

# Horticulture News

UF/IFAS  
Nassau County Extension  
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## All Bugs Aren't Bad

by Becky Wern - Duval County Master Gardener

Many folks assume that the outside world is teeming with insects that are enemies of humans. The reality is that between 95 percent and 97 percent of the insects in Florida are either beneficial or have no impact at all on man.

When you repeatedly bombard the landscape with pesticides, you damage the insects (and spiders, which are not insects, but are great insect eaters) that benefit us, as well as the relatively few that do not. You destroy the food source of birds and tree frogs and other non-insect predators. So, having removed the predators, you must spray again and again and again to try to maintain some population control.

In the '50s, '60s, and '70s, there was a widespread assumption that humans could just eliminate insects. The reality that developed was that insects developed a resistance to

the poison, increased their populations and required more - and more toxic - pesticides to attempt to control the insects. The beneficial insect populations demolished by the pesticides weren't able to help control the pests. At higher concentrations, the chemicals in pesticides become deadly to humans, especially the young and the ill. It was a losing battle, and we are all fortunate that we eventually called a truce.

The fact is humans could not survive without insects. And pesticides are not very good at targeting the annoying insects and leaving, say, the pollinators alone. And, as I'm sure you've heard with all the

press about disappearing bees, one-third of our food supply is dependent on pollinators.

Even pesticides labeled as all-natural can and do cause allergic reactions. Being all-natural is not a safety label: Arsenic, nicotine, and hemlock are all natural, yet very dangerous.

Research demonstrates that the smart way to "control" insects is to enlist the aid of the predators and let them do the hard work.

Building a healthy ecosystem in your yard takes just a little work and benefits you, your landscape, and the world around you.

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# PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Crash Course in Florida Gardening

Thursday/Friday  
February 12-13, 2009  
9AM-12PM  
Checks should be made out to Nassau County Extension.  
Registration deadline is Friday, January 30th.  
Cost is \$50 for notebook and materials.  
Phone 904 548-1116 or e-mail [rljordi@ufl.edu](mailto:rljordi@ufl.edu) to enroll.  
Fifteen participants are required.

## 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

#### Pruning

Wednesday January 21, 2009 11AM -12PM  
Rebecca Jordi & Master Gardener Bea Walker

#### Roses

Wednesday February 11th, 2009 10 - 11AM  
Master Gardener Paul Gosnell

#### Location

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

### Proper Pruning Techniques Demonstration

Becky Jordi, Nassau County Horticulture Agent and Nassau County Master Gardeners will demonstrate proper pruning techniques at The Home Depot at 463785 State Road 200 on Monday, January 26 at 10AM. The demonstration will include both established landscape trees in the Home Depot parking lot and container trees from the Garden Department. The public is invited to this free educational event.

## Spotlight on Nassau Gardens

### December Winner - Nancy Rho

The December selection for Spotlight on Nassau Gardens is Nancy Rho's lovely garden. Nancy and her husband Dr. Tae Rho, a long time Fernandina pediatrician/internist – now retired - have lived in their present home in the Summer Beach area on Amelia Island for 13 years and on the island for 30 years, coming here from South Korea, via New York. Nancy has incredible roses of all varieties, but we chose to photograph her with her beautiful yellow Angel's Trumpet (*Datura arborea*). She has another in pink on the other side of the yard. Nancy has David Austin Roses, hybrid teas, climbers, English, floribundas and grandifloras - about 150. She keeps her weeds at bay with palmetto fronds. As with most gardeners, she loves to share information about her garden "children".



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](mailto:atwoodca@bellsouth.net). For more information contact Rebecca Jordi at 548-1116.

## Florida Forest Plants - Beautyberry

Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) grows in many environmental conditions from moist and shady to open and dry. Across this range of habitats, it most frequently occurs under open pine stands. Beautyberry is found in most of the southeast, between Florida and Texas in the south, to Maryland, Missouri, and Oklahoma in the north.

Beautyberry occurs in both old forests and in new pine plantations. It tolerates fire, and often spreads in peri-

odically burned twigs, leaves, and fruit pine stands. The fruit and seeds are eaten and dispersed by more than forty species of songbirds, deer, raccoons, opossums, armadillos, and numerous small rodents. The leaves are also a common food source for white-tailed deer.

Small flowers blossom in midsummer in dense clusters along the new stems. The petals are bright pink to lavender. Later, clusters of small, but bright, violet berries dot the forest from Au-

gust to January. Although beautyberry fruits most heavily with full sun, it will grow fine in partial shade also. A very distinctive feature of beautyberry is the strong, unpleasant aroma of crushed leaves.

The two most common species of beautyberry are our native American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) and purple beautyberry (*Callicarpa dichotoma*). Purple beautyberry is a more compact, neater shrub but otherwise the two are very similar.



## “TO DO” LIST FOR JANUARY

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**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.



## “TO DO” LIST FOR FEBRUARY

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**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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If you would like to receive  
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email, contact Rebecca Jordi  
at the email address above.

Visit us online at  
<http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu>

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Rebecca L. Jordi,  
Horticulture Agent III



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## Butterfly ID - Cassius Blue



A member of the family of Gossamer-wing butterflies (*Lycaenidae*) the Cassius Blue (*Leptotes cassius*) ranges through Florida and the Keys, Texas south through the West Indies, Mexico, and Central America to South America.

Very common in the southern part of its range, the Cassius Blue flies in almost any sunny spot. Although this species maintains northern populations during moderate weather, it still succumbs to frigid midwestern winters.

The Cassius Blues inhabit

subtropical thorn scrub, forest edges, weedy fields, and residential areas. Adults feed on nectar from shepherd's needle, lippia, and many other flowers.

Eggs are pastel green in color changing to ivory and are laid singly on flower buds of the host plant. Young caterpillars are dark yellow, becoming speckled green suffused with russet. They eat flowers and seedpods of ornamental leadwort (*Plumbago capensis*), rattlebox (*Crotalaria incana*), hairy milk pea (*Galactia volubilis*), and

lima bean (*Phaseolus limensis*).

Predation and parasitism may be discouraged by ants, which tend the caterpillars and feed on their sugary secretions.

These are tiny little guys with a wingspan of only ½ to ¾ inches. The upperside of males is a pale blue while females have white patches. Both sexes are translucent, with underside markings showing through.