Save the Dates
March 20th and 21st
Kanapaha Spring Garden Festival
at Kanapaha Botanical Gardens

April 17th Native Plant Sale
at Morningside Nature Center
Gainesville

Vegetables
Cool season crops like beets, broccoli, cabbage, collards, cauliflower, carrots, celery, endive, and escarole can still be planted in the late winter garden. Also Chinese cabbage, kale, lettuce (crisp, butter-head, leaf and Romaine) mustard, green onions, kohlrabi, leeks, English peas, parsley, potatoes, radishes, and turnips can be planted at this time. These vegetables will tolerate temperatures slightly below freezing but will need protection if the temperature dips below 28 degrees Fahrenheit. You may request a copy of the Vegetable Gardening Guide, SP-103 from the Extension Office.

Now is a great time to get your potatoes started in the vegetable garden.

You can also select warm season crops seeds like tomato, cucumber, pepper, and eggplant for growing your own transplants. Seeds may be germinated in flats or containers and placed in a cold frame, greenhouse, or in a south-facing window. In late February or early March, transplant seedlings into your garden.

Be prepared to protect tender young plants if we have a late freeze. The average last freeze date is March 10th.

Four to six weeks prior to planting your spring vegetable garden, till the ground where you plan to plant. If you have not had your soil pH checked in the past couple of years, you may want to consider doing so. Call the Alachua County Cooperative Extension Office (352-955-2402) for information on soil testing. Soil testing can tell you what the acid level (pH) and levels of nutrients are in your soil. A slightly acid
Now is a good time to fertilize deciduous fruit trees. For peaches, plums, pears, persimmons, apples and figs, apply about 1 lb, if 10-10-10 fertilizer per tree during May of the first season after planting. Each February in succeeding years, apply about 1 ½ lbs. of 10-10-10 fertilizer for each year of age of the tree until a maximum of 10 to 15 lbs. per tree is reached. Excessive nitrogen fertilizer results in vigorous growth that requires excessive pruning and drastically reduces the number of fruit buds formed. Also, overly vigorous pear trees are often attacked by the bacterial disease, fire blight, so be careful when fertilizing pears.

For pecan and chestnuts, apply 1 lb. of 10-10-10 fertilizer per tree the first season. This application should be made in May. After the first season, apply 10-10-10 fertilizer each February at the rate of 2 lbs. for each year of age of pecan trees with the maximum of 50 lbs. per tree.

Blueberries are very sensitive to nitrogen and can be killed easily – particularly when they are young. Exercise caution when fertilizing young plants. An annual application of 2 ounces of acid fertilizer (such as for camellias and azaleas) per plant in February is ample fertilizer on 2 year old plants. Blueberries should not be pruned until after harvest.

Mature blackberry vines should receive three applications of 1/3 lb. of a complete fertilizer (i.e., 10-10-10) with the first application in late February, the second shortly after harvest, and the third in late August.

Grapes (bunch and muscadine) should be fertilized at the rate of 1 ½ lbs. of 10-10-10 for each year of age with a maximum of 5 lbs. per plant applied in late February.

Watch for pest problems like insects and diseases. Remove insects and any plant parts that may be diseased to reduce stress and spread to the rest of the garden.

**COMING CLASSES**

**Growing Fruit in North Central Florida**  
February 17, 2010, 6:00 - 7:30 pm  
Learn to grow citrus, peaches, persimmons, blueberries and more in your own backyard. Pre-register by leaving voicemail at 352-337-6209.  
Class will be held at the Alachua County Extension office 2800 NE 39th Ave Gainesville, Fl 32609

**Vegetable Gardening Basics**  
March 3, 2010, 6:00 - 7:30 pm  
Learn the right vegetable varieties and planting times for vegetable garden success. We will also cover site planning, maintenance and harvesting. Pre-register by leaving voicemail at 352-337-6209. The class will be held at the Alachua County Extension office 2800 NE 39th Ave Gainesville, Fl 32609

**Turf Boot Camp**  
March 17, 2010, 6:00 - 7:30 pm  
Shape up your grass. Learn about lawn pests, weeds, and disease problems in your lawn. Also covered is correct watering and fertilizing. Discover different grass types and lawn care techniques. Pre-register by leaving voicemail at 352-337-6209. The class will be held at the Alachua County Extension office 2800 NE 39th Ave Gainesville, Fl 32609
Now is the time to prune your deciduous fruit trees. Proper pruning and training of fruit trees is necessary to obtain maximum yield of high quality fruit.

Pruning should be done toward the end of winter to avoid promoting premature growth that could be damaged by freezes. For more information on how to maintain and prune fruit trees, ask for Fact Sheet HS-82, *Pruning and Training Deciduous Fruit Trees for the Dooryard.*

Spraying an application of Horticultural Oil spray (dormant oil) while the tree is in dormancy is an effective way to control scale problems for the coming year, and to clean up any current scale problems.

**Lawns**

Most lawns are dormant now and should stay that way until the warm weather comes by to stay. You should mow and water only as needed. In cooler weather, water approximately every 10-14 days, applying ¾ inch at a time. Even though grass might be trying to grow, do not fertilize yet. A cold snap could damage new succulent growth stimulated by fertilization, so wait until March to do so. Also wait until after the last freeze (March-April) to seed or sod new lawns.

Rake lawns to remove fallen plant debris in preparation for next month’s spring growth and subsequent fertilization. Use the debris under and around existing trees and shrubs as mulch.

If you had a problem with annual spring weeds like CRAB GRASS you can apply a pre-emergence herbicide in late February or early March to stop these weeds as they germinate. More information is available from the Extension office.

**Trees and Shrubs**

If you have cold damaged landscape plants, be careful not to prune off freeze damage too soon. Plants should bud or leaf out by March. Prune out split damaged of dead branches just below damaged area. Never prune plants during a growth flush (leafing out). And as a general rule: only prune 1/3 of growth at any one pruning. For more information on pruning, request Circular 853, *Pruning Landscape Trees and Shrubs.*

Winter and spring flowering plants such as azalea, camellia, gardenia, spirea, Indian hawthorn, wisteria, dogwood, fringe tree, redbud, some hydrangeas and magnolias such as star and saucer should be pruned soon after flowering but before flower buds form for next year.

Plants that produce flowers in the summer or fall can be pruned now. They include abelia, hibiscus, oleander, rose, crape myrtle, cassia, and princess flower. Now is also a good time to prune shade trees like oaks, maples and hickories.

**Herbs**

Plant cool season herbs like dill, coriander, parsley, chervil, chives, garlic, rosemary, sage, sweet marjoram and thyme. Wait to plant others until danger of frost or freeze has passed.

**Flowers**

Now is the time to plant alyssum, baby’s breath, calendula, China doll carnation, dianthus, gloriosa, Marguerite daisy, pansy, petunia, and snapdragon, dusty miller, statice, candy tuft, delphinium, foxglove, sunflower, sweet pea, and nasturtium. Use transplants since they will flower faster and are harder.

Bulbs that may be planted now are African lily, caladium, canna, crinum, dahlia, gloriosa lily, kaffir lily, Marcia, moraea, spider lily, tritonia, tuberose, watsonia, zephyr lily, achimenes, Dutch iris (pots), ixia, and voodoo lily.

Valentine’s Day is a good reminder to prune your roses. Prune your well established roses in order to maintain shape and size. Pruning also encourages blooming. Use sharp pruning shears and make cuts at a 45 degree angle at ¼ inch above the node.

Fertilize camellias and remove spent flower buds. Wait to prune
until bloom ceases. If you had petal blight on azaleas, remove the old mulch and apply a fresh layer of new mulch around plants to prevent spore germination next year.

This is the time of year when people prune their crape myrtle trees if necessary. Severe pruning (crape murder) has been shown to reduce the number of blooms and delay blooming. Only prune if the tree is growing far too large for the area, and to clean up twiggy growth.

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please e-mail Wendy at wilbewl@ufl.edu.

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Funding for the duplication of this publication is provided in part by the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners.

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