



Highlights in

Horticulture

Baker County

Dear Extension Friends,

April showers bring May flowers! I can't remember the last time we have received this much rain in April, but I'm not complaining and I don't think the plants are either.

It was nice to see so many of you at the Spring Garden Fest last month. I hope everyone enjoyed it as much as we did. As always, it is a pleasure to serve you and don't hesitate to call/email if you have questions, concerns, comments, or suggestions.

Best Regards,

Alicia

Alicia R. Lamborn
Horticulture Extension Agent
Baker County Extension Service

May 2009

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Upcoming Programs and Events: May

May 7th — **Turfgrass Workshop** 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Baker County Extension Office (Agriculture Center).



This class will teach participants about best management practices for maintaining their lawn. A \$3 registration fee for materials and refreshments is due by Wednesday, May 6th at 5pm. Please call 904-259-3520 or email alamborn@ufl.edu for more information.

May 14th — **Fruit & Nut Twilight Field Day** 4:00 pm to 8:30 pm at the North Florida Research & Education Center - Suwannee Valley. Learn about variety selections for persimmon, blackberry, chestnut, stone fruit, muscadine grape, blueberry and citrus, production practices, pest management, harvest and postharvest handling, market potential, and propagation. \$25 covers dinner and educational materials. Deadline to register is May 8th; call 386-362-1725 x 101 or email KHancock@ufl.edu for more information.



May 18th — **Florida-Friendly Landscaping** 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Baker County Extension Office (Agriculture Center). Learn to create and maintain attractive landscapes that enhance the community while protecting Florida's natural environment. All participants will receive a Florida-friendly landscaping handbook which includes a guide for selecting Florida-friendly plant material. This program is free; RSVP by calling 904-259-3520 or email alamborn@ufl.edu by Friday, May 15th.





Vegetable Gardening

The No-Pesticide Approach to Pest Management



Gardeners encounter pests all the time — weeds, insects, diseases to name a few. But there are many ways to reduce pest problems without using pesticides that can harm people, pets, beneficial insects, and the natural environment.

- Follow the recommended planting dates since vegetables planted "out of season" are very susceptible to many pests. Plant as early in the spring (or as late in the fall, depending on the crop) as is safely possible.
- Rotate crops so that vegetables within the same family are not planted in the same areas year after year.
- Control weeds in and around the garden because they can be a source of insects and diseases. Weed control is best accomplished by mulching and hand-pulling or hoeing small weeds. Recommended mulches are straw, fallen leaves, and unfinished compost. Wood mulches and un-decomposed sawdust should not be used. Weeds around the outside of the garden and between rows can be reduced by putting down several layers of newspaper and then covering them with leaves.
- Choose adapted varieties with resistance or tolerance to diseases and nematodes.
- Plant seed from disease free plants and select transplants free of insects and disease symptoms (leaf spots).
- Plants can be protected from cutworms by placing a "collar" around the plant. The collar can be made from a bottomless plastic cup or a waxed cardboard carton. The collar should extend a few inches above and at least an inch below the surface of the ground.
- Lightweight row covers (also called floating row covers) can be used as a barrier to insects. Put in place at planting, with lots of excess material to leave room for the growing plant. Plants that require bees for pollination (Cucurbit Family) will need to have the cover removed once flowering begins.
- Keep plants vigorously growing and in a state of good health by supplying appropriate amounts of water and fertilizer. A healthy plant is often able to survive insect attack. Too much nitrogen, however, can make plants more inviting to aphids and whiteflies.
- Monitor or scout the garden twice weekly for pest problems. This includes inspecting the plants from the bud to the soil, including both upper and lower leaf surfaces. Record notes on pest problems and the performance of different varieties. Include photographs of insects, diseases and beneficial insects that you find.
- Learn to identify beneficial insects that prey on other insects (praying mantis, spiders, big-eyed bugs/assassin bugs, lady beetles, and all wasps).
- Large insects can be removed by hand and destroyed. Place them in a container of soapy water, where they will sink and drown.
- Water in the morning so that plants do not stay wet at night.
- Watch for early disease symptoms. Remove any diseased leaves or plants to slow the spread.
- Most plants that produce fruits, pods, or ears can stand a 10 – 20 percent loss of leaves without loss of potential yields. Do not panic and start spraying at the first sign of leaf feeding.
- Harvest crops such as tomatoes, peppers, squash, and beans as soon as they are ripe. Allowing over-ripe fruits to remain on the plants often invites additional insect problems.
- As soon as a plant or crop is no longer productive, remove it from the garden and compost or dispose of it.

Learn to properly identify garden pests and use chemicals only when a serious pest problem exists. If you need assistance with identifying insects or need additional advice on insect control measures in your garden, call the Baker County Extension Service at 904-259-3520.



Palm Tree Planting Guide for North Florida

Florida is home to a wide variety of palm trees and other palm-like plants and it's no wonder that so many of us enjoy having them in our landscapes to add a bit of tropical flare. However, homeowners should be careful about the species they select since most species do not thrive in our cooler north Florida climate. If you decide to push the limits and grow a palm recommended for a warmer zone, be aware that although it may survive one harsh winter, several harsh winters in a row just may do the plant in. If you are replacing a palm that didn't survive our winter this year, or planting for the first time, you can use the following guide to help you make your decision.

Cabbage Palm (*Sabal minor*): This is Florida's state tree and is adapted to most landscapes. White flowers are seen in summer, followed by fruit which is important for wildlife. This palm has high resistance to wind and older palms transplant easily. Watch for weevils, scale, and ganoderma butt rot (mushroom conchs).

Canary Island Date Palm (*Phoenix canariensis*): A massive palm that grows up to 60 ft tall, often seen with ferns growing from along the old leaf stems. The orange dates are very decorative and are edible but not very tasty. This palm is frost tolerant and can survive 28°F without cold damage. Very young palms may need some cold protection in our area.

European Fan Palm (*Chamaerops humilis*): This very cold-hardy clumping palm is relatively low maintenance compared to other palms. It has attractive yellow flowers in summer and sharp teeth at the base of the fronds.

Needle Palm (*Rhapidophyllum hystrix*): This Florida native grows in full sun to shade but prefers partial shade. It has red flowers in summer, followed by yellowish fruits which are eaten by mammals and large birds. Sharp, slender needles (4 to 10 inches long) form at the base. Considered endangered because it has been commercially exploited, it should never be transplanted from the wild.

Pindo Palm (*Butia capitata*): The Pindo is widely used in landscapes but is still a nice palm, grown for its cold hardiness, high wind resistance, and ability to attract wildlife. White flowers are followed by orange edible fruit (used for jelly). Looks best in full sun but tolerates partial shade. Leaf color ranges from silver to blue, or blue-green. Some consider the large quantities of fruit a nuisance, as ripening fruit attracts wasps and other insects.

Windmill Palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*): This attractive palm has inconspicuous, fragrant flowers in summer and is good for shaded landscapes (tolerates occasional sun). Watch for scale.



Other palm-like plants include:

Coontie (*Zamia floridana*): This is Florida's only native cycad. It can be planted in full sun to shade but does best in partial shade. Temperatures in the low 20s turn foliage brown, but once established, considered very cold hardy. Seeds and caudex are poisonous.

Dioon (*Dioon edule*): This cold-hardy cycad is considered easy to grow and good for low-maintenance landscapes. It tolerates adverse conditions for periods but requires excellent drainage and full sun. Some leaf damage may occur when temperatures reach the 20s. Leaflets have very sharp points, therefore it is advised to plant away from foot traffic and wear heavy gloves when handling.

Dwarf Palmetto (*Sabal minor*): This is a good understory plant and for retention ponds/drainage swales. It prefers moist soils but tolerates drier conditions after establishment. Fruit attracts wildlife in the fall.

Saw Palmetto (*Serenoa repens*): This slow growing shrub has high drought tolerance, yellow/white flowers in spring, and black fruits used by mammals and large birds. Plant 30 feet from buildings in wildfire-prone areas. Some varieties have silver-blue foliage.

Baker County Extension Service
1025 West Macclenny Avenue
Macclenny, FL 32063

Phone (904) 259-3520

Fax (904) 259-9034

Email: alamborn@ufl.edu

Website: <http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu>

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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 five (5) days prior to the event. Hearing impaired persons can access the foregoing telephone by contacting the Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8770 (voice) or 1-800-955-8771 (TDD).

More Upcoming Programs and Events: May & June

May 16th — **Creating A Rain Garden** 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm at the Columbia County Library in downtown Lake City. Free to the public. No registration needed.



May 19th — **Butterfly Gardening Workshop** 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at the Columbia County Extension Office. Participants will learn how to take cuttings of several butterfly plants and will take them home. \$10 fee includes materials and plant starts. Call 386-752-5384 to pre-register before May 15th.

May 19th — **Cut Flower Production on Small Farms** 6:30 pm at the Clay County Extension Office. This is an introductory educational workshop for those who wish to start a niche market enterprise or just produce flowers for personal use. Cost is \$10 for demonstration plot, materials, and beverage break. Call 904-284-6355 ASAP; seating is limited.

June 23rd — **Palm Production Seminar** 8:30 am to 12:30 pm at the Hamilton County Extension Office. Topics will cover best management practices for palm production, basic palm nutrition and fertilization, palm diseases in production systems and surviving the economic storm. Program is free but seating is limited - RSVP by June 19th by calling 386-792-1276 or 386-362-1725 x105 or for more information.



June 29th to July 2nd — **Junior Master Gardener Summer Camp** Youth, ages 8 to 18, are invited to join the Baker County Extension office and Baker County Master Gardeners for a week long gardening day camp. Attendees will learn about topics such as plant biology, insects, wildlife, and alternative gardening while participating in a variety of hands-on activities! Call 259-3520 for more information.

