



# Know, Sow, Grow Flagler County

UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County

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## Thank you, Volunteers!

Maia McGuire, PhD, UF/IFAS Extension Florida Sea Grant Agent, Interim Associate Program Leader for Florida Sea Grant Extension

I would like to thank all of the Flagler County Master Gardener Volunteers for being so supportive of the UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County Office for the past six months. We anticipate having a new Environmental Horticulture extension agent and Master Gardener coordinator starting in about mid-January.

Our Master Gardener Volunteers (MGVs) are truly an amazing group. In 2019 alone, this group of fifty individuals has reported more than 4,000 volunteer hours. Using the Independent Sector's value for volunteer time for the state of Florida, this equates to over \$96,000 in value!

What do our MGVs do? Perhaps a better question would be what they do *NOT* do! Most weekdays, we have MGVs who help by answering the phones in the Extension Office. They help clients who walk-in or call with horticulture-related questions. Some MGVs also do this at Washington Oaks and the Flagler County Library in Palm Coast during monthly plant clinics. The MGVs plant and maintain the demonstration gardens at the Extension Office as well as the plants in the Government Services Building. They are working with Flagler County Schools to relocate a community garden. The MGVs represent UF/IFAS Extension at outreach events (you can check out their holiday trees at the Library's Festival of Trees and Marineland's Conservation Christmas Celebration). MGVs are also available as speakers for various community meetings and events.

MGVs are also artists, photographers, carpenters, plumbers and mechanics as needs arise.

I would like to extend a hearty "THANK YOU" to all of the Flagler County MGVs—the UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County Office could not function without you!



*Claudia Lappin, Joanne Mason, Julia Wilson, Jeanne Florio, and Joy Hudson at Marineland*



*Kathy Warner, Gregg Wilson, and Verona Groom at the Flagler County Library, Palm Coast*

## Winter 2019

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## Using Soaps on Plants

Mary Ellen Setting, Master Gardener Volunteer

Home-made soap recipes claiming to control plant pests are commonly promoted on social media and garden websites. These recipes or home-brews vary widely in the amounts and brands of soap to use and are touted as a safe and natural pesticide. However, there are a number of reasons why **not** to use soap products on your plants.



Home-brews are not based on scientific research and the different recommendations for amounts of soap and water to use are confusing. Dish soaps are not natural or organic. Dish soaps are not true soaps but synthetic detergents containing sodium-based components made to strip grease off kitchenware.

When used on plants, these soaps remove the protective waxy cuticle on plant leaves. As a result, the plant loses water through transpiration and the foliage dries out. Without the waxy layer, the door is opened to microbial, viral and fungal invasion.

A better alternative to soap home brews is to use insecticidal soap, a registered pesticide product. Insecticidal soaps are more environmentally-friendly and designed for use on plants to control insect and mite pests. When used according to label directions, they are relatively safe for plants. These products contain potassium salts of fatty acids, found in fats and oils of animals (lard, fish oil) and plants (cottonseed, olive, palm, coconut).

Insecticidal soaps are used as a topical spot treatment on soft bodied pests like aphids, soft scale, mealybugs, whiteflies, thrips and spider mites. Two applications 5-7 days apart greatly reduce pest populations. For this product to work, it must come into direct contact with the pest. Any remaining residue on the plant will have no insecticidal effect once it has dried. Products are usually formulated with a 1%-2% insecticidal rate so a majority of plants are not damaged. Delicate ferns, waxy succulents, plants with hairy leaves or those suffering from drought stress may be more sensitive to soaps. The pesticide product label will list sensitive plants that should not be sprayed as well as a caution not to treat a plant on a sunny day when temperatures exceed 90° F.

To avoid causing injury to your plant and the environment, only use products that are registered by the Environmental Protection Agency and follow the legal label directions to be sure it is okay to use on a specific plant. Follow UF /IFAS Extension recommendations for science-based, best results in pest control. For more information, visit <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in1248> and <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in197>.

## Tools for Easier Gardening

Kathi Wright, Master Gardener Volunteer

Getting fresh air and enjoying the fruits of your gardening labor can help relieve stress and improve your health. Unfortunately, a lot of the hard work of weeding, digging, and planting can also be a pain in the neck, back, shoulders, and hands. Here are some tools that can help you avoid pain and let you enjoy your time sowing and reaping.

### Raised beds

When flowers and edibles are in a raised container your back gets a break and you avoid weeds. There are several sizes and materials available at a variety of heights, so you can choose what is most suitable for you.

### Garden Cart

Drop the wheelbarrow, and get a 4-wheeled cart instead. The instability of a wheelbarrow can potentially wrench and strain your shoulders. A 4-wheeled cart does the balancing instead of your muscles and tendons. There are several that have the ability to dump the contents like a wheelbarrow as well.

### Adjustable Handle

Add an adjustable handle to your rake or shovel. There is a good selection of handle attachments that you can add to the pole of your garden equipment that eases strain on your back and shoulders. Because the handle is versatile, you can add it onto your handle so that it fits your height.

### Garden Stool

Get yourself a sturdy stool or kneeler. Some garden stool options can be flipped over to be used as a knee pad, others have storage so you can easily bring along tools. Be sure to select a sturdy version, and you'll avoid straining your back and arms while weeding or planting.

### Coiling Hose

Trade out your heavy hose for a good quality version one that coils. Coiling hoses can weigh five times less than a regular hose and doesn't tangle or kink, so you won't wrench your back dragging it across your patio to water your containers.

These tools can help keep you healthy as you enjoy your Florida garden month-by-month. <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn-and-garden/florida-gardening-calendar/>

**References:** *Jessica Sullivan, Agriculture Faculty at the University of Florida IFAS Extension – Osceola County*

<http://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/design/types-of-gardens/accessible-gardens.html>



## Air Layering - An Underused Form of Propagation

Joy Hudson, Master Gardener Volunteer

Have you ever had an overgrown houseplant, or one that has lost most of its lower leaves, making it unsightly? There is an easy way to make corrections that will give these plants new life. It is called “Air Layering”. This process is virtually fool-proof as the potential new plant remains attached to the parent plant, receiving all the nutrients it requires until roots are developed. A few of the best plants suited for air layering are: rubber plants, fiddle leaf figs, roses and camellias.

“Layering” happens very often in nature. This occurs when a branch of a plant touches the ground, becomes covered with soil and, over time, forms roots. “Air Layering”, on the other hand, has to be manipulated, and is achieved without making any contact with the soil below. To accomplish this technique, you will need the following:

- Sharp knife or blade
- Sphagnum Peat Moss
- String (pre-cut), and ties
- Plastic wrap – 5 inch strip (approx.)
- Aluminum foil – 6 inch strip (approx.)
- Rooting hormone (optional)
- Water

For a plant that has become too large, where you would like to start one or more new, smaller plants:

In a small container, combine sphagnum peat moss with enough water to make it moist, but not soggy. When properly saturated, mound an appropriate amount in the center of the plastic wrap.

Select (but do not remove from plant) the newest branch or branches that are about 2 feet long, with a diameter of about 1/2 to 3/4 inch. Remove all leaves in this area.

Below a node where you would like the roots to begin forming, use a sharp knife to score around the branch (just deep enough to go through the bark and cambium). Make a second ring around the branch that is about 2 inches lower. Then, between the two rings, score a straight line to connect the two rings.

You will now be able to carefully peel off the outer layer between the two rings, thus exposing the white heart of the branch. Rooting hormone may be applied at this point.

Now, carefully cover the exposed area with the plastic wrap bandage you prepared, making sure there is proper contact between moss and branch. Use ties to secure the ends, then tie with string if necessary.

Cover with foil, molding it to mounded area – tie ends with string if needed. Foil may be removed and replaced periodically to determine if roots have formed. Rooting should take an average of four weeks.

As soon as there is an adequate root system, cut branch below the end of the roots and plant in a pot. Extra care is recommended at this point to allow plant to become established. Staking plant may also be helpful.

For a plant that has lost most of its lower leaves, follow the instructions above, but utilize the main stem of the plant to create your new plant. When rooted, place in a pot and discard the lower portion of the plant.

*References: University of Florida Blogs: Wayne Hobbs. North Carolina State Extension: Ervin Evans; Frank Blayich*



Photo credits: Joy Hudson

## Poinsettia Care Pre- and Post-Holidays

Joanne Mason, Master Gardener Volunteer

Well, it's that time of the year again when we are celebrating the holiday season and welcome poinsettias into our homes. Poinsettias are native to Mexico and were given the name *Euphorbia pulcherrima* which means "very beautiful". The bright petals, which resemble flowers, are actually the upper leaves of the plant called bracts. The colors of the bracts are created through photoperiodism, meaning that they require darkness (12 hours at a time for at least five days in a row) to change color.

There are basic rules in caring for the poinsettias while inside your home. First, place the plant in bright, indirect light (direct sunlight is not required)—windows facing south, east or west are the best locations. Second, remember that maintaining temperatures between 65 to 70 degrees are best. Third, do not let the soil dry out. If you feel dryness on the soil, water the plant until it runs freely out the drainage hole. Fourth, the poinsettia pot should be able to drain the excess water, so it does not become water-logged. With proper care, your poinsettias may stay colorful for many months.



Photo Credit: Tyler Jones, UF/IFAS Extension

When the holidays are over, you may want to plant the poinsettia in your landscape after the last frost. Find a spot in your garden where the plant will receive full sun for most of the day and where the soil is moist, well drained, and fertile (with a soil pH between 5.5 and 6.5). Cut off the fading bracts, leaving 4-6 inches of the stem on each branch and as many green leaves as possible. Keep the plant mulched and well-watered until established, and fertilize monthly. During the summer months, be sure to pinch back the poinsettia several times, this will help to create a full plant with lots of flower heads. However, discontinue pruning after mid-September as the buds will begin to develop in October. Contrary to popular belief, poinsettias are not poisonous, although some gardeners may be sensitive to its sap, which contains latex.



Photo Credit: Tyler Jones, UF/IFAS Extension

Enjoy your beautiful poinsettias, and take pride when the following year, the showy portions of the leaves begin to turn color again!

References: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep349> and <http://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/poinsettia.html>

## Winter Lawn Watering

Lori Powell, Master Gardener Volunteer

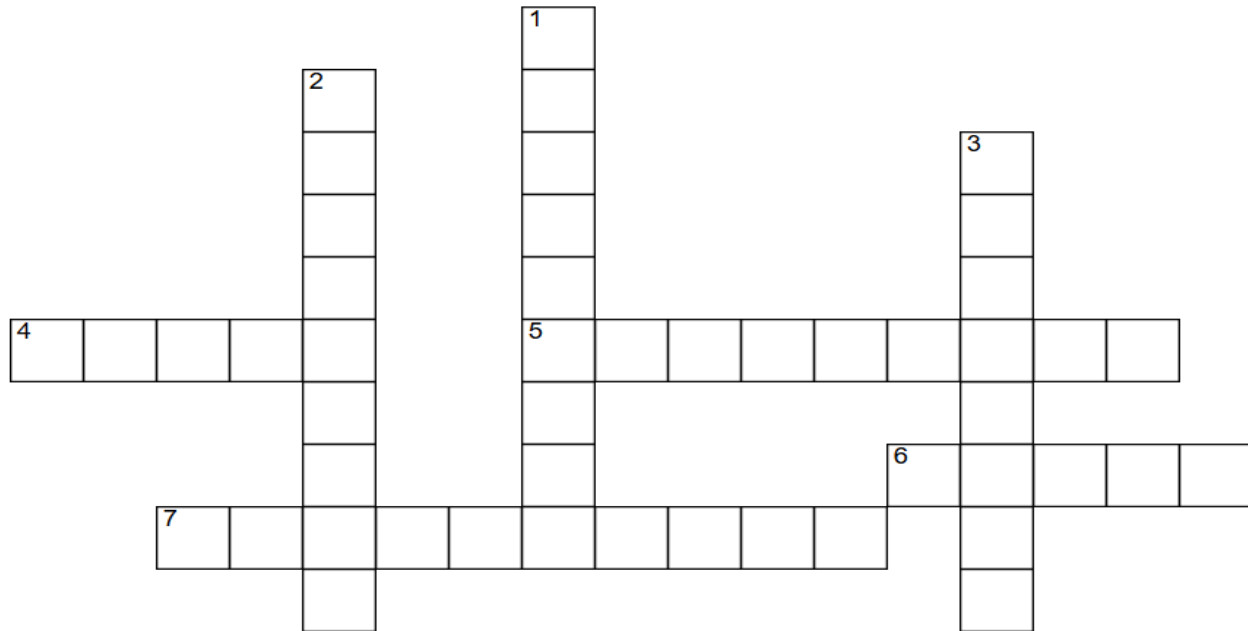
The fall and winter months are periods of dormancy for many warm weather grasses like St Augustine, Bahia and Bermuda. Shorter days and cooler temperatures result in slower-growing lawns.

Your lawn does not need as much water in the winter. Overwatering can harm your lawn by increasing its susceptibility to disease and promoting weed growth.

A good way to know when it's time to water is to simply keep an eye on your lawn. Your grass will tell you when it needs to be watered by showing signs of drought stress or by changing its color.

Remember water restrictions limit watering to one day a week during Eastern Standard time. Homes with addresses ending in an odd number can water on Saturday and those ending in even number can water on Sunday. For more information visit: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/LH/LH02500.pdf> and <https://www.sjrwmd.com/wateringrestrictions/>.

## Winter Garden Wonderland



**ACROSS**

- 4 Genus Ilex
- 5 Plant that has leaves throughout the year that stay green
- 6 Colorful flower with "faces"
- 7 Also known as the Christmas Flower

**DOWN**

- 1 Kissing under a sprig of this is a romantic tradition at Christmas
- 2 A bulbous plant with red or pink trumpet like flowers
- 3 A fragrant evergreen herb native to the Mediterranean

## What to Plant in Your Garden this Winter

### Vegetables

- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Kale
- Lettuce



### Annual, Perennials, Bulbs

- Amaryllis
- Agapanthus
- Dianthus
- Petunia
- Pansies



### Herbs

- Cilantro
- Fennel
- Parsley
- Sage
- Thyme

For more information on planting and maintaining your garden visit: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021>





## Soil Testing

The Flagler County Extension Office offers free soil testing for homeowners. The soil test consists of determining the pH and/or salt content of your soil. Soil pH is a measure of the acidity or alkalinity of the soil. On the pH scale, a value of 7 is neutral, pH values less than 7 are acidic, and pH values greater than 7 are alkaline.

Always consider the pH of your soil when selecting new plant material for your home landscape or garden. For instructions on preparing your samples visit

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ss494>

For your convenience, you can now drop off your samples on certain Saturdays at Master Gardener Plant Clinics. These are held on the second Saturday of every month at Washington Oaks Gardens State Park (10 am–2 pm) and on the last Saturday of every month at the Flagler County Public Library in Palm Coast (9-11 am). Results of your soil test will be provided to you by email.

## Ongoing Events

### Washington Oaks Gardens State Park

Master Gardener Volunteers are at the Washington Oaks Gardens State Park Plant Sale on the second Saturday of every month from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. to answer questions and provide advice.

### Flagler County Public Library, Palm Coast

Master Gardener Volunteers will be available to respond to lawn, landscape and pest management questions with research-based solutions from the University of Florida from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. on the last Saturday of every month.

### Speaker's Bureau

We are available to non-profits, homeowners associations, clubs, etc. Contact us if you would like an Agent or Master Gardener to present information to your group on horticultural topics.

## 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.*

## 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.*