April 2007

Dear Extension Friend

It's April and I am sure you are busier than ever, planting, weeding, fertilizing, & pruning ... maybe mowing, and watering, too! Everything you can do this month to get plants growing well will pay off this summer.

This newsletter has hints about what you can do to keep plants in good shape. We have some programs scheduled and the Master Gardener Plant Clinics continue this month. I've also included information on a new kind of honey bee that we all need to be aware of.

It was great to see so many of you at our Let's Get Growing Workshops last month! We have since secured a grant to renovate our greenhouse and add a shade house in order to establish a regional demonstration site for many of the techniques and crops discussed at the workshops. Stay tuned for more on that.

I'll make this brief so you can get back to your spring gardening.

Have a Happy Easter and enjoy friends, family, and fun in your April gardens!

Respectfully,

Barbara Smith
Extension Agent - Horticulture

Private Pesticide Applicator School & Exams
April 12th at the Baker County Extension office

If you would like to get a private applicator license or you need CEUs to keep your license current, this all-day course will give you that opportunity.

7 CEUs in CORE, Ag Tree Crop, Private Applicator AG, Ag Row Crop, Forestry, Ornamental & Turf, and Soil & Greenhouse Fumigation are offered.

Exams are offered as part of the school. You will need to study the two training manuals Applying Pesticides Correctly & Private Applicator Agricultural Pest Control. They will be used as part of the class and are available through the Extension office (cost is $15 for both).

The cost for the school is $5 per person & includes materials and refreshments. Reservations are required. Call Baker County Extension at 904-259-3520 by Tues., April 10th to register. Complete agenda and more information is at our website.
The Buzz on the New Africanized Honey Bees!

Africanized honey bees have made their way into the state of Florida. These bees breed and compete with the European honey bees that normally inhabit our state, pollinating flowers and crops.

Since the Africanized honey bee population is increasing, it is important to become familiar with them and their behavior.

Africanized honey bees are sometimes referred to as killer bees because they are very defensive. Attacks occur when people or animals come too close to their nests.

How is this honey bee different from European honey bees? A colony is a group of bees with comb and brood. The colony may either be managed (white hive boxes maintained by professional beekeepers) or wild (feral).

A group of bees in the process of leaving the parent colony and starting a nest in a new location is called a “swarm.” Usually a new queen is reared to stay with the parent colony and the old queen flies off with the new queen is reared to stay with the parent colony and starting a nest in a new location is called a “swarm.”

1. The Africanized honey bee swarms much more frequently than other honey bees. A colony is a group of bees with comb and brood. The colony may either be managed (white hive boxes maintained by professional beekeepers) or wild (feral).

A group of bees in the process of leaving the parent colony and starting a nest in a new location is called a “swarm.” Usually a new queen is reared to stay with the parent colony and the old queen flies off with the swarm. Scout bees often locate potential nesting sites, be cautious when entering a swarm.

2. Regardless of myths to the contrary, Africanized honey bees do not fly out in angry swarms to randomly attack unlucky victims. However, the Africanized honey bee can become highly defensive in order to protect their hive, or home.

3. The Africanized honey bee is far less selective about what it calls home. This bee will occupy a much smaller space than the European honey bee. Known nesting locations include water meter boxes (pictured below), metal utility poles, cement blocks, junk piles, and house eaves. Other potential nesting sites include abandoned vehicles empty containers, places with holes, fences, overturned flower pots, old tires, garages, outbuildings, walls, chimneys, crawl spaces under houses or buildings, mobile home skirting, and abandoned structures. Holes in the ground, lumber piles, manholes, tree limbs, mail boxes, even an empty soda can; all are possible "homes" to the Africanized honey bee.

4. The Africanized honey bee is extremely protective of hive and brood. The Africanized honey bee definition of "home turf" is also much larger than the European honey bee. So, try to allow ample physical distance between yourself and the hive. At least 100 feet, or the width of a four-lane highway, is a good distance. The best advice is that if you see a bee hive, start moving away immediately.

How will our behavior need to change now that we have this differently behaving honey bee?

Be watchful of any bee activity, avoid swarms and nest sites, be cautious when entering an outdoor building that has not been opened recently, & when getting ready to mow, check for bee activity in the area before starting the equipment.

Bee-proof Your Property

The best defense is a good offense. Removing or blocking potential nesting sites around your yard and house reduces your risk of encountering Africanized honey bees at home.

In order to 'bee-proof' a building, remove all potential nesting sites (see the list above).

Remember, Africanized honey bees also nest in a wide variety of locations and may enter openings as small as 3/16-inch in diameter (about the size of a pencil eraser) as long as there is a suitable-sized cavity behind the opening for a nest.

From March - July (swarming season), inspect your property weekly for unusual bee activity. Seal all gaps larger than 1/8-inch in walls and around chimneys and plumbing. Install screens made of 1/8-inch hardware cloth over other openings, such as rain spouts, vents, cavities of trees and fence posts, water meters, utility boxes, etc. Remove any trash or debris that might serve as a shelter for honey bees. Fill or cover animal burrows in the ground. Make sure window and sun screens are tight fitting.

Keep shed doors tightly closed and in good repair and exercise caution when entering buildings that are not used frequently. Look for large numbers of bees passing into and out of or hovering in front of an opening. Listen for the hum of active insects. Look low for colonies in or at ground level, and also high for colonies under eaves or in attics.

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What to do if attacked by Africanized honey bees, remember these important steps:

1. RUN away quickly.

2. As you are running, pull your shirt up over your head to protect your face. This will protect sensitive face areas and airways. (Note: Africanized honey bees will attack dark colors, going for eyes, nose, and mouth.)

3. Continue to RUN. Do not stop running until you reach shelter, such as a vehicle or building. A few bees may follow you indoors. However, if you run to a well-lit area, the bees will tend to become confused and fly to windows.

4. Do not jump into water! Africanized honey bees may wait 30 minutes before they give up. If you are trapped for some reason, cover up with blankets, sleeping bags, clothes, or whatever else is immediately available.

5. Do not squat at the bees or flail your arms. Bees are attracted to movement and crushed bees emit a smell that will attract more bees.

6. Once you have reached shelter or have outrun the bees, remove all stingers by scraping them out sideways using your fingernail, the edge of a credit card, a dull knife blade or other straight-edged object.

7. If you have been stung more than 15 times, or are feeling ill, or if you have any reason to believe you may be allergic to bee stings, seek medical attention immediately.

More information about Africanized honey bees can be found at our Baker County Extension Website: www.baker.ifas.ufl.edu and at the UF/IFAS Extension website: www.solutionsforyourlife.com. Also at-Florida Dept. of Agriculture’s African Honey Bee page: www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi

**Source:** Solutions for Your Life website: http://www.solutionsforyourlife.com

ALL KINDS OF PESTS are active in April: Insects, Diseases, & Weeds. As plants start to actively grow, keep an eye out for insects and disease. We’ve seen lots of scale lately on various plants including cycads and Japanese magnolia. Borers are showing up on tree-trunks as well. Weekly scouting for pests pays off because you can locate little problems before they grow into big ones. Prune out large areas of disease and when possible use biorational, environmentally safe chemicals like insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils, and Bt products like Dipel for insect pests. As always, read and follow label directions.

Weeds are a concern as always. Hand pulling and mowing to prevent reseeding are the best tactics right now, tedious as they are. It’s too late to use pre-emergence herbicides. You can spot treat areas that are densely covered in weeds with a non-selective herbicide like Roundup. Just remember that any herbicide stresses and non-selective herbicide kills turf grass.

OTHER APRIL CHORES:

Prune cold damaged plants and trees this month after they leaf out. Disinfect pruning tools by dipping them in 1 part bleach and 9 parts water. For more information on pruning, call the extension office and request Pruning Landscape Trees and Shrubs (CIR 853).

Established trees and shrubs may not need fertilizing. If needed, fertilize trees and shrubs that are not flowering with complete fertilizer with ratio of 3:1:2 or 3:1:3 (12-4-8 or 15-5-15 or similar analysis fertilizer like 16-4-8) at rate of 1 lb per 1000 square feet of area. Wait until flowering shrubs finish blooming before fertilizing or pruning. Azaleas, Camellias, Gardenia, Dogwood and Magnolia need acid fertilizer such as Azalea-Camellia special. Fertilizer recommendations for landscape plants depend on your chosen level of maintenance. Faster growth means more pruning. Use 0-2 lbs N per 1000 sq ft of area per year for basic maintenance. Where fastest growth is important, you may use 4-6 lbs N/1000 sq ft/yr. Ask for Fertilizer Recommendations for Landscape Plants (ENH-858) for more information.

Remember that established trees (3-5 years) have roots that extend one and a half to two times the diameter of the canopy. Roots of grass, shrubs, and trees are intermingled in the upper 6-12 inches of soil. Any fertilizer applied to the lawn is absorbed by the roots of surrounding trees and shrubs. Your trees may get enough fertilizer as a result. So, any supplemental applications can be placed directly under the canopy.

Palms need palm special fertilizer (8N-2P2O5-12K2O+4MG plus micronutrients) and turf grass growing in the vicinity of palms will need palm special as well. Otherwise, palms can develop nutrient deficiencies over time. UF/IFAS Extension publications ENH-59 and ENH-1009 are good sources of more information on palms. Ask for them at the Baker County Extension office, 1025 W. Macclenny Ave., Phone: 904-259-3520.
Upcoming Programs:

April 14 FLAGA Iris Society’s “Reigning Iris for 2007” show and sale at St. Peter’s Anglican Church, McIver & 5th ST (SR 228) Macclenny, (Show Open: 11:15 am -3:00 pm). Entries accepted 7-10 am Saturday, April 14th. Exhibitors reserve space by April 6. Call Pat Fish for more info. at 904-259-7411 or email her at pfish@nefcom.net.

April 16 Horse Management Workshop for Beginners (6:00—9:00 pm) Baker County Extension Office, 1025 West Macclenny Avenue. Cost is $5 per person for the sponsored meal. Please register by April 10, 2007

April 19-22 Florida Native Plant Society’s state conference, “Conservation Cures by Yards and Miles” is in Gainesville this year with native plant field trips, speakers & plant sale dealing with the native plants that make Florida a unique and special place to live. This program is for homeowners, gardeners, landscapers, community planners, environmental consultants, teachers, students and nature lovers. We have the agenda for this meeting at the extension office. Or go the FNPS website at www.FNPS.org.

April 24 Invasive Plants in Baker County (6-7:30 pm) - Horticulture Agent, Barbara Smith, presents a program dealing with the issue of invasive plants. You’ll learn identification of the worst offenders and how to prevent and control them. Please register by April 23.


May 1 Suwannee Valley Twilight Field Day - North FL REC—Suwannee Valley, Live Oak. This field day will have speakers and tours of the crops and research at the NFREC. $15 if paid by April 20th, $20 after that. Deadline to register is April 27. Ask for Karen or Laurie.

May 5 Be a Hobby Beekeeper Short Course, Clay County Agriculture Center, Green Cove Springs. For more info, call 904-284-6355.

May 16-17 Floriculture Field Days hosted by FNGLA’s Floriculture Division and UF. Visit www.fnfla.org for info. or call (800)375 3642. UF’s Fifield Hall, Gainesville Speakers and display of trial gardens. Registration required before May 27. Contact Chairperson, Nina B. Ring for info. at Ninagville@aol.com.

June 4-6 FFGC/UF 71st Short Course “Harmony in Gardening” at Best Western Gateway Grand Hotel in Gainesville Speakers include: Jennifer Gillett, Pat Grace, Claudia Chopp, Dr. Sydney Park Brown, Dr. Amy Shober, and Tom Wichman.

Extension programs are open to all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, handicap, or national origin. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person needing a special accommodation to participate in any activity, should contact the Baker County Cooperative Extension Service at 1025 West Macclenny Avenue, Macclenny, FL 32063 or telephone (904) 259-3520 no later than seven (7) days prior to the event. Hearing impaired persons can access the foregoing telephone by contacting the Florida Relay Service at 1-