



Horticulture News

UF/IFAS Nassau County Extension

May/June 2006

Flowering Maple/*Abutilon megapotamicum*

Flowering Maple derive their name from the shape of their leaves which resemble those of a maple tree. Abutilons, however, are not closely related to true maples.

Abutilon megapotamicum is one of the showiest and hardiest of the genus. The species name means “from the big river”, Brazil’s Rio Grande.

This is a shrub with vine-like qualities, and is sometimes called Trailing Abutilon. It has long, slender, arching branches that may be trained against a wall or fence. The dangling

flowers bloom for a long season, adding much color to the landscape.

Abutilon megapotamicum is easy and quick to grow. It prefers morning sun but shade in the hot afternoon, and may benefit from pruning to make it more compact.

In Zones 9-10 these plants grow as garden shrubs, becoming as tall as 4 feet and blossoming year after

year; elsewhere they reach a height of 12 to 18 inches. Flowering Maples come



in a wide choice of colors, including red, white, yellow, salmon or purple blooms.

Slugs

Slugs are insatiable plant chewing mollusks that live on land. They have one large foot with a mouth, and are the same as a snail, except that a snail has a shell. The mucus they secrete helps them to move, mate, and defend themselves. They can truly do a lot of dam-

age to your plants. They like damp places, feed at night, and prefer tender new growth, seedlings, lettuce, delphiniums and French marigolds. Slugs really go after hosta! Slugs live and lay eggs in warm, wet, dark places so remove boards, bricks, and other damp debris on the ground.

They are most active at night, when they can be caught and drowned in soapy water. Slugs are attracted to the yeast in beer, and willingly throw themselves into it. USDA research shows that caffeine kills slugs, so go out in the morning and throw coffee on them!

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Program Announcements

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.

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 ten (10) participants.

Landscape Matters

May 17th, 2006
Wednesday 10 - 11AM
Herbs of NE Florida
Claudie Speed
Master Gardener

June 21st, 2006
Wednesday 10 - 11AM
Plant Propagation
Anne Mankovich
Master Gardener

Yulee Satellite Office
North Corridor
Conference Room A
96135 Nassau Place
Nassau County Govt.
Complex

What is that Plant? Spiderwort



What are those lovely blue wildflowers blooming in May and June? Often thought of as weeds because of the tendency of some species to spread uncontrollably with long, messy foliage, the spiderwort family (Commelinaceae) contains a number of very attractive plants.

Throughout the summer this plant rarely stops blooming. It is shade and sun tolerant. It grows from a

rhizome and forms one to three foot clumps. The flowers grow in a terminal cluster. have three rounded petals, and are various shades of blue and purple. The flowers have gold colored stamens, which are surrounded by dense blue hairs. They attract bees and butterflies when planted in sunny locations.

The flowers open in the morning and

melt away in the afternoon. An enzyme contained in the flower causes the flower to decompose into a slimy gel. This occurrence gives the plant alternate names of widow's tears, Job's tears and cow slobber. More flowers develop each day to provide a long blooming season. When finished flowering in July, they can be cut back to the ground. New foliage will appear and will flower through September.

May Checklist

Flowers: Annuals to plant this month are celosia, coleus, coreopsis, crossandra, gaillardias, gazanias, hollyhocks, impatiens, kalanchoe, marigolds, nico-tianas, ornamental peppers, pentas, portulacas, salvia, thunbergia alata, torenias, verbenas, periwinkles, and zinnias. Perennials may die back to a small rosette then grow back during the spring season. This is a good time to give all perennials a label so they won't be forgotten during the dormant season.

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).

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 under-side 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.



June Checklist

Flowers: 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. 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 katydid. 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. You may still plant tomatoes in containers if you want something to harvest. This is a good month to solarize your garden to fight against nematodes.





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If you would like to receive this newsletter in color via e-mail, contact Rebecca Jordi at the above e-mail address.

Visit us online at

<http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/>

Nassau County is proud to provide you with this information. Horticulture News is a joint project with contributions by county agents and Master Gardener Volunteers.

Sincerely,

Rebecca L. Jordi,
Horticulture Agent II



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Basil

Basil is native to India, Africa, and Asia and was brought to Europe in the 16th century. The name of this sweet and pungent herb is derived from the Greek word *basileus*, meaning "king".

A member of the mint family, basil is an annual that prefers well-drained, moist soil in a sunny position. It will grow best if well-rotted manure or manure compost is mixed with the soil before planting.



Grown easily from seed, germination takes about two weeks. The tips of new shoots should be pinched out regularly to encourage bushy growth. Sow outdoors when all danger of frost has passed since basil is quite sensitive to cold.

When planted close to tomatoes, basil helps to counteract fruit-fly and improves the quality of the tomatoes. In cooler climates, basil should be treated as a tender annual.

Basil adds a distinctive, spicy flavor to Italian foods, tomato and egg dishes, soups, sauces, sausages and rich stews. Basil leaves (like all other herbs) should be added towards the end of the cooking process to prevent the development of a bitter taste.

Store in an oil, vinegar, or frozen paste, or dry and store in tightly sealed containers.