New Perennial Book Review by Terry DelValle


This 144 page book provides information on proven perennials with 200 color photos for easy identification and hardiness zone recommendations specifically for Florida. Site requirements are included on each plant as well as a narrative. It features perennials for fragrance, a specific color range, drought or salt tolerance, butterfly and hummingbird gardens, cut flowers, natives, full sun vs. shade, and for specific form. Special sections are dedicated to gingers, begonias, hibiscus, clerodendrum, lantana and salvias. The cost is $18.95 plus shipping and handling.

Upcoming Classes

Tuesday, July 18 from 5:45 to 7:45pm — Learn about E-Z Color for the Landscape and What's Bugging Me. @ the Southeast Branch Library on 10599 Deerwood Park Blvd. Find out which plants that are easy to grow that provide color. Learn how to identify good bugs from the bad bugs and how to treat them. Call 387-8850 to register.

Saturday, August 5 from 11am to 1pm — Learn how to Troubleshoot Your Landscape @ the Mandarin Library on 3330 Kori Road. This program covers drought issues, what to do with weeds, how to handle pests, plus trees and their troubles. Get answers to plant and tree problems by bringing in a sample of a disease or pest. One sample please. Call 387-8850 to register.

Monday, August 21 from 5 to 8:30pm — Learn Landscape Design Tips @ the Mandarin Garden Club on 2892 Loretto Road. Create a garden room or develop a focal spot. Learn which plants to choose for sunny, shady, wet or dry areas. Also find out how to convert an irrigation system in plant beds to low flow. From 5 to 6pm, tour outside demonstration area. Program starts at 6pm. Cost is $5 to attend. Call 387-8850 to register.

Saturday, August 26 or Tuesday, August 29 from 10AM to Noon—Fall Gardening Workshop at the Superior Street Urban Garden Field Office. Learn what to plant in the fall garden and get some of these varieties to test this fall. Call 387-8850 to register. $5 fee to attend. Limit of 20 per class.
Things to do in July/August— by Terry DeValle, Horticulturist

♦ Keep mower blades sharp and remove no more than 1/3 the height at each mowing. This may require mowing every 5 days or so. Mowing height varies depending on the type of lawn you have. Leave the clippings on the grass and this will not contribute to thatch if you are removing no more than 1/3 of the height. Avoid mowing when grass is wet to minimize disease spread.

♦ The rains have finally returned and the irrigation systems can probably be given a rest. Water only when 30-50% of the grass blades begin to fold to encourage a deep root system and conserve water. Most established woody plant beds will not require supplemental irrigation as long as the occasional thunderstorms continue.

♦ If you skipped a scheduled fertilizer application due to the drought, July would be the time to apply a slow release nitrogen product. If below 30% water insoluble nitrogen, apply at the 1/2 pound nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. If 30% or above water insoluble nitrogen increase to 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. The other option is to use iron or manganese to green-up lawns instead of nitrogen. This will green up lawns without causing excessive growth. Use 2 ounces of iron sulfate per 3 to 5 gallons of water over a 1,000 sq. ft area or use a chelated iron. Never apply a fertilizer before a heavy rain. Lightly water in the fertilizer with 1/4" water after application. Don't apply fertilizer within 10 feet of a body of water or hard surface like a street or driveway.

♦ Many diseases thrive in warm rainy weather—especially gray leaf spot (Pyricularia grisea) on St. Augustinegrass. Ideal conditions are 12 hours or more of wet grass, 80 to 90° F temps, and over 95% relative humidity. If lawn appears to be yellowing or thinning in areas, examine leaf blades for spots. Spots from this disease are oblong in shape, gray to tan in color and surrounded by a dark border (dark olive green to brown). Spots may merge and cause leaves to die back especially from the tips. This disease is worse on lush green grass. To control avoid nitrogen applications, water only when needed and water only early in the morning, and avoid using herbicides (especially atrazine). Fungicides are available at local garden centers but check the label. One example is the active ingredient propiconazole found in Ortho Lawn Disease Control.

♦ Got weeds? Hand-pulling is the best option. You can try spot treating with a post-emergent herbicide but be careful to keep it away from sensitive plants.

♦ Warm weather has kicked in and it's prime time for many insect problems. Scout the landscape on a weekly basis to catch problems early. Many problems can be eliminated if caught early by pruning a few infested leaves. If treatment is needed, treat only the affected area and use a Florida-friendly insecticide (soaps, oils, neem, BT) to protect beneficial insects (see lady beetle above). Once the lubber grasshoppers get large, no insecticides will control them. Squash with 2 bricks or clip in half with pruning shears.

♦ Fertilize fruit trees after harvesting fruit. A good fertilizer is a peach/pecan or a citrus blend. Citrus needs frequent applications through September using a citrus blend.

♦ Once the blackberries are harvested, cut the canes back flush with the ground to help reduce disease problems. New canes will develop this year for next years crop.

♦ Grape season is almost here. Visit local U-Picks or try growing your own. To check for a U-pick in our area, go to our website at http://duval.ifas.ufl.edu.
Things to Plant in July & August by Terry DelValle

Plant selections are limited due to the heat and humidity. Annuals for July include Celosia, coleus, crossandra, Exacum, Impatiens, kalanchoe, nicotiana, ornamental pepper, portulaca, salvia, and vinca (periwinkle). In August, consider replacing declining annuals with coleus, salvia or garden mums.

Bulbs for July include Aztec lily, butterfly lily, gladiolus, gloriosa lily, kaffir lily, moraea (African lily), Scarborough lily, sternbergia, spider lily and walking iris. In August add to the list grape hyacinth, iris and leopard lily. Divide and transplant spring flower bulbs in August/September. Many perennials will offer color throughout the summer up until the first frost. Check local garden centers for availability.

Vegetables to plant in July include eggplant, okra, peppers, watermelons. In August plant bush, lima and pole beans, corn, cucumbers, southern peas, peppers, pumpkin, summer and winter squash, tomatoes and watermelons. Towards the end of August, some cool season crops can be planted like broccoli, cauliflower, collards, onions and turnips.

In May, I attended a 2006 summer trial garden tour at the U of FL. There were many wonderful plants displayed that show promise. Many portulacas were featured which include Tequila fuchsia pictured above. The series had large flowers & leaves and vibrant colors. One standout from the 2005 trials that I planted last fall is Intensia phlox (pictured to the right) available in white, pinks and lavenders. I set out 2 plants last October and each spread out about 3 feet and topped out at 12”. It’s late June, and they are still in full bloom.

Coontie Palm by Terry DelValle

Coontie palm, Zamia floridana, is Florida’s only native cycad. It is in the same genus as the sago palm and likewise has both male and female plants. The female plants produce a cone with naked seeds (gymnosperm) that are red to orange in color. They are poisonous so be sure to keep them away from pets and children. Leaves are compound, leathery and have 5 to 30 leaflets that are often twisted.

Coonties are underutilized in the landscape probably due to cost. They are higher in cost because they are a slow grower but they are well worth the investment. They are drought tolerant, salt tolerant and require very little care once established. They reach 2’ to 4’ in height with a 3’ to 5’ spread with a rounded growth habit. They prefer partial shade but will also grow in full sun and will tolerate alkaline or acidic soils that are well drained.

Coontie palms provide a tropical look to landscapes. Mix into beds that have gingers and other plants which typically die back during the winter. They are most effective when used in a mass planting spaced 3 to 5 feet apart or use as a border or a foundation plant. These are great substitutes for sago palms because they will not outgrow their space over time and so far, are not plagued by the Asian cycad scale. There are several scales and mealy bugs that occasionally affect this plant but can be controlled with Insecticidal oil sprays. Try your hand at propagation. When seeds mature, remove outer orange coating and lightly scratch outer surface before planting.
Urban Gardening Update
By Mary Puckett, Urban Gardening Program Assistant

It's not too early to start thinking "Fall Garden". Now would be a good time to get your catalogs ordered and start planning:

1) What vegetables do you intend to grow? A great reference is the Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide (table 3) that can be found at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021 or your extension office.

2) How much room it will take to grow what you want (same reference guide, table 4).

3) Crop rotation, which is recommended, and simply means that the same members of the same family are not planted repeatedly in the same soil. This practice primarily prevents diseases from living over from season to season. Nematode damage is less likely as well.

4) Get your soil tested. Most vegetables grow best in a soil that has a pH between 5.8 and 6.5.

In the mean time, for those that are still enjoying your spring garden, remember to pick cucumbers, squash, beans, okra and peppers regularly so plants will continue producing. Remove all diseased vegetable plants or infected leaves from the garden.

Summer Thyme Herb

Summers are hard on many herbs here in Florida because of the rain, heat and humidity. Some plants are going to look a bit ragged for a time in the summer, but will come back and look great again. Don’t give up and pull them out. The best thing to do in summer is to wait until after the rains slack off, then cut back about half of the green growth. What is cut off is used as the herb harvest or to propagate new plants.

Most herbs fit into one or more classifications according to use: culinary, aromatic, ornamental, and medicinal. Culinary herbs have a wide range of uses in cooking. Parsley is used mostly as a garnish. Sage, an important flavoring in pork sausage. Other popular culinary herbs include chives, thyme, savory, marjoram, mint, and basil. Thyme is one of the lesser used of the fresh summer herbs. Thyme is in the mint family and is native to dry, rocky western Mediterranean area. Florida’s summer heat and humidity can keep some thyme from becoming the fragrant, blooming ground cover that it is farther north. Experienced herb growers have mats of it that bloom for months in early summer. Use thyme while you have it. The plant seems to thrive on trimming. Trim the top one-third portion of the plant when in full bloom and spread on newspaper in a well-ventilated room to dry. Then, strip the leaves and flowering tops from the stem and store in tightly closed containers. Thyme lends itself well to fresh tomato dishes. Here is a great recipe to try.

Thyme for Tomato Salad—Yield: About 5 cups

Ingredients:
3 large tomatoes, chopped
8 ounce can pitted kalamata olives, coarsely chopped
12 ounce can pitted black olives, coarsely chopped
1/2 medium red onion, finely chopped
1/2 cup chopped roasted yellow bell peppers
2 tbs. capers; 1 bunch finely chopped thyme; 1/2 large lemon, juiced; 1 tsp. sea salt; 1/2 tsp. black pepper; 1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper

Chop the tomatoes, olives, onions, and yellow bell pepper. Add the spices and toss with the lemon juice. Adjust seasoning to taste.

Roasted Eggplant: 1 medium eggplant, cubed; 1 1/2 tsp. sea salt; 2 tbs. olive oil
Toss eggplant cubes with 1 tsp of sea salt and place in colander for ten minutes. Rinse, then toss with two tbsp olive oil and 1/2 tsp. of sea salt, and bake at 450°F for 15 min. Let cool and add to above mixture.
Reducing Pests, Diseases & Weeds by Solarization

Consider soil solarization as a way to reduce nematode and weed populations for your fall garden.

Solarization is a process of using heat from the sun. Many nematodes and other soil problems such as tomato wilt, insects, and weeds are killed by prolonged exposure to high temperatures.

Most of your vegetable harvest will come to an end by July. It would be a good idea to remove old vegetables from the garden once they have finished producing and any debris so as not to leave diseased or insect infested plants in the garden area.

After removing all the plant debris, till the garden area thoroughly. Moisten the soil well. Moist soil conducts heat better than dry, as well as activates the population of nematodes. Cover with a clear plastic tarp. Clear plastic produces higher soil temperatures faster than black plastic. Sunlight passes through clear plastic to heat the soil directly, while black plastic holds the light. High temperatures (above 130°F) must be maintained during this time for best results.

Smooth out the plastic as you place it and bury the edges of the clear plastic (see Figure 1). Leave the plastic on the soil for at least 4 to 6 weeks. Keep the plastic in place until planting time to minimize recontamination of the solarized area.

Root knot nematodes are serious pests that live in the soil. They are small eel-like worms that feed within the plant root tissue.

Root knot nematodes live most of their life inside the plant root. Most often nematode feeding reduces the flow of water and nutrients into the plant roots, increasing the plant's susceptibility to other stress factors such as heat, water and nutritional deficiencies.

There are numerous varieties of tomatoes and peppers that are resistant to attack by root knot nematodes. Tomato varieties identified with the letter symbols "VFN" have genetic resistance to verticillium wilt (V), fusarium wilt (F) and root knot nematodes (N).

Soil solarization will help control root knot nematodes and other soil related problems. One limitation in Florida is the frequent afternoon showers may prevent the soil from reaching required temperatures.

We would like to welcome Mary Puckett as the new Urban Garden Program Assistant effective June 30. She will be available to give talks on vegetables, host field trips to the Urban Garden on Superior Street and work closely with the Urban Gardeners throughout the city. Mary is moving from our Urban Gardening secretary position into this new position. If you would be interested in applying for the Urban Gardening secretarial position call Terry or Mary @ 387-8850 for more information.
Be on the Lookout for Chinch Bugs from www.turf.ufl.edu

**Description** - The southern chinch bug is the most important insect pest of St. Augustinegrass in Florida. Adults are about 1/5 inch long and are black with white patches on the wings. The young (nymphs) range from 1/20 inch long to nearly adult size. The small nymphs are reddish with a white band across the back, but become black in color as they approach adult size.

**Life Cycle** - Sometimes adults hibernate in the winter in northern Florida, but all stages are present year-round in most of the state. Eggs are laid in grass sheaths or pushed into soft soil and protected places. In summer, eggs hatch in 10 days and the young develop to adults in 3 weeks. Chinch bugs pass through three generations per year in north Florida.

**Damage** - Chinch bugs are seriously damaging only to St. Augustinegrass but will feed on other grass species. This insect sucks the plant juices through its needle-like beak and also apparently causes other internal injury to the grass, resulting in yellowish to brownish patches in lawns. These injured areas frequently are first noticed along concrete or asphalt paved edges or in water-stressed areas where the grass is growing in full sun. In north Florida chinch bugs usually cause economic damage from April through September.

**Monitoring** - When chinch bugs are present in sufficient numbers to cause yellow or brown areas in lawns, they can be found by parting the grass runners in the yellowed areas and observing the soil surface and base of the turf where they can be seen moving about. In extremely heavy infestation some of the chinch bugs can be seen crawling over grass blades, sidewalks and outside walls of houses. If no chinch bugs are seen by this method, their presence or absence can be confirmed by using the soap flush described earlier, or by using a metal can such as a three-pound coffee can with both ends cut out. Place one end of the can on the grass in an area where the grass is yellow and declining. Cut the grass runners around the bottom edge of the can with a knife. Twist and push the bottom end of the can an inch or two into the soil and fill the can with water. If chinch bugs are present they will float to the surface within 5 minutes. It may be necessary to add more water to keep the water level above the grass during this 5-minute period. If no chinch bugs are found in the area checked, examine at least three or four other places in the suspected areas. Treatment may be necessary if 20 chinch bugs are found per square foot.

**Control**

**Resistant Varieties** - The St. Augustinegrass varieties Floratam, Floralawn, and Floratine provide various degrees of resistance to chinch bug feeding. (These varieties have not shown the resistance they once did—editor's note.)

**Beneficial Insects** - Several predatory insects are often associated with southern chinch bugs. The most prominent predator of chinch bugs is the black big-eyed bug. A predacious earwig, *Labidura*, is also a very good predator on all stages of the chinch bug. An adult earwig has been observed to eat as many as 50 adult chinch bugs in one night. Big-eyed bugs and anthocorids (another group of predators) are about the same size as chinch bugs and are often confused with them. Quite often these beneficial insects are misidentified as chinch bugs, and a pesticide is applied when it is not needed.

**Control with Pesticides** - When it is established that chinch bugs are the problem and the damage threshold has been reached (20-25 chinch bugs per square foot) a pesticide should be applied. Purchase and apply an insecticide that is specifically labeled for chinch bug control. The treated grass should be irrigated lightly with about 1/8 inch of water to flush the insecticide into the thatch layer where the chinch bugs are feeding. A correctly applied application should provide control of chinch bugs for 8 - 10 weeks. (Chinch bugs have shown resistance to several pesticides. Recent research indicates that Sevin/Carbaryl should be used before the rainy season and then switch to a Pyrethroid product during the rainy season—editors note.)
Tree of the Month - Blackgum *Nyssa sylvatica*

By Larry Figart, Urban Forester

Many people in Northeast Florida yearn for a tree that will give them consistent fall color. Well folks "have I got a tree for you". The Blackgum tree is a very underutilized native tree that will please you with bright green leaves in the summer that change to red in the first few weeks of fall.

The leaves are simple, deciduous, oblong and alternately arranged on the stem. The growth is relatively slow but can be pushed with judicious use of fertilization. The tree can reach a mature height of 65-75 feet. The nondescript, white flowers form as the leaves appear in the spring. While these flowers may not seem spectacular to us, they are highly prized as a source for tupelo honey. The fruit is a drupe that matures in the early fall as a 1/2 inch fleshy blue fruit that is consumed by squirrels and migrating birds.

The Blackgum tree can be found growing naturally in the hardwood swamps and bottomlands in Florida. While it can grow well in wet soils, it is very adaptable. It prefers moist acidic soils, however, it will grow in all soil types except those that are very well drained.

The Blackgum tree has a pyramidal shape when it is young. It requires little pruning when it is young since it usually develops a central leader with branches that grow at wide angles to the trunk. As it mature, the crown tends to flatten out as the scaffold branches grow in a horizontal direction. The tree at maturity is an upright oval shape. There is quite a bit of natural variability in this tree so it is hard to get two trees that look exactly alike. There is a concerted effort in the landscape industry to develop superior selections that will contribute to a more consistent shaped tree for landscape plantings.

One of the few drawbacks with this tree is a problem in transplanting field grown trees. To solve this problem it is recommended that you use quality containerized material to plant in the landscape. With plenty of room, this tree will make an exceptional specimen in the landscape.

Repairing Storm Damage

By Larry Figart, Urban Forester

It has been a long dry spring. Thankfully, the summer rains are beginning to come. Unfortunately, occasional strong winds accompany our summer showers. In the worst case scenario hurricane force winds may impact our area. Whether it is a thunderstorm downdraft or a tropical storm, our trees take the brunt of the winds force and sometimes they are damaged.

Many trees that are damaged in storms can recover. The ability of the tree to recover depends on the health of the tree, the species dependent characteristic of the tree to compartmentalize, the extent of damage, the skill of the arborist, and finally, the patience and persistence of the homeowner. Tree restoration may take more than one pruning and may take several years.

Split trunks and cracks are probably the most serious type of damage that can occur to trees. They can occur because of included bark, or from internal decay. Either way they can be braced and cabled by a certified arborist. This treatment is expensive and should be reserved for high value trees.

Leaning trees are also concern. The key to treatment is to figure out why the tree is leaning. If it is leaning because it was pushed over by wind it needs immediate attention. If the tree is less than four inches in diameter then it may be able to be staked back up. The support should be left on 3 months for every inch of trunk diameter. Sometimes trees lean because that is the way they grew. Perhaps to capture sunlight from a far away opening in the canopy. If the lean is less than 40 degrees on a naturally leaning tree it may be fine. A tree that is leaning because it is unstable usually has an uplift of soil on one side of the tree and a depression on the other side of the tree. Again, if there is some question about a leaning tree, a certified arborist should be called in to evaluate the tree.

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Broken branches are the most common type of damage caused by wind. Branches that are broken above the branch collar can be pruned at the branch collar making sure not to cut into the branch collar. If a branch is broken below a branch collar, then the tree should probably be pruned at the next branch union. In some cases a heading cut (topping cut) may be used. I will talk about that in the next section. Pruning paint should not be used after a branch is pruned. It has been shown to not do anything to help a tree callous over the wound. In fact it can hold moisture and decay behind the paint causing more decay than if the wound was left alone.

Now back to the heading cut. In some cases the next available branch collar is a long distance away from the wound. A heading cut can be used as a last resort. However this requires a lot more follow-up. The branch will produce many sprouts at the site of the heading cut. According to Dr. Gilman, A few of the sprouts should be removed, a few should be reduced, and a few should be left alone. Continued maintenance will eventually produce a branch collar at the heading cut. For a more detailed look at storm restoration go online at [http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/index.htm](http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/index.htm).

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

Terry B. DeValle
Extension Agent-Environmental Horticulture

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