

Highlights in

*Horticulture*

Baker County

August 2007

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Dear Extension friend,

It's arrived at last, the newsletter for horticulturists! This first issue has some information I believe you will find useful. I plan to improve with each issue. Give me your feedback. Stay in touch and feel free to call or e-mail me with questions or comments.

Respectfully,

*Barbara*

Barbara A. Smith  
Baker County Extension Agent - Horticulture

**Save on Cooling Costs : Grow Some Shade**

Home comfort levels and energy costs can be dramatically affected by shade. Creative landscape planning will help alter the climate outside your home and modify indoor temperatures. Plant trees to block sun on the east and west sides, shade you're A/C unit to maximize cooling, and plant groundcovers near paved areas to keep it cooler in the surrounding areas.

**Trees**- providing shade to the east and west windows and walls should be top priority since these surfaces receive about fifty percent more sunshine during summer than those facing north and south. When planning your design, keep in mind that trees are more effective at shading when planted close to the home. A tree planted ten feet from the west wall will shade an area four times longer than a tree planted twenty feet away. Mature tree height should also be considered when selecting plants. In general, small-or medium-sized trees (26 - 30 feet) are preferred for shading sidewalls. Taller trees should be planted farther away from the home because they can become a safety hazard when canopies begin to overhang the roof. Use deciduous trees for shading the south side since they will be bare in winter and will allow winter's sun in, lowering the heating bill.

**Air Conditioning Units**- to keep air conditioning costs to a minimum, shade the outside condensing unit. Allow sufficient room for air to move around the condenser so that it can operate at peak efficiency.

**Groundcovers**-Driveways, sidewalks, and patios absorb the sun's heat and hold it long after sundown, radiating heat into the area surrounding your home. Research has shown that temperatures may be 15°F to 25°F hotter over asphalt or concrete. Planting groundcovers around paved areas can help reduce these temperatures. Groundcovers are low-growing plants that can be used to cover an area in the landscape. Turfgrass is the most commonly used groundcover. While turf makes an excellent choice for recreational areas, it does not grow well in dense shade and is difficult to establish in extremely wet or dry areas. Evidence indicates that taller groundcovers, with their larger leaf surface, can provide even more cooling than shorter groundcovers such as mowed grass. There are several alternative groundcovers that adapt well to conditions unsuitable for turf. Try growing border grass (*Liriope*) or mondo grass (*Ophiopogon*) for a low maintenance groundcover tolerant of dense shade. Asiatic jasmine (*Trachelospermum asiaticum*) tolerates sun, shade, & drought. It grows well on a slope where grass would be difficult to mow. In wet soils, daylilies or irises planted near your paved areas can cool things off.

## Questions for Barbara:

### Why won't my African Lily bloom?



*Agapanthus*, aka African Lily or Lily of the Nile, is a terrific perennial in the same family as *Amaryllis*. This plant should bloom during the summer in full sun or partial shade. Leave plant clump undisturbed for several years because *Agapanthus* blooms best when somewhat crowded. If grown from seed, it may take up to four years before you get blooms. Keep this lily well watered and fertilize monthly during the growing season. *Agapanthus* prefers moist, organic soil conditions, but will endure drought once established.

For more on this outstanding perennial, see the University of FL publication online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FP018> or call our office for a copy.

## LAWNS

It is getting a little late to plant grass seed now. However, you can sprig or plug in bare areas of your centipede or St. Augustine using grass from thicker areas in your yard or make plugs when you edge plant beds.

Mow frequently with a sharp blade at the proper recommended height for your type of grass. Centipede grass should be cut at 1-2 inches, St. Augustine & Bahia at 3 - 4 inches & dwarf St. Augustine cultivars at 2.5 inches. Mowing grass at this recommended height allows it to develop deep roots and to tolerate drought stress.

Use a mulching mower, or just go back over clumps of clippings, then let the clippings remain on the ground to recycle the nutrients. Check lawns regularly this month for disease and pest problems. See *Insect Management in Your FL Lawn*, CIR 427, at our website for

\*Source: excerpts from UF's Solutions for Your Life website. [www.solutionsforyourlife.com](http://www.solutionsforyourlife.com) and from Wendy Wilber's *Gardening Tips Newsletter*. \*The use of trade names in this newsletter is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee of warranty of the products names and does not signify they are approved to the exclusion of others of suitable comparison.

## Children in the Garden

### Keep Kids Safe - Use Caution with Chemicals

- Store pesticides in locked cabinets, in their original containers. This includes organic pesticides, some of which are quite toxic.
- Never use empty food or drink containers for storing pesticides, cleaning supplies, or fertilizers!
- Don't leave pesticide containers out while using them. Put them up promptly in a safe location after you have mixed the material.
- Children should never be around while pesticides are being mixed or applied.
- Do not allow children to eat soil from the garden. Some soils may contain relatively high amounts of lead or other toxic substances and should not be consumed.
- Store the gas tanks for propane grills where children can't reach the knobs.

To learn more about garden safety with kids, visit the Florida School Gardens website at: <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/ggk/index.shtml>.

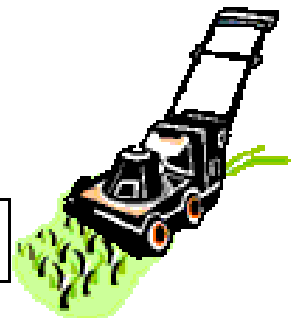
## HOT ITEM THIS MONTH

### It's Hot Enough to Solarize the Soil !

If your garden has been bothered by nematodes in the past, you can help the situation now, before next year's planting season. Use the hot August sun to help sterilize your soil using a technique called *solarization*.

Basically, you cover the area with a clear plastic sheet and allow the sun to heat the soil, killing some of the nematodes, weed seeds, insect pests, and plant disease-causing fungi to a depth of 6-8 inches. You must use full hot sun and it takes at least 6-8 weeks. Work soil first with hoe or roto-tiller to break up clods. Pull out all the sticks, roots, and stones. Soil needs to be moist, but not wet, when you apply the clear plastic cover. Bury the edges to anchor it. Don't remove the cover until you are ready to plant next season. Just let it cook!

For more on soil solarization, see the publication at : <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IN470>.



# Gardening to Grow Food

## VEGETABLES

It's time to begin your plans for your fall garden. Select the area for your fall garden and have the soil tested for pH and nutrient levels. If possible, rotate your garden to an area that has not been used as a garden the past few years. Try rotating your crops in different locations to reduce the number of pests and diseases that may attack your plants.

Most vegetables grow in a slightly acidic environment with a pH of 6.0-6.5. It is important for the pH to be adjusted to this level for the plants to take in the nutrients they need. If your soil pH is too low, you will need to add lime to raise pH. If the pH is too high, you will need to add sulfur to lower it. Testing should be done several weeks before planting so you can make adjustments if necessary. To receive soil testing bags and forms, contact the Baker County Extension Office.

Two University of Florida publications will come in handy during this planning and prep phase of fall gardening, also. *Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide* (SP103) has planting dates and recommended cultivars. *Diagnosis and Control of Plant Diseases and Nematodes in a Home Vegetable Garden* (CIR 399-A) has information on all aspects of planning a garden to reduce diseases and nematodes. Call our office for a copy or access it online at our website: <http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu>.

If you had a problem with root knot nematode, wilt or root rot disease, you will need to change locations or solarize the soil in the area where that has occurred (see page 2). Select plant varieties that are resistant to nematodes or wilt(s). This will give you further protection. Look for seed packets that have capital letters "V", "F", "N", following the name of the plant. This letter indicates tolerance or resistance to Verticillium (V) or Fusarium (F) wilts, and nematodes (N).

If your garden area is planted with a green manure crop like peas or hairy indigo, you need to till it in about one month before planting. This will give the plants time to decay and supply nutrients back into the soil before planting.

Compost can be incorporated at a rate of 25 lbs./100 sq. ft. if you are using cow, horse, or hog manures. If you use sheep, goat, or rabbit manure apply at a rate of 10-12 lbs./100 sq. ft.

## FRUITS and NUTS

You can plant containerized fruits or nuts now. Be sure to keep any transplants watered if they are not getting enough moisture from daily rains. The University of Florida publication, CIR 611, *Deciduous Fruit for North Florida* is available at our office to guide you in choosing the right cultivar for this area. Call to request a copy by mail.

Muscadine **grapes** will be ripening this month. If you do not have grapes to harvest at home, look for local U-pick vineyards.

**Pears** are also ripening. Pick hard pears when they start to yellow. To keep the grittiness (stone cell development) down, store at 60-70 degrees. Soft pears can be harvested while still firm and stored at room temperature. These soft-flesh pears break down internally and are of poor quality when left on the tree to full maturity.

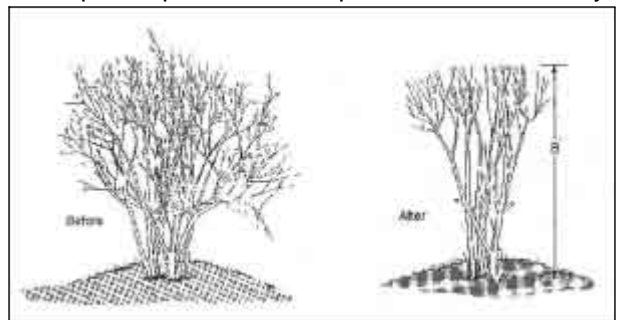
Fertilize **blackberries** soon after harvest with 10-10-10. Apply at a rate of 1/3 pound per vine. Also, prune them all the way back to the ground. This will insure fruiting for the next year.

**Blueberries** may be pruned after harvest to generate new fruiting growth for the next year or to control plant size. Pruning established plants requires the cutting out of old canes. These old canes have little strong new wood and are not productive. On the remaining canes eliminate the twiggly growth in the top and outer area of the bushes. See drawing at right.

**Figs** are ripening or will ripen soon. Pick as soon as ripe for eating fresh.

For preserving, pick figs before they fully ripen and leave the stem attached.

Fruit will hold together better and you will have less fruit splitting & souring.



Pruning established blueberry plants

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## ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

### Upcoming Programs and Events in North Florida

- August 8**      **Deadline to apply for Master Gardener Volunteer Program in Baker County.** Call 904 259-3520 for more info.
- August 10**      **Start date for two new Baker County Extension Agents (4-H: Renee Gore & FCS: Melanie Thomas)**
- August 14**      **Wild Edibles with Keith Fuller**, 10-noon at the **Duval County Extension Office**, 1010 N McDuff Ave, Jacksonville. Call 904-387-8850 for more info.
- August 18**      **Low-Volume Irrigation & Permeable Paving Demonstration**, 10am—2pm at the Florida Partnership for Water, Agricultural and Community Sustainability at **Hastings, FL**. Homeowners and irrigation contractors are invited to come and learn techniques for installing low volume irrigation and paving that allows water to flow through, important for a FL Friendly Landscape. Attendance will be limited to 50. Soft drinks, water and snacks will be available. Contact St. Johns County Agent Joe Sowards at [sewards@ufl.edu](mailto:sewards@ufl.edu) for info.
- August 20**      **Master Naturalist Course** (Uplands Habitats Module) offered in Clay County. Register online at this website: <http://www.MasterNaturalist.org/>.
- August 21**      **Muscadine Grape Twilight Field Day – Grapes Fresh from the Suwannee Valley- Cultivars & Wine Making**, North Florida REC—Suwannee Valley, Live Oak, FL, \$15 registration fee is due by August 15, 2007. For more info, call Linda Landrum at 386-362-1725 x 105 or email [LLandrum@ufl.edu](mailto:LLandrum@ufl.edu).
- August 22**      **Marketing Series Part 1: Why Should I Buy From You? Branding Your Products and Your Business**, North Florida REC—Suwannee Valley, Live Oak, FL. \$5 registration fee is due by August 20, 2007. For more information call Linda Landrum at 386-362-1725 x 105 or email [LLandrum@ufl.edu](mailto:LLandrum@ufl.edu).
- August 22**      **New Master Gardener Training** begins for Baker, Bradford, Duval & Nassau counties. Continuing on Wednesdays through November 7th.
- August 23**      **Peanut Field Day**, NFREC – Marianna. Registration begins 8 am (CDT) followed by field tours. Topics include disease and nematode control, new varieties, and other peanut production issues. CEUs are available. For more information, call Mary K. Chambliss at 850-482-1242.
- September 5**      **Marketing Series Part 2: Why Should I Buy From You? The Good, The Bad, The Ugly**, North Florida REC—Suwannee Valley, Live Oak, FL. \$5 registration fee is due by September 3, 2007. For more information call Linda Landrum at 386-362-1725 x 105 or email [LLandrum@ufl.edu](mailto:LLandrum@ufl.edu).
- September 6**      **Florida Pecan Field Day**, Monticello, FL. For more information call Larry Halsey at 850-342-0187.

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