

Highlights in

Horticulture

Baker County

July 2011

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Dear Extension Friends,

With the extremely dry conditions lately, gardeners are struggling just to keep their plants alive! But whether we're in a drought or not, everyone should do their part to conserve water by watering efficiently and only as needed. See page 3 for lawn and landscape watering tips.

Best Regards,

Alicia

Alicia R. Lamborn
Horticulture Extension Agent
Baker County Extension Service

Species Spotlight: The Pomegranate

Pomegranates are native to southeastern Europe and Asia, but produce quality fruit in regions with cool winters and hot, dry summers. Few areas are too hot, and the pomegranate is more cold hardy citrus. Most pomegranates are cultivated in California, but a UF researcher specializing in horticulture science believes pomegranates could become Florida's next cash crop.



Normally a dense, bushy, deciduous 6-12 foot tall shrub, the pomegranate may be trained as a small tree reaching 20 feet in height. Pomegranate is an attractive ornamental, having glossy, dark green leaves and flaming orange-red blooms with crinkled petals and numerous stamens. Pomegranates are brownish-yellow to purplish-red berries (2-5 inches) with a smooth, leathery skin. Numerous seeds are each surrounded by a pink to purplish-red, juicy, pulp which is the edible portion. Pomegranates in North Florida mature from July to November. The cultivar called 'Wonderful' is grown commercially in California; 'Purple Seed' and 'Spanish Ruby' are popular dooryard cultivars.

Pomegranates are adapted to many soil types from pure sand to heavy clay. Yields are usually low on sands, while fruit color is poor on clays. Plant trees in early spring (February - March), avoiding late frost. When used as a hedge, plants are spaced 6-9 feet apart, otherwise spacing of 15-18 feet between plants and rows are used for orchards and for dooryard trees. For more information, visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg056> or <http://www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/pomegranates/> for directions on how to eat a pomegranate.

Ask Alicia: Your Vegetable Gardening Questions Answered

We had a good turnout for the Vegetable Gardening class last month and participants were full of great questions! And since we all deal with the same problems from time to time, I thought it best to share their questions with you. If you have a gardening question, don't be afraid to ask...we are here to help!

Q: What is the best way to prevent peas from being stung?

A: The Cowpea curculio (a beetle) can be a problem in Florida during the late spring. Although entire fields can occasionally be damaged during those months, it is not seen at any other time of the year. Crops affected by this pest include snap beans, peas, soybeans, lima beans, cotton, and strawberry, but it prefers black-eyed pea, crowder pea, and long bean. The weevils spend the winter months in weeds or crop debris. Upon leaving overwintering sites, adult females puncture bean pods to feed and to lay their eggs in developing seeds, leaving unsightly brown spots on the pods and seeds. Once the larvae hatch, they too feed on the seeds for one to three weeks then bore exit holes into the sides of the pod and drop to the ground, where they pupate in the soil. About ten days later, the next generation of adults emerges.



Because the adult rarely flies, but reaches its host plant principally by walking, crop rotation is beneficial. In other words, avoid planting your peas in the same spot every year. Tilling the plot and destroying weeds and other host plants, along with crop residue, will also help manage this pest by destroying overwintering beetles. Chemical sprays can also be used to target the adult beetles, but growers are encouraged to attempt to manage this pest without the use of chemicals since multiple applications are required both prior to pod development and during pod growth, and insecticide resistance has become a problem for some chemicals. For more information, visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in380>

Q: Since nematodes attack weeds, does keeping your okra plot clean of weeds actually make nematode damage worse?

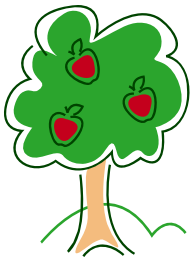
A: Root-knot nematodes (microscopic worms that attack plant roots) can be especially problematic for okra, among other plants. And since these nematodes attack a variety of weeds also, one might conclude that leaving the weeds to grow with the okra might reduce damage to the desirable crop. However, nematodes are relatively immobile so those that are near the okra roots will move into the roots. Those that are away from the okra roots and near a weed would remain dormant if the weed was not a host, or would enter the weed roots if it was a host.



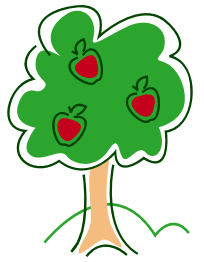
The root-knot nematode feeds on plant roots, causing knots or galls to form in the plant tissue.

Because the presence of weeds is not likely to reduce damage to the okra, weed removal is recommended since weeds compete with crops for light, water, and nutrients which all contribute to the health of the crop (the healthier the crop, the more nematode damage the crop can withstand). Weed removal becomes especially important when the okra season is over. If some weed hosts remain around (many broadleaf weeds can host root-knot nematodes) then the nematodes could continue to survive and reproduce on them. The best plan is to rotate crops and move the okra plots around each year, if possible. Other nematode management strategies include the use of organic matter when preparing the soil, growing nematode resistant vegetable varieties, transplanting into the garden instead of direct seeding, and solarizing the soil during the late summer months. One management strategy alone will not result in fewer damage, but the combination of all strategies will allow growers to produce plants of acceptable quality and yield. For more information on managing nematodes, visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ng005> and <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in856> or stop by our office for free information.

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Fruit Tree Calendar: July



The following fruit trees require attention this month. All fertilizer recommendations are for optimum growth of fruit trees. It is important to remember that you always have the option of applying less fertilizer, but the amount of fertilizer should not exceed these recommendations.

Blackberries: Fertilize after harvest using 1/4 to 1/2 pound (1/2 -1 cup) of 10-10-10 with micronutrients per plant or about 10 pounds (20 cups) per 100 foot row. (Newly planted blackberries should not be fertilized again until next winter.)

Muscadine Grapes : (Year 2): Fertilize June or July using 1 pound (2 cups) of 8-8-8 or 10-10-10; apply the fertilizer in bands about 1 foot to either side of the vine. (Year 3+): Fertilize June or July using up to 3 pounds (6 cups) of 8-8-8 or 10-10-10; apply the fertilizer in bands about 1 foot to either side of the vine. *Note: It is sometimes beneficial to apply fertilizer that has micronutrients added.*

Peaches/ Nectarines/Plums (Year 1): Fertilize this month using 1/2 pound (1 cup) per tree of 12-4-8 fertilizer with micronutrients.

Pomegranate: Fruit matures this month and continues through November.

To access our Fruit & Nut Calendar, visit our website and look under 'Gardening Information'



Lawn & Landscape Watering Tips



Even with our watering restrictions, many of us still overwater!

Overwatering does more than deplete the water supply, it also makes plants prone to pests and adds to stormwater runoff, which pollutes our waterways. Our plants can't live without water, but by watering responsibly you can reduce water bills, insect and disease problems, and maintenance requirements.

- Reduce the need for watering by choosing drought-tolerant plants adapted to your site. And since we're in an extreme drought, consider waiting to plant anything new until the summer rains arrive.
- Group plants according to water (and light) needs—this will make watering less of a chore and you're plants will be happier too. For example, separate turf irrigation zones from trees and shrub zones.
- If you have an automatic sprinkler system, install a rain shutoff device or sensor that will override the system when it rains. Florida law requires rain shutoff devices on all automatic sprinkler systems installed since 1991. A certified irrigation professional can provide technical assistance for installing and maintaining these devices.
- Water in the early morning (4-7am); this is the most efficient time because temperature and wind speeds are at their lowest, which reduces evaporation. Also, lawns and landscape plants are less susceptible to fungus if water is applied at the time that dew normally forms. Watering restrictions won't allow us to water between 10am-4pm so if you can't water before 7am then try to water before 10am. This will allow plant leaves to dry out during the day and prevent water from sitting on the plants overnight, increasing the chances of disease.
- Let your lawn and landscape plants tell you when its time to water! Apply 1/2" to 3/4" of water when grass shows signs of distress (bluish-gray color, leaf blades fold in half lengthwise). The same goes for trees & shrubs—apply only when plants begin to wilt or change leaf color. Do not water again until symptoms reappear.
- Not sure how much water you are applying? Use a rain gauge to measure irrigation or use a ruler to mark 1/2" and 3/4" depth inside a tuna can. Run the irrigation for 30 minutes, check to see how much water you've applied, and adjust the run time accordingly to apply the proper amount.
- Make sure your sprinkler system is applying uniform coverage by placing several tuna cans in a grid pattern. If one or two cans are full while others are almost empty, it's time to make some adjustments. Not only will you save on water, but your lawn will thank you.

For more water wise advice, stop by our office for a one-on-one consultation.

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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Ask Alicia: Your Vegetable Gardening Questions Answered ...continued from page 2

Q: What is the best practice for storing seeds for next year?

A: You can store left-over seeds in their original packets in a cool, dry place. A tightly sealed jar placed in the refrigerator at 50°F works well. Most garden vegetable seeds may be stored in the freezer, but storage is generally no better than in the refrigerator. But be careful—seeds must be very dry before freezing, or the seeds can be killed. If saving harvested seed, be sure they are clean and dry before storing. The table below indicates the storage life of several vegetable seeds.

Seed Storage Life		
Short-lived	Medium-lived	Long-lived
Onion	Beans	Cucumber
Corn	Carrot	Radish
Okra	Peas	Eggplant
Parsnip	Tomato	Squash

Q: I was told that tomato fruit will not set when temperatures get too high. Is this true?

A: Tomato fruit set is affected by both high day and nighttime temperatures. When daytime temperatures are above 90 degrees and the nighttime temperatures are above 70 degrees the number



of tomato flowers and fruit set will be reduced. Some commercially grown varieties have been bred to withstand these higher temperatures. You may be able to get some of these heat-set varieties from your garden center. However; they generally have less flavor than most home garden varieties.

Q: What about growing in partial shade for late squash, cucumbers, and early greens?

A: Based on their work with shade over vegetables, the North Florida Research and Education Center in Live Oak has found that 30-40% shading is enough to extend the season for some vegetables that can't take the extreme heat in full sun certain times of the year. In other words, shading your crop may allow growers to plant earlier in fall and/or keep plants growing longer during spring and into summer. Shade cloths are available from greenhouse supply companies, but before purchasing, growers should consider their options for mounting the shade cloth above the crops. A permanent structure works well if you are able to install & remove the shade cloth once the weather changes, otherwise a transportable frame may be the way to go.

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 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).