



**Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ (FFL)  
Winter-Spring 2011-2012 Newsletter  
Hillsborough County Extension**

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**If you don't want your landscape plants to look like this next spring.....**

Lynn Barber, Hillsborough County and UF/IFAS Extension



**...here are a few things you can do now and in the coming months.**

Don't encourage new plant growth by pruning or fertilizing because the plant will be more prone to cold damage. Healthy plants are less prone to cold damage and more resistant to insect damage or disease. Landscape plants need less fertilization in the fall because their nutrient intake is smaller that time of year.

Pruning alters the hormone balance resulting in a growth flush. There are two options on pruning. The 1<sup>st</sup> is to delay pruning after the freeze until you see new growth and after the risk of future freeze passes. Then prune beyond the point of black or brown stem coloration. The damaged plant material insulates and protects the live parts of the plant. The 2<sup>nd</sup> option is to prune all dead and freeze damaged plant material post freeze. This makes it easier to cover and protect the plant if a freeze occurs before spring.

Plant coverings are frost protection versus cold protection. Covers can be sheets, quilts or frost/freeze cloth and should be in place before the sun goes down. Other than frost/freeze cloth, the covers must be removed during daylight. Frost/freeze cloth may remain in place for several days as air and light flow through the cloth. Plastic is not a good choice because it transfers the cold onto the plant. You can, however, put plastic on top of the sheet or quilt during windy freezes or very cold nights. The covering you select must extend to the ground to capture heat from the soil and provide wind protection. You can make a frame over the plant you are covering; then place the covering on top of the frame. This way, nothing touches the plant itself. A cardboard box large enough to fully cover the plant is another option.

Even though you have covered your plants, an additional source of heat may be needed. Christmas tree lights (not LED because it does not provide heat) or a light bulb may provide enough heat to protect your plant from freezing. Covering tropical plants in your landscape and those not hardy in your zone may help those plants survive cold weather. If you can't live without tropical plants and they have not survived the past two winters, you may need to plant them in containers so you can move them from your landscape to your porch, lanai or garage. Your garage may well be 10+ degrees warmer than the outside temperature which is another option for plant storage during freezing temperatures. Container plants can be covered to the ground or grouped together and covered.

Slightly moisten the soil before a freeze or near-freeze because moist soil releases more heat than dry soil. Hand watering the ground beneath the plant helps.

This is a great time of year to mulch now that it has cooled off a bit. Mulch helps regulate the soil temperature and protect the plant roots. Maintain a three-inch layer of mulch after it settles.

After a freeze, you should check to determine if your plant needs water. The leaves could be losing water while frozen water remains in the soil. Applying water to the soil will provide both a thaw and water your plant at the same time.

Practice the 1<sup>st</sup> principle of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ which is Right Plant, Right Place. Consider sun/shade, wet/dry, mature size, soil type and pH. Cold sensitive ornamentals should be planted in an area where air flows freely. Use screening, fences and landscape design where multiple plants are located strategically for protection. Well drained soil enhances root growth and stability. Plants in the shade become dormant earlier in the fall and stay that way until later in the spring. You can reduce the cold injury the plant will suffer if you plant it under a tree canopy because the evening temperature is higher. Shade thriving plants have less moisture loss than full sun loving plants. Sun loving plants living in shady conditions are less cold tolerant.

Most perennials are root hardy. While the foliage will die back to the ground, new growth will appear in the spring. Be patient because it can take several months before shoots are visible above the ground.

For more information on environmental horticulture, contact the Hillsborough County Extension office, 744-5519, or drop by at 5339 County Road 579, Seffner, FL 33584.

## **Welcome to Nicole Pinson, Urban Horticulture Agent, Hillsborough County and UF/IFAS Extension**

Lynn Barber, Hillsborough County and UF/IFAS Extension

We're thrilled to announce that Nicole Pinson has been selected as our new Urban Horticulture Agent. She first became familiar with Hillsborough County Extension as a child when she attended Extension workshops with her mom. More than 15 years ago, she started off as a volunteer raising butterflies and caterpillars for the live butterfly garden at the Museum of Science and Industry. While working on her Environmental Science and Policy degree, she became part of the MOSI staff and the volunteer coordinator. Later Nicole accepted the position of Sr. Environmental Educator at the Audubon Resource Center, Lettuce Lake Park, where she developed educational materials and workshops and conducted student field trips. She has had the opportunity to be a landscape designer and live goods buyer, and for the past four years worked to promote and protect public health for the Florida Department of Health.

She earned a B.S. in Environmental Science and Policy from the University of South Florida. She is a Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association - Florida Certified Horticulture Professional and a Florida Certified Environmental Professional. In her spare time, she enjoys trail running, traveling, reading, gardening, and visiting museums, parks, and historic sites. You can contact Nicole at 744-5519 x54145.

## **Adding Color to the Florida Landscape: Flowering Trees**

MARIA CARVER, HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY FLORIDA-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPING™  
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION OUTREACH PROGRAM COORDINATOR

When people think of a Florida landscape, they picture a landscape that is bursting with color, lush tropical plants and super green lawns. Sometimes this can be difficult to achieve with our dry seasons, cold winters and pest problems, but there are still many plants that will add that splash of color without breaking your back, your will and your bank. Before deciding what to plant, determine your Florida planting region. Florida is divided into three main regions: north, central and south. In the south region of Florida, many more tropical to semitropical plants can survive the winter conditions; in the north region of Florida, more cold-tolerant plants are needed. The next step is to evaluate your landscape site conditions, which consist of soil pH, light levels, soil moistures, soil type and salt levels to name a few. Matching the proper plants with your site conditions is very important when it comes to the success of your landscape.

When designing for color, first start with the backbones of the landscape — trees. Trees are known for their ability to provide shade and a feeling of permanence to the landscape, but there are also many trees that can provide amazing displays of color. Typically these displays of color are seasonal and only last for a few weeks to a few months. But when the trees are in full bloom, they are spectacular. Flowering trees such as crape myrtles can really be showstoppers in the landscape and have a long blooming period. Crape myrtles will grow throughout Florida and are known for being drought-tolerant, tough plants. They are available in a variety of

colors, ranging from pinks, reds, whites and purples. Some cultivars of crape myrtles provide added interest to the landscape by having colorful peeling bark. Colder areas of Florida may also get an extra display of color in the autumn when foliage can turn yellow, orange or red. Crape myrtles have low salt-tolerance, so choose an alternative plant if you live near the coast.

Another colorful tree that is adapted for most regions of Florida is the bottlebrush (*Callistemon* sp), which blooms spring through summer with a red bottlebrush-shaped flower, hence the name. Flowers attract beneficial insects such as butterflies and they also attract hummingbirds. There are several different species of bottlebrush and the shapes vary from upright to weeping forms. *Callistemon citrinus* and *Callistemon rigidus* are more cold-tolerant and are hardy in parts of the north region of Florida. Bottlebrush trees prefer full sun and dry conditions. They have moderate salt tolerance and do not like very alkaline soils.

The north region of Florida is suitable for growing eastern redbuds, camellias, fringetrees or saucer magnolias. Flowering trees that perform well in the central region of Florida are yellow tabebuias, pink tabebuias, eastern redbud and Chickasaw plum. For the warmer southern parts of the state, try growing royal poinciana, jacaranda, tabebuias and golden shower trees. This is by far not an all-inclusive list of the flowering trees in each region. Cold tolerance and suitability for the landscape can vary widely from species to species and between cultivars. For a more comprehensive guide for regional plant selections, refer to the University of Florida's *The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guide to Plant Selection & Landscape Design*, which can be found at [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYN\\_Plant\\_Selection\\_Guide\\_v090110.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYN_Plant_Selection_Guide_v090110.pdf).

The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Community Association Outreach Program is sponsored by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), the [Hillsborough](#) and [Polk Boards of County Commissioners](#), and the Alafia, Hillsborough and Peace River basin boards of the [Southwest Florida Water Management District](#). **Additional information** on Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ can be accessed at <http://floridayards.org>, <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu> and [WaterMatters.org](http://WaterMatters.org).

## **Southern Chinch Bugs: A Major Pest of Florida Lawns**

(Adapted from *Southern Chinch Bug Management on St. Augustinegrass* by Eileen A. Buss, UF/IFAS Extension, Fact Sheet ENY325)

MARIA CARVER, HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY FLORIDA-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPING™  
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION OUTREACH PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Southern chinch bugs, or *Blissus insularis*, are the most destructive pests of St. Augustinegrass in Florida. They also feed on Bahiagrass, Zoysiagrass and Bermudagrass, but the damage is usually not as extensive. Southern chinch bugs' activity (feasting) occurs from March to November in north and central Florida and year-round in south Florida. Chinch bugs prefer warm, damp summer months and populations usually peak in July.

The first step in controlling southern chinch bugs is identification. Adult southern chinch bugs are about 1/8" to 1/10" long and have wings that are folded on their backs. The bodies are black and the wings are shiny white and have a black triangular-shaped marking. Young chinch bugs (nymphs) are reddish-orange with a white band across the back. As they mature, the nymphs darken in color, eventually turning black. Examine leaf sheaths of the St. Augustinegrass by pulling out small pieces of the grass plants and investigating closely to determine if plants are infested with chinch bugs. A small hand-held vacuum can also be used. Use the vacuum on areas of damaged turf and examine the contents for signs of the pest. Another option is to cut out both ends of a metal can and push the can a few inches deep into the damaged turfgrass area. Fill the can with water and count the number of chinch bugs that have floated to the surface after five minutes. Make sure you keep enough water in the can so that the bugs float to the top above the grass. Repeat any of the above methods in damaged areas of the lawn to confirm a chinch bug infestation.

Improve St. Augustinegrass tolerance to chinch bug damage by using good cultural practices. Avoid over-watering and over-fertilization of the turf, which can cause excessive thatch growth. Thatch is a layer of dead grass material between the live grass plant and soil. This area is an excellent place for chinch bugs to

overwinter and can be hard to penetrate with insecticides. Use slow-release fertilizers instead of spraying water-soluble fertilizer on your turf because large amounts of nitrogen can cause rapid growth and make turfgrass more susceptible to chinch bug attacks. Maintain St. Augustinegrass at a height of 3 to 4 inches. The increased mowing height will encourage the grass to grow deeper roots, which allows the plant to recover from insect damage as well as drought.

When using chemical control for management, spot-treat damaged areas instead of a broadcast treatment of the entire area. It may take up to a week or more for the insecticide to kill the chinch bugs. Multiple applications may be needed to successfully control chinch bug populations. The southern chinch bug has become resistant to many insecticides and rotating the type of chemical class during treatments is recommended. Always read the insecticide label for directions on how to properly apply the chemical. Specific chemical control recommendations can be found in the University of Florida publication *Southern Chinch Bug Management on St. Augustinegrass*, which can be found at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh036>. Contact us for information on environmental horticulture topics.

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## Hillsborough County Master Gardener Program

Nicole Pinson, Hillsborough County Extension, Urban Horticulture Agent and Master Gardener Coordinator

Hillsborough County Master Gardeners have had a busy year working on projects throughout Hillsborough County and helping residents find solutions to their problems. The Master Gardener program and training is conducted by Extension agents. The training provides gardeners with the opportunity to improve their horticultural knowledge and skills and then share their experience with the public through organized volunteer activities.

In exchange for specialized training, Certified Master Gardeners are required to complete 35 hours of volunteer service per year and obtain 10 continuing education hours. During their first year, they are required to complete 75 hours of volunteer service. Typically, our Master Gardeners go above and beyond the minimum volunteer hours required. Master Gardeners are a valuable resource for the residents of Hillsborough County and are an extension of UF faculty and staff.

For the 2011 calendar year, Master Gardener volunteer contributions include:

- Assisting with Garden Goodies, a project that gives youths and their parents the opportunity to grow a vegetable garden and learn about preparing the soil, planting, harvesting, composting and preparing healthy meals.
- Providing docent tours to garden visitors, assisting with Rain Barrel, Water-Wise and Compost Happens workshops and staffing booths at area events. In addition, more than 40 Master Gardeners help maintain Extension grounds, the perennial garden, Bette S. Walker Discovery Garden and compost demonstration areas. Over 800 people visited the Bette S. Walker Discovery Garden this year.
- Sharing expertise with local school, church and community gardens.

- Presenting various talks at Library Plant Clinic workshops coordinated with 15 library branches throughout Hillsborough County. More than 50 Master Gardeners coordinate or assist these programs and 35 volunteer for additional talks through our Speakers Bureau.
- Completing evaluations of applicant's yards to certify them through the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ or Florida Certified Backyard Wildlife Habitat programs. The Yard Recognition Team notes what the homeowner is doing right, and provides feedback for improving scores and promoting sustainable landscape practices.
- Creating educational programs and writing articles for local publications.

Master Gardeners are an extension of the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS). They are a resource to residents of Hillsborough County in that they provide research-based solutions to problems via phone calls, email, walk-in client consultations and soil pH testing.

To date, Hillsborough County Master Gardeners have volunteered:

- More than 6,900 hours (which is equivalent to about 3.5 full-time employees).
- Completed more than 1,300 hours of continuing education.
- Distributed over 6,000 publications.
- Answered over 3,000 phone call and email requests for information.
- Assisted nearly 1,000 walk-in clients.

The expertise and volunteer service contributions of Hillsborough County Master Gardeners accounted for over 6,500 client contacts! For information on any of the programs listed above, please call the Hillsborough County Extension Office at (813) 744-5519 or by email at [hillsborough@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:hillsborough@ifas.ufl.edu).

## **Picking the Benefits of a January Garden**

LYNN BARBER, FLORIDA-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPING™AGENT

It's time to plan your January garden. I'm focusing on vegetables, herbs and spices for several reasons. These plants are easy to grow, require minimal maintenance, are inexpensive, healthy and delicious additions to your menus.

Vegetables to plant in January include: beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, Chinese cabbage, collards, endive/escarole, green onions, lettuce, mustard, peas, potatoes and turnips. Create a root vegetable casserole with turnips, potato, rutabaga, parsnips, olive oil and spices. I can smell it already!

Herbs and spices you can plant in January include: anise, basil, bay laurel, borage, caraway, cardamom, chervil, chives, cilantro/coriander, dill, fennel, ginger, horehound, lemon balm, lovage, marjoram, Mexican tarragon, mint, nasturtium, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, thyme and watercress. I love the smell of rosemary brushing against my clothes as I walk through my landscape beds. Cut the flowers off your herbs to promote additional growth.

Be sure you follow the planting instructions, and water daily for 7-10 days to start. If it does not rain, then water and fertilize as needed with a complete fertilizer or finished compost. Be sure to follow the current watering restrictions. For more information on composting, contact the Extension office for workshop dates.

Creating a vegetable and herb garden can save you money; the cost difference of purchasing the plants or seeds versus purchasing the produce, gasoline, wear and tear on your vehicle, pollution and travel time. It can also be a wonderful family experience. You can share this project with your children; planting, pruning, harvesting, meal planning and cooking. Their fond memories will remain with them for the rest of their lives...as have mine.

For a copy of the Hillsborough County Gardening Calendar created by Sydney Park Brown, Ed.D, which lists many 'to dos' month by month, go to:

<http://hillsborough.extension.ufl.edu/HomeGardening/Garden-Almanac.html>

## **Florida-Friendly Yard Recognition**

Virginia Overstreet  
Hillsborough County Water-Wise Program Coordinator

Have you considered having your landscape officially recognized as a Florida-Friendly Yard? The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program teaches homeowners to use environmentally friendly landscaping practices recommended by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS). If you follow the nine principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ (FFL), you probably already have a Florida-Friendly yard. The nine principles of FFL can be found at [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/homeowners/nine\\_principles.htm](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/homeowners/nine_principles.htm). Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ conserves water, minimizes runoff of pesticides and fertilizers and provides for wildlife.

There is no typical Florida-Friendly yard. Florida native plants are not required, but they make a great addition to your landscape. Turf grass is permitted as long as it is used in functional areas. It is not the plants themselves that make a landscape Florida-Friendly, but the manner in which the landscape is maintained. No particular plants are required in FFL but exotic invasive plants should not be used. The IFAS Assessment of Non-Native Plants can be found at <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment/conclusions.html>. This assessment lists plants that have been determined to be invasive and not recommended.

Please consider having your landscape evaluated for this program. The owners of Florida-Friendly yards receive a sign for the front yard. By serving as an incentive for your neighbors to adopt the 9 principles of FFL, you will help to beautify your neighborhood and preserve Florida's natural resources. An informational checklist about the Florida-Friendly Yard recognition program can be found at [http://hillsborough\\_fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN%20PDF%20Files/yardstickchecklist.pdf](http://hillsborough_fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN%20PDF%20Files/yardstickchecklist.pdf). Mail your checklist to Lynn Barber, 5339 CR 579, Seffner, FL 33584-3334 or fax it to 744-5776. She will have the Yard Recognition Team arrange a time to visit your home for an on-site consultation. The process generally takes a few weeks. Make your yard the envy of all your neighbors-Go Florida-Friendly!

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ THIS  
FLORIDA-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPING™ NEWSLETTER.**