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Highlights in

Horticulture

Baker County

April 2010

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Dear Extension Friends,

We have been cooped up inside all winter but it is now time to get outside and enjoy our gardens again. If you need some gardening advice, be sure to visit with the Master Gardeners at the Farmer's Market on Saturday April 3rd (details below). Also be sure to visit the Farmers Market each Saturday and support our local farmers and craftsman so the market will continue to grow. Hope to see you there!

Best Regards,

Alicia

Alicia R. Lamborn
Horticulture Extension Agent
Baker County Extension Service

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).

Recycling Plastic Nursery Pots

1. Most plastic containers are stamped with a number on the bottom, indicating the type of plastic. Check with your recycling center to see which numbers are accepted.
2. Reuse pots for plant sales or for propagating your own plants.
3. Ask about return or recycling programs at garden centers or botanical gardens. Some will accept nursery pots if you are willing to clean them before bringing them in.
4. Contact your local garden club, Master Gardener office or other plant societies to see if they could use the pots or to find out if they know of programs for nursery pot recycling or reuse.
5. To avoid plastic pots, look for plants grown and sold in biodegradable pots. Some are made of fiber (pictured left) and can be planted and left in the ground. Others are made from rice hulls (bottom, right), which look and feel like plastic, but actually break down slowly over time as they come into contact with water.



The Baker County Master Gardener Program is currently in need of 4" and 6" pots for their greenhouse projects. Donations will be accepted at the Ag Center only during our Earth Day Event scheduled for April 22nd, 3-6pm (see page 1 for more details).

Upcoming Programs & Events: April

April 3rd — **Master Gardener Plant Clinic** 8:00am to 1:00pm at the Farmers Market Grand Opening located in the Cornerstone Square (Food Lion) shopping center on SR 121 in Macclenny. Stop by the Master Gardener booth to have your gardening questions answered, problems solved or just to pick up free helpful information. There will also be gardening demonstrations and a free raffle to win plants!



April 12th — **Lawn Care Workshop** 5:30pm to 6:30pm at the Baker County Extension Office (Agriculture Center). Learn techniques for maintaining a healthy lawn all year long. \$2 registration fee for materials and refreshments is due by Friday, April 9th at 5 pm. (We must have 10 people to hold the class, so sign up today!)

Lawn Class Rescheduled



April 22nd — **Earth Day Event** 3:00pm to 6:00pm. The City of Macclenny and Wal-Mart have partnered with the Extension Office for Earth Day 2010! Stop by the Agriculture Center to find out how you can make every day Earth Day by conserving water inside and outside your home and recycling in the garden. There will be lots of freebies for both adults and children, including a raffle for drought tolerant plants and free reusable shopping bags for the first 100 people.



April 24th — **Spring Garden Fest** 8:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Baker County Extension Office (Agricultural Center). The 2nd Annual Spring Garden Fest has something for everyone...plants for sale, gardening demonstrations, and children's activities. See enclosed flyer for more details.



Water Wise Is Beautiful

There are so many beautiful, drought tolerant plants available that you are sure to find the perfect fit for any area of your landscape!

Groundcovers:

Perennial Peanut: yellow/orange flowers in summer/fall; no nitrogen fertilizer needed; withstands foot traffic; some varieties need mowing only twice per year!

Mulhy Grass: showy pink flowers in fall; tolerates extreme drought and flooding

Beach Sunflower: fast growth; yellow flowers all year until frosts; no pest problems



Beach Sunflower

Annuals/Perennials:

Stokes Aster: evergreen perennial; flowers come in many colors; attract butterflies

Coreopsis: Our state wildflower; orange/yellow flowers in summer; may be annual or perennial depending on species

Vines:

Cross Vine: orange flowers attract hummingbirds in spring

Purple Passion Vine: unique purple flowers attract butterflies and hummingbirds in summer and fall



Purple Passion Vine

Shrubs & Trees

Pineapple Guava: evergreen shrub; edible flowers and fruit

Winged Elm: fast growth; "winged" branches add interest; attracts wildlife

For more Florida-Friendly plant ideas, visit the Fact Sheets page on our website at <http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu>

Mulch Matters

Whether you use bark, wood chips, pine needles, oak leaves, rocks or rubber, there are many benefits to using mulch in the landscape. When applied correctly, mulch will...

- ◆ Retain moisture in the soil for your plants.
- ◆ Suppress weeds that may compete for nutrients by preventing seed germination and smothering existing small weeds.
- ◆ Act as an insulator, keeping the soil cool under the intense summer sun and warm during the intense winter cold.
- ◆ Reduce erosion by preventing soil splash
- ◆ Add nutrients to the soil (organic mulches).
- ◆ Add beauty and interesting texture in the landscape.

While inorganic mulches do not enrich the soil, they are virtually permanent and require little maintenance. However, they may be best suited in paths and shrub borders or areas where organic mulch could be a fire risk.

Regardless of which type of mulch you use, mulched areas must be maintained at 2-3 inches after settling to be effective.

A Note on Cocoa Mulch:

Cocoa bean shells are a byproduct of chocolate production and the mulch produced from this product is gaining in popularity due to its attractive color and pleasant aroma. However, like chocolate, this mulch is toxic to dogs and should not be used by dog owners.

To explore all of your landscape mulch choices, please visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fr079>.



A layer of mulch in your potted plants will add a finished look to containers and slow down moisture loss. Use shredded bark, rocks, or shells to dress up those containers.

Attracting Butterflies

The butterflies are not out in full force yet, but you can prepare for their arrival now to ensure these beautiful creatures make a visit to your yard this year!

Key Requirements for a Successful Butterfly Garden:

- ◆ **Adult Nectar Sources** (Colorful flowers)
- ◆ **Larval Host Plants** (Specific plant species that caterpillars feed on)
- ◆ **Alternative Attractants** (Rotting fruit, including banana peels and melon rinds)
- ◆ **Water** (Provide shallow water dishes with rocks or sand)
- ◆ **Shelter** (Create shelter by planting a variety of groundcovers, annuals/perennials, shrubs and trees; butterfly houses are decorative, but are not used by butterflies)



Tiger Swallowtail feeding on Butterfly Bush

Garden Design Tips:

- ◆ **Provide both adult nectar sources and larval host plants to accommodate the entire life cycle.** This will encourage adults to remain in your yard, reproduce, and build populations year after year instead of just passing through in search of nectar.
- ◆ **Plant in both full sun and partial shade when available.** Most prefer bright sunlight – but some are at home in woodlands or along forest edges and rarely venture out into open, sunny areas. These species are drawn to shadier areas of the garden.
- ◆ **Aim for consistent host plant and nectar source availability throughout the growing season.** Choose plants that bloom, grow or perform better at different times of the year in addition to plants having one peak season. This helps the garden remain productive as long as possible and provides food for butterflies during periods of low natural availability.
- ◆ **Create horizontal & vertical diversity by choosing plants with different heights and growth habits.** This adds interest and texture to the garden while increasing the number of microclimates and feeding levels available to butterflies.
- ◆ **Plant in groupings.** If you have enough space, plant several of the same species in a large grouping. Large drifts of color and clusters of vegetation are generally more aesthetically pleasing than isolated plants and are more attractive to adult butterflies. Groups of larval host plants provide larvae with additional resources in the event one runs out and help to mask leaf damage or defoliation.
- ◆ **Provide a mix of flower colors, shapes and sizes.** Different species have distinct color preferences, feeding behaviors and proboscis (tongue) lengths which will determine the flowers a butterfly chooses or is able to visit. Some flutter while they feed and others need a flowers with a good landing platform to rest while feeding.
- ◆ **Provide native plants.** Native plants are well adapted to the soil type and climate where they naturally occur. Once established, they tend to provide a more vigorous display with minimal care.
- ◆ **Learn to identify butterflies (adults and larvae).** Once identified, learn what to plant to attract more.



Passionflower: A larval host plant for the Gulf Fritillary when planted in full sun and the Zebra Longwing when planted in partial shade.



This Zinnia flower provides a nice landing platform for a Monarch.

For more information on butterfly gardening, visit EDIS to access:

Butterfly Gardening in Florida <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw057>

Getting Starting in Butterfly Gardening <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in564>