



Baker County Extension Service Monthly Newsletter

February 2011

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Dear Extension Friends,

Although we haven't seen much warm weather, Spring is just around the corner and there will be many Extension Programs offered in our Programmatic Areas. Please check the Calendar and Upcoming Events section for dates and details. Thank you to all of our stakeholders who have responded to continue receiving the newsletter. Since we have to update our mailing lists every year, it is important that we have your information so that you can continue to receive the newsletter. You may also subscribe to an electronic version by visiting our website at <http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu>. As always, if we can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Davis
County Extension Director / Ag Agent



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Highlights in Horticulture

By:

*Alicia Lamborn,
Horticulture Agent*

Species Spotlight: Blueberries



Growing blueberries can be both rewarding and fun since they show fall color, followed by interesting flowers and delicious fruit. But if you haven't already planted, you'd better hurry - the best time to plant is from mid-December to mid-February!



Two types of blueberries are grown in Florida; rabbiteye and southern highbush. However, only low-chill cultivars of each are adapted to Florida. Most blueberry cultivars grown in Florida are self-unfruitful, requiring one or more other cultivars for good cross pollination. And choosing the right cultivars for our area is very important since some perform better than others. In general, rabbiteye cultivars are considered easier to grow in North Florida because they flower later, reducing the chance of flower drop from late freezes. They also require less organic matter, less mulching, and are more drought tolerant and vigorous than southern highbush cultivars. Rabbiteyes are best adapted to areas of Florida north of Ocala. Early season rabbiteyes include 'Beckyblue', 'Bonita', 'Climax', and 'Austin'. Most of the mid to late season rabbiteye cultivars are more productive, which include 'Brightwell', 'Powderblue', 'Tifblue', and 'Woodard', and others. However, the early season cultivars are useful in extending the rabbiteye harvest season.

Southern highbush blueberries are considered more difficult to grow because they flower early making them more susceptible to winter freezes. They are also less forgiving of soil requirements and are more prone to having root rot and stem blight problems. In general, southern highbush cultivars should be grown in central and south Florida, although some are adapted to areas as far north as Gainesville. Recommended highbush cultivars include 'Emerald', 'Gulf Coast', 'Jewel', 'Millennia', 'Sharpblue', 'Star', and 'Windsor', but cold protection may be required to grow these varieties in our area.

Blueberries thrive on acidic soils (soil pH of 4.0 to 5.5 is required) containing 1-3% organic matter. Incorporating peat moss prior to planting and later mulching with pine bark will increase soil organic matter and help lower pH. Bushes should be pruned at planting. Prune any weak, twiggy growth at the base of the plant, but leave the tallest, strongest cane unpruned. During the first growing season, all flowers should be removed before fruit set occurs. Since plants use a lot of energy producing fruit, removing the flowers will help promote strong vegetative growth and good plant establishment. Plant in a sunny location, away from the roots of trees. Plants located too close to hardwood trees will produce less fruit, except when planted near pine trees. Since blueberries can be damaged or killed from over fertilization, it is best to provide frequent but light applications of a 12-4-8 analysis fertilizer with 2% magnesium (Mg). A special formulation called "blueberry special" is available in Florida or another possibility is an "azalea-camellia" fertilizer that meets these requirements.

For more information on growing blueberries and other fruits check out the following online publications:

- ◆ **Blueberry Gardener's Guide** <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg359>
- ◆ **Fruit Varieties for Baker County** <http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu/Horticulture/fact%20sheets.html>
- ◆ **Month-by-Month Calendar: Fruits and Nuts** <http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu/Horticulture/fact%20sheets.html>

If you need more information (on any topic), stop by our office to visit our publication room which is filled with free information!

Living Well in Baker County

By:
Melanie Thomas,
FCS Agent











It's Tax Time!



It's that time of the year again; the income tax filing season has begun and important tax documents should be arriving in the mail. Even though your return is not due until April, getting an early start will make filing easier. Here are the Internal Revenue Service's top 10 tips that will help your tax filing process run smoother than ever this year.

- **Start gathering your records** Round up any documents or forms you'll need when filing your taxes: receipts, canceled checks and other documents that support income or deductions you're claiming on your return.
- **Be on the lookout** W-2s and 1099s will be coming soon if you haven't received them already; you'll need these to file your tax return.
- **Use Free File:** Let Free File do the hard work for you with brand-name tax software or online forms. It's available exclusively at <http://www.irs.gov>. Everyone can find an option to prepare their tax return and e-file it for free. If you made \$58,000 or less, you qualify for free tax software that is offered through a private-public partnership with manufacturers. If you made more or are comfortable preparing your own tax return, there's Free File Fillable Forms, the electronic versions of IRS paper forms. Visit www.irs.gov/freefile to review your options.
- **Try IRS e-file:** After 21 years, IRS e-file has become the safe, easy and most common way to file a tax return. Last year, 70 percent of taxpayers - 99 million people - used IRS e-file. Starting in 2011, many tax preparers will be required to use e-file and will explain your filing options to you. This is your chance to give it a try. IRS e-file is approaching 1 billion returns processed safely and securely. If you owe taxes, you have payment options to file immediately and pay by the tax deadline. Best of all, combine e-file with direct deposit and you get your refund in as few as 10 days.
- **Consider other filing options** There are many different options for filing your tax return. You can prepare it yourself or go to a tax preparer. You may be eligible for free face-to-face help at an IRS office or volunteer site. Give yourself time to weigh all the different options and find the one that best suits your needs.
- **Consider Direct Deposit** If you elect to have your refund directly deposited into your bank account, you'll receive it faster than waiting for a paper check.
- **Visit the IRS website again and again** The official IRS website is a great place to find everything you'll need to file your tax return: forms, publications, tips, answers to frequently asked questions and updates on tax law changes.
- **Remember this number: 17** Check out IRS Publication 17, Your Federal Income Tax on the IRS website. It's a comprehensive collection of information for taxpayers highlighting everything you'll need to know when filing your return.
- **Review! Review! Review!** Don't rush. We all make mistakes when we rush. Mistakes will slow down the processing of your return. Be sure to double-check all the Social Security Numbers and math calculations on your return as these are the most common errors made by taxpayers.
- **Don't panic!** If you run into a problem, remember the IRS is here to help. Try <http://www.irs.gov> or call toll-free at 800-829-1040.














February 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3 	4	5 
6	7	8 	9	10 	11  	12 
13	14	15 	16	17  	18	19
20	21 	22	23	24 	25	26
27	28					

Upcoming Programs are marked with a Program Area Symbol. Please match these symbols with the list on the following page for more information about the program.

Upcoming Programs & Events

Programs will be held at the Baker County Extension Office (Agricultural Center) unless otherwise noted.

- Feb. 3**  **All County 4-H Club.** Start time is 6:30pm. Contact 4-H Agent with questions.
- Feb. 5**  **2011 Water Education Festival at MOSH.** 10:00am to 4:00pm at the Museum of Science and History, Jacksonville. Bring the kids out for a fun-filled day of games, crafts, and experiments that celebrate the importance of water and Florida's environment! There will also be a 'touch tank' where you can interact with water animals and a water scavenger hunt for prizes! The Baker County Master Gardeners will be there showing off a floating water garden and will also have a water wise trivia challenge. **Admission is FREE.**
- Feb. 8**  **Hoof N Around 4-H Club.** Start time is 6:30pm. Contact 4-H Agent with questions.
- Feb. 11**  **Winter Orchard Management.** 8:00am to 4:30pm. This is the second course of a 4-part series held at the N. FL Research and Education Center—Suwannee Valley, 8202 CR 417, Live Oak, FL. Topics will include: pruning stone fruit and Muscadine grapes, market research and strategies, cold protection, pest control and cold-hardy citrus. \$80 registration fee due 1 week prior; bring a farm hand for \$50; late registration add \$25. Registration forms available at the Baker County Extension Office or visit <http://nfrec.ifas.ufl.edu>. For more information, call 386-362-1725, ext. 109.
-  **Food Preservation Class.** 9:00am to 12 noon. The program will emphasize the proper techniques in canning foods safely. Registration is \$20 per person and is due by February 8. For more information, please call the Baker County Extension Office at 904-259-3520. Space is limited.
- Feb. 15**  **Tri-County Pesticide Update.** 5:00pm to 9:00pm at the Lake Butler Community Center, Lake Butler, FL. Topics include Weed Management for Vegetable Crops, Pasture & Hayfield Weed Control and Integrated Pest Management. A total of 3.5 CEU's have been applied for. Registration is \$10 per person and due by February 11. Late Registration or on-site is \$15. Contact the Baker County Extension Service at 904-259-3520 or visit our website (<http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu>) for more information.
- Feb. 17**  **Tri-County Beef Update.** 6:00pm to 9:00pm at the Bradford County Extension Office, Starke, FL. Topics include Body Condition Scoring, Minerals and Beef Cattle Nutrition. To register, contact the Bradford County Extension Office at 904-966-6224. For more information, please contact either the Bradford or Baker County Extension Offices.
- Feb. 21**  **Junior Master Gardener 4-H Club.** Start time is 6:00pm. Contact 4-H Agent with questions.
- Feb. 21**  **Vegetable Gardening Class.** 6:00pm to 7:00pm. Save money and eat healthy by learning to grow your own vegetables! Topics include preparing the garden, plant selection, planting, watering, fertilizing, soil pH and lime. Registration by calling the Extension Office at 904-259-3520 by Friday, February 18.
- Cloverleaf Cloggers 4-H Club.** Every Thursday at the Fairgrounds at 7:00pm. 
- Horse Power 4-H Club.** 'Heart Hunt' on 2/12 and meeting on 2/17 at Cuyler Baptist Church, 7:00pm. 
- Archery 4-H Club.** On hold until warmer weather. Contact 4-H Agent with questions. 
- Forestry 4-H Club.** On hold until next fall due to poor attendance. Contact 4-H Agent with questions. 

The Clover Chronicle

By:

*Reneé Gore,
4-H Agent*

Annual County Events Program

- Spend the morning sharing your demonstration or speech about something you have learned in your program area.
- The *Fashion Revue* competition is ready for you if you have a garment that you have sewn.
- Do you play an instrument, recite poetry or whistle? *Share the Fun* skits are a good way to show us your talent and provide lots of entertainment.
- There are also photography and cake contests and the *4-H Olympics* take place in the afternoon.
- Club prizes include a 4-H Banner.
- Check out the 4-H blog archives at http://4hbakerco.blogspot.com/2010_11_01_archive.html for articles on activities.

Contact Reneé Gore, Baker County 4-H Agent, for more details.

Baker County 4-H Blog

The Baker County 4-H Program has developed a blog that is used to pass on timely and important information to our 4-H stakeholders. The web address for the blog is <http://4hbakerco.blogspot.com>.

You can find information on how to participate in County Events, 4-H Projects and more. Club leaders are encouraged to give Ms. Reneé information to post about club activities and events.

**More Than You Ever
Imagined!**



Camp Cherry Lake 2011 Mythology Theme

Camp Cherry Lake for ages 8 to 12 will be held June 27 to July 1, 2011. As always, there is going to be a ton of fun! There are many classes to choose from, including: Kayak and Canoeing, Swimming, Environmental Education, Archery, Healthy Lifestyles and others. Additional activities include night-time camp fires, singing and dancing galore. The theme this year is Mythology. Baker County participants will be camping with Madison and Nassau Counties again this year.

It is anticipated that camp will cost \$200.00 to cover expenses plus canteen, t-shirt and bus travel. We have devised a budget system to help with the costs of Camp. Families can split up the cost over the four months of February to May and make equal payments of \$50.00 each month in the name of your sponsored child. The payments will be held on account for payment of your child's Camp experience. Contact Reneé Gore, Baker County 4-H Agent for details.



Weed Species Spotlight - Cutleaf Geranium

Cutleaf (or Carolina) Geranium is the common name for the species *Geranium carolinarum*. This plant is a winter annual that is common to Florida and has distinctive red to pink hairy stems. The leaves of the plant are divided into deep segments that are attached to long stalks. Common habitats for the Cutleaf Geranium include disturbed areas with little to no cover plants, cultivated fields, pastures and roadsides.

Control of the species is typically achieved via pesticide application when the plant is small and actively growing. Herbicides such as 2,4 D-amine (at 2 pints per acre), Weedmaster (at 1.5 to 2 pints per acre and GrazonNext (at 2 pints per acre) provide excellent control. Please note that the use of brand specific names does not indicate endorsement of the product or production company.

Image Source: Chris Evans, River to River CWMA, Bugwood.org
Source: Weeds in Florida, EDIS Publication SP 37, Florida Cooperative Extension Service; Hall, D.W., Vandiver, V.V. and Ferrell, J.A., authors. ©2006



Cutleaf (or Carolina) Geranium
Geranium carolinarum



Soil Testing

Consider having your soil tested before liming, fertilizing or installing new plants this spring.

- ◆ Soil testing is available through the Baker County Extension Office and the University of Florida's Soil Testing Laboratory.
- ◆ A simple pH test will determine the pH of your soil and the amount of lime needed (if any) to adjust the soil's pH. The pH and lime requirement test is \$3.00.
- ◆ A soil fertility test will determine the pH and lime requirement of the soil, but will also tell you the amount of nutrients currently available to your plants. Based on the results, you will be given specific recommendations on how to fertilize for optimum plant growth. The soil fertility test is \$7.00.
- ◆ Of course, all recommendations are specific to your lawn, garden, or crop.
- ◆ You will also have the option of discussing your results with your county agent.

Stop by the Baker County Extension office today to pick up your free soil testing kit!

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Extension programs are open to all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, handicap, or national origin. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person needing a special accommodation to participate in any activity, should contact the Baker County Cooperative Extension Service at 1025 West Macclenny Avenue, Macclenny, FL 32063 or telephone (904) 259-3520 no later than five (5) days prior to the event. Hearing impaired persons can access the foregoing telephone by contacting the Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8770 (voice) or 1-800-955-8771 (TDD).

SECOND REQUEST

If you would like to remain on the **Baker County Extension Service Newsletter** mailing list in 2011, please complete the form below and mail it or bring it to our office. Individual program newsletters, such as Horticulture and FCS will continue to be produced individually on an electronic basis. You can renew any newsletter subscription by visiting our website at <http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu>. Please disregard this notice if you have already sent the First Notice in.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP** _____

PHONE: _____ **RACE** _____ **GENDER** _____

Please check this box if you prefer to receive the newsletter by email.

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Please return this form to our office or mail it to: Baker County Extension Service
1025 W. Macclenny Ave.
Macclenny, FL 32063