The new water restrictions that were supposed to take place in August have been postponed by the St. Johns Water Management District. The new proposed date is December 1, 2005. For more information on the new water restrictions, refer to their website at http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/outreach/conservation/restrictions/index.html.

The new advertisements to prepare people for the new water restrictions are confusing to some people. The ‘Think Two’ slogan is not to suggest that our plants need watering twice a week. If you are watering any with all the rain we are now receiving, you are overwatering your plants. In drought conditions during the summer, lawns may need water up to 2 times per week at 1/2 to 3/4” each time. Adjust watering to the temperature, wind, amount of sunlight, etc. Water when the plants need it…..not on a set schedule.
Have you ever noticed 1/2” hair or stalk-like projectiles from plant leaves with a small dot on the end? These are the eggs of the green lacewings, a beneficial insect. Adult lacewings lay their eggs at the ends of these stalks to prevent their young from being cannibalistic.

The adult lacewing is about 3/4” long and have 2 pair of pale green translucent wings with a netted appearance. Adults feed mostly on nectar and honeydew but sometimes feed on insects. They typically hang out close to sources of honeydew.

The larvae or immature stage are aggressive feeders. They are about 1/4” long and are brown in color with bumps and long hairs. They feed on many insect pests which include aphids, mealybugs, insect eggs, and other soft-bodied insects. I recently discovered one on my citrus that was feeding alongside the leaf hoppers. The larvae of the lacewing was disguised because it was covered by trash. The feeding mouthparts were obvious as sickle-shaped pinchers at the front. Not all species masquerade as trash. Occasionally, because of the pinchers, they can bite people if handled.

Learn to identify all the stages of a beneficial insect so you don’t kill these by mistake. If pesticides are required, use a soft material like soaps to reduce the chance of destroying them and other beneficial insects.

What are these brown lizards that are taking over my landscape and where are the green ones? The brown lizard is actually an anole which is the most commonly seen lizard in Florida. Our only native anole is green, 5 to 8 inches long, and has the ability to change colors so is often referred to as a chameleon.

The male pictured here has a large throat fan that is displayed with a bobbing type motion when mating or defending their territory.

No one knows for sure why the brown are becoming more common. Competition for food is an issue and the brown anole produce more young. Because the brown cannot change to green, they become toys for cats. Once the brown anoles are introduced, green anoles move higher up in the trees for food.
**Things to Plant in July and August** by Terry DelValle

Plant selections are limited due to the heat and humidity. Annuals for July include Calibrachoa (Million Bells), 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. A great annual to plant now is the mallows. They thrive in the heat and come in an assortment of colors.

Bulbs for July include Aztec lily, butterfly lily, 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.

There is a host of perennials that will add color to the landscape. Three that are often confused due to common names are the firecracker plant, firebush and firespike. **Russelia** or firecracker plant (photo on left), provides a 1 1/2 to 2’ tall plant with cascading branches covered with orange tubular flowers. **Firebush**, *Hamelia patens*, is a native shrub in south Florida that may reach 8 feet in height. Cold weather and pruning tend to control the plant size in NE Florida. This woody perennial produces a multitude of orange tubular flowers. Grow in sun to partial shade and clip frequently. **Firespike**, *Odontonema strictum*, is a vigorous spreading perennial reaching 5’ tall, dies back to the ground each winter but comes back each spring with a passion. Give it plenty of space or be prepared to dig volunteers because this plant will creep. Spikes of red tubular blooms will form at the tips of stems all summer into fall. All three of these fire-named plants will attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

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**Lawn Shrimp** by Terry DelValle

All the rains are creating some unusual critters scattered along sidewalks and driveways. They look like tiny shrimp and are classified as amphipods. Don’t think you’re going to make a meal out of these critters as they range from 3/16 to 3/4” in length.

They live in moist areas around plant beds, usually in the top 1/2 of mulch. When we receive too much rainfall, they migrate to drier areas. Too much and too little water is deadly to lawn shrimp. So they escape the saturated plant beds only to dry up and die on sidewalks and driveways. Once they die, they turn a reddish or shrimp color.

Lawn shrimp are more of a nuisance and a novelty pest.

For pool owners, they can create problems by clogging pool filters. During rainy weather when these are a problem, the only solution is to clean pool filters more frequently.

If these occur in large numbers in plant beds, reduce irrigation and/or dry out mulch. There are no pesticides labeled for control. Treat around doorways or problem areas with a pesticide labeled for that site. Spot treatment with a residual contact insecticide will have some control. If they are entering homes, replace the weather-stripping around doors.
Urban Gardening Update
by Sara Cimbalik, Urban Gardening Program Assistant

We had a great crop of tomatoes, peppers, squash, eggplant and cucumbers this year with plenty of peppers, okra and eggplant still to come! Tomatoes, squash, and cucumbers, have seen better days and should be removed from the garden. Due to the heat, July isn’t the time to plant many vegetables. In the later part of August broccoli, cauliflower, collards, bunching onions and turnips can be planted in the garden.

The demonstration garden has been in renovation mode. The lean-too greenhouse has new siding and we’re in the process of installing a propagation misting bed! Numerous groups of children have visited the site to see where their vegetables are actually coming from!

From recent site visits the community gardens seems to be flourishing as well. As a reminder watering should not occur between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM, it is best to water the garden early in the morning or late at night. Watering in the heat of the day isn’t efficient since much of the water is lost due to evaporation. One inch of water per week is sufficient for an established vegetable garden.

Any gardeners out there who take pride in giving back to the community by:

- Donating produce to feed the hungry in the community through the Plant a Row for the Hungry Program
- Working in an urban area using community gardening to successfully address the various challenges of an inner-city neighborhood
- Beautifying a park, main street, or neighborhood within the city limits, and in the process, have significantly contributed to community pride

Please contact Sara at 387-8850 to possibly be entered into Scott’s Give Back Award Program

Tea Time by Sara Cimbalik

Using herbs for tea can be very refreshing. Below is a list of herbs that are commonly used for tea.

- Lemon Verbena, *Aloysia triphylla*, is a strong lemon flavored plant. It is a woody perennial that prefers full sun and well drained soil. Their long (2-4 inch) leaves will drop off during the cool season, but don't think the plant is dead, it will come back in the spring!

- Catnip, *Neptea cataria*, has a grayish green, heart-shaped leaf. It is a perennial plant that doesn’t thrive through Florida summers although it can withstand drought. The plant is unique since it has stronger aroma in full sun, but larger more tender leaves in part shade. Use leaf for tea.

- Mint, *Mentha* spp., Peppermint is about the best mint to make tea from. It is easy to grow but due to its growth habit it can become invasive therefore, it's best in a container. Moist soil and full sun provides the best environment however, it can handle shade in the summer time.

- Roses, *Rosa* spp., Rose hips (fruit) can be used to make red, tart, lemon-orange tea. Rose petals of any fragrant variety also work. Make sure to use petals from an organically grown plant and not petals from a florist since they may contain pesticide that isn’t labeled for human consumption.

The herbs above along with bee balm, lemon balm, betony, coriander, sunflower seed hulls, fennel and chamomile can be used fresh or dried for tea. If drying, lay them flat on a tray in a warm, dry, airy place. Turn them up to twice a day for 4-8 weeks until thoroughly dried and store them in air tight containers. Fresh to dry ratio is 2:1.

**Mint Mania Tea**

3 tablespoons peppermint leaves
1 tablespoon catnip leaves
1 tablespoon rose petals
1 tablespoon lemon verbena leaves

This recipe is per cup of tea and is using dried ingredients. Pour boiling water over the leaves and let steep for 1-3 minutes. Herb teas are naturally light therefore darken, sweeten and add body with honey.
Common Garden Pests by Sara Cimbalik

The heat is on in the garden, especially with some of the pests and fungus that may be lingering in your plants. To help your plants survive here are a few pests to watch out for. These are most commonly found on eggplants, pepper, tomatoes, squash and cucumber:

**Yellowstriped Armyworm** - They have dark heads with a faint white line down the middle. There are black triangular markings on each side, with a white or yellow stripe below. The larva grow from 2 to 35 mm in length. They have chewing mouthparts, which allows them to feed on the leaves. The best control measure for the Yellowstriped Armyworm is to hand pick the worms off the plant. Dipel dust can also be applied.

Aphids are pests that usually linger on the underside of new plant growth. They are small in size (1.8-2.1 mm in length) and vary in color depending on the species. Aphids have piercing sucking mouthparts that are able to transmit virus. Aphids will cause the plant material to curl and turn somewhat chlorotic (yellow in color). Aphids can be controlled by spraying a steady stream of water on them, releasing lady beetles into the area, or by applying a soap or oil.

**Stink bugs** can cause havoc in one’s garden especially on the fruit. However, there are predatory and plant feeding stink bugs. The predaceous species, *Alcaeorrhynchus grandis*, feed on many insects, especially caterpillars. They have “spines” on their shoulders whereas the plant feeding stink bugs have “rounded” shoulders.

Plant feeding stink bugs feed on all plant parts but prefer feeding on fruit, such as peppers. They have piercing sucking mouthparts that will puncture the fruit resulting in the fruit turning brown or black in color. If the damaged fruit is young the puncture may cause the fruit to fall from the plant. The most common plant feeding stink bug in our area is the Southern Green Stink Bug, *Nezara viridula*. The name says it, it’s green in color and will fly. The best control for them is to capture and destroy them by hand, release their natural enemy, a tachinid fly, *Trichopoda pennipes* or apply a product with the active ingredient being pyrethrin.

Interested In Starting a School Garden?

Fall is a prime time to start a garden for youngsters. Urban Gardening helps classrooms start vegetable gardens by helping teachers select the best spot for a garden and tilling the area. The classroom supplies materials and Urban Gardening will help educate the children by showing them how to plant and care for the garden. If you’re interested we are able to help establish 10 gardens on a first come first serve basis. To reserve your spot call Sara today at 387-8850.

Solarize in the Heat of the Summer

Nematode populations, wilt fungi, insects, and weeds can be killed or reduced by prolonged exposure to temperatures of 130°F or more. This can be achieved by soil solarization. First, remove vegetation then break up and wet the soil. Cover the soil with clear plastic film. Secure the plastic by placing soil, bricks etc. around the border. Leave for six weeks and let the sun do the work. Hopefully your soil will be improved for the fall garden.
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.

If lawns look a little washed out due to all the rain, consider using iron or manganese to green-up lawns instead of nitrogen. This will green up lawns with causing excessive growth. Use 2 ounces of iron sulfate per 3 to 5 gallons for water over a 1,000 sq ft area or use a chelated iron.

Many diseases thrive in warm rainy weather—especially gray leaf spot (Pyricularia grisea) on St. Augustine grass. Ideal conditions are 12 hours or more of wet grass, 80 to 90º 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 shade, 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). It's too hot to apply atrazine now but if an herbicide is needed, spot treat the weedy area. Fungicides are available at local garden centers but check the label. One example is the active ingredient propiconazole found in Ortho Lawn Disease Control.

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. Once the lubber grasshoppers get large, no insecticides will control them. Squash with 2 bricks or clip in half with pruning shears.

Fertilizer 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 all 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.

Get landscapes ready for hurricane season. Cut down dead or dying trees and get them hauled to a recycling center before the storm. If trees are large, contact an arborist. To find an arborist in your area go to www.isa-arbor.com. Prune dead limbs and get limbs away from the home that may brush the house during a storm. Remove dead palm fronds but leave the remaining leaves intact. For more information on pruning to prepare for storms, go to http://hort.ufl.edu/woody/stormprep.htm.

With all the rain, expect more mosquitoes. To reduce the numbers of larvae, get rid of any standing water. Water in flower pots, bird baths, or any other containers should be emptied every several days to disrupt the life cycle. Bromeliads and other plants that hold water are potential breeding areas. Flush plants with water to remove larvae. Clean roof gutters to remove leaves that hold water.
I am often asked what I thought was the toughest, hardiest tree to plant in the urban environment. I have a couple that I would list in the top five. One of those trees is crape myrtle. It can withstand the harsh urban climate of drought, polluted air, compacted soil, poorly drained soil, and wide variations in temperature that is commonly found in the city. Kind of like the camel of the urban forest. The amazing thing about crape myrtle is that it not only survives and flourishes in the urban forest, it looks good too.

Typically, Crape Myrtles will reach a mature height of 10-30 feet with a spread of 15-25 feet. The leaves are reddish purple when they emerge in the spring turning dark green at maturity. The leaves have the potential to show some fall coloration of red, orange, or yellow with the optimum fall weather conditions.

The spectacular show of flowers occur in the late spring or early summer and can last for months if the spent flowers are pruned off. The flower color can vary depending on the cultivar. Colors that are available are white, pink, lavender, and deep red.

The flowers are not the only showy feature of crape myrtle. The bark is a real asset of the tree. As the tree gets older the bark will start to exfoliate showing a handsome underbark that can range from tan to brownish red to grey.

The trees are commonly topped in the dormant season. This practice is not good for the tree. Crape myrtles should be pruned as a multi stemmed tree. Pruning should be limited to rubbing and crossing branches, dead or diseased branches, and sucker sprouts. There are dwarfing cultivars available that should be used when a shorter tree is desired.

Crape Myrtle does best in full sun with moist well drained soil, but as mentioned earlier it is adaptable to a wide variety of soil conditions. Pests and diseases that are significant to crape myrtle include powdery mildew and aphids. Recent cultivars that have been developed are fairly resistant to these pests. Speaking of cultivars, the choices are endless. Some of the cultivars are good selections while others are not. The National Arboretum has a breeding program for Crape Myrtles that has produced some superior cultivars. A listing of Crape Myrtle cultivars can be found in a publication called the Lagerstroemia Handbook/Checklist by Egolf and Andrick.

The cool, dormant season has long been thought of as the prime time to plant trees. This is correct. However, a quality tree, planted correctly, in the correct location, and given adequate irrigation can be planted almost anytime of the year. Finding a quality tree may be harder than you think. When choosing a tree consider the following advice from Dr. Ed Gilman from the University of Florida Environmental Horticulture Dept:

1) Pull the tree out of the container. There should be no roots greater than 1/10th of the trunk diameter circling more than 1/3 around the root ball.
2) Push on the trunk of the tree. The trunk should bend instead of pivot at or below the soil line. This indicates a tree that is properly rooted into the soil media.
3) The topmost root or root flare should be within 2 inches of the surface of the soil. The closer to the surface, the better.
4) The caliper(diameter), height, and rootball of the tree should be within Florida Grades and Standards for nursery stock. (More on Florida Grades and Standards later.)
5) There should be one dominant leader to the top of the tree with branches spaced at least six inches apart. This does not apply for typically multi trunked trees such as crape myrtle.
6) The canopy should be uniform and there should be (Cont. on page 8)
Choosing a Quality Tree (Continued)

no more than 40% of the tree height as clear trunk.
7) Branches should be no more than 2/3 diameter of the tree trunk.
8) Trees greater than 1.5 inches in caliper should be able to stand erect without a supporting stake.
9) Open wounds in the branch should be less than 10 percent of the trunk diameter and smaller than 2 inches long. Properly performed pruning is not considered a wound
10) Trees should meet Florida Grade #1 or better.

Now a little more on Florida Grades and Standards. The Grades and Standards for Nursery Stock were passed by the Florida Legislature to establish a vehicle for buyer and seller communication. They are administered by the FL. Dept. of Agric. Division of Plant Industry. They can be found at: http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/pubs.html

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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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