

Horticulture News

UF/IFAS
Nassau County Extension
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Pruning

By Terry Brite Devalle, Horticulture Extension Agent, Duval County

Pruning time is here, which is obvious by piles of branches stacked at homes for roadside pickup. But don't be too quick with the shears. First look at a few rules of Pruning 101.

The first rule is to determine why you are pruning. Is it because your neighbor is pruning? Don't prune without understanding why, how or what the plant response will be.

The next rule is to know when a specific plant should be pruned. Trees and shrubs can be pruned lightly any time. For heavy pruning, the best time to prune trees is late in the dormant season (now) or several weeks after a growth flush. The worst time to prune is when new leaves are forming or when trees are under stress.

Don't prune winter and spring flowering shrubs and trees now. Some of these include azaleas, some hydrangeas, camellias, spirreas, Indian hawthorn, wisteria, pyracantha, feijoa, and gardenia. Also, don't prune trees such as redbud, dogwood, magnolias, fringe tree and hollies. Wait to prune these after bloom

but don't put off too long. Dogwoods and azaleas form flower buds in July, so June would be the last date to prune without affecting next year's flower show.

Cold-hardy summer and fall bloomers can be pruned now because flowers are formed on new growth. Examples of these shrubs and trees include glossy abelia, oleander, roses, American beauty berry, golden rain tree, crape myrtle, and loblolly bay.

Many fruit trees are deciduous (apples, peaches, pears) and are dormant during the winter. They should be pruned while dormant but only after the danger of severe freezes is past. Prune fruit trees now if there are problem areas (dead wood, crossing branches, suckers) that should be corrected and to create a strong tree structure to support the fruit load.

When pruning shrubs, timing is critical depending on the desired response. To encourage growth and bushiness, prune just prior to bud swell in the spring. However, most of us are pruning to control growth.

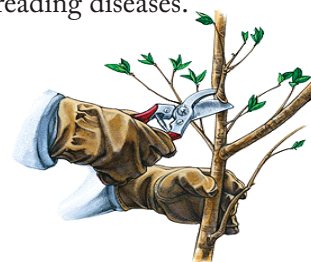
To control or slow down growth, prune just after a growth flush after leaves have fully expanded.

It's easier to select plant material that will grow to the desired height and avoid excessive pruning. But if the landscape hedges demand a more formal look, prune the top slightly narrower than the base. If the top is wider or both are the same, the top will shade lower branches and cause leaf drop.

Diseases such as dieback or stem cankers may enter through fresh pruning cuts. Constant shearing, several times a year, to maintain shrub height will lead to branch dieback. If plants develop canker or dieback, the only control is to prune back into healthy wood to remove the disease. When pruning, always dip the pruning shears into alcohol or some other disinfectant material between each pruning cut to prevent spreading diseases.

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PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

In 1945 the Florida Legislature designated the third Friday in January as State Arbor Day. This year it will be celebrated January 18th by schools and civic organizations with tree plantings and other activities. Check your local paper for announcements.

Troubleshooting & Neighborhood Stormwater/Landscape Program

Solve landscape problems and 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. Fifteen participants are required.

Fruit Tree Pruning Class

Join Rebecca Jordi for a free fruit tree pruning class. Learn hands-on how to properly prune common fruit trees. Please dress for the weather and bring pruning shears and work gloves. Please phone 904-548-1116 or e-mail rljordi@ufl.edu if you plan to attend.

February 11th, 2008
Monday 10AM
Yulee County Building
86026 Pages Dairy Road

Landscape Matters

January 16th, 2008
Wednesday 10 - 11AM
Citrus
Rebecca Jordi
Horticulture Agent II
Yulee County Building
86026 Pages Dairy Road

February 13th, 2008
Wednesday 10 - 11AM
Roses
Master Gardener
Paul Gosnell
Demonstration Garden
96135 Nassau Place
Nassau County Govt.
Complex

Crash Course in Florida Gardening

Monday/Tuesday February 4th/5th, 2008 9AM-12PM
Checks should be made out to Nassau County Extension.
Mailto 543350 U.S. Highway #1, Callahan, FL 32011.

Registration deadline is Friday, January 25th. Cost is \$35 for notebook and materials.
Phone 904 548-1116 or e-mail rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu to enroll.

Fifteen participants are required.

These programs are free to the public, so please call us at 904-548-1116 or e-mail rljordi@ufl.edu if you plan to attend. If response is too small, the program will be canceled.

Weed Watch - Florida Betony



Florida betony is an aggressive cool-season perennial weed in the mint family. It is a formidable foe because of its network of underground stems, or rhizomes, which bear tubers at their tips.

In the fall seeds and tubers sprout and begin active growth. Growth slows during winter's cold, but then resumes with vigor until late spring. In April

and May it produces whorls of white to pink trumpet-shaped flowers. After flowering, Florida betony goes dormant with the onset of hot temperatures and humidity.

Florida betony can be found in full sun to light shade and from dry to wet soils. It usually invades thin or bare lawn areas. Isolated plants can be hand pulled, but take

care to remove the rhizomes and tubers. You may spot treat with a post-emergence herbicide such as Weed-B-Gone. Apply in October and again in late February if necessary. You may also use a preemergence herbicide containing dichlobenil. Apply between December and February around established ornamentals when the soil temperature is below 55°.

“TO DO” LIST FOR JANUARY

Flowers: Annuals to plant are carnations, pansies, petunias, snapdragons, delphiniums, larkspur, dianthus, and foxgloves. Be ready to move less hardy bulbs inside. Most others, like ginger and amaryllis may have their foliage damaged during severe cold, but can be left in the ground and be expected to survive. Tulips, hyacinths, and daffodils can be planted now if you refrigerated them for 8 weeks to meet their chilling requirements.

Herbs: Plant anise, borage, chives, chervil, coriander, fennel, garlic, lavender, marjoram, mint, parsley, rosemary, sage, sesame, sweet marjoram, and thyme

Lawns: This is fertilize free month. Check the soil to determine water needs. When the grass blades fold it's time to water. Water once every 10-14 days in the winter. If mowing, keep your mower height at the highest level.

Perennials: Water when surface soil is dry to the touch, make sure you have 2-3 inches of mulch around the roots, and water during the morning hours only. Outdoor plants require less water in the winter months. Roses should be pruned once each year during December or January in North Florida.

Trees: Remove dead limbs, trim off suckers, lanky growth, and crisscrossing limbs; remove old seedpods. Don't perform major pruning on any flowering trees that produce their blooms during the spring months.

Vegetables: English peas, beets, broccoli, potatoes, cabbage, celery, carrots, bunching onions, radishes, turnips, and cauliflower can be planted now.

Roses should be pruned once each year during December or January in North Florida.

“TO DO” LIST FOR FEBRUARY

Flowers: Remove all dead plant portions of annuals. Baby's' breath, calendulas, carnations, dianthus, dusty miller, Marguerite daisies, pansies, petunias, and snapdragons can be planted this month. Prune out declining foliage of bulbs as needed. Use insecticidal soap for aphids.

Lawns: Cut St. Augustine lawns as needed; keep the mowing height highest level for your grass variety. Cutting grass too short encourages insects damage and disease. No fertilizer this month.

Perennials: Do not rush to prune out the dead or declining portions, as some cold may linger until March. Leaving dead portions on may provide some protection in case another freeze occurs. Prune ornamental grasses. Remove all brown cut stems to 6-12 inches above ground and feed!

Trees: Existing well-established trees and palms do not normally need special watering - the nearby irrigation of lawns, shrubs, and flower beds normally supply adequate moisture. Some exceptions may be dogwoods or red maples.

Vegetables: This month plant collards, lettuce, endive, potatoes, and turnips.



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*To receive this newsletter
in color via email, contact
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address above.*

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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Fine Feathered Friends - Blue Gray Gnatcatcher

Smaller than a sparrow, this tiny, slender, long-tailed bird, blue-gray above and white below, with white eye ring and broad white borders on a black tail, looks very much like a miniature mockingbird.

Gnatcatchers are lively birds, constantly flicking their conspicuous long tails upward while gathering insects from the branches of trees or bushes. In common with most of the other very small birds (though not the hummingbirds) of eastern United States, the blue-gray gnatcatcher eats very little if any vegetable food; and, by virtue of its fondness for some of the insects most harmful to

man's interests, it is considered an entirely beneficial species.

The only gnatcatcher species common in the Eastern United States, the blue gray gnatcatcher can be found in habitats of deciduous woodlands, streamside thickets, live oaks, pinyon-juniper, or chaparral.

The gnatcatcher builds exquisite nests, which are beautifully made of plant down and spider webs, decorated with flakes of lichen and fastened to a horizontal branch at almost any height above ground. Four or five tiny eggs usually constitute the set for the blue-gray gnatcatcher,

seldom more or fewer. They are pale blue and evenly covered with fine reddish brown spots.

The nests are exceedingly difficult to find unless the adults are feeding their young. During this time the parents are quite noisy and conspicuous, and seem to ignore intruders.

Fairly often, it plays host to the Brown-headed Cowbird, which parasitizes its nest so that the gnatcatchers raise cowbird young instead of their own.

The soft, rambling song of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher usually contains some mimicked songs of other bird species.

