When you think of hydrangeas, low-growing shrubs with big, disky blue flower clusters usually come to mind. But the hydrangea family includes many options for your landscape, including an elegant climbing vine and a stately native shrub with large, oak leaf shaped foliage. These versatile plants rarely suffer from pest and disease problems and grow in a wide range of climates as diverse as Maine and Florida.

Native to southern and eastern Asia (from Japan to China, the Himalayas and Indonesia) and North and South America, the flowers are also extremely common in the Azores Islands of Portugal, particularly in Faial, which is known as the “ilha azul” due to the vast number of hydrangeas present on the island. They can be either deciduous or evergreen, though the widely cultivated temperate species are all deciduous.

The bigleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) is the most familiar. They are distinguished by the type of flower produced: the mopheads or hortensias, and the lacecaps. Both are hardy in zones 6-9 and have pink or blue flowers depending on the pH of the soil. In most species the flowers are white, but in some species (notably *H. macrophylla*), they can be blue, red, pink, or purple. In these species the exact color often depends on the pH of the soil; acidic soils produce blue flowers, neutral soils produce very pale cream petals, and alkaline soils result in pink or purple. Hydrangeas are one of very few plants that accumulate aluminium. Aluminium is released from acidic soils, and in some species, forms complexes in the hydrangea flower giving them their blue color.

The beautiful oakleaf hydrangea (*H. quercifolia*) grows in zones 5-9 and is native to shady stream banks in eastern North America. Most have white flowers and leaves that are shaped like an oak, only bigger. In fall, the foliage turns different shades of burgundy. This shrub is easy to divide if you want more plants because it sends up suckers (shoots from the roots). In hot climates it needs consistent watering. It is a robust grower when basking in morning sun.

The climbing hydrangea (*H. anomala*) is a good choice for those who seek to cover a large tree trunk or decorate a wall. This vine can grow up to 50 feet or more. If grown free-standing, it will assume a shrublike form. It will produce lacelike blooms in the summer.
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
Butterflies
Wednesday May 20th, 2009 10-11AM
Master Gardener Ginny Grupe

Hurricane Preparation
Wednesday June 17th, 2009 10-11AM
Master Gardener Candace Bridgewater

Master Gardener Program
Do you love plants, trees, and gardening? Would you enjoy volunteering your time to help teach youth and newcomers in your community? Then perhaps you should become a University of Florida/IFAS Master Gardener Volunteer! It requires 75 hours of volunteer time to be given back to Nassau County Extension the first year and 35 hours every year thereafter. Ten sessions held on Wednesdays will begin in the middle of August and end in November. Textbooks will cost $75. If you are interested and would like an application packet please call 879-1019 or 548-1116 or e-mail rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu. Interviews for the Master Gardener Program will begin near the end of July and selection will occur by the first week of August.

Beneficial Insects - Ant Lion
by Becky Wern Duval County Master Gardener
Do you have little holes in the soil around your home and landscape? Ever wonder what little critter could be making the holes? These are the good guys. They are called ant lions, although children of all ages prefer to call them doodlebugs. This affectionate term refers to the insects meandering scratches on the ground made while searching for an adequate reap site.

When it finds soil of just the right looseness, the ant lion larvae will dig a spiral in the sand and position itself at the bottom of the funnel. Unsuspecting ants and other insects tumble onto the pit, and slide down into it. The ant lion grabs them with its pincer legs, injects some poison and feasts on the insect.

If the insect should happen to escape, the ant lion can simply hurl a gain of sand at it and cause the sand to shift and send the hapless insect back into the claws of the predator. The ant lion is able to capture and eat insects much, much larger than its diminutive size would suggest.

It can pinch humans, although that would only be done as a last resort, when it feels extremely threatened. Because this insect eats insects we consider to be pests, it is best to simply leave it alone. Just let it be the tiny ferocious predator that it is.
May Checklist

Flowers: Annuals to plant this month are celosia, coleus, coreopsis, cossandras, gaillardias, gazanias, hollyhocks, impatiens, kalanchoe, marigolds, nicotianas, 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 underside 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.

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 katydids. 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.

Selected from Florida Vegetable Guide by JM Stephens, RA Dunn, G Kidder, D Short, & GW Simone, University of Florida and Month-by-Month Gardening in Florida by Tom MacCubbin
Super Shrubs - Coral Bean

Full sun and dry sandy soil are a perfect match for coralbean, *Erythrina herbacea*, a highly distinctive shrub found in dry open woods, roadsides, clearings, and disturbed areas throughout Florida. From North Carolina southward and west to Texas, coralbean, also called Cherokee bean, has endeared itself to gardeners with its arrow-head-shaped leaves and striking spikes of large red tubular flowers that attract hummingbirds. The name “Coralbean” stems from the beautiful shiny reddish orange seed encased in bean like pods. Coralbean tolerates a range of soil conditions, full sun to partial shade, and require no irrigation once established.

Typically multi-stemmed and spreading upward, some forms of coralbean are viney and others form erect small trees. Heights vary from 3-20 feet and the plant is often as wide as it is tall. Coralbean is deciduous and has sharp spines, features which require careful consideration in its placement (away from footpaths). It combines beautifully with massed plantings of silver saw palmetto, needle palm or native bunch-grasses such as cordgrass or muhlygrass. It can be planted in front of large shrubs, in informal woodland borders, or as a background plant. Viney forms do well against a wall or fence. Note: Coralbean seeds are toxic and children should be cautioned not to eat them.