



Horticulture News

UF/IFAS Nassau County Extension

May/June 2005

Beneficial Insects: The Dragonfly

The term "dragonfly" is used to describe both members of the order *Odonata*, the dragonfly (*Anisoptera*) and the damselfly (*Zygoptera*). Throughout the world there are about 5000 species of dragonflies; 450 are found in North America.

Dragonflies begin life as aquatic larvae, feeding on insects, worms, tadpoles, snails, and small minnows at the bottom of ponds and streams. When ready for adulthood, the larvae crawl out of the water onto vegetation, the skin splits, and the adult emerges. Before it can

fly, the dragonfly must pump its wings full of blood. During these hours, many become food for birds, frogs, spiders and other dragonflies.

Once airborne, the dragonfly is an expert flyer. While its wing design is quite primitive, it is extremely efficient, using very little energy per unit of distance traveled.

Dragonflies have extremely sharp vision due to their huge compound eyes, which have as many as 28,000 facets,

seven times those of house flies. Eighty percent of their brain is devoted to processing visual information, a great asset for hunting prey and avoiding predators.

The adult has a voracious appetite for pest insects such as mosquitoes, black flies, horse flies, aphids, and grasshoppers. Amphibians, fish, birds and other aquatic invertebrates feed upon the larvae. These beautiful insects serve as inspiration for artists in paintings, jewelry, fabrics, lamps, and other decorative items.



Mockingbird: Florida's State Bird

In 1927, the Florida legislature designated the mockingbird as the state bird. The mockingbird may have the prettiest song of any bird in North America because its song is a combination of other bird melodies. It is thought that an individual can perform 39 species' songs and 50 call notes, and even mimic sounds such as that of a barking dog, squeaky hinges,

notes from a piano and even a cackling hen!

Not only is the repertoire of the mockingbird impressive but its stamina is as well. Some birds can sing for hours and even throughout the night into the early morning hours, sometimes to the dismay of its human neighbors. Males are especially vocal in the spring to attract females, while

both sexes sing throughout the year to defend their feeding territories. During nesting season mockingbirds can be aggressive and have been known to attack other birds and even cats!



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Program Announcements

Neighborhood Stormwater/Landscape Program

Provide your neighborhood with information about proper landscape and pond maintenance practices that will protect Florida's natural waterways. St. John's River Water Management/WAVE Representative Paula Staples and Rebecca L. Jordi, University of Florida/IFAS Horticulture Extension Agent will come for a free consultation.

This program must have a minimum of ten (10) participants.

Troubleshooting Florida Landscapes

Do you and your neighbors need a personal consultation on how to solve landscape problems? Are you concerned about your trees, shrubs, or lawngrass thriving?

Rebecca L. Jordi, University of Florida/IFAS Horticulture Extension Agent and Nassau County Master Gardener Volunteers will come for a free group consultation.

This program must have a minimum of six (6) participants.

Landscape Matters

May 18th - Propagation
Master Gardener Bonnie Johnson
June 15th - Pests of Turf
Master Gardener Richard Austin

Wednesday 10 - 11AM
Peck Center Auditorium
516 S. 10th Street
Fernandina Beach

These programs are free to the public, so please call us at **904-879-1019** or e-mail rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu if you plan to attend. If response is too small, the program will be canceled.

Product Recalls

In cooperation with the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, two companies announced product recalls.

Arett Sales Corp. in Cherry Hill, NJ recalled 2 million multipurpose barbecue lighters, sold under the brand name Kitchen Works. The lighters lack child resistant mechanisms that meet federal safety standards.

Gardener's Supply Co. in Burlington, VT, recalled 2000 beeswax rope candles (SKU # 34-911) manufactured by Zhongshan Zhongnam Candle Manufacturer Co. Ltd of China. The candle has a clamp (vise) that leads the end of the rope candle at the top. When clamped properly it is supposed to self-extinguish the candle when the burning wick meets the metal clamp. The clamp does not always sever the wax close to the wick and does not always enable the wick to self extinguish.

Hummingbird Plants—Trumpet Creeper

Trumpet Creeper, *Campsis radicans* is an attractive hummingbird flower occurring naturally in open woods, thickets, cliffs, stream banks, old fields, and along roadsides in Florida. This woody perennial vine uses aerial rootlets (tiny roots which grab onto trees, bushes, other vines, fences, or walls) to grow up to 30 feet tall. On its own, without anything to climb, Trumpet Creeper would take the form of a small shrub.

Trumpet Creeper is best known for its magnificent flowers, which occur more abundantly in a sunny location. These bright red blossoms grow up to three inches long, delighting observers from June until the first frost.

Wild Trumpet Creeper vine, like most vines, may grow aggressively and should be planted where its spread will not be a problem. Many farmers consider it to be a weed. The flowers of this plant are a major food source of Ruby-throated hummingbirds. They, along with bumblebees, are one of the few animals which can reach the nectar inside the long flowers. Trumpet Creeper depends on these animals to pollinate flowers. Each time a hummingbird visits a flower, it gets pollen on its head, which it delivers to the next flower.

Trumpet Creeper is sometimes called "Cow Itch" because contact with leaves can cause a rash in some animals, especially cows. It can also cause a rash in some people, similar to poison ivy. Contact may result in redness, burning and itching in susceptible individuals.



"To Do" List for May

Annuals: Now is a great time of year to be a vigilant scout for pests. Annuals to plant this month are celosia, coleus, coreopsis, crossandras, gaillardias, gazanias, hollyhocks, impatiens, kalanchoe, marigolds, nicotianas, ornamental peppers, pentas, portulacas, salvia, thunbergia alata, torenias, verbenas, periwinkles, and zinnias.

Lawns: Check St. Augustine for chinch bugs. It is the beginning of mole cricket season for bahia, Bermuda, and zoysia lawns. The mole crickets have been busy laying eggs that can start hatching this month. Fertilize with 15-0-15 or 16-4-8 this month, water as needed (every 5-10 days).

Perennials: Perennials may die back to a small rosette then grow back during the spring season. Make sure each plant has room to grow or make plans to move them later in the year. This is a good time to give all perennials a label so they won't be forgotten during the dormant season.

Trees: Some magnolias may drop their leaves during the spring months. This is normal, as they replenish the foliage. Some magnolias will even drop most of their leaves before putting on new growth.

Vegetables: Scout for insects and hand remove if possible. Check the underside of leaves for eggs and aphids. Remember some of the insects are predators. These predators are important part of keeping the pests from totally taking over your vegetables. Vegetables to plant this month are lima beans, eggplant, okra, Southern peas, and sweet potatoes.

"To Do" List for June

Annuals: If growth appears too slow and the foliage turns yellow, they may need an extra feeding. Too much growth and a lack of flowers indicates the plants have all the nutrients they need and you can skip a feeding. Globe amaranth, melampodium, pentas, portulaca, purslane, salvia, zinnia, lantana, buddleia, daylily, verbena, purple coneflower, plumbago, and sun coleus can be planted in full sun.

Bulbs: Plant agapanthus, blackberry lily, clivia, gloriosa lily, achimenes, crinum, and iris.

Lawns: Keep mower blades sharp (once a month is a good rule). This is a good month to apply iron in liquid or granular form to St. Augustine lawns.

Perennials: Some pests to check for are grasshoppers and katydids. Both may be chewing holes in plant leaves. Try to handpick them from the plants, or if needed, use a synthetic insecticide as instructed on the label for chewing insects.

Trees: Pests may be noticed in many trees. Their damage is minimal and sprays are seldom needed. Look for aphids, borers, mites, etc.

Vegetables: June is not the best month to be starting a garden or planting new crops. Wait until August before putting in new plants. However, you may still plant tomatoes in containers if you want something to harvest. This would be a good month to solarize your garden to fight against nematodes.



Celosia

"Now is a great time of year to be a vigilant scout for pests."



Clivia

Selected from *Florida Vegetable Guide* by JM Stephens, RA Dunn, G Kidder, D Short, & GW Simone, University of Florida and *Month-by-Month Gardening in Florida* by Tom MacCubbin

Sincerely,



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Culantro

Herb of the Month—Culantro

Culantro (*Eryngium foetidum L.*) is a biennial herb grown throughout the Caribbean and Central America, and is a key ingredient in Puerto Rican cooking. It is relatively unknown in the United States, and is often mistaken for its relative cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum L.*). It is also known by many other names, such as Puerto Rican coriander, Black Benny, saw leaf herb, Mexican coriander, Saw tooth coriander, long coriander, Spiny coriander, Fitweed, and spiritweed. In Puerto Rico it is known as recaó.

When cultivated, culantro thrives under well-watered, shady conditions. It belongs to the same plant family as cilantro, but looks quite different. The long, tough leaves smell very similar to cilantro (with much more flavor) thus making it a respectable summer substitute for cilantro, which prefers cooler weather.

Culantro can be planted in pots or on the ground. If planted in the ground, this herb will continue to reproduce for an almost endless supply. Culantro is relatively pest and disease free. It is rumored to be attractive to beneficial insects such as ladybugs, green lacewings, and to provide an excellent defense in the garden against aphids. In cooking it is used to flavor salsa, sofrito, chutney, ceviche, sauces, rice, stews, and soups. To harvest, remove the oldest leaves all the way down to the base of the plant leaving the young new leaves to grow. The leaves can be chopped and used fresh or frozen to keep their flavor.