

FACT SHEET: The Lazy Gardener

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You can't be a lazy gardener if you want your landscape to look like the Biltmore's unless you have hired extremely professional gardening help! But, you can have a beautiful garden while maintaining a lazy gardener life style. All you have to do is: Right plant/right place, hydro-zone, consider size and keep it simple.

Right Plant/Right Place: Think about the sun, shade, water requirements and mature size of the plant while considering the landscape area you're working with.

Lazy watering: Hydro-zone – arrange plants by water needs, use micro-irrigation and harvest rain water.

Size: Determine garden dimensions, mature plant size, and laziest number of plants needed to fill space. Lazy gardeners do not plant for instant gratification. They plant for mature plant size which saves time, work and money.

Tips and Tricks: **If you are too lazy to** water during dry spells, plant drought resistant bloomers or wait until the rainy season. **If you are too lazy to** rake leaves or needles in the fall, create self-mulching landscape beds. **If you are too lazy to** plant annual flowers, plant perennials.

Sweat Savers: Repeat your successes, and plant re-seeders. Deadhead for more blooms and to save seeds. Use a timer system to perform 15 minutes of a dreaded activity, then stop when the timer goes off. You'll be surprised how much you can accomplish!

Time Saver: Wear gloves. Saves time in cleaning your hands.

Maximize your Laziness: Use your friends wisely, start a garden raisers group, learn to love volunteer plants and permanently borrow plants from your friends and neighbors. Cheap and lazy go hand in hand! Divide & relocate perennials: no money spent, save on gasoline, no need to shop. Wait a minute!! No shopping????

Lazy Maintenance Plants: Slow growers (less pruning)-Indian Hawthorn; wide spreaders (fewer plants)-Lantana ground cover; drought tolerant (less watering)-Beach Sunflower; pest and disease resistant (less Lazy Pest Management)-Knock out roses - recently there seems to be a pest or two for this plant, however!

Low demands and high returns include: Dracaena, Plumbago, Firecracker Bush, African & Walking Iris, Thryallis, Penta, Fire Bush, Croton, and Salvia.

Limitations to Lazy Gardening:

Mulch – Types include: pine needles/bark, Florimulch (Melaleuca tree), Eucalyptus, municipal mulch, and nature's "freebie" oak leaves and pine straw. Regulates soil temperature, has organic value, serves as a weed barrier, retains moisture in the soil and is prettier than sand. Takes a little work to put it down but saves a lot of time and effort in the long run.

Fertilizing - Only fertilize plants you want to flourish and use slow release fertilizer. To be really lazy, don't fertilize until you are sure of a light rain the next day to activate it.

Pruning – Reasons include: to train the plant, remove insect infestation, deadhead to reduce the amount of pruning, choose right plant and provide your friends with cuttings. (Train) Espaliers are dramatic examples; getting plant to grow in certain direction. (Health) Remove diseased stems; open interior for better air circulation. (Improve Quality) More flowers; bigger fruit on some types; more abundant foliage; removing unproductive sprouts. (Restrict growth) Keep plant in boundary of available space.

War on Weeds - A weed is the wrong plant in the right place, the right plant in the wrong place, or a plant with nine lives. Using mulch (depth 2-3 inches after it settles) helps. Or you can make new friends – learn to like a few weeds. If you chose to fight the weed war, you can cover weeds with newspapers to smother them out and/or point, aim, and shoot with an environmentally friendly weed killer spray.

Pests – Biting, Sucking and Chewing! Yes, we have aphids, caterpillars, slugs and snails, scales and spider mites. Note that less than 1/10th of 1 per cent are BAD BUGS, so, 99 and 9/10 per cent are good bugs.

Consider Lazy Pest Management (LPM): Murder by Hand Methods: Use two pinching fingers to squish pests; hard spray with water; prune off most infested sections; or eyebrow tweezers --who has the patience for this method? Note that early morning is the best time to catch caterpillars in the act. If you want more information on Murder by Chemical, contact the Extension office and request a copy of Safe Solutions. Provide your email address, and we'll email it to you.

Rewards of laziness: Reading, golfing, sleeping, cooking, crafting...you name it!

For more information on environmental horticulture, contact the Hillsborough Extension Service at (813) 744-5519, visit our office at 5339 County Road 579, Seffner, FL 33584 or check out the County and University websites: Hillsborough County Extension at <http://hillsborough.extension.ufl.edu> or University of Florida/IFAS at <http://solutionsforyourlife.com>