-flowering daf-

(Continued on page 6)

Volume 3, Issue 10

October 2005

Inside this issue:

October Gardening Tips	2
New UF/IFAS Publication	2
Control Winter Annual Weeds Now	3
Upcoming Events	4
A Spider in Your Garden	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.



October Tips

Flowers

- Get ready to protect valuable container grown tropical and subtropical plants. Move them indoors when night temperatures drop into the 40's°F.
- To get a Christmas cactus or poinsettia to bloom for Christmas be sure it is not getting light at night. Starting approximately October 1, put the plants in a dark area that receives no light from 5 p.m. to 8 a.m. Keep putting it in the dark at night for one month for the cactus, six to eight weeks for the poinsettia. Place the plant in its normal growing area during the day so that it gets sufficient light.
- Set out bachelor buttons, calendulas, dianthus, delphinium, flowering cabbage or kale, foxglove, mums, nasturtium, Shasta daisy, snapdragon, statice, sweet alyssum, pansies and petunias.
- Obtain wildflower seeds and prepare for planting in November. Prepare the soil by tilling thoroughly to a depth of 4 to 5 inches. Find a local source, or order seed so that planting can be done during late October or early November. Anyone who is not experienced with the establishment of wildflower plantings should start with a good mixture of several kinds. Choose a southern or southeastern mixture containing such proven species as coreopsis, Indian blanket, lemon mint, coneflower, Drummond phlox, larkspur, black-eyed susan and yarrow.
- Divide crowded perennials such as ajuga, day-lilies, liriopé and mondo.
- Continue to spray roses for diseases.

Trees and Shrubs

- Prepare for making an application of horticultural oil this fall if scales, mites, and other plant sucking insects have been a problem on woody ornamentals
- Fall is an ideal time for planting many trees and shrubs. When transplanted during the fall, the roots of woody ornamentals continue to grow throughout

the winter. This results in plants that are well on their way toward establishment before hot weather the following spring.

Fruits and Nuts

- Locate a source of fruit trees and place your order. Most are shipped to local outlets during December or January.
- Begin planting strawberries in mid to late October. Set out strawberry plants in the garden, in planters or in "strawberry jars."

Vegetable Garden

- Plant seeds or establish transplants of these cool season vegetables: beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, collards, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mustard, onions, parsley, radish, spinach and turnips.

Lawns:

- Continue mowing and providing general care, including irrigation. **Avoid** the application of a fertilizer. This could encourage excessively tender grass that would result in winter damage. Instead, allow the grass to gradually go dormant
- Overseeding of the permanent lawn with annual ryegrass can be done during October and early November. Though a well kept cool season lawn can be attractive, it requires a commitment. Regular mowing, irrigation and a couple of light, supplemental applications of fertilizer will be required during the winter in order to keep the lawn looking its best. Seed should be applied during October or early November. Use 10 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet of area.
- Apply a pre-emergence herbicide in early October to control winter weeds.

New UF/IFAS Publication

A new UF/IFAS publication entitled "**Getting Started in Butterfly Gardening**" by Dr. Richard Sprenkel is now available.

This publication was developed for individuals who are just getting started in butterfly gardening or

who want to pursue the hobby with a good chance of success.

Call your local Extension Office for a copy or look online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IN564>.

Control Winter Annual Weeds Now

The best time to control annual weeds is just before you can see them.

Timing of the herbicide (weed killer) application is of utmost importance in controlling winter weeds that are about to sprout in home lawns all over North Florida. Common winter weeds that germinate during fall include annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*), chickweed, henbit, hop clover, lawn burweed and Carolina geranium.

These and other winter annual weeds germinate from seeds during fall as the soil temperature cools and the day length shortens. The little seedlings usually go unnoticed at this time but continue to slowly grow through the colder winter months. Approaching spring, as the day length becomes longer and the soil temperature warms, all of these previously inconspicuous weeds put on a growth spurt and go to seed.

The majority of calls for advice on winter annual weed control come to me in late February through April when these weeds are most visible. By then, it's too late. The parent plants are dying and seeds have been scattered all over the yard. You should now see why timing is important when controlling these weeds.

If you intend to use a preemergence herbicide, apply it during late September to early October when nighttime temperatures drop to 55° to 60°F for several consecutive days. This will be just before the weeds emerge.

Timing of a preemergence herbicide application for warm season weeds such as crabgrass should be during mid February to March 1 when day temperatures reach 65° to 70°F for four to five consecutive days. This generally coincides with the blooming of azaleas, dogwoods and forsythias.

Some preemergence herbicides to look for include oryzalin (Surflan), benefin (Sta-green Crab-

grass Preventer, Hi-Yield Crabgrass Preventer), pendimethalin (Pre-M, Pendulum, Turf Weedgrass Control, Halts Crabgrass Preventer), benefin + oryzalin (XL) and DCPA (Dacthal).

I've placed common names for products first followed by examples of brand names for those products in parenthesis. You may find other brand names on the market that contain the same active ingredient. All of these products are safe to use near ornamental trees, shrubs and flowers.



Poa annua (annual bluegrass) is a common winter weed found in lawns

Atrazine (Purge II, Atrazine, Aatrex) is another common herbicide that has both preemergence and postemergence activity on a wide range of weeds. Do not apply an atrazine product over the root zone of desirable trees, shrubs and flowers. Also, atrazine can injure certain types of lawn-grasses.

For season-long weed control, a second application should be made about nine weeks after the initial application. To activate some products, irrigation or rain may be necessary fol-

lowing application. Because many preemergence products may interfere with lawngrass seed germination, delay reseeding six to sixteen weeks after application. This applies to overseeding a lawn with ryegrass seed, also.

Overuse of some types of preemergence herbicides can cause your lawn grass to produce short stubby weak roots. So as is true with all pesticides, only apply the product if there is a pest to control – in this case, if you have had a history of winter annual weeds. Otherwise, save your money and time. It is the user's responsibility to read and follow all label directions and precautions when using any pesticide, including herbicides.

—by Larry L. Williams, UF/IFAS Extension Horticulture Agent, Okaloosa County

Upcoming Events

Every Tuesday in September: *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. For more information about what type of sample to bring visit our website at <http://www.santarosa.fl.gov/extension/horticulture/diagnostics.html>.

Saturday, October 1, 2005: *Harvest Happenings Fall Festival—Rhapsody of Trees.* UF/IFAS Santa Rosa County Extension and Santa Rosa County Master Gardeners will host Harvest Happenings from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. This day long event will include tours of the demonstration and teaching gardens, live characters to answer your gardening questions, arts and crafts, a food

court, gardening educational programs and a tree adoption.

The Extension office is located at 6263 Dogwood Drive, Milton, FL. For more information call 623-3868.

October 20, 2005: *Gulf Coast Gardening From the Ground UP: Composting: Turning Leaves into Gold.* 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. Barbara Knight, Santa Rosa County Master Gardener, will be presenting a program on how to compost.

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

A Spider in Your Garden

One creature that you may notice hanging around in your garden this month is the spiny orb weaver spider. The spiny orb weaver is one of the spiders that sometimes alarms people due to its unusual shape and bright coloration. Fortunately, this spider is not poisonous and, because it feeds on insects, it is one the gardeners allies in controlling damaging insects in the garden and landscape.

When viewed from above, the spiny orb weaver is somewhat flattened with an oval shape, white in color with black spots and red spines protruding from the sides. The undersurface is black with some white spots. The legs are black.

The spiny orb weaver ranges from the southern United States to Argentina. In other areas of its range its coloration can vary considerably from what is seen with typical Florida specimens. The body of the females can be as large as about ½ inch diameter. The males are smaller.

The spiny orb weaver is usually found in areas such as wooded areas, nurseries and home land-

scapes where it spins its webs that may be between about 3 feet and 20 feet above the ground. The webs are used to trap insects including whiteflies, flies, moths and beetles. As with other orb weavers, the webs are elaborate constructions. Several strands of the web radiate out like spokes of a wheel from a central connection point with another strand spiraling out to the edge of the web.

The females deposit their egg sacs on the undersides of leaves of plants that are close to the web. Each egg sac can contain from about 100 to over 250 eggs. It takes 11 to 13 days for the eggs to hatch.

When it is encountered in the home landscape it is best to leave the spiny orb weaver alone to do its silent work of feeding on insects.

This information is taken from the University of Florida's Featured Creatures website. A more extensive article on the spiny orb weaver can be found on that website at this address: <http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu/>



Questions and Answers

Q: I have some overgrown shrubs that need some serious pruning. Is this a good time of the year?

A: This is the wrong time of year for the major pruning of shrubs. Since pruning stimulates new growth, you could be setting plants up for serious cold injury. Delay such heavy jobs until spring. This allows the entire growing season for the shrubs to recover and toughen up for winter.

Q: I would like to establish sod this month (October). Is it too late in the year?

A: Sod can be established just about any time of the year in our location. Extra close attention to watering will be necessary because fall is typically our dry season. Even if an early cold spell brings on dormancy, continue to water periodically. Root growth, and establishment, continues through the winter because our soils are relatively warm during the fall and winter.

The optimal time to sod is in spring after all chance of frost but before the weather turns hot.

Q: My African violets will not bloom but they are huge! What can be wrong? They just keep getting bigger and bigger but without flowers.

A: Like all plants, African violets need the proper environment to grow and flower normally. You must consider light and humidity for leaf growth; soil moisture content and drainage for root growth, and temperature and plant nutrients for growth of the entire plant.

Too much light can be just as bad as too little. Fortunately, if you know what to look for, you can spot the effects of improper lighting before serious consequences result. When African Violets don't get enough light, the leaves may be thinner and a darker than normal shade of green. Under low light, your plants may grow quite well, with one important exception- they will provide few (if any) flowers. Insufficient light is the most common cause of failure to bloom in African violets. On the other hand, excess light affects growth, as well as, leaf color and blooming. If your African violet gets too much light, plant growth will slow down, the

leaves will turn a pale yellowish- green, and flowering will eventually decrease.

Try setting your African violets near north or east windows. But, heed a few words of caution. Don't expose your plants to direct sunlight, which could cause the leaves to burn. Secondly, during winter, keep them far enough away from cold glass to avoid injury. Also, remember that plants growing near windows need to be rotated periodically to maintain even growth pattern.

You may want to grow African violets where adequate natural light is not available. In such cases, artificial light is the answer. You can use either fluorescent or incandescent lamps. Fluorescent lights are cheaper to operate, generate less heat, and give better results than the incandescent bulbs. In fact, African violets grown under properly regulated fluorescent light have better color, grow faster, and produce more flowers than plants grown under natural light.



To have healthy plants under artificial light, you should provide about 600-foot candles of light for twelve hours each day. You can do this with two forty watt, cool white, and fluorescent tubes suspended eight to twelve inches above the plants.

Q: Do you have any information on attracting birds to backyards? Types of feeders, food, plants and watering containers are all part of the information I am seeking.

A: Birds have the same needs as humans: food, shelter and water. Though humans and avians attain their needs differently, if birds find the environment they desire in your yard you'll never lack for entertainment. Evergreen shrubbery, like holy or camellia, supplies year-round hiding and brooding places. Any plant that produces berries, nuts or fruit will be a favorite of birds.

(Continued from page 1)

fodils.

Snapdragons are not that hard to grow. Deadhead to keep flowers producing, and keep water on all fall bedding plants to help them survive drought conditions.

If record cold should threaten, cover snapdragons with pine straw for a few days until the chill has passed. When temperatures warm back up in the spring and faster growth begins, give the bed a dilute application of a water-soluble 20-20-20 fertilizer.

—By 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

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