



UF/IFAS Nassau County Extension

March/April 2008

## *Princess Flower*

**T***ibouchina urvilleana*, also known as Princess Flower, is a native of Brazil. This sprawling, evergreen shrub or small ornamental tree ranges from 10 to 15 feet in height. It is a vigorous grower which can be trimmed to any size and still put on a vivid, year-long flower display.

The dark green velvety leaves have several prominent veins instead of the usual one, and are often edged in red. Large, royal purple blossoms, flaring open to five inches create a spectacular sight when in full bloom. Some flowers are open throughout the year but they are especially plentiful from May to January.

Princess Flower is ideal for the mixed shrubbery border or used in small groupings. It requires full sun for best flowering. It prefers rich fertile soil but is able to adapt to other

soils as well if mulched, fed and periodically watered. Fertilize after each bloom cycle for optimum flowering. The use of a fertilizer for “acid loving plants” is recommended.

The princess flower has a growth habit that is somewhat weedy, requiring training and pruning to develop and maintain it as a tree. It can be trained as a standard or espaliered against a west-facing wall receiving at least five hours of full sun. It can also be trained on a trellis or arbor as a vine. Pinching new growth helps increase branching and will enhance the flower display.

Propagation is by softwood cuttings and division of clumps.

Hardy from zones 8-12, *tibouchina* will be killed back by freezing temperatures but will recover with the return of warm

weather to bloom in mid summer.

Plant near outdoor living areas where its flowers can be enjoyed at close range. It’s attractive flowers are quite enjoyable and good for cutting. Princess flower is seldom bothered by pest or disease. It’s easy to grow and requires little maintenance once established.



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## Program Announcements

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### First Annual Master Gardener Plant Sale

Friday April 4th 10AM-4PM

Saturday April 5th 9AM-2PM

Our first annual plant sale has Master Gardener-propagated plants, select trees and shrubs and "plant goodies" for your garden, including custom painted planters and classes by horticulture experts including James Loper from Reflections of Nature. Don't miss the best sale Nassau County has ever seen! All proceeds benefit the Nassau County Master Gardener program and the volunteer community projects they perform in Nassau County.

#### Location

Yulee Satellite Office  
86026 Pages Dairy Road  
Yulee, FL

### Plant Clinics

Monday March 10 10AM-2PM

Monday April 7 10AM-2PM

Monday April 21 10AM-2PM

#### Location

Yulee Satellite Office  
86026 Pages Dairy Road  
Yulee, FL

### Landscape Matters

#### Propagation

Wednesday March 19th, 2008 10 - 11AM

Master Gardeners Shirley Fenton and Shirley Lohman

#### Butterflies

Wednesday April 16th, 2008 10 - 11AM

Master Gardener Ginny Grupe

#### Location

Demonstration Garden  
Nassau County  
Government Complex  
96135 Nassau Place  
Yulee, FL

## Spotlight on Nassau Gardens

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### February Winner - Deborah Rollins

The February selection for the Spotlight on Nassau Gardens is Deborah Rollins who lives in Fiddler's Bend on Amelia Plantation. She has a colorful garden even in mid-winter. Deborah and her husband Jim have been developing their courtyard garden for eleven years, populating it with container plants that were later transplanted into garden beds. Deborah's garden design features a variety of textures and colors and shows the glory of a shaded, small space.

View more photos online at <http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture/spotlight/spotlight.html>. To be considered for Spotlight on Nassau Gardens, send a digital photo, with a description of your garden, along with your name, address and phone number to [bwalker105@bellsouth.net](mailto:bwalker105@bellsouth.net). For more information contact Rebecca Jordi at 548-1116.

## Beneficial Insects - Golden Silk Spider

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In Florida and other southeastern states, the golden silk spider, *Nephila clavipes* (Linnaeus), a large orange and brown spider with the feathery tufts on its legs is well known to most native southerners. It is particularly despised by hikers and hunters, as during late summer and fall the large golden webs of this species make a sticky trap for the unwary.

However, as is typical with most spiders, there is little real danger from an encounter with the golden silk spider. They are not aggressive and will bite only if held or pinched. The bite itself will produce only localized pain with a slight redness, which quickly goes away. On the whole, the bite is much less severe than a bee sting.

Typically, this spider makes its webs in open woods or edges of dense forest, usually attached to trees and low shrubs, although they may be in the tops of trees or between the wires of utility lines. Prey consists of a wide variety of small to medium-sized flying insects, including flies, bees, wasps, and small moths and butterflies. They also feed on small beetles and dragonflies.

These spiders are tremendously beneficial, because of all the insect pests that they eat. You can discourage them from building close to your home by simply breaking their webs down, they will move higher and farther away by themselves.

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



## March Checklist

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**Flowers:** Water as needed. Over-watering causes root and stem rot. Opt for drought tolerant plants such as purslane or periwinkle. Group your plants together according to their watering and light requirements. Bulbs will be in full bloom. To conserve plant energy, cut off the old seedpods after flowering. Fertilize perennials this month if you missed last month. Plant poinsettias in landscape during late March. Cut back plants to within 12 to 18 inches of ground level. Pinch back new growth every four weeks until September 10. Fertilize monthly from May to September. Choices for planting include lantana, pentas, salvias, purple coneflowers, buddleia, verbenas, dianthus, petunias, and snapdragons.

**Lawns:** Rake dead grass to allow new grass to grow. Complete fertilizer can be applied this month. Check your soil first. Phosphorus can accumulate in the soil. Select a fertilizer with a such as a 15-0-15 or 16-4-8. Follow directions on the label.

**Shrubs:** Prune and fertilize azaleas with acid fertilizer as soon as they finish blooming. Azaleas may be transplanted now as well. Overgrown shrubs can be cut back down to 12-24 inches.

**Trees:** Make sure your younger trees maintain a straight trunk as new growth begins. Remove or prune all limbs that compete with the central leader.

**Vegetables:** Have your soil tested prior to planting. The pH and the nutrient content of the soil is an important factor in production of vegetables. This month's choices for planting are cantaloupes, watermelon and beans.



## April Checklist

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**Flowers:** Annuals to plant now include celosia, coleus, coreopsis, dusty miller, geraniums, hollyhocks, impatiens, kalanchoe, lobelias, marigolds, portulacas, rudbeckias, salvia, verbenas, zinnias. Groom to reshape perennials. Prune hard to correct growth problems. Divide overcrowded fall flowering perennials and bulbs. Bulbs to be planted now include achimenes, agapanthus, amaryllis, Asiatic lilies, begonias, blood lily, caladiums, cannas, crinum, dahlia, gladiolus, gloriosa lily and zephyranthes.

**Lawns:** Water during early morning when the leaves curl and turn gray-green. Stop feeding during very dry times. Keep mower height at the highest setting for your grass type. Apply 1 inch of sand to uneven areas for leveling. Allow grass clippings to fall on the lawn.

**Trees:** Most older trees and palms are fine and can exist with the seasonal rains. Look for aphid, borer, and scale infestations. Caterpillars may be extra heavy this month.

**Vegetables:** Herbs to plant are anise, basil, borage, chives, dill, marjoram, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, and thyme. Vegetables to plant are cantaloupe, collards, cucumbers, lima beans, okra, pumpkin, yams, peppers, squash and watermelon.



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.



Rebecca L. Jordi,  
Horticulture Agent II



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## Fringe Tree - *Chionanthus virginicus*



**A**lthough the flowers of this tree are creamy rather than white, the literal translation for *Chionanthus* is “snow flower.” Native to the southeastern United States, the “grancy graybeard” is usually found growing wild in various habitats in the southeast: moist woods, dry rocky slopes, and sandy stream banks, but usually on basic soils.

This is one of the prettiest trees in the world; it is spectacular in full bloom. There are about 120 species of *Chionanthus*, but only two hardy ones; the best known is the eastern North American species, *chionanthus virginicus*. It is a small tree, reaching only 30 feet or less in height; in cultivation it usually grows 12-20 feet high with an equal spread. Branches can grow horizontally and closed to the ground. The fringe tree is sometimes described as a large shrub.

Hardy in zones 4-9, the fringe tree is easily grown in average, medium wet, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. It prefers moist, fertile soils. These deciduous trees seldom need pruning. Flowers appear in the spring, and give way to clusters of dark blue fruit which is a food source for birds and wildlife. Leaves turn yellow in the fall.