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**IFAS EXTENSION**



Highlights in

*Horticulture*

Baker County

May 2010

**Inside this issue:**

Ask Alicia	2
Gardening For Hummingbirds	3
Caring For Mother's Day Flowers	3
Master Gardener Training Starts Soon!	4

Dear Extension Friends,

The Master Gardeners and I would like to send a big 'thank you' out to everyone who attended our 2nd Annual Spring Garden Fest! We hope you enjoyed it! Also, congratulations to all of you that won plants and to Tonya who won the rain barrel raffle! If you missed out on the fun, you still have one more opportunity to purchase plants (details below), otherwise we hope to catch you next year.

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).

**Master Gardener Training Starts August 4th!**

**UF/IFAS-Baker County Extension Service is now accepting applications for Master Gardener volunteers.**



The Master Gardener program is a national program of volunteers who are associated with the Extension Service. Trained Baker County Master Gardener volunteers help extend unbiased, research-based horticultural information from the University of Florida to people in our community who need that information.

In Baker County, a Master Gardener might serve in one of the following roles:

- ◆ Work with horticulture extension staff at the office
- ◆ Assist horticulture agent with extension programs
- ◆ Assist horticulture agent with yard visits to homeowners
- ◆ Answer homeowner questions at plant clinics
- ◆ Work with youth to plant and maintain school gardens
- ◆ Plant and maintain demonstration gardens
- ◆ Grow a flower crop in the extension greenhouse
- ◆ Work with youth in the Jr. Master Gardener Program

This is a great opportunity for anyone who enjoys gardening and wants to volunteer for our community. We will teach you everything you ever wanted to know about gardening and you will pay us back by volunteering in 2011!

**Applications accepted until July 16<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm.**

**Classes are held from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm each Wednesday starting August 4<sup>th</sup> until mid October. The cost for the training and reference materials has been reduced to \$55.**

Visit our website or stop by the extension office for an application packet.

**Upcoming Programs & Events: May & June**

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

May 7<sup>th</sup> — **Master Gardener Plant Sale** 9am to 11:30am in the parking lot of the Baker County Extension Office (Agricultural Center). If you missed the Spring Garden Fest, you are in luck! We still have houseplants, coleus, succulents, cold-hardy bromeliads and azaleas available. We also have beautiful hanging baskets and container gardens...just in time for Mother's Day!



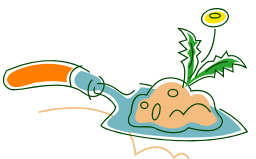
May 28<sup>th</sup> — **Rain Barrel Workshop** 10:00am to 11:00am. Install a rain barrel that will save the rain for your plants and save you money! Learn how to build, install, and maintain a functional rain barrel for immediate use. All materials are provided for this "make and take" rain barrel workshop and we help you build. \$35 fee for materials (per barrel) is due by Friday, May 21st at 5:00 pm. Already have your own barrel? Just call 259-3520 to register and join the class for free!



June 3<sup>rd</sup> — **Ornamental Plant Pest Management** 5:30pm to 6:30pm. Save time and money by learning to identify helpful and harmful insects and how to manage pests in the landscape. This class is free; RSVP by calling 904-259-3520 or email [alamborn@ufl.edu](mailto:alamborn@ufl.edu) by Tuesday, June 1st. *\*We must have 10 people sign up to hold the class, so sign up today!*



June 5<sup>th</sup> — **Master Gardener Plant Clinic** 9am to Noon in the garden center of Ace Hardware located on Hwy 90 in Glen St. Mary. Baker County Master Gardeners will answer your gardening questions, help you solve your plant problems and provide free gardening publications.



# Ask Alicia: Your Gardening Questions Answered

*I know everyone has been out enjoying their gardens due to the wide variety of questions coming in this spring. If you have a question or problem, don't be afraid to ask. We are here to help!*

**Q: I have caterpillars that look like bird droppings eating my citrus leaves...what are they and should I get rid of them?**

A: The caterpillars you are seeing are actually Giant Swallowtail Butterfly larva (shown upper right), nicknamed orange dog caterpillars because of their fondness for citrus. They resemble bird droppings to stay camouflaged from predators, which is why you may not notice them until quite a few leaves have been eaten. If you have a young citrus tree, it is best to remove the caterpillars so they don't eat all of the leaves, putting your tree under stress. However, if your citrus tree is established and has lots of foliage, it is okay to let the caterpillars get their fill. If you are worried about killing them, try to find a friend or neighbor with large, mature trees and relocate them.

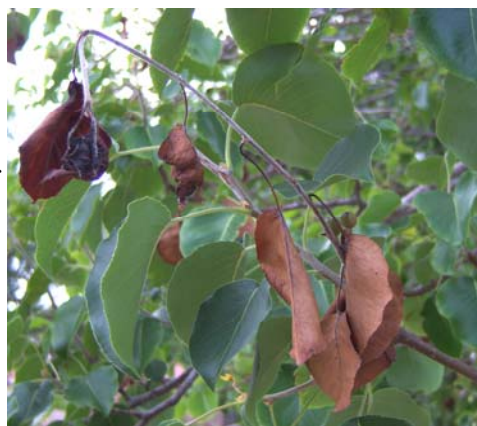


**Q: My daffodils are turning yellow and starting to look bad. Can I cut off the foliage?**

A: Daffodils are beginning to go dormant for the summer, turning yellow and then brown. While they can be quite unattractive, it is best not to cut them, letting the foliage dry naturally. This ensures that enough energy is stored in the bulb for blooming next year. Some folks prefer to braun the yellow foliage to improve the appearance, but planting annuals in your daffodil bed will hide the daffodil foliage and spare you the time of braiding. If the foliage must be cut, wait until there is absolutely no green tissue left and no sooner than six weeks after blooming.

**Q: I have several pear trees and a couple of them have branches that are turning brown only at the tips. Some have even begun to curl under. What could be the problem?**

A: The symptoms being described are caused by a bacterial infection, commonly called fireblight (pictured right). Fireblight typically spreads from tree to tree during the bloom period. Susceptible fruit trees include pears and apples. Pruning out the infected areas by cutting 8 to 10 inches below the lowest infected area of the branch may help, but pruned off parts should be burned and pruning shears must be disinfected between each cut to prevent re-inoculation. Lower rates of nitrogen fertilizer will result in lower tree vigor, but will reduce incidences of fireblight. Established pear trees can survive the attack of fireblight, but apples may succumb to this disease after several years of infection.



**Q: I purchased some ammonium nitrate to throw on my corn, but can I also use it on my tomatoes?**

A: Farmers use ammonium nitrate nitrogen to push more growth on their corn plants before they begin to produce ears. (The recommendation is to top-dress 40 lb N per acre before the tassel appears in the whorl.) However, this technique is not recommended for your tomatoes. Applying excess nitrogen will make your tomatoes plants grow ten feet tall, but will also cause them to not bear fruit. Instead, apply a well-balanced, slow-release fertilizer with micronutrients.

# Gardening For Hummingbirds

**To be successful in keeping hummingbirds around your house, you must garden for them.**

◆ **Provide red, orange, and pink flowers.**

Hummingbirds are not born with an attraction to certain colors but because most nectar-bearing flowers available to hummingbirds are red, orange, or pink, they quickly come to favor those colors.

◆ **Choose plants that produce tubular flowers.**

Tubular flowers are generally the best since they hold large amounts of nectar at their base. Other flowers may attract hummingbirds, but will not provide nectar due to the flower shape.

◆ **Aim for consistent plant nectar source availability throughout the growing season.**

Nesting hummingbirds will need nectar from March to September. Therefore, your garden should have numerous nectar plants available throughout this time. It is best to plant a variety of species and to arrange these flowers in several groupings. Nesting hummingbirds are very aggressive and territorial around their food source. Having more than one flower garden will allow several hummers to feed at the same time without conflict.

◆ **Supplement your plant nectar sources with artificial feeders.**

Packages of instant nectar may be found at many lawn and garden stores. You also can prepare your own solution with 1 part white, granulated, cane sugar to 4 parts water. Boil the sugar solution to help dissolve the sugar. Then allow it to cool before filling a feeder. This concentration is about the same as that in wildflower nectar. Using a sweeter solution, sugar substitutes or honey could be lethal to hummers. It also is not necessary to add red food coloring since the birds will be attracted to the red feeders. Space feeders at least 10 feet apart in a place out of direct sunlight and where they will not get diluted by rain.

◆ **Keep the hummingbirds healthy.**

Sugar solutions must be kept fresh. Florida's hot weather can cause rapid bacterial growth in these feeders and birds that drink contaminated water could die. To avoid this, change the solution every 3-5 days. Clean the feeders with hot water and white vinegar. Do not use soap or chlorine bleach.

*Note:* Artificial feeders will attract hummingbirds, but should not be the sole source of food provided. The sugar solution may appeal to the hummingbirds' sweet tooth, but it provides little nourishment. Nectar is much more than just water and sugar! For more information on hummingbirds and what to plant, visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw059>.



## Caring for Mother's Day Flowers

Fresh flowers are a popular gift on holidays, with good reason--92% of American women can remember the last time they were given flowers, and fresh flowers have an immediate positive impact on happiness. Increase the lifespan of your beautiful flowers, and extend your good feelings, by following these easy steps!



- Handle your flowers carefully--they are delicate and living plants.
- Keep flowers in water, first removing any leaves that would be submerged.
- Trim the stems before placing the flowers in water. Cut about an inch off the stem with a sharp, clean knife or clippers. This will allow water to pass more easily through the flower stem.
- Use a commercial flower food, properly mixed in your vase water. Make sure you follow the directions on the floral preservative packet--most packets are for either one pint or one quart of water.
- If your vase solution becomes cloudy, re-cut the stems and place them into a new vase solution.
- To help cut flowers retain moisture, keep them in a cool place out of direct sunlight.
- Avoid placing flowers near heated surfaces to prevent wilting.
- Keep flowers away from smoke and ripening fruit. These contain ethylene gas, which is harmful to flowers.

Source: Terril Nell, Environmental Horticulture Department, University of Florida, <http://solutionsforyourlife.com>