

September/October
2005



Sabal Palmetto - Florida's State Tree

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The sabal palmetto, also known as the cabbage palm, sabal palm, and cabbage palmetto is the state tree of Florida. It appears within the great seal on the state flag of Florida, and also on the state flag of South Carolina whose nickname is the "Palmetto State". The durable trunks are sometimes used for wharf pilings, docks and poles. Brushes and brooms can be made from young leaves, and the large fan shaped leaves have been used by the Seminole Indians in Florida as thatch for traditional pavilions, called chickees.

The large leaf buds of immature cabbage palms are used in southern cooking to make swamp cabbage and hearts of palm salad. Removal of the bud is lethal to the palm. It is suggested that you NOT purchase nor eat hearts of palm for two reasons: 1) they're not that tasty, having only a bland crunchiness to recommend them and 2) most commercially available canned product is obtained from wild stands of Sabal species in Mexico and Central America which is decimating those populations.



You can help protect Florida's state tree by pruning it correctly. Green fronds are the palms source of nutrients. Cutting green fronds stunts growth, invites disease, and reduces the palm's natural resilience to high winds. Harsh pruning takes away food and shelter from native and migratory songbirds, woodpeckers, butterflies, honey bees, treefrogs, bats, anoles, squirrels, and other wildlife. Over-pruned palms develop weakened trunks, which will eventually cause them to break off and die. Work boots with climbing spikes incur wounds in the trunk, leaving the palms prone to disease.

Brown fronds provide unique habitat for tree frogs and bats (chemical-free mosquito control). In nature, there is no waste. Recycle fallen palm fronds as mulch or a brush pile for wildlife. Palm berries are critical sources of highly nutritious food for many birds and other wildlife. Plant palms where berries and sprouts won't be a problem. Palm "boots" (the leafbases) are important habitat for other plants, including many beautiful rare and endangered ferns. Prune hanging brown and yellow fronds only when absolutely necessary. Prune stems away from trunk.



*Acceptable
Pruning

Harsh
Pruning

Long Term
Effects

Recommended Fall Crops:

Beets
Broccoli
Cabbage
Cauliflower
Lettuce
Onions
Radishes
Spinach

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

September 14th
Florida Wildflowers
Free Wildflower Seeds!
Master Gardener
Claudie Speed

October 12th - Bromeliads
Free Bromeliad Pups!
Master Gardeners
Sue Baia & Bonnie Johnson
Wednesday 10 - 11AM

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.



Stinging Insects - Puss Caterpillar

"Anyone known to be sensitive to insect stings who is stung by this caterpillar should be referred to a doctor immediately."

The puss caterpillar (*Megalopyge opercularis*), is the larva of the flannel moth and the most poisonous caterpillar in the United States. Its poison is hidden in hollow spines among its hairs. When touched, these poisonous spines break off in the skin and cause a burning sensation and severe pain. This hairy caterpillar is found in the southern states including Florida. It feeds on a variety of trees and shrubs, but prefers oak and citrus. In Florida, there are two generations per year, in spring and fall. Natural enemies keep these caterpillars at low numbers during most

years; periodically they become numerous. The puss caterpillar does not have to be alive to "sting" you. The hollow spines, filled with toxin, will continue to cause painful stings hours long after the insect has been killed.

FIRST AID: If you are stung by this caterpillar, the untreated lesion will be acutely painful for several hours, and will likely cause mild to moderate discomfort for at least 4 to 5 days. The severity of the pain can be significantly reduced if you follow

the following simple procedure: Spines are easily removed from the skin by gently pressing adhesive tape to the lesion, and lifting it off the skin, as soon as possible after the sting occurs (though immediate relief has been reported by those who waited as long as a day or two before using tape to remove the spines).



“To Do” List for September

Flowers: For instant color plant marigolds and garden chrysanthemums.

Bulbs: Bulbs to plant now include amaryllis, Aztec lily, calla, elephant ears, grape hyacinth, iris, leopard lily, narcissus, snowflake, watsonia, and zephyr lily.

Herbs: Plant anise, basil, borage, chervil, marjoram, parsley, sesame, and thyme.

Lawns: Fertilize with a 15-0-15 or 16-4-8 fertilizer. Most Florida soils are high in phosphorous, the middle number on the fertilizer label, so this nutrient is rarely needed. Increase mowing heights to promote a deeper root system.

Perennials: Lots of pruning is in order this month. When pruning, make cuts back to the branch angle, or to the ground. If you want the plant to fill in from the base, make the cut about 1 foot above where you want the new branches to begin.

Trees: Fertilize palms. For fall color plant deciduous trees such as bald cypress, Chickasaw plum, crape myrtle, redbud, red maple, river birch, sugarberry, sweet gum and winged elm. Fruiting trees to plant include black olive, dogwood, golden raintree, hollies, southern juniper, sugarberry, and wax myrtle. For fall flower color try golden raintree, loquat, orchid trees, and sweet acacia.

Vegetables: Snap beans, pole beans, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, endive/escarole, lettuce, cucumber, bulbing onions, bunching onions radishes, summer squash, and turnips. Tender vegetables must be planted in very early September.



Aztec Lily

“To Do” List for October

Flowers: Buy spring flowering bulbs (narcissus, tulips, etc.) and store in the refrigerator for 60 days. Plant bulbs immediately upon removal. Keep them away from ripening fruit during storage. Plant cool season flowers like dianthus, pansy, petunia, shasta daisy, snapdragon, viola, million bells, status, thunbergia, flowering kale and cabbage. Bulbs to plant include agapanthus, gladiolus, kaffir lily, marica, moraea, society garlic, spider lily, anemone, hyacinth, pineapple lily and star-of-Bethlehem.

Herbs: Plant parsley, sage, thyme, and rosemary.

Lawns: Do not fertilize the lawn this late in the year. For a green winter lawn that will have to be mowed, overseed with ryegrass. Watch for brown patch fungus disease, chinch bugs, sod webworms, army worms, and mole crickets.

Trees: You can remove diseased or dead limbs any time of year. If you plant a tree this month, remember that water is the most important part of early tree care. Be sure to dig the hole wider than deep. Do not fertilize now, wait until next spring. Let the tree put its effort into producing roots.

Vegetables: Plant strawberries in late October through November. Plant in rows 36" apart and 12" apart within the row. Elevate rows 6" above existing soil to insure good drainage. Use pine straw to reduce weed problems and slugs.



Moraea

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If you would like to receive this newsletter in color via e-mail, contact Rebecca Jordi at rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu

Sincerely,



Rebecca L. Jordi,
Environmental Horticultural Agent

We are on the web!
<http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/>

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Solomon's Seal—Made for the Shade

Winner of multiple plant awards, variegated Solomon's seal, *Polygonatum odoratum* "variegatum", is easy to grow and easy to love. Its bright green leaves are edged in white to match the dangling pale, fragrant flowers. Solomon's Seal blooms from April until June, giving way to bluish-black berries August through October. As the plant goes dormant in the autumn the leaves and stems turn yellow, glowing as the light of sum-

mer fades. It combines beautifully with other shade loving perennials and shrubs, and will even grow under the canopy of trees.

Solomon's seal is a member of the Liliaceae family of plants which include such members as Hosta, Liriope, and Trillium to name a few. Although, the genus *Polygonatum* includes some sixty plus species, only three or four are commonly found in the United States. Two are

native species, *Polygonatum biflorum* and *commutatum* and two are native to Japan, *humile* and *odoratum thunbergia* 'Variegatum'. All *Polygonatum* thrive and grow best in shady areas with a deep, rich, organic soil, but are quite drought tolerant once established. They seem to be extremely adaptable to other soil conditions as well.

Solomon's seal requires little or no

maintenance, is rarely troubled by insect pests, and is long lived and very hardy. It grows up to two feet tall, spreading slowly but steadily by underground rhizomes. To propagate, dig up and divide the rhizomes, being sure each division has at least one bud.

