Be on the lookout for the Brazilian pepper tree, *Schinus terebinthifolius*. It's a native of Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil but was found in Jacksonville Beach at the intersection of A1A and JTB. Due to the mild winters, it's been moving our way. It is one of the most aggressive of the non-native invaders in central and south Florida. Everyone should be proactive in controlling it before the problem becomes insurmountable.

The plant was probably introduced into Florida around 1842-1849 as an ornamental plant. It grows into a shrub or small tree reaching thirty feet in height. Attractive evergreen leaves are compound and arranged alternately along the stem. Leaves are dark green with contrasting lighter colored veins. A good identification technique is to crush leaves to see if they smell peppery or like turpentine.

Upcoming Classes:

- **January 20 from 10AM to 12:30PM**: Attend an Arbor Day Program at the Duval County Extension Office on 1010 N. McDuff Ave. Learn about new tree varieties, diseases and disorders of trees, how to plant a tree and pruning. Call 387-8850 to register and there is a cost of $2 at the door. All pre-registered attendees will take home their choice of a swamp chestnut oak or hophornbeam tree seedling.

- **January 23 from 6 to 8PM**: Learn How to Prepare Your Landscape @ Regency Square Library on 9900 Regency Square Blvd. Call 387-8850 to register. Learn about low maintenance landscaping, 2006 plant selections & more.

- **January 26 from 10 to 11:30AM**: Learn how to start your own flat of vegetable seeds at the Urban Gardening Field Office. Call 387-8850 to register as space is limited. Registration is $7 per person.

- **February 23-26**: Attend gardening workshops at the Jacksonville Home and Patio Show. Check the Times Union or call our office for specific topics and times.

- **February 28 or March 4 from 10AM to Noon**: Choose either date to learn about spring vegetables and purchase plants after the program at the Urban Gardening Field Office. Call 387-8850 to register. A $1 fee will be collected at the door.
Weeds in Lawns — by Terry DelValle, Horticulturist

Mild weather causes soil temperatures to heat up and leads to weeds popping up in area landscapes. Herbicide applications to prevent the germination of weed seedlings is linked to soil temperatures and treatment time can vary from mid February to March 1. Before shopping for an herbicide, identify the weed and determine why the weed has become a problem. A healthy lawn can keep weeds from becoming established, but this involves following good cultural practices. Examine mowing, water and fertilization practices to combat weed problems.

Identify the Weed: To have any success at controlling weeds, it is critical that they be identified and grouped into one of these three categories: broadleaf, grasses, and sedges.

Broadleaf weeds have leaves with netted veins and often have showy flowers. Examples include dollarweed, chickweed, Florida betony, clovers, spurge, Asiatic hawksbeard and many others.

Grass weeds have leaves with parallel veins and have hollow, rounded stems with nodes referred to as joints. Flowers are composed of seedheads that lack petals so are not as showy as broadleaf weeds. Examples include crabgrass, torpedograss, goosegrass, sandspur, carpetgrass, Alexander-grass, etc.

Sedges have triangular stems, are solid (not hollow), and have no nodes. Flowers are often used to help identify the type of sedge. Seed heads are often spiky structures with short leaves just beneath the seed heads at the top of a stalk. Examples include purple nutsedge, yellow nutsedge, globe sedge, and annual kyllinga.

Weed Control: If a commercial Pest Control Company services your lawn, don't apply another herbicide to your lawn after a professional service has treated it because it can damage your lawn.

Herbicides will help control weeds, but will also weaken your lawn. Tree roots that extend into treated areas will absorb herbicides, and if used repeatedly may cause stress to trees. If weeds start in a small area, the first defense should be to hand-pull. Learn to tolerate some weeds. If weeds are impossible to pull by hand or the affected area is out of control, apply a herbicide to the weed area. When selecting a herbicide, read the fine print on the label to make sure it’s safe to use on your lawn and will control your specific weed problem. Now is not a good time to apply weed and feed products because it’s too early to fertilize lawns. Wait until March to apply a good quality fertilizer to lawns.

Herbicides are divided into two groups: preemergent and postemergent herbicides. Preemergent herbicides are applied to prevent weed seeds from germinating whereas postemergent herbicides are used to control existing weeds. Benefin (Hi-Yield Benefin Granular, Balan) is a good preemergent material to control grassy weeds safely on most home lawns. Atrazine products have both pre and postemergent properties and are safe for use on St. Augustinegrass to control many young broadleaf weeds.

Sedges are difficult to control and are often found in soils that are moist and compacted. Control with herbicides should be in conjunction with correcting the drainage or soil compaction problems. For chemical control, use Basagran to control yellow nutsedge and Manage or Image to control purple nutsedge. Repeat applications will be necessary for control because of the underground structures. Image slows down lawn growth so do not use when lawns are recovering from the winter.

For hard-to-control weeds, try a two or three way mix containing 2,4-D, MCPP, and/or 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid such as Spectracide Weed Stop, Bayer Advanced Lawn Southern Weed Killer, or Ortho Weed B-Gone for lawns. Read the label and make sure it’s safe to use on your specific variety of lawn. ‘Floratam’, a commonly used variety of St. Augustinegrass, is often excluded from the label.
Things to Plant in November & December by Terry DelValle

We've had our normal roller coaster weather with some cool weather followed by spring-like temperatures. That's enough to confuse any plants into blooming early once they've met their chilling requirement. Cold weather has not been too severe so many warm-season flowering plants are still blooming away, especially in protected areas. Choices of things to plant are limited, so take some time to look through 2005 catalogues and “think spring”! Order seeds now while they are still available.

Annuals recommended for planting now are carnation (China doll), dianthus, flowering cabbage and kale, pansy, petunia, ranunculus, stock, viola, and snapdragon. For March flowers, plant delphinium, digitalis (foxglove), and larkspur in January or February. In February, add to the list baby's breath, calendula, marguerite daisy, and statice.

Bulbs that can be planted are Achimenes, African lily (Agapanthus), amaryllis, Aztec lily, calla, crinum, daylily, Dutch iris, gloriosa lily, gloxinia, Hurricane lily, Ixia, kaffir lily, marica (walking iris), moraea (African lily), spider lily, Tritonia, tuberose, tulip (prechilled only), voodoo lily, watsonia, and Zephyr lily. In February it’s too late to plant amaryllis, calla, daylily, Hurricane lily, and tulips but add to the list Amazon lily, caladium, canna, and dahlia.

Pesticide Disposal by Terry DelValle

Over time, gardeners may accumulate an arsenal of chemicals and are unsure of what they have or how to use them. Many pesticide labels have changed over the last several years and many products are no longer labeled for homeowner use. When inspecting pesticide containers, the first thing to look for is a sign of leaking. Also look to see if labels are damaged or missing, making it impossible to determine application rates. Pesticides don’t have an indefinite shelf life, so if you can’t remember the last time you used that product, you probably don’t need it. Leaking containers and materials without labels should be set aside for proper disposal.

Storage Tips: Once you’ve looked over the materials and determined what should be kept, store them correctly. Here are a few common sense tips to follow.

♦ Always store products in their original containers or make sure the containers are clearly labeled on the outside. Don’t ever place pesticides in a food-type container that children could mistake for a food item.
♦ Store dry products (dusts, granules, baits) above liquids. Do not store dry materials on the floor but keep elevated to prevent moisture problems.
♦ Keep containers tightly sealed. Many dry products will absorb moisture and will loose effectiveness. For example, Amdro fire ant bait has a very short shelf life once opened.
♦ Limit the amount of pesticides and fertilizers that are stored by purchasing only what are needed.
♦ Store any flammable products separately from other products. Always store nitrate-based fertilizers separately from solvents, fuels and pesticides. Nitrate fertilizers can accelerate fires.

Continued on page 8
January and February are the months to prepare for the spring garden. As you finish harvesting all those cool season greens begin to start thinking about what you want to plant for the spring. Choose crops that your family enjoys grazing on. Make a plan on paper to find out how much room you'll need to grow your favorite crops. The Florida Vegetable gardening guide can come in useful when trying to figure out row and plant spacing, along with seeding depth. Find the guide at: [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH021](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH021)

These are the perfect months for starting your own seedlings to transplant into the garden. If you've been an avid gardener and are looking for something new to grow, look through seed catalogs to try a new or unusual variety.

If you're gardening in a new area or haven't had your soil pH tested in awhile, now is also the time to do that. If required, make any pH adjustments now so the reaction has time to take place in the soil. Add amendments such as, compost, to your soil. This will enrich organic matter. Doing these small preparations can provide a bountiful harvest in the months to come.

Planting warm season crops in January and February can be risky depending on temperatures. Providing adequate temperature and rainfall, the following crops can be planted: Beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, endive kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, parsley, English peas, potatoes, radish, turnips, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers and tomatoes.

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**Herb of the Month, Parsley**

By Sara Cimbalik

Parsley is one of those all around good herbs that has multiple uses. Parsley, *Petroselinum crispum*, native to the Mediterranean area and belonging to the carrot family comes in curly leaf, flat leaf and rooting types. Parsley's leaves have a mild flavor and are an excellent source of vitamin C, iodine, iron, and other minerals.

Often parsley is left on the plate to become the last bite, as it tends to sweeten the breath. Parsley is considered a cool season crop in our area. It does best when planted in late fall or winter, however depending on the springtime climate, it also can be grown in early spring. Thus, it's very versatile considering it can be grown for 9 months of the year!

Parsley has a biennial life cycle and is best started by planting seeds. However, germination can be a lengthy process, sometimes up to five weeks. To aid the germination process soak seeds in warm water for 24 hours prior to planting. This will likely speed up the germination time to 7-12 days.

Plant parsley seeds 1/4" deep in a well-drained slightly acidic soil (pH 6.2-pH7.0). Place plants 3-6 inches apart and rows 1 foot apart. Parsley prefers very moist soil therefore it will continually need to be watered. If limited on space, parsley grows very well in containers. A complete fertilizer at planting time followed by monthly feeding with a nitrogen fertilizer is best on most Florida soils. Parsley will be ready for harvest about 3 months after seeding.

Curled leaf parsley has a very finely divided leaf type. It is the most common type of parsley grown in Florida gardens and is very attractive. The curly leaf variety, Neapolitan, is grown for its leaf stalks, which are eaten like celery. Italian/plain-leaf/flat-leaf parsley is a less decorative but very flavorful parsley. It most closely resembles the original non-curl parsley from Europe and survives the warm temperatures of Florida the best. The leaves can be used fresh or dried as flavoring or as garnish. Hamburg, a rooting type of parsley has white roots that resemble young parsnips in appearance and use. The rooting types of parsley are most commonly used as a cooked vegetable especially in soups.

Not only does parsley serve as a culinary use, it also is used as a butterfly attractant. Further, if you're looking to only use a bit of parsley in your cooking, don't worry it won't go to waste as the swallowtail caterpillars will gladly devour it for you!
Grow Perfect Potatoes

By Sara Cimbalik

With today’s low-carb diet craze, the potato is still one of America’s most popular vegetables. The average American consumes an average of 125 lbs of potatoes per year. Potatoes are a fun crop to grow and can really inspire a child with its under ground development. The Irish potato, *Solanum tuberosum*, is a cool season crop that can easily be grown in the home garden. A recently grown and harvested potato tastes much better than one that has been in storage for up to 6 months or more. Potatoes grow best in a loose, well-drained, slightly acidic soil (pH 5-6). If you have any area that is prone to flooding, prepare a bed above the level of soil at least 10-12" to make sure plants are above any standing water.

Potatoes are heavy feeders and require multiple fertilizer applications throughout the growing season. Per 100 foot row, 7.5 lbs of a 10-10-10 complete fertilizer should be applied at each application. One fertilizer application should be applied at planting time while other applications should be applied in 3-4 week intervals after planting. When applying fertilizer, band about 4 to 6 inches to either side of the plant and about 2 inches deep.

The following varieties are recommended for Florida gardens: LaChipper (white skin), Sebago (buff/white skin), Yukon Gold (buff/white skin), Red LaSoda (red skin), Russet Norkotah (brown skin), and All Blue (blue flesh). In the home garden use only certified seed. Certified seed insures that the seed tubers are free of disease. Certified seed can be found at a reputable garden supply center or seed company. There are two reasons why potatoes from the grocery store should not be used as seed:

1. They may carry harmful potatoes diseases.
2. They may be treated with a sprout inhibitor, which won’t allow them to sprout in your garden.

Once you’ve obtained certified seed you’ll need to prepare the tubers for planting by cutting them into seed pieces. In general, one pound of potatoes will make about 6-8 seed pieces, while each seed piece will make about 8 good-size potatoes. The pieces should be cut to the size of an egg (2 oz.) with at least one eye (bud) per seed piece.

Once the seed piece has been cut it should “heal-over” before planting. To “heal-over”, leave the tuber in a cool (60°-65°F), dark, well-ventilated, humid place for one or two days. Healing over is recommended to reduce the risk of rot before sprouting.

When planting seed pieces, place them 4" below the soil surface, 6-8” apart with rows 36” apart. Plant the seed piece with the cut side down and the eyes facing up. Roughly 10 days to 2 weeks following planting the row will need to be “hilled”. Hilling means to add soil (2-3 inches) to the top of the potato row. Hilling is practiced to prevent tubers from being exposed to sunlight, which causes them to turn green and be inedible. Hilling also gives the stem lots of room to produce more tubers. Moderate moisture should be maintained, however too much water will promote root and tuber decay.

Colorado potato beetle, flea beetles, aphids, leafhoppers, and wireworms are all pests of potatoes. The best way to avoid them is to practice crop rotation, planting the same crop in the same location every 3 years, and removing weeds. Early blight, late blight, rhizoctonia, and mosaic virus are just a few of the diseases that potatoes are susceptible to. The best way to avoid disease is to plant certified seed.

Most potatoes are ready for harvest between 80-115 days after planting. If potatoes will be stored after harvest the plant should be allowed to die before harvest. Two-three weeks after the plant has died, harvest the tubers by carefully digging below the potatoes with a shovel or spading fork and lift them from the ground. Once harvested, washed, and dried your crop can be stored for 3-6 months.
Monitor rainfall and water plants as needed. Although plants may look like they’re resting, roots still need water in dry weather. Water grass/turf every week when there is no rainfall at the rate of 3/4". Woody ornamentals need water less frequently—3/4" water every 10 to 14 days.

Irrigate plants to help with cold protection 24 to 48 hours before a freeze. If rain precedes the freeze, don’t irrigate. Bank sand around citrus to protect the graft union and pull leaf or pine straw mulch up over low-growing sensitive plants. Harvest citrus if it is ripe if temperatures will fall below 28ºF for 4 or more consecutive hours.

Now is a good time to scout the landscape for plants that have scale insects. They vary in color and often look like a wart or bump on the plant leaf or stem. When you try to remove it, the scale comes off and is not a part of the plant. Treat with a dormant or horticultural oil and spray both upper and lower leaf surfaces.

Take a break from mowing lawns and service your lawnmower. Clean the mower, sharpen the blades, drain and replace the oil, drain or use up the gasoline, and grease all fittings.

Remove leaves from lawns as they drop and use as mulch or make them into compost.

It’s time to prune deciduous plants, if needed. Remove rubbing branches, diseased or dead branches, and suckers from the base. Don’t prune spring flowering shrubs or trees until after bloom.

Prune grapes in January or February. For muscadines, prune all branches that are less than 3/16" in diameter, leaving 2 to 3 buds per spur. Remove most of the spurs located at the top of the trunk to prevent crowding and bushiness. See diagram at left from Alabama Coop. Extension.

They can irritate skin and respiratory passages, so take precautions using this technique. Flowers are white and bloom year-round in south Florida but most heavily in the fall. Flowers develop into small green fruit that turn red as they mature. They become bright red similar to holly berries this time of year.

Inside the fruit is a dark brown seed that has a very high germination rate. Seeds are eaten and spread by mammals and birds. There is a 30 to 60 percent viability rate for the seeds and seedlings also have a very high success rate.

Control: Brazilian pepper-tree is sensitive to cold weather so if we get a hard freeze, this could eliminate existing populations, but the seeds may still survive. If you find this plant in your neighborhood, cut the tree down as close to the ground as possible and within five minutes, treat the cut surface with an herbicide that contains either glyphosate or triclopyr to the cambium layer, a circular area just inside the bark. Another option is to spray the foliage with one of the herbicides listed above, but this requires more herbicide and there is always a risk of killing desirable plants. The best time to treat is in spring to mid-summer. Once the plant is treated with an herbicide, do not pull up or cut back for three to four weeks. Do not cut when the trees are fruiting unless you remove the fruit by hand and destroy. Do not send to the compost/recycling center as the seeds will not be destroyed and the plant will spread. Be careful when handling or cutting the tree. Some people are very allergic to the leaves and
Swamp Chestnut Oak *Quercus michauxii* by Larry Figart

Swamp Chestnut Oak is a native to Florida that should be planted more in the urban environment. Swamp Chestnut Oak can tolerate a wide variety of sites. It can withstand saturated soils for a short period and it can tolerate droughty sites as well. Once it becomes established it needs little or no irrigation.

Swamp Chestnut Oak should be grown in full sun. It should also be grown in spaces that have plenty of room above and below. It can grow to heights of over 100 ft in its natural environment of the hardwood swamp. It needs plenty of soil space for root growth and should not be planted in small spaces.

The tree grows upright until middle age when the canopy spreads out forming a rounded outline. This makes the tree well suited for street tree planting. A systematic pruning regime should be used to promote a single stem or leader starting at an early age. Trees are very tolerant of urban conditions and have survived and grow well along streets. Trees compartmentalize decay fairly well meaning that once injured, the tree has the ability slow or stop the spread of decay.

The leaves are deciduous and vary from 4-8 inches in length. They are oval shaped with dentate (tooth like) lobes. The leaves turn a crimson red in the fall when the conditions are right.

The bark is attractive as well. It is fairly flakey. Somewhat similar to pecan bark. It is gray with tinges of red within the flakey bark.

The large acorns are very good for wildlife and the wood is good for lumber. It has been used for veneer, boards, barrels, and extensively for baskets. Sometimes this tree is even called "Basket Oak". The biggest Swamp Chestnut Oak in Florida is in Suwannee County and measures 91 feet tall with a crown spread of 87 feet.

Tree Tips - Pruning Your Landscape Tree by Larry Figart

As a general rule trees in North Florida can be pruned any time of year. However, the winter months seem to bring out the pruning bug in many folks. Before we get out the pruning saw, loping shears, or pruning shears, there are a few things we need to go over.

First, you should always have an objective when pruning. You should have an idea why you are pruning so that you know when your objectives are met. Some common objectives include pruning for structural stability, reduce shade on lawns or ground covers, reduce wind resistance and aesthetic improvement.

Second, you should remember that pruning cuts are wounds. When we prune a tree we are setting in motion a wound response by the tree. This response is commonly called compartmentalization. The tree will try to wall off or compartmentalize any decay that will arise from the pruning. The compartmentalized tissue will be sealed off and become unusable to the tree. The wound response in the tree can be managed depending on the location and size of the pruning cut.

This brings us to the third point, the location of the pruning cut. When pruning live branches the pruning cut should be made just outside of the branch collar. The branch collar is the transition area between the branch and the trunk. By pruning outside the branch collar, the wound response of the tree is minimized and less of the tree tissue is lost to compartmentalization. Also, the size of the pruning cut is smaller and can 'callous' faster when the cut is made outside the branch collar.

Fourth, pruning paint, tar, or varnish, is not needed. It has been proven to inhibit the tree’s natural healing process. In some cases it can cause moisture to collect and increase the likelihood of decay. For further information on pruning from the University of Florida go to http://hort.ufl.edu/woody/pruning.
Pesticide Disposal by Terry DelValle (cont. from p3)

♦ Store insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides in separate areas to avoid contamination and misapplication.
♦ Keep kitty litter or vermiculite on hand for pesticide spills. These are excellent absorbent materials.
♦ Storage shelves should be composed of a nonporous material so they will not absorb spills.
♦ For longer shelf life, pesticides should not be exposed to extremes in hot and cold temperatures.

How to Dispose of Unwanted Chemicals: Don’t pour unwanted pesticides down the drain or put in the trash. Nothing should go down storm-water drains except for water. It’s illegal to put pesticides, fertilizers and clippings down the storm drain. Most counties have a Household Hazardous Wastes collection site for your convenience. In Duval County, the facility is at 2675 Commonwealth Avenue and is open from Tuesday through Saturday from 8:00AM to 5:00PM. They accept paints, pesticides, used oils, and household cleaners. They will not accept medical waste or containers of materials of unknown origin. For specific requests, call 387-8847.

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Once you have read this newsletter, turn “A New Leaf” and pass this information on to a friend.

Terry B. DelValle
Extension Agent-Environmental Horticulture

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