



Know, Sow, Grow Flagler County

UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County
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Melanie Thomas
UF/IFAS Extension Director

It's Spring Time! A time when everything comes to life. According to Merriam-Webster: an early or flourishing stage of development. There is something in the air, and contrary to the yellow haze on your car, it's not just pollen. It's energy from the sun. During spring we experience longer days and more sunlight resulting in new life and alertness.

We often hear or talk about "spring cleaning" and the term is typically associated with decluttering and deep cleaning our homes. However, it's also a perfect time to look inward and declutter our mental health. A time to assess our habits, activities and relationships that directly affect our well-being. According to the National Institute of Health, emotional well-being is the ability to successfully handle life's stressors and adapt to change and difficult times.

True wellness is the result of harmony and balance among multiple dimensions of wellness in our lives. These dimensions include spiritual, emotional, cognitive (thoughts), physical, financial, social, and environmental. While these dimensions may seem simple, they're actually very complex. They must work together to achieve full wellness. Any disruption, such as stress and fatigue, can cause physical consequences such as increased blood pressure, headaches, tension, and even depression over the long term.

You may be asking yourself why I'm writing about mental health in a Master Gardener newsletter. This is the perfect place to include an article on mental health. Our mental health is directly connected to our indoor and outdoor environments.

Gardening and landscaping have proven therapeutic mental health benefits. Studies show that spending time in nature, especially around water and green spaces, can increase moods and self-esteem. It can also reduce anger and anxiety.

As the weather begins to warm the air this time of year the urge to spend more time outside increases. Not only is it fun to be in nature, but it's also good for your soul. There are steps you can take to help maintain or improve the quality of your environment.

LEARN ABOUT AND ENGAGE WITH NATURE:

- Go on a walk or spend time in nature to reduce stress and boost your mood.
- Visit a park right here in Flagler County (<https://www.flaglercounty.gov/departments/parks-recreation/find-a-park>). We have many wonderful choices right in our backyard.
- Visit a Florida State Park (<https://www.floridastateparks.org/>).
- Plant a garden to grow your own food. Even if you do not have a yard, you can grow herbs and other small plants on a porch or windowsill.

PROTECT AND IMPROVE YOUR INDOOR AND OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS:

- Reduce your use of pesticides by using integrated pest management techniques. Talk with a Master Gardener or visit <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/> and search "integrated pest management."
- Turn off unnecessary outside lights at night. Artificial light at night can affect the natural behavior of certain animals and insects, such as songbirds and honeybees.
- Help to preserve and improve natural areas by removing trash and litter.
- Protect your water quality by only letting rainwater go down a storm drain. Do not pour oil, paint, or unused chemicals down a storm drain.
- To protect your indoor air quality, ensure good ventilation and avoid smoking indoors. Prevent mold by monitoring for leaks under sinks and in showers.

By integrating some of these strategic habits into your life, you can manage common stressors and enjoy a healthier life. To learn more about healthy living and the multiple
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For current and past issues of this newsletter visit:

<http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/flagler/lawn-and-garden/horticulture-newsletters/>





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 dimensions of wellness, I encourage you to check out A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO HEALTHY LIVING, a University of Florida EDIS article you can find here: [FCS3359/FY1498: A Practical Guide to Healthy Living \(ufl.edu\)](https://edis.ufl.edu/FCS3359/FY1498)

The Current State of Citrus Greening

Joy Hudson, Master Gardener Volunteer

The average homeowner with a citrus tree that has failed to thrive may or may not have heard of the citrus tree disease called Greening (also referred to as HLB or Huanglongbing). However, commercial growers here in Florida have been struggling with this issue for more than 15 years. It was first discovered in South Florida, then it slowly made its way throughout the entire state. The disease is caused by a bacterium that is injected into the leaves of citrus trees by the Asian citrus psyllid insect, then spreads throughout the tree, including the root system. Because the disease is throughout the tree, Greening can also be spread via grafting.

Since citrus production has been the second largest industry here in Florida, not only is this disease a threat to the trees,



Citrus Greening, Photo: UF/IFAS

but to the economy. Greening has posed such a threat to the citrus industry that serious thought has been given to shifting the focus from citrus to other produce, such as blueberries and pomegranates.

If you, as a homeowner, have a failing citrus tree that has been correctly fertilized, irrigated, and there is no other evidence of the usual pests that

affect citrus, such as leaf miners, mealybugs, and scales, this condition called Greening should be considered. However, conclusively diagnosing this condition is not easy. The University of Florida states that certain conditions must be present on the leaves before looking for a more conclusive diagnosis. Infected trees will first exhibit symptoms of vein yellowing, then go on to produce fewer and smaller fruits which fail to color properly. It is important to note that the vein yellowing caused by Greening is of an asymmetrical pattern, also referred to as “blotchy mottle,” and is considered one of the biggest identifiers of Greening. Not only is the yellowing pattern of the leaves asymmetrical, but the fruits are lopsided as well.

To obtain a conclusive report, submit leaf samples to: University of Florida Plant Diagnostic Center, Building 1291, 2570 Hull Rd., Gainesville, FL 32611, phone (352) 392-1795, or Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry, 1911 SW 34th St., Gainesville, FL 32611, phone (352) 395-4700. Please note that there is a \$50 charge for the analysis performed by the University of Florida Diagnostic Center and no fee charged by the Division of Plant Industry. Test forms and information can be found at:

[UF/IFAS Citrus Extension: Plant Pathology \(ufl.edu\)](https://edis.ufl.edu/).

Currently, there is no cure for Greening affected trees, but many advancements have been made by researchers at the University of Florida to improve the health of citrus trees. For example, the Citrus Health Management Program was established to collaborate directly with growers in developing programs designed to slow the spread of disease. The University has also developed disease tolerant citrus



Photo: F. Alferez

varieties, such as the Sugar Belle, a Mandarin citrus variety.

Most recently, Dr. Fernando Alferez from the UF/IFAS Southwest Florida Research & Education Center in Immokalee, FL published an article in the Hometown News, where he reports on his research performed over a 4-year period. His research has led to many growers trying his new method of growing citrus trees. Dr. Alferez has discovered that placing an individual mesh covering over young citrus trees before they are exposed to Greening

makes it possible for these trees to stay healthy until they begin to produce fruit. In other words, by delaying the chance of infection, the trees stand a much better chance of survival. Fruit drop is eliminated and the trees are now better able to produce normal size fruits. Naturally, the hope is that the end result will be beautiful, tasty fruits.

References: University of Florida, Gainesville, FL: Ed Etxeberria, Pedro Gonzalez, William Dawson, and Timothy Spann, UF/IFAS Blogs, UF/IFAS Citrus County Extension, US/IFAS



Photo: F. Alferez

Citrus Research and Education Center, and Hometown News, Dr. Fernando Alferez, UF/IFAS SW, Florida Research and Education Center, Immokalee, FL.

Post Bloom Care of Your Amaryllis (Hippeastrum) Bulb

Barbara Scharf, Master Gardener Volunteer

Your Amaryllis bulb, purchased for indoor cheer during the holiday season, is now finished blooming. In zone 9A, the potted plant can be treated as a houseplant or moved into the lanai or other sheltered location where it receives a half day of sun. It can be watered, when the soil is dry, and fertilized monthly with a water soluble fertilizer to encourage the growth of new leaves. If a frost is (Continued on next page)



H. Sofia from the collection of Barbara Scharf



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 expected, put it in a location where rain will not reach it. The leaves will slowly turn yellow and start to wither. The completely dry potted plant can then be stored in a cool dark area, such as a garage in zone 9A. After 6-8 weeks, the bulb can be repotted into fresh soil with about 1/3 of the bulb above the soil line, watered once, and put on a sunny windowsill. Amaryllis may become top-heavy when in bloom, so make sure the pot is substantial enough that it will not tip over. Staking the bloom stalk can also reduce the likelihood of tipping. Warmth, increasing daylength, and increasing moisture acts as a signal for the bulb to put up blooms and leaves. Once top growth appears, water when the soil is dry to the touch. No fertilizer is needed until blooming is finished. The bulb takes one to three full growing seasons before it will again flower. Forcing dormancy is not necessary if you are not looking for blooms around Christmas. Amaryllis planted directly into the garden will undergo a short natural dormancy in January through February and bloom in mid-March through April. The next article: Planting Amaryllis Bulbs into the Garden for Springtime Color. *Reference: Sydney Park Brown and Robert J. Black / UFIS Cir-1243 Amaryllis.*

Preventing and Correcting “Crape Murder”

Mary Ellen Setting, Master Gardener Volunteer

The crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia spp.*) is a beautiful, drought-tolerant plant that produces stunning blooms in shades of lavender, white, red, and pink from summer through fall. Properly grown and pruned, its stems and branches provide an interesting sinewy form and texture during winter months after leaf drop. However, because of long-standing pruning practices, many crape myrtles stick out in the landscape with their ugly, misshapen stubby stems with gnarly looking knuckles. The practice of annually topping crape myrtles leaving large branch and stem stubs is now widely known as “Crape Murder.” Topping causes profuse growth at the pruning site, basal sprouting, and increases susceptibility to insects and disease. However, with a little patience and time, the “murdered” crape myrtle can be restored to its natural beauty.



Photo: UF/IFAS blog

A crape myrtle placed in the right site (away from buildings and walkways) is a low maintenance plant needing little or no pruning. Selection of a crape myrtle variety by mature height and width that fits its space in the landscape will minimize the need for pruning to reduce overall plant size. Proper pruning involves removing suckers (small sprouts that develop along main stems or roots) and any crossing, rubbing, damaged or dead branches. Do not remove stems larger than pencil size in diameter. Although pruning can occur anytime, it is best to prune when the plant is dormant – December through February. The later in the season the better to avoid freeze damage to new growth. Since flowers form on new growth, dormant pruning will not interfere with bud development. There are two options to remedy “Crape Murder.” The first method is to choose the strongest two or three sprouts from each stub and remove all the other sprouts. This encourages the remaining sprouts to be stronger and opens

up the canopy of the tree. Follow this procedure for a couple of seasons and the tree health and appearance will greatly improve. This method works best on a tree that has been “murdered” for only a couple of years or less. The second, and more drastic method is to cut the tree back to within one to two inches of the ground while it is dormant. This major rejuvenation is necessary if the tree has been pruned under these conditions for more than two years. After two to three weeks of growth, select three to five of the most vigorous new shoots on each trunk and remove all others. Remove any new shoots that emerge later. Within three to five years, the crape myrtle will have a natural look.

For more information, visit: [EP39900.pdf \(ufl.edu\)](#); [Correcting Crape Murder | Gardening in the Panhandle\(ufl.edu\)](#); [Crape Myrtle Pruning - UF/IFAS Extension \(ufl.edu\)](#); [Pruning Crape Myrtle - Gardening Solutions - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences \(ufl.edu\)](#).

Peppers

Connie Balliet, Master Gardener Volunteer

In north central Florida, spring is an excellent time to start pepper plants indoors or in a greenhouse. Days to harvest for most pepper plants is 90 to 100 days so plants started in February or March will produce fruit by May or June. Peppers love the sun, and they will continue to produce fruit through the Florida summer months as long as they receive proper fertilization, water and mulching. Pepper plants can be started again in midsummer for an early fall planting in August and September. Selecting seeds from colorful catalogs, farm stores or online websites is one of the great pleasures of home gardening.

It is truly amazing how many pepper varieties are available. There are two main varieties of peppers: sweet peppers & hot peppers. Some of the Florida recommended sweet varieties are California Wonder, Red Knight, Sweet Banana, Big Bertha and Cubanelle. For hot varieties, try the Cherry Bomb, Jalapeno, Cayenne and Habanero. You can also buy seedlings from your local garden center. If you are interested in some of the more exotic varieties you will probably have to order seeds and start your own plants. For best results, start your pepper seeds in soil-less potting mix (formulated for seedlings) under a grow light or sunny window. As they emerge, keep the small plants warm and away from drafty shady conditions. When the outside weather becomes warm, you can move them outdoors during the day. When the nighttime temperatures are in the upper seventies, you can move them outdoors fulltime. Peppers prefer well-drained fertile soil with a pH around 6.5.

Water your garden soil regularly to keep your pepper plants
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Photo: UF/IFAS



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producing fruit and blanket the soil around your plants with mulch to help hold in moisture as temperatures rise. You should fertilize, with a control-released fertilizer, at the time of planting and again two or three times throughout the growing season. Chose a fertilizer that is lower in nitrogen, because too much nitrogen will give you wonderful pepper plants that produce very few fruits. Peppers grow well either planted in the ground or in larger container gardens.



Photo : H. Zell. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0

Hot peppers are especially rewarding in the Florida garden because they continue to produce when the temperatures and humidity climb. A single hot pepper plant outside your front door can provide color and interest to your garden or container and all the hot spicy flavor you need for your chips and salsa afternoon snack.

Hot peppers get their spicy flavor from a compound known as capsaicin, and the relative spiciness of peppers is compared on a heat index known as the Scoville scale. The “hotness” of peppers is often measured in Scoville Heat Units (SHU)—a scale invented by Wilbur Scoville—which generally reflects the capsaicin content of a pepper. Milder hot peppers like Jalapeños rank between 1,000 and 10,000 SHU, while spicier peppers like the Cayenne or Habanero can check in at 50,000 or 250,000 SHU. The Carolina Reaper, measuring at 2.2 million SHU must be overseen with extreme caution. When overseeing hot peppers, DO NOT TOUCH YOUR FACE OR ANYWHERE NEAR YOUR EYES. All parts of hot pepper plants and fruits should be kept away from pets and children.

North central Florida is somewhat famous for the Datil pepper, *Capsicum chinense*, which has long been grown in St. Augustine and has very hot, small blunt fruits (100,000 to 300,000 SHU) that ripen to a bright yellow-orange. They have been compared to habanero peppers, but datil enthusiasts say the flavor is more complex and fruitier. Local legend says they were brought to Florida from Spain by Minorcans. Datil peppers are popular in hot sauces and dishes like chicken pirlau and Minorcan clam chowder.



Photo: William McIntosh, UF/IFAS Extension St Johns County Master Gardener Volunteer

For more information on peppers, check out the following UF/IFA resources: Starting Transplants Indoors: <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/planting/starting-transplants-indoors.html>, Hot Peppers: Whether you grow them to eat or just to admire, hot peppers will add a kick to your garden. <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/hot-peppers.html>, Peppers Ranked by Heat: <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/peppers-by-scoville-units.html>, Some Common Diseases of Pepper in Florida: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/VH054>, Peppers: <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/peppers.html>, Gardening with Datil Peppers: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/media/sfylifasufledu/st-johns/horticulture/pdf/Hort-3--Datil-Peppers.pdf>.

Lawn Care Tips for Spring

Lori Powell, Master Gardener Volunteer

Most warm-season grasses went dormant during the winter and will now start coming back to life and turning green. Here are some tips to get your lawn beautiful and healthy.

Watering. The arrival of daylight savings time also means a change in watering restrictions. Residential watering is permitted twice a week depending on the last number of your address. If your address ends in an odd number, your watering days are Wednesday and Saturday and if your address ends in an even number, your watering days are Thursday and Sunday. For more information on watering restrictions visit https://www.sjrwmd.com/watering_restrictions/. Of course, you should only water on those days if your lawn actually needs it. Lawns only need 1/2 inch– 3/4 inch of water per week. Too much watering can lead to a weak root system and increases the chance of diseases. For more information on watering your lawn visit: <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/water/articles/systems/watering.shtml>.

Fertilizing. Proper fertilization is important. Different warm season grasses will have different fertilization needs. The first step in determining the fertilization needs of your lawn is to perform a soil test. Our office will perform an analysis of your soil samples. For information on how to collect your soil sample visit: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/SS494>. Generally, the over- use of fertilizer increases mowing frequency and pest control. Most lawns will benefit from three applications of either a complete or nitrogen source fertilizer starting in March with another application in May and a final application in September. Once lawns start to go dormant in the fall, fertilizer is not needed. Bahiagrass and St. Augustinegrass may turn yellow during the summer because of a lack of nitrogen. However, avoid applying nitrogen during this time as it can cause disease and insect problems. If you want to green up your lawn, apply iron. Iron will make your lawn green without causing excessive growth. Always read the label on the package prior to use. For more information visit: <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/fertilizer/fertilizing-the-lawn.html>.

Mowing. Grass cuttings should be left on the lawn to increase organic matter and provide nutrients to the soil. Each type of warm season grass has an optimal mowing height. Higher mowing heights create a more extensive root system, protect the grass from drought, and increase leaf surface for more photosynthesis to occur. Cutting the grass too short can cause stress and lead to weeds, insects and disease. Bahiagrass should be cut between 3-4 inches high; St Augustinegrass 3.5- 4 inches; and zoysia grass should be cut to 1-2 inches. Make sure your mower’s blade is sharp; dull blades damage the blades of the grass. Mow in a different direction each time you cut your grass. This prevents wear
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patterns and allows the blades to grow straighter and healthier. Avoid cutting grass when it is wet. The blades tend to stick together making the cut very uneven. The clippings can clog the mower and they can mat on the grass blocking the sunlight. Mowing the lawn when it is wet can also spread any small patches of fungus and can create disease infestation. For more information visit: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/LH028>.

Weed Control. The best way to control weeds is by having a healthy lawn. Proper watering, fertilizing and mowing will result in a healthy lawn that crowds out weed growth. First identify the type of weeds that have been or are in your yard. Weed control measures include hand pulling and herbicide application. If you have only a few weeds, hand pulling works best. However, if weeds are a major problem, the use of an herbicide may be needed.

Preemergent herbicides should have been applied mid-February. This type of herbicide must be applied prior to weed germination so timing is important. It will not work on existing weeds. Post emergent herbicides kill existing weeds. Do not mow your lawn for several days after application to give the chemical time to work. Repeat applications spaced 10-14 days apart may be necessary for weed control. Before applying any herbicide, read the directions on the label! Additionally, ensure that the herbicide you apply is safe for your type of lawn. Some herbicides will kill St. Augustinegrass but will not harm bahiagrass. For information on the herbicides that are safe to use on your lawn visit: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP575> and https://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/yourfloridalawn/weed_management_chemicals.html.

Horticulture Workshop Series: How to Make a Terrarium

Lori Powell, Master Gardener Volunteer

The first class in the Horticulture Workshop Series presented by Palm Coast Parks and Recreation with the UF/IFAS Agricultural Extension office was held at the Palm Coast Community Center on January 28.

Master Gardener Volunteers showed attendees how to make a basic open terrarium and care for it. Each attendee created their own terrarium to take home from supplies at the class.

There are four more workshops in the series on various topics. Please see the Upcoming events section of this newsletter on the next page. Hope to see you there!



Spring Planting Guide

<u>Vegetables</u>	<u>Herbs</u>	<u>Perennials/Annuals</u>
Beans	Basil	Angelonia
Cantaloupes	Borage	Caladium
Corn	Cardamon	Coleus
Cucumbers	Lemon Balm	Daylily
Eggplant	Marjoram	Gazania
Okra	Mint	Salvia
Peas	Nasturtium	Wax Begonia
Peppers	Oregano	
Squash	Sage	
Sweet Potatoes	Thyme	
Tomatoes		
Watermelon		

UF/IFAS Extension provides a printable garden calendar: [Florida Gardening Calendar - UF/IFAS Extension \(ufl.edu\)](#). Planting dates and other vegetable gardening information are also available as a free mobile app called 'Florida Fresh.' Access an app provider for your mobile phone or download it from <http://m.ifas.ufl.edu>.



UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County Master Gardener Volunteers

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Our Mission

To assist Extension Agents in providing research-based horticultural education to Florida residents.

Our Vision

To be the most trusted resource for horticultural education in Florida.

On Going Events

Master Gardeners are at the Flagler County Public Library the last Saturday of every month from 9:30 am to 11:30 am to answer your gardening and landscape questions.

Up Coming Events

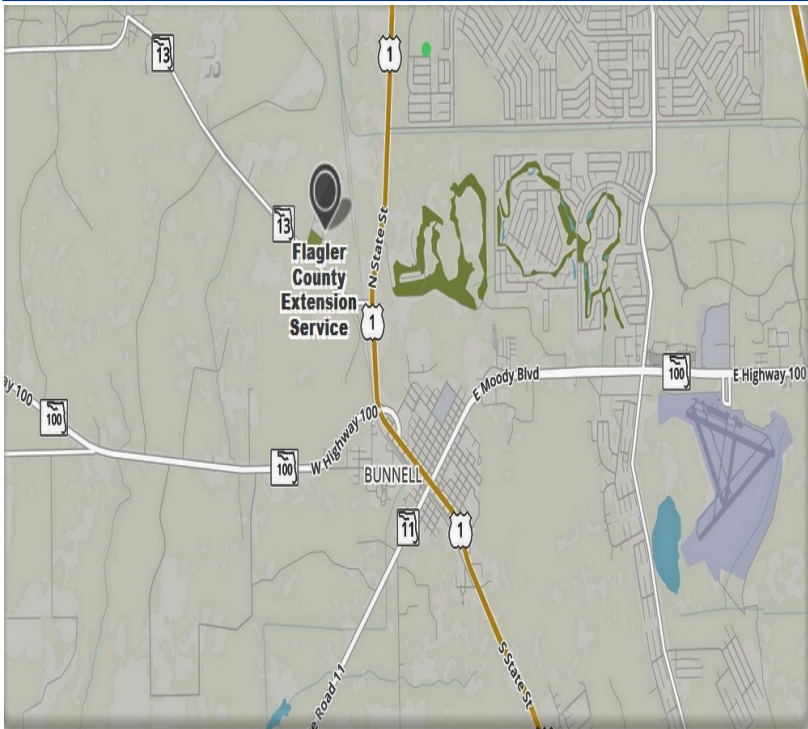
City of Palm Coast Parks and Recreation
Horticulture Workshop Series with UF/IFAS Agricultural Extension Office

Mar 25: Succulents for Indoor and Outdoor
Time: 10 am-11am
Fee: \$10

Apr 29: Raising Butterflies at Home
Time: 10 am-11am
Fee: \$10

May 27: Edible Gardening in a 5-Gallon Bucket
Time: 10 am-11am
Fee: \$10

All workshops will be held at the Palm Coast Community Center located at 305 Palm Coast Pkwy NE, Palm Coast, FL 32137. See additional information at <https://indd.adobe.com/view/80d416c6-a0bc-459d-9e20-7f0a83d78e8c>. Register at parksandrec.fun/seniors or call 386.986.2323 for more information.



Stay Connected!

Flagler County Extension: <http://flagler.ifas.ufl.edu>

University of Florida Solutions for Your Life: <http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu>

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™: <http://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu>

UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions: <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/>

University of Florida Master Gardener: <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/mastergardener>

The Flagler County Master Gardener and Horticulture program is open to all regardless of gender, race, color, nationality, creed, or disability.