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Even Dogs Are Going Green These Days...

This dog house, on display at the Oklahoma State University Botanical Gardens, is being used to demonstrate a roof garden.

Roof gardens—growing plants or turf directly on a building's roof—has been popular in Europe and Japan for decades. Also known as a "green roof," roof gardens greatly reduce storm water run-off, help to reduce cooling costs in the summer, and filter pollution from rain water.

Cities and government agencies are even providing financial incentives to encourage homeowners to "green-up" their roofs. Apparently there are incentives for dogs too!

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

UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA | IFAS EXTENSION

Highlights in Horticulture
Baker County

August 2010

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Dear Extension Friends,

If you haven't heard, a "community" garden is underway to supply food for our local food bank. This community garden project will also help to provide raised bed gardens for families in need and help them start a garden in their own yard. If you would like to volunteer or get involved as a garden mentor, be sure to contact Helene Guest at junebugz74@gmail.com.

The entire community is invited to the garden dedication on Friday August 6th @ 9am at the garden site, located at the new county jail on North 5th Street in Macclenny.

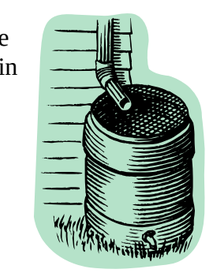
Best Regards,

Alicia

Alicia R. Lamborn
Horticulture Extension Agent
Baker County Extension Service

Upcoming Programs & Events: August & September

All programs will be held at the Baker County Extension Office (Agricultural Center).



August 19th — **Rain Barrel Workshop** 6:00pm to 7:00pm. Install a rain barrel that will save the rain for your plants and save you money! Learn how to build, install, and maintain a functional rain barrel for immediate use. We provide a barrel and two spigots, plus the tools and assistance to help you build. $35 (per barrel) is due by Friday, August 13th. Already have your own barrel? Just call 259-3520 to register and join the class for free!

August 20th — **Botanical Bullies** 2:00pm to 3:00pm. Don't let badly-behaved plants take over your land. Come learn which plants cause problems in Baker County & how to get rid of them! This class is free, just call 259-3520 to register by Wednesday, August 18th.

September 21st — **Home Vegetable Gardening** 6:00pm to 7:00pm. Learn to be successful in the vegetable garden by knowing when and what to plant plus other helpful tips and tricks. This class if free but seating is limited. Please call 259-3520 to register by Friday, September 17th to save your seat.

Ask Alicia: Your Vegetable Gardening Questions Answered

If you have a gardening question or problem, don't be afraid to ask. We are here to help!

Q: The tops of my onions fell over. Is it time to harvest them?

A: Bulbing onions can be planted anytime from September to December here in North Florida and are ready for harvest in approximately 120 to 160 days. But if you're like me then you can't exactly remember when you planted them which is why most people just wait for the tops to fall over. When onion tops fall over, it's your signal to pull them out of the ground. Use them immediately, or store them in a cool, dry place.

Q: Some of my tomatoes have yellow splotches on them. What could be causing this?

A: The yellow splotches you are seeing are actually caused by stink bugs which probed the fruit with their mouthpart and left behind saliva with toxic properties to the tissue. While not toxic to humans, it does make for a very unappetizing tomato. To control stink bugs in the garden, you will need one product to control nymphs (young stink bugs) and one product to control the adults. Look for products with an active ingredient of *Spinosad* or *Carbaryl* to control nymphs, and *Pyrethroids* to control adults. The active ingredient can be found in smaller print at the bottom of the label.

Q: Is August too early to begin planting my fall garden?

A: August marks the beginning of the end of summer, but is still too hot for most cool-season vegetables . However, many vegetables can be planted during August and harvested in October or November before our first frost. Vegetables to plant in August include beans (bush and pole), corn, cucumbers, southern peas, peppers, pumpkins, squash, and tomatoes. As the weather cools in September and October, you can continue to plant in your garden with cool-season vegetables.

Don't Guess...Soil Test!

Trying to guess what your plants need can end up costing you in the end.

Soil testing is available through the Baker County Extension Office and the University of Florida's Extension Soil Testing Laboratory.

Consider having your soil tested now in preparation of fall planting and/or fertilizing.

A soil fertility test will determine the pH of your soil, tell you if lime is required, and give you recommendations for fertilizing based on the amount of nutrients that are currently available to your plants.

You should receive your results in about 2 weeks and we are here to help you interpret the results.

It's a win-win situation for you and your plants, so stop guessing and pick up your soil test kit today!

Tired of Seeing **Black & White?**

This newsletter is available in

COLOR!

Be the first to receive the newsletter in color each month by allowing us to deliver it directly to your email inbox.

To sign up for electronic newsletters, just give us a call at (904) 259-3520 or visit our website at http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu

On the right side of our website home page, click on the link titled "Sign up here for newsletters!"

Then just fill out the form (remember to include your email address) and click "Submit".

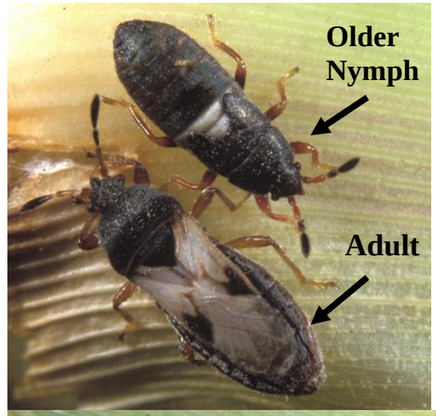
Because everything is more beautiful in color...

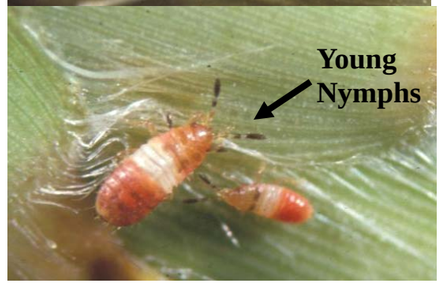
Chinch Bugs Destroying Your Lawn?

The southern chinch bug, is currently the most difficult-to-control and damaging insect pest of St. Augustinegrass in Florida. Adults and nymphs (juveniles) feed on plant fluids which kills the grass and contributes to weed invasion. Unfortunately chinch bug populations have developed resistance to every major chemical class that has been used against them and host plant resistance has been overcome. Therefore, an integrated pest management program, or resistance management program, must be implemented to keep chinch bug populations under satisfactory control.

Chinch Bug Identification

Adult southern chinch bugs are about 1/8 to 1/10 of an inch long. The wings are folded flat on the back and are shiny white with a triangular-shaped black marking in the middle of the outer edge of each wing. Adults may have long or short wings, and populations often contain both. Their bodies are black. Young nymphs are reddish-orange with a white band across the back, darken in color as they mature, and turn black before becoming adults.





Detecting Infestations

Other factors, such as disease, nematodes, nutritional imbalances, and drought can cause off-color areas to occur in lawns. Therefore, the lawn should be carefully examined to determine which corrective measures may be needed. Several methods can be used to find southern chinch bugs...

- The easiest and fastest is to part the grass near yellowed areas and look at the soil surface and thatch. Pull out individual grass plants and look inside the bottom leaf sheath. Examine several different areas if chinch bugs aren't immediately found.
- Use a Dust Buster or hand-held vacuum cleaner to suck up chinch bugs near damaged areas. Remove the filter, empty the contents on a sidewalk or into a plastic bag, and look for nymphs and adults. Repeat in several damaged areas.
- Make a chinch bug float: cut both ends out of a metal can and push one end 2-3 inches into the soil on green or yellowing grass (not dead grass). Slowly fill with water and count the number of chinch bugs that float to the top within 5 minutes. Keep the water level above the grass surface. If nothing emerges in the first area, examine at least 3 or 4 other areas.

If you can't positively identify your lawn bugs on your own, bring them to the Ag Center in a sealed jar for a second opinion.

Cultural Control

The way to care for your lawn can make a big difference in controlling and preventing chinch bug damage.

- Using slow-release nitrogen fertilizers responsibly will help to avoid rapid turf growth and reduce chinch bug population build-up. Rapid growth does not help plants outgrow damage, but instead increases chinch bug survival, development time, and the number of eggs that can be laid.
- Excessive thatch should be mechanically removed (vertical mowing, power raking, aerating, etc) and excessive watering, fertilizing, and/or fungicide use (which causes lawn grasses to develop a thick thatch layer) should be avoided. Thatch is a layer of dead plant roots and stems that accumulates between the live plant and the soil which can actually block insecticide treatments and keep the chemicals from reaching these soil-dwelling pests.
- Adopt proper mowing practices which can make grass more tolerant to chinch bugs and greatly improve the appearance of the lawn. St. Augustinegrass should be mowed to a height of 3 - 4 inches.

Chemical Control

Since chinch bugs have a track record of developing resistance to insecticides, efforts should be made to reduce the amount and frequency of pesticide use against this pest. Areas where pesticide resistance does not seem to exist should be treated differently than areas where resistance is suspected. If you have positively identified chinch bugs in your lawn and would like advice on chemical controls, please call our office or visit the website link found below.

This article includes excerpts from *Southern Chinch Bug Management on St. Augustinegrass* by Eileen Buss, located at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh036.