Do you enjoy the great outdoors? Whether hiking, biking, camping or fishing, you could protect yourself from a severe case of dermatitis if you are armed with knowledge about poisonous plants.

Poison ivy, oak, and sumac all do their harm when you come in contact with the sap of the plant. This can occur when you touch the plant, or result indirectly from animals, clothes, or other items that have come into contact with the plant. Particles in the smoke of the burning plant may carry toxins as well.

Symptoms may appear within a few hours or a few days. Itching and burning of the skin may be followed by a rash, redness, swelling, and watery blistering. Infection of the blisters may cause systemic complications.

Individuals vary in their sensitivity to the poison in these plants. Approximately twenty-five percent of the population are not sensitive, but anyone may become sensitive after repeated exposure.

Poison Ivy

Of the poisonous plants in Florida’s natural areas, poison ivy is the most commonly encountered by humans. It is a woody shrub or vine with hairy looking aerial roots. It grows to ten feet or more, climbing high on trees, walls and fences or trails along the ground.

Virginia Creeper

Virginia creeper is the most common poison ivy look-alike. It can easily be distinguished from poison ivy by its three to five divided leaflets, which are shaped in the shape of an outstretched hand.

Poison Oak

Poison oak--also called “oakleaf ivy” or “oakleaf poison ivy”--is more distinctive than some other types of ivy. It usually grows as a vine, but occurs as a low growing shrub. Stems generally grow upright.

Poison Sumac

Poison sumac is also known as swamp sumac, poison elder, poison ash, poison dogwood and thundertwood. It does not have variable forms like those of poison ivy. It grows as a course woody shrub or small tree and never in the vinelike form of its poison ivy relatives. Mature plants range in height from five or six to twenty-five feet.

This shrub is usually associated with swamps and bogs. It generally grows along the margin of an area of wet acid soil. Pois-
Program Announcements

Landscape Matters 10AM-11AM

**Perennials**
Wednesday May 2
Master Gardener Shirley Lohman

**Palms**
Wednesday May 11
Rebecca Jordi

**Annuals**
Wednesday June 6
Master Gardener Jane Brown

These programs are free to the public, so please call us at 904-491-7540 or 904-879-1019 or e-mail rljordi@ufl.edu if you plan to attend. If the response is too small, the program will be canceled.

Plant Clinics 10AM-2PM

Monday May 7
Saturday May 12*
Monday May 21
Monday June 4
Monday June 18

Bring us your tired, diseased, insect infested plants yearning to be free of problems. When possible place your plant in a plastic bag to prevent chances of spreading issues to other plants. You will receive current researched based information on proper plant care, disease management and insect control. These sessions are free to the public. No registration required. Come anytime between 10AM - 2PM for expert advice.

*Saturday May 12 Plant Clinic will be held from 10AM to Noon at The Callahan Farmer’s Market, The Callahan Train Depot, 45383 Dixie Avenue Callahan, FL http://www.callahanfarmersmarket.com/

Trouble-shooting Landscapes: Efficient Irrigation

County Extension Director/Horticulture Agent, Rebecca Jordi and Master Gardener volunteers Paul Gosnell and Nelson Peterson will assist homeowners in reducing insect and disease issues on lawns and landscapes. These problems often result from too much water, shallow irrigation, or uneven coverage. They will demonstrate how to properly measure irrigation at one zone and then provide solutions for correcting discrepancies. Other cultural practices such as fertilization, proper mulching, planting depth of trees and shrubs, etc. will also be provided. In addition, Jordi and the Master Gardeners will diagnosis disease or insect issues on ornamentals at the site. The goal is to reduce frustrations and the cost of managing North Florida landscapes. Jordi requires at least 6 homeowners and will come to your subdivision for these free sessions. To schedule a "Trouble-shooting Landscapes” session for you and your neighbors, please call the Extension office at 904-879-1019, or email Ms. Jordi at rljordi@ufl.edu.

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. CD Manuals will cost $55. If you are interested and would like an application packet please call 879-1019 or 491-7340 or e-mail rljordi@ufl.edu. New master gardeners will be selected in July. Classes begin in August.
What is an Invasive Exotic Plant?

An invasive-exotic plant species is an introduced species that has been shown to displace the native vegetation by out-competing native species. Without the limiting factors that normally keep invasive plants under control in their native homes (e.g., diseases and insects), they overwhelm and displace existing native vegetation to form dense, single-species stands that dominate and alter the original natural community.

For a complete list of invasive exotic plant species that can be found in the Southeast, visit the Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council. For a list of the invasive status of non-native plants in Florida, go to the IFAS Assessment of Non-Native Plants (see Conclusions) and the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (see Plant Lists).

Prevent the Spread of Invasives

By choosing to plant a garden with native plants, you will prevent the spread of invasive plants from your yard to other natural areas. At the same time, you conserve water, energy, time, and money, as well as reduce or eliminate the need for harmful pesticides and herbicides. There are a wide variety of native plants and landscaping designs to choose from in creating the yard that is the most pleasing to you.

Invasive Species to Avoid or Eliminate

- Old World Climbing Fern: *Lygodium microphyllum*
- Brazilian pepper: *Schinus terebinthifolius*
- Water hyacinth: *Eichhornia crassipes*
- Melaleuca: *Melaleuca quinquenervia*
- Australian pine: *Casuarina equisetfolia*
- Chinese tallow: *Sapium sebiferum*
- Tropical soda apple: *Solanum viarum*
- Wild taro: *Colocasia esculenta*
- Melaleuca

If you spot these plants, contact a local conservation manager.

For more information about invasive plants in Florida, visit the IFAS Assessment of Non-Native Plants in Florida and the Florida Exotic Plant Council.

Why You Should Care*

Once invasive plants take over our native plants, the result is that:

- Florida’s natural biodiversity is destroyed. Our native plants can eventually become permanently eliminated.
- The animals that use those native plants for food and habitat cannot make use of the non-native ones.
- Aquatic invasive plants can harm fish habitats.
- Boating, swimming, hiking, and other activities can be limited or impossible in areas overrun with invasive exotic plants.
- It costs billions of dollars to control invasive exotic plants, and it is usually very difficult to eradicate them completely.

*Adapted from http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/guide/invplant.html#whatprob
Improving Your Lawn’s Drought Tolerance

Drought tolerance is a measure of how well your grass will survive dry spells. Still, there are some simple management practices that can help improve the drought tolerance of whatever turfgrass species you have on your home lawn.

Why Improve Drought Tolerance?
The primary objective of improving drought tolerance is to grow a good-quality lawn that will survive drought with little or no supplemental irrigation (watering by hose or sprinkler system). A lawn properly prepared to survive a drought will have a deep and extensive root system. These management practices will help train your grass’s roots to grow deep.

Irrigation
Less frequent, longer irrigations will help establish a deeper root system. Many homeowners rely on automatic sprinkler systems to apply small amounts of water several times weekly, regardless of rainfall. This is actually detrimental, because such a lawn’s roots will stay only in the top few inches of soil so they’re not able to get down to find water deeper in the soil during dry spells.

To develop a deep root system, water your lawn only when 30 to 50 percent of it shows at least one of the three wilt signs. The three signs of wilt, or lawn thirst, are folding leaf blades, blue-gray color, and footprints remaining in grass.

When you do water, apply 1/2–3/4 inches. For sandier soils, which do not hold water well, the 3/4-inch rate may be necessary. For heavier clay soils in North Florida and the panhandle, the 1/2-inch rate may be sufficient. The idea is to get water to your grass’s roots without drowning your grass or creating run-off (excess water that your grass cannot absorb).

Once you have watered your lawn, hold off watering again until a portion of it shows one or more of the wilt signs. Do not irrigate to the point of run-off, where the soil is no longer able to absorb water and it flows on top of the ground or pavement. This only wastes water and does nothing for your landscape.

Mowing
Always mow at the highest recommended height for your turf species. This increases leaf area, allowing for more photosynthesis, the process by which plants make carbohydrates that they store to help them survive stresses like drought. The higher the mowing height, the deeper and more extensive the root system will be.

Never cut more than one third of the leaf blade at any one time. You may be able to reduce your mowing frequency since the grass will grow more slowly during drought. Be sure to keep your mower blades sharp. A sharp blade makes a cleaner cut that heals faster and stresses the grass less than one made with a dull blade.

Fertilization
Fertilization during drought should be reduced or postponed. Nitrogen fertilization encourages grass to put its energy into growing shoots rather than roots. This both prevents the grass from developing the deep root system it needs to survive and creates new grass blades that will suffer the effects of drought. If you choose to fertilize, look for a fertilizer with a primarily slow-release nitrogen and phosphorus.
source that will not promote rapid growth. Look for a fertilizer with a high potassium level (the third number on the bag) as this can help to enhance drought tolerance. Be sure to irrigate your fertilizer in after application to avoid burn and get the product to the roots, where it will be taken up by the plant. You want to apply just a small amount of water (1/4 inch) to do this, which would typically mean running an irrigation system for about fifteen minutes.

Supplemental iron applications can also help keep turf green during drought without promoting new shoot growth. Iron can be safely applied during drought times.

Soil testing is helpful in monitoring nutrient levels and soil pH, and not just during drought. Knowing your lawn’s nutrient requirements can help you choose the right fertility products and design the best possible fertilization regime. Contact your county Extension office for information on how to submit soil samples.

**Pest Control**

A healthy, vigorously growing turfgrass is the best defense against weeds and pests, so try to keep your lawn healthy by following homeowner best management practices. Pesticides application should always follow the label in order to avoid harming the plants, animals, or the environment. Especially in times of drought, it is best to spot-treat only those small areas that might be affected by a pest. The irrigation, mowing, and fertilization practices outlined above will reduce the need for pest control measures. If a pest problem is diagnosed, it should be promptly treated by following recommendations from your county Extension office. Spot treating (treating individual areas by hand) is usually effective and is safer for drought-stressed grass than blanket treatment, or treating the entire lawn.

**Alternatives to Turfgrass**

Sometimes turf is planted where it cannot survive long term. Alternatives to turf should be considered in such cases. Mulched beds or groundcovers, such as trailing evergreen plants like Asiatic jasmine or ivy, may be more suitable. In any case, choose plants that are hardy and do not require supplemental irrigation. Consult your county Extension office for suggestions on groundcovers that grow best in your area.

**Sources**

*Improving Drought Tolerance in Your Florida Lawn (EDIS LH027)*
May Checklist

**Citrus:** Depending on citrus fertilizer label, apply fertilizer every six weeks or as directed. Check for citrus insects; apply ultra fine or all season horticulture oil before 10 am and in early evening if insects are detected. Check for disease; apply fungicide just at new leaf flush or after bloom drop. Maintain 2-3’ unmulched area around citrus trees.

**Fruit:** Weed as needed. Apply 6-6-6 or 8-8-8 fertilizer if appropriate. Check irrigation to ensure it is working. Make repairs.

**Flowers:** Annuals to plant this month are celosia, coleus, coreopsis, crossandras, gaillardias, gazanias, hollyhocks, impatiens, kalanchoe, marigolds, nicotianas, ornamental peppers, pentas, portulacas, salvia, thunbergia alata, torenias, verbenas, periwinkles, and zinnias.

**Herbs:** Anise, basil, bay laurel, borage, caraway, cardamom, chervil, chives, coriander, culantro, dill, ginger, horehound, lemon balm, lavender, marjoram, Mexican tarragon, mint, parsley, oregano, rosmary, sesame, and thyme can be planted now.


**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 which will start hatching this month. Fertilize with 15-0-15 or 16-4-8 this month. Water restrictions (city water or wells) allow odd numbered houses to water Wed. & Saturday; even numbered houses – Thurs. & Sunday. Non-residential properties water on Tues. & Friday. Remember small amounts of fertilizer work best. Too much nitrogen can attract insects and disease.

**Trees:** Some magnolias may drop their leaves during the spring months. This is normal, as they replenish foliage. Palms should have a “palm special” fertilizer applied over the root system under the spread of the fronds. The configuration should be 8-2-12-4 (N-P-K-Mg). Ideally this would also include manganese, boron, sulfur, etc. with appropriate formulations. Use slow release fertilizer if pH is acid, use quick release for alkaline or high pH soils. Many palms are deficient in potassium, in spite of using palm fertilizers. Apply Muriate of Potash to correct this deficiency.

**Vegetables:** Scout for insects and hand remove if possible. Check the underside of leaves for eggs and aphids. Remember some insects are predators. These predators are important part of keeping the pests from totally taking over vegetables. Vegetables to plant this month are lima beans, eggplant, okra, Southern peas, and sweet potatoes.
June Checklist

**Citrus:** Depending on citrus fertilizer label, apply fertilizer every six weeks or as directed. Check for citrus insects; apply ultra fine or all season horticulture oil before 10 am and in early evening if insects are detected. Check for disease; apply appropriate fungicide. Weed as needed.

**Fruit:** Summer pruning to include water sprouts, and fire blight infected wood. Be sure to clean pruners between cuts using alcohol, bleach or Lysol on the blades to prevent transmitting diseases. Apply 6-6-6 or 8-8-8 fertilizer to pears and plums. Apply azalea fertilizer to blueberry shrubs at 1/2 lb per 3’ of shrub. Weed as needed.

**Flowers:** If growth appears too slow and the foliage turns yellow, they may need fertilizer. Too much growth and a lack of flowers indicates the plants have all the nutrients they need and you can reduce nitrogen. Globe amaranth, melampodium, pentas, portulaca, purslane, salvia, zinnia, lantana, buddleia, daylily, verbena, purple coneflower, plumbago, and sun coleus can be planted in full sun. Plant agapanthus, blackberry lily, clivia, gloriosa lily, achimenes, crinum, and iris.

**Herbs:** Bay laurel, culantro, ginger, horehound, lavender, mexican tarragon, mint, parsley, oregano, rosemary, sesame, and thyme can be planted now.

**Roses:** Continue spray program. Apply liquid fertilizer. Cut and remove spent blooms. Check for spider mites. Water, water, water.

**Lawns:** Keep mower blades sharp (once a month is a good rule). Mow the lawn on the highest height for each species – never cut it too short.

**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 and disease causing fungi.

*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*
Donation brings new nature park to Yulee

By Candace Bridgewater, UF/IFAS Nassau County Master Gardener

Longtime Nassau County residents Paul and Suzi Schutt have donated a beautiful three-acre marsh-side property to the University of Florida College of Design, Construction and Planning. Administered by the Nassau County Extension Office, the garden is offered for free educational and recreational use to the community.

"My goal is to create a unique native landscape for the enjoyment and education of the community," said Paul Schutt. He encourages Scouts, church groups, youth and school groups, neighborhoods and clubs to reserve the space at no charge.

The amenities include a large screened sunset gazebo with tables and chairs, ice maker, barbecue grill and grill tools and a fire pit. An extensive lawn of Bahia grass offers play space for children. Horseshoes and bocce ball equipment are nearby. A nearby workshop provides the restroom.

A six-year "retirement" project for nuclear scientist Schutt, the land has been thoughtfully prepared as a Florida native plant collection and educational garden.

Assisted by James Loper of Reflections of Nature Garden Center in Yulee, Schutt has searched the state for native trees, shrubs, flowers and ground covers. The collection of 14 native oak trees is impressive. These include Live, Laurel and Water Oaks as well as less often seen Overcup, Willow and Chestnut oaks.

Each plant is carefully marked with common and scientific name and each is easily approached on comfortable pathways. The plants range from a rare Ashe magnolia to Florida privet and Walter’s Viburnum. The various fruit-producing natives are a perfect draw to our Florida birds that feast on seeds and berries.

"The Paul and Suzi Schutt Florida Botanical Garden offers a wonderful educational and recreational opportunity that both our 4-H and Master Gardener programs have utilized. We are grateful that the garden has so many native plantings - some of which are in the Nassau County Demonstration Gardens, but several are unique to this local garden. We have planned several activities that will benefit our youth and adult volunteers," said Rebecca L. Jordi, county extension director/horticulture agent.

To make a reservation, call James Loper at 904.887.8266 or Rebecca Jordi at 904.491-7340 or rljordi@ufl.edu. No dogs please.
A beautiful pair of stone columns with a commemorative plaque greets visitors to the Paul and Suzi Schutt Florida Native Botanical Garden in Yulee.

Donor Paul Schutt stands near the Hercules’ Oak, a host plant for the Giant Swallowtail butterfly.

Elizabeth Wilkes/For the News-Leader
son sumac shrubs usually do not have a symmetrical treelike appearance. Instead, they lean and have branched stems that have about the same diameter from ground level to middle height.

**Poison Sumac**

The leaves consist of leaflets arranged in pairs with a single leaflet at the end of the midrib. The leaflets are elongated ovals without marginal teeth or serration and a smooth, velvety texture. Their color ranges from bright orange to green with scarlet midribs to brilliant red-orange or russet.

Small yellowish-green flowers grow in clusters on slender stems arising from the axis of leaves along the smaller branches. The flowers mature into ivory-white or green-colored fruits resembling those of poison oak or poison ivy, but they are usually less compact and hang in loose clusters.

**Sumac Look a Likes**

Throughout most of the range where poison sumac grows, three nonpoisonous look-a likes may also occur: smooth sumac, staghorn sumac, and dwarf sumac.

**Staghorn Sumac**

The leaves of smooth sumac and staghorn sumac have many leaflets (usually more than thirteen), which are slender and lance shaped and have a toothed margin.

Like poison sumac, dwarf sumac has fewer leaflets that are more oval shaped with smooth or even margins, but dwarf sumac leaves have a winged midrib. Poison sumac never has the wing margin on the midrib.

**Dwarf Sumac**

So, protect yourself and the ones you love. Poisoning by these plants is preventable if you know how to identify them. Children should be taught to recognize these plants, particularly poison ivy, which is by far the most common.