



Highlights in

Horticulture

Baker County

March 2012

Dear Extension Friends,

With the unusually warm weather we've been experiencing, many folks are anxious to get out and start their spring gardening. Just don't get caught off guard by late winter freezes. Planting warm season vegetables is acceptable as long as you have a way to protect your plants from the cold. However, fertilizing lawns is not recommended until at least mid-April. To get your gardening questions answered, plan to join us this month during our plant clinics and lawn care workshop, and next month during our Spring Garden Festival and Gardening Crash Course. Hope to see you there!

Best Regards,

Alicia

Alicia R. Lamborn
Horticulture Extension Agent

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March Plant Clinics



Bring your plant problems & questions to the Ag Center for personalized service from the Baker County Master Gardeners:

Friday, March 9th & Friday, March 16th
Hours: 1:00 pm—3:30pm

The Master Gardeners will be set up in the parking lot, ready to show off some gardening demonstrations, answer your plant questions, or just chat with you about gardening.



Lawn Care Workshop

Thursday, March 15th
Hours: 6:00 pm—7:30pm

Discover different grass types and basic maintenance techniques for keeping your lawn healthy. Topics include mowing, watering, fertilizing, insect & disease monitoring and weed management. Participants may also bring their lawn weeds for identification and control recommendations.

Cost: \$2 per person
Please register by Tuesday, March 13th



Lawns & Gardens

Lawns:

- ◆ While the weather has been warmer than usual, it's best to wait until April to fertilize the lawn, even if it begins to come out of winter dormancy. Pushing out lots of new growth with fertilizer will only cause more damage if we happen to get a late freeze.
- ◆ For now, a soil test will suffice, determining soil pH and telling us which nutrients your lawn needs and in what amounts. If you choose not to soil test, plan on fertilizing next month with a 10-0-10, 15-0-15, or similar fertilizer, since phosphorous (the middle number) should only be applied if soil test results indicate this nutrient is deficient. Also consider using a controlled or slow-release fertilizer which releases some nitrogen right away and some slowly over time. This will give longer lasting results & help reduce nutrient pollution in our aquifer and waterways.
- ◆ Chronic weed problems are an indication of an unhealthy turf and while there are ways to manage weeds, spraying herbicides isn't always the answer. You should ultimately be considering how to better manage your turf. Overwatering, improper fertilizer use (amount and timing), and improper mowing all contribute to an unhealthy lawn. Instead of just spraying weeds this year, consider using plugs of turf to replace bare areas where weeds are filling in, and possibly altering your lawn management strategies. If you have questions or need advice in this area, we'll be happy to help!
- ◆ Have your mower blades sharpened this month in preparation of spring mowing. Dull blades make jagged, uneven cuts, creating a larger surface area for water to be lost and thus making your lawn less drought tolerant.
- ◆ Calibrate and check irrigation systems to make sure they are ready for the spring drought. Check for leaks and make sure the heads are not spraying the driveway or street. To calibrate, place containers such as tuna cans, coffee cans, or rain gauges around the yard. Run the system for 15 minutes, calculate the average amount of water collected in each can, then determine how long it would take to apply 1/2 to 3/4 inch of water to the landscape.
- ◆ Don't forget to sign up for our lawn care workshop for more information on keeping your lawn healthy!

Gardens:

- ◆ Vegetable gardens can be planted this month, along with annual and perennial seeds, or purchase transplants to get a jump on the season. Just be sure you have a way to protect them from late frosts and freezes. If you need advice on vegetable gardening, check out the *Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide* at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021> or stop by the office to pick up a free copy and receive one-on-one advice.
- ◆ Plants that suffered a lot of winter damage will also need pruning to reshape the canopy. This is best done after new growth has begun. This will ensure that you are only trimming off dead tissue. Prune your azaleas, camellias, hydrangeas, and spirea after they finish blooming.
- ◆ If you are planting containerized trees and shrubs, be sure to purchase healthy plants that are appropriate for the designated site. Consider planting low maintenance, drought tolerant species that will not require excessive watering during periods of drought. Not sure what to plant? Visit our website to view our Florida-Friendly Plant Lists for Baker County and plan to visit our Arboretum during the Spring Garden Festival to learn about Florida's unique tree species.
- ◆ Fertilize spring flowering trees and shrubs only as needed. Mature, established trees shouldn't need any fertilizer. Also remember that any fertilizer you apply to your lawn next month will also be used by your landscape plants since roots can extend far beyond the edge of the canopy. Newly planted trees and shrubs should be fertilized 4-6 weeks after planting. Never put fertilizer in the planting hole.





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Baker County
Extension Service

Spring Garden Festival

Saturday, April 14th 2012

8 am — 2pm

Baker County Extension Office (Ag Center)

Plants For Sale:

Annuals, perennials, houseplants, cactus, succulents, fruits, vegetables, herbs, ornamental shrubs, trees, and more! *The Jr. Master Gardener 4-H Club will also be selling flowers and vegetables to raise money for summer camp!*

Gardening Exhibits:

- **Container Gardening** — Growing Fruits, Vegetables, Herbs and Flowers in Containers
- **Butterfly Gardening** — How To Catch the Eye of a Butterfly
- **Rain Barrels & Compost Bins (for sale)**
- **Prize Winning Plants** — How To Show Off Your Green Thumb at the Fair
- **Arboretum Tours** — Learn About Florida's Unique Tree Species
- **Tree Planting Demonstration @ 9am**

Plant Giveaways Every 1/2 Hour

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Enter to Win a Rain Barrel

For more information, visit baker.ifas.ufl.edu or call 904-259-3520

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Baker County Extension Service
at least 10 days prior to the event at
904-259-3520 or FAX 904-259-9034





Florida-Friendly Tip of the Month: Water Efficiently



Even with the recent rains, we are still technically in a drought. However, this doesn't give us the right to overwater. Our watering restrictions limit irrigation to certain days and times. But realize that even if it is your assigned day to irrigate, that does not mean you *should* irrigate. Scheduled watering can waste time, money and resources. Don't let the calendar tell you when to water—look to your plants for telltale signs of water needs.

- ◆ Water lawns when 50% of the lawns show signs of wilt: leaf blades folded in half, blue-gray color and footprints remain on the lawn. Water established bedding plants and shrubs when you see early signs of wilting.
- ◆ Use a rain gauge to measure rainfall and when watering your lawn—only apply 1/2” to 3/4” of water when grass shows signs of distress and do not water again until the symptoms reappear.
- ◆ For more tips on saving Florida’s water, both inside and outside the home, visit <http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu/Horticulture/documents/WaterConservationTips.pdf>

Florida Gardening Crash Course Offered in April

Join us Monday nights in April for a crash course on gardening in North Florida!

Topics include:

Plant Identification Techniques, Florida-Friendly Landscaping, Installing and Maintaining Trees & Shrubs, Annuals/Perennials/Bulbs, Basic Lawn Care, Managing Landscape Pests, Fruit and Vegetable Gardening, and Plant Propagation



This course is split into three sessions, held at the Baker County Extension Office from 6:00 pm — 8:00 pm on the following dates:

April 16th April 23rd April 30th

Cost: \$35 per person (\$50 for couples)

Fee includes all workshop materials and handouts (binder included), Pest Management ID Guide (book), and light refreshments.



Participants must register with our office by Monday, April 9th.



Baker County Extension Service

1025 West Macclenny Avenue
Macclenny, FL 32063



Phone: (904) 259-3520

Email: alamborn@ufl.edu

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

For Extension Programs offered around the state, see the IFAS Extension Web Calendar at <http://calendar.ifas.ufl.edu/calendar/index.htm>.

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 ten (10) 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).