

Gardening Tips

By Wendy L. Wilber

June 2009

Hurricane Prep

June marks the beginning of Hurricane season in Florida. There is still time to evaluate the trees in your landscape for potential hazards. Storm damage can be reduced with preventative action. If your trees need attention, contact a certified arborist as soon as you can.

Remove dead branches that can fall on houses, cars, and people. Eliminate branches with cracks and those that are not attached to the tree well. If your tree has disproportionate or overly long branches, shorten them instead of removing them all together. Thinning trees by removing branches on the outer edge of the canopy will reduce wind resistance. Topping a tree is not a recommended practice.

Pay special attention to the following list of trees. These are species that did not fare well in the Florida hurricanes.

Laurel oak – Trees decay as they reach about 40 years old; roots rot, bark inclusions cause weakness.



Trees can fall during the heavy winds of hurricanes.

Water oak – Trees decay as they reach about 40 years old; roots rot.

Turkey oak – Trees decay as they reach about 40 years old; roots rot.

Southern red oak – Butt rot occurs on old trees.

Chinaberry – Wood is weak; prevention is difficult.

Red maple – Bark inclusions are common; branches with

inclusions break easily in storms; preventative pruning can help minimize damage.

Pines – Pine branches broke and trunks snapped; prevention is difficult.

Pecan – Poor structure resulted in breakage; trees can be preventively pruned to minimize this.

Tulip poplar – Many planted trees blew down in the hurricanes; there are other reports of good



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Heliotrope is an excellent plant to use in the butterfly and pollinator garden

survival of planted trees; check for and cut circling roots at planting.

Southern red cedar – Weak wood breaks in strong storms; prevention is difficult.

For more information concerning the lessons learned about trees in hurricanes, and how to recover from a hurricane check out the UF website <http://treesandhurricanes.ifas.ufl.edu>

Vegetables

The list of recommended vegetables to plant narrows as we move into the hot time of year. You can still plant lima beans, okra, southern peas and sweet potatoes in the summer garden. Also try Malabar spinach or Tampala (amaranth), two tropical spinach-like vegetables available from seed companies.

When possible, water early in the day and avoid overhead watering. Wet foliage going into the evening is susceptible to attack by disease organisms. Surface irrigation

systems like drip irrigation, soakers and weep hoses keep the foliage dry and apply water directly to the root zone. You may need to fertilize your garden at this time. For most soils you will need to add 2 ounces of 8-8-8 or 1 ounce of 15-0-15 for a 10 foot row. Apply every three to four weeks, side dressing just outside of roots on both sides of rows.

The primary purpose of cultivation is to control weeds, and they are easier to control when small. Practical weed control in gardens is best accomplished by hand-pulling, hoeing, mechanical cultivation or mulching. Chemical herbicides are not suggested because none are labeled for all vegetables.

Disease incidence and insect problems are at their peak during the summer months. Several gardeners have reported problems with blossom-end rot on tomatoes, yellow squash and zucchini. This problem arises during dry/wet weather cycles and results in a calcium deficiency. Other crops

that can be affected are cantaloupe, and watermelon. Spray the foliage of the plants with calcium chloride at 1.3 tablespoons per gallon of water 2 to 3 times a week, and make sure you are watering the garden.

Scout the garden at least twice a week for insect damage. Spray only affected plants if you find insects. Follow label directions.

Insect pest such as aphids and white flies can be controlled by soaps or soaps plus oil solutions. These can be homemade by adding 2 tablespoons of liquid dish soap (without a degreaser) to 1 gallon of water for the insecticidal soap. Soap-oil solutions are made with 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil and 2 tablespoons of liquid dish soap to 1 gallon of water.

Tomatoes do not set new fruit when night temperatures rise above 70° F. High temperatures cause pollen tubes to abort. Therefore, no fruit are formed. Varieties like 'solar set', 'heat wave' and 'cherry' types are more tolerant of heat.

Herbs

There are a few herbs that can be planted at this time. They include basil, sage, marjoram, horehound, ginseng, ginger, catnip, comfrey, chives, thyme, summer savory, borage, hyssop, lemon verbena, rosemary, tarragon, mint, and oregano. Cut them frequently and fertilize as for vegetables. Herbs can be grown in containers too.

Fruits

Potted fruit plants or trees can still be planted, but keep them watered.



This is the harvest season for blueberries, blackberries, apples and some pears. If you do not have dooryard fruit trees, consider picking your own at a local U-pick or buy locally grown fruit from the Farmer's Market. Come by the Extension Office and pick up a Grower's Directory of local growers who sell to consumers.

Fertilize citrus, apples, pears, pecans, plums, peaches, nectarines, and persimmons this month. Fertilize peaches and grapes if you didn't fertilize last month. Yellowing of blueberry leaves may indicate an iron deficiency. Apply a liquid iron and have the soil pH tested.

Flowers

Plant flowers that thrive in hot, wet weather. These include begonia, blue daze, blue sage, celosia, coleus, coneflower, crossandra, cup flower, Gerbera daisy, goldenrod, golden shrimp plant, hollyhock, impatiens, justitia, jacobinia, kalanchoe, melampodium, Mexican sunflower, nicotiana, ornamental pepper, pentas, periwinkle, portulaca, salvia, torenia, vinca, and zinnia. Use either transplants or seedlings.

Trees and Shrubs

Newly planted trees and shrubs must be watered on a regular basis to give the root system time to become established. You can still plant containerized trees and shrubs, and this is also a good time to plant palms.

Water established trees and shrubs only when needed. Plants can lose water faster than they are able to take it up during hot, dry spells. Azaleas are good indicators of drought stress since they have a shallow root system.

This is the last month to prune azaleas without pruning off next year's blooms.

It is a good time to propagate most shrubs and trees from cuttings. Softwood and semi-hardwood cuttings are taken from the current season's growth. For more information on propagation, call the Extension Office and request **Circular 579, Propagation of Landscape Plants**.



Following the wet weather you may see slime mold on your turf. It is harmless and will go away when the weather dries up.

Lawns

The rains of May have really made our lawns green and growing. Keep up the lawn looking great by mowing at the appropriate heights.

If possible, mow the lawn the day after watering. Be sure to remove no more than 1/3 of the length of the leaf blade. Mow higher and less frequently whenever possible. This reduces stress on the grass during hot dry periods. Proper mowing and watering practices encourage deep roots which allow our lawns to survive during times of drought.

WILDLIFE HAPPENINGS

The Southern flying squirrel is starting its breeding season.

Red bats and Seminole bats give birth.

It's the height of the gopher tortoise breeding season.

Cicadas emerge from their underground growth period to begin making their classic summer sound.

Turfgrass Species	Optimal Mowing Height (inches)	Mowing Frequency (days)
Bahiagrass	3.0 - 4.0	7 - 17
Centipedegrass	1.5 - 2.0	10 - 14
St. Augustinegrass	2.5 - 4.0*	5 - 14
Zoysiagrass	1.0 - 3.0	10 - 14

* Dwarf varieties of St. Augustinegrass (Seville, Captiva, Delmar) are the only cultivars of this species that should be mowed at 2.5".



Watch for yellow or brown areas. Bahia, Centipede and St. Augustine lawns typically yellow during the summer months. This yellowing may be caused by a minor element deficiency and can be corrected by spraying ferrous sulfate (chelated iron). Apply at a rate of 2 ounces/3-5 gallons water per 1000 square feet.

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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