

FACT SHEET: Snake Identification

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From the questions I've been receiving lately, this must be snake-a-thon season! In central Florida, there are 4 venomous snakes: Coral Snake, Cottonmouth-Water Moccasin, Pygmy Rattlesnake and Eastern Diamondbacked Rattlesnake. Most of my calls and emails from clients involve Coral Snakes or their look-alikes. There are several things we need to know about snakes.

Most important is how to identify whether the snake is venomous or non-venomous. Do this from a safe distance. We have snake posters in our office you can pick up or you can access: Dealing with Snakes in Florida's Residential Areas – Identifying Commonly Encountered Snakes: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw258>. This publication contains color photographs of snakes and descriptions of each of them.

The Scarlet Kingsnake and Scarlet Snake look very similar to the Coral Snake because they bear the same colors but in different order. On the Scarlet Kingsnake and Scarlet Snake, red touches black and they have red snouts. **On a Coral Snake, red touches yellow; they have a black snout and their tail has black and yellow rings. Coral snakes are venomous.** The Kingsnake and Scarlet king snake are non-venomous. The color combination of the snakes is important because it helps identify if the snake is venomous or not. Whether a snake is venomous or non-venomous determines the urgency and caution needed in dealing with and/or removing a snake from your home or landscape.

“Last year, I had many baby black racers brought in by folks who wanted to make sure they didn't have a “nest” of rattlesnakes to deal with. The harmless and beneficial young black racer looks similar enough to a rattlesnake to be easily mistaken. This is a non-venomous snake that shouldn't be killed as it is a beneficial species that eats a variety of prey items including frogs, lizards, mice, rats, and even small snakes.” JoAnn Hoffman, Hillsborough County Extension.

Other resources:

Dealing with Snakes in Florida's Residential Areas - Preventing Encounters - “Snake Proofing” your yard, home and other structures and how to safely deal with snake encounters, including trashcan capturing and snake traps

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FILES/UW/UW26000.pdf>

Dealing with Snakes in Florida's Residential Areas – Emergency Planning - creating a plan to deal with snakebites

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw261>

Florida Museum of Natural History - step-by-step instructions on how to capture a snake

<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/herpetology/fl-guide/gettingalong.htm>

To find a licensed wildlife removal specialist

http://fwc.myflorida.com/fwcwww/fwc_www.nwt_nuisance_wildlife_pkg.nwt_active_trappers_rpt_pr



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For horticultural assistance, contact the Hillsborough County Extension Office, 744-5519, or visit us at 5339 County Road 579, Seffner, FL 33584. Master Gardeners are available Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. We can help!