

Horticulture News



UF/IFAS Nassau County Extension
November/December 2008

Turk's Cap is a member of the mallow family (family Malvaceae), which includes herbs, shrubs, and rarely small trees. There are about 85 genera and 1,500 species, many in tropical America. Okra and the plant that produces cotton are also in this family.

Turk's Cap

Malvaviscus is a genus of three species of shrubs in the mallow family Malvaceae, native to tropical America from Florida and Mexico south to Peru and Brazil. Common names include Turk's Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus*), also known as Sleepy Mallow, sleeping hibiscus, wax mallow, and cardinal's hat.

A hardy shrub in zones 9-11, in zone 8 it will freeze to the ground but will grow back in the spring. Certainly a fascinating plant out of its natural growing area, it can be grown in northern zones in containers and protected in the colder months in a greenhouse.

Turk's Cap can grow to ten feet but has a drooping or droopy effect, which makes it quite interesting. The flowers resemble those of the related genus Hibiscus, except that the petals are folded spirally and only partially unfurl to form a turban-shaped flower, to encourage pollination by hummingbirds.

Easy to grow, it tolerates almost any soil, and requires average amounts of water, being drought resistant. It prefers light shade in the tropics, but full sun with afternoon shade in cooler climates. Turk's cap has very few insect or disease problems. Propagate by cuttings at any time of year.



Turk's Cap

Program Announcements

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.

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.

Landscape Matters

There will be no programs in November and December.

Spotlight on Nassau Gardens

September Winner - Queet Hertweck

The September selection for Spotlight on Nassau Gardens is Queet and Max Hertweck's courtyard garden on Amelia Island. There are 50 boxwoods along with 5 Mary Nell holly trees. The trellis is covered with Confederate Jasmine as is part of the wall on the right. There are two Camellias on either side of the hollies in the center and the fountain has a statue they found in Louisville, KY.



October Winner - Jan Davis

Jan Davis enjoys a "pocket garden" which can be viewed through a large bay window off the dining room. Because the garden is walled, it creates a shade garden below, while Jan uses raised hanging pots to provide a splash of color. The walls are covered with creeping fig, giving a green backdrop for a large statue in the center of the small garden. Anchoring one end is a white standard azalea which, she says, "looks like a large snowball when it is in bloom." Jan also grows roses in another area of her yard and receives great pleasure from sharing roses with friends.



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 atwoodca@bellsouth.net. For more information contact Rebecca Jordi at 548-1116.

Plant a Palm - Windmill Palm

The windmill palm *Trachycarus Fortunei* is a familiar sight in temperate climates, like the Southeast USA. This palm, hardy to 10°, is native to China where it grows in frigid mountainous regions. A very slow-growing palm, it can reach 40 feet in height but is often seen much smaller, 10 to 20 feet. It bears yellow flowers which are

quite showy. It should be grown in shade or partial shade on fertile soil to look its best, but it is also tolerant of full sun on well-drained soils when given ample moisture in the northern part of its range. Plants should be watered regularly and fertilized with a palm fertilizer in spring, summer, and fall in NE Florida. Plants can be

used successfully close to the shore, being quite tolerant of salt and wind. BUT it is very difficult to grow in the tropics due to its "chilling requirements." The high humidity in the tropics (including Southern Florida are also limiting factors), as is the region's calcareous soil (highly alkaline), in composition.



November Checklist

Flowers: Sow seeds of larkspur, bachelor's buttons, sweet peas, and California poppies in full sun for a colorful spring show. Set out hardy plants such as sweet alyssum, petunia, dianthus, and snapdragon.

Lawns: Avoid the temptation to apply winter fertilizers in NE Florida.

Perennials: Plant now for fall color. Mexican bush sage has spikes of purple-and-white flowers that will wave in the wind. Pineapple sage has brilliant red blooms and leaves each with a hint of pineapple aroma. Firespike with its red bloom spikes is great for partial shade. Philippine violet brightens fall days with its lavender flowers. The brilliant yellow of swamp sunflower will stop traffic a block away. Cigar flower has an abundant display of small orange-and-yellow, tubular blooms.

Trees: If you are planting a new tree, staking may not be necessary. New trees become stronger if some movement is allowed. Planting too deeply causes future problems. Plant trees so the top root is just at or slightly below soil level.

Vegetables: Keep crops picked to encourage new production. Irrigate during morning hours (6-10am) with drip irrigation to discourage disease.

December Checklist

Annuals: Plant carnations, digitalis, pansies, petunias, shasta daisies, and snapdragons this month.

Bulbs: Check for declining plant portions and pests. Examine bulbs in storage and remove adhering soil or damaged portions.

Herbs: Anise, basil, bay laurel, borage, caraway, cardamom, chervil, chives, coriander, dill, fennel, ginger, horehound, lemon balm, lavender, lovage, marjoram, Mexican tarragon, mint, nasturtium, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, thyme and watercress can be planted now.

Lawns: Do not apply fertilizer or any nitrogen this time of year, wait until March or April. Keep mowing height the same year round. Water $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch every 10 to 14 days if we receive no rain.

Trees and Shrubs: Late December is the ideal time to begin transplanting plants if the weather has turned cool. It is best to transplant trees and shrubs after they have gone into dormancy. Prune roots two to three months before digging by severing roots with a spade just inside the intended root ball to generate new root hairs and reduce transplant shock. Be sure to keep plants out of the ground as little time as possible. Do not put anything in the transplant hole, simply keep the plant irrigated well for 3-4 months.

Vegetables: Choices for this month include beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, Chinese cabbage, English peas, onions, and radishes.



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color via e-mail, contact
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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 III



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Fine Feathered Friends - Cedar Waxwing

The cedar waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) is one of the few North American birds to specialize in eating fruit. Waxwings have been reported to devour an entire fruit crop of red cedars over a two day period. This behavior and the waxy red appendages found on their wings have earned them their name.

Traditionally, cedar waxwings have yellow tail tips. In the 1960's birds with orange tail tips began to appear. This color is the result of a red pigment picked up from the berries of an introduced species of honeysuckle. If a waxwing eats the berries while it is growing a

tail feather, the tip of the feather will be orange.

The cedar waxwing lives in open woodlands, orchards and residential areas, especially those with fruit-bearing trees and bushes. Although these birds can survive on fruit alone for several months, they will also eat sap, flowers and insects. Unlike many birds that regurgitate seeds from fruit they eat, the Cedar Waxwing defecates fruit seeds. If fermented fruit is eaten, the birds are vulnerable to alcohol intoxication and even death.

