War against Weeds

By Terry Brite Devalle, Horticulture Extension Agent, Duval County

In mid February azaleas and dogwoods will be blooming, which is an indicator that soil temperatures are heating up. This also means that seeds deposited by summer weeds will begin to germinate. Herbicide applications to prevent the germination of weed seedlings are linked to soil temperatures, and treatment time can vary from mid-February to March 1. That is a good time to apply pre-emergent herbicides.

The first step is to identify the weed and determine why the weed has become a problem. Are you mowing at the correct height and removing no more than one-third of the leaf blade? Perhaps the grass is stressed from foot traffic, shade or too much water. Remember, a healthy lawn can keep weeds from becoming established.

Weeds are grouped into one of three categories: broadleaf, grasses and sedges. Broadleaf weeds have leaves with netted veins and often have showy flowers. Examples are dollarweed, chickweed, and clover. Grass weeds have leaves with parallel veins and have low, rounded stems with nodes referred to as joints. Crab grass is one example.

Sedges are grass like weeds with distinguishing characteristics. They have triangular stems which are not hollow, have no nodes, and leaves which extend in three directions. Examples include purple and yellow nutsedge.

It is important to know if the weed is an annual or a perennial. Warm season annuals emerge in the spring and produce seeds before winter. Cool season annuals sprout in the fall but form seeds in early spring. Perennials may die back each year but come back from the root system, not seed.

Herbicides will help control weeds but will weaken grasses. Tree roots will absorb herbicides, and may become stressed. For weeds in a small area, the first defense is to hand pull. Taller weeds can be mowed. Apply herbicides when the area is out of control.

Sedges are difficult weeds to control and are often found in moist compacted soil. Use herbicides in conjunction with correcting drainage and soil problems.

Crab grass is prolific and hard to control with herbicides. Pre-emergent herbicides, applied to prevent seed from germinating, are only effective if the weeds have died back and are germinating from seed.

Some weeds require more drastic measures. A broad spectrum herbicide such as glyphosate is an option for crab grass, Bermuda grass, Florida betony, alligator weed, torpedo grass, and doveweed. This will kill everything, including your St. Augustine grass. Use an edger or shovel to cut the runner of your grass around the area to be treated. Glyphosate is a systemic herbicide and cutting the runners will prevent transfer outside the treated area.

Watering the day or evening before treatment, or applying after a rain will increase the effectiveness of a herbicide.

Timing is everything!
Crash Course in Florida Gardening
Thursday/Friday
February 4-5, 2010
9AM-12PM
Checks should be made out to Nassau County Extension.
Registration deadline is Friday, January 22nd.
Cost is $50 for notebook and materials.
Phone 904 548-1116 or e-mail rljordi@ufl.edu to enroll.
Fifteen participants are required.

Landscape Matters

Pruning
Wednesday January 20, 2010 10AM - 11AM
Rebecca Jordi

Roses
Wednesday February 10, 2010 10AM - 11AM
Master Gardener Paul Gosnell

Special Class on Citrus Pruning
Wednesday February 17, 2010 10AM - 11AM
Rebecca Jordi

Plant Clinics
Monday February 8, 2010 10AM - 2PM
Monday February 22, 2010 10AM - 2PM

Stormwater Pond Landscaping and Maintenance Presentation
Wednesday January 20, 2010
6:30 PM – 8:30 PM
Paula Staples, Nassau County Watershed Action Volunteer Coordinator and Rebecca Jordi, University of Florida/IFAS Nassau County Horticulture Extension Agent will educate homeowners and small businesses about the benefits of correct maintenance and proper landscaping of plants surrounding stormwater systems and within the aquatic system itself.

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

Location
Nassau County Extension
86026 Pages Dairy Road
Yulee, FL

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Super Shrubs - Shrimp Plant

This colorful shrub gets its name from profuse blooms which resemble shrimp, especially if one squints from a distance. This evergreen perennial is native to Mexico, and it is a popular ornamental among people who live in warm climates. In peninsular Florida it has escaped cultivation and naturalized.

The plant should be expected to successfully overwinter without damage only in zones 10 and 11. In zone 9b, the tops will be killed in a severe freeze but regrowth should occur from the roots. (If the plant does die back, dead foliage should be trimmed away and removed to clear the ground for the spring.) Elsewhere it can be used as an annual. Even where this perennial remains unscathed by winter frosts, it should be pruned back hard annually to overcome a tendency toward legginess.

If winters are mild, the shrimp plant will bloom almost year-round, a trait many gardeners appreciate. The leaves may be deep green or purple in color, while the flowers come in various shades of red, white, yellow, pink, green, or cream.

The shrimp plant enjoys full to partial sun and needs generous watering in hot weather to keep it looking fresh. You may start new plants from cuttings in the spring or by division of clumps.
“TO DO” LIST FOR JANUARY

**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 criss-crossing 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.

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

“TO DO” LIST FOR FEBRUARY

**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.
Master Naturalist Jean Middleton and Master Gardener Kay McAllister learn from Bob Chabot, Director of Horticulture at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens.

Nassau County Master Gardeners pose with Bob Chabot, Director of Horticulture at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens.
Bob Chabot, Director of Horticulture at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens inspires Nassau County Master Gardeners.

Nassau County Master Gardener Shirley Fenton and Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens Horticulturist Jennifer Best.
The osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*, is a large raptor, a fish eating bird of prey. It tolerates a wide variety of habitats, but is found mostly along lakes, rivers, and coasts with relatively clear water. Ospreys are found on all continents except Antarctica, although they migrate through South America and do not breed there.

In Florida ospreys are found statewide, but in greater numbers in some areas such as the Kissimmee and St. Johns River basins, the swamps of Alachua and Marion counties, and near Sebring and Lake Placid. Fewer are found in north Florida during the winter.

Ospreys usually mate for life. They nest near or over water in the tops of tall trees, including cypress and pine, and in mangroves along the coasts. They also nest on manmade structures such as telephone poles, television antennas, channel markers, and nesting platforms. The same nest may be reused and expanded for many years.

Ospreys suffered serious population declines in Florida in the 1950’s and 1960’s, the result of pesticide contamination, breeding site destruction, and shooting. They have recovered though there has been a decline in the Florida Keys population, and their status is a species of special concern in Monroe County.