

UF IFAS EXTENSION/
SEMINOLE COUNTY
GOVERNMENT

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- **Sunshine
Spotlight: A
Native Yard!**
- **Soil Health**
- **Fertilizer
Workshops**



The New Leaf Newsletter: Florida-Friendly Landscaping

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Air Potato Patrol: The Secret Agents of the War on Air Potato

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Florida is home to many exotic invasive organisms -everything from plants to insects and even lizards and salt water fish. But one problem plant that many Florida residents are familiar with is *Dioscorea bulbifera*, or the air potato vine. In the past, herbicides and 'air potato roundups' were used to help slow its spread, but it seemed that the vines just came back stronger the next spring.

In 2012, a leaf beetle native to SE Asia, *Lilioceris cheni*, was released for the first time in Florida as a biological control agent. The beetle began to have a positive impact on the volume of air potato plants in many areas. But many questions remain to be answered by researchers concerning the vine's growth and the distribution (and effects) the beetles are having across the state.

In order to better educate Flori-

da residents about this invasive vine and how to control it, a citizen science project, The Air Potato Patrol, was created. This program was created by Dr. William Lester, UF/IFAS Extension in Hernando County, and Dr. Chris Kerr, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), and was launched in early June of this year. Their website includes several educational tutorials on how to properly identify the air potato vine, some common look-alike plants, and the biology and identification of the air potato leaf beetle.

If you are interested in getting involved and doing your part to help better control this invasive plant, along with helping the scientists working on it; the website address is <https://airpotatobeetle.com/>. Occasional surveys will be sent asking the members to collect data on the plants and beetles on their proper-



ty. The response to date has been very positive, but we still need more volunteers to provide information about air potato on their property.

The Newest EDIS Articles

Tools for Evaluating Soil Health

Healthy soil is the foundation of a healthy yard. Use this factsheet to learn the quality of your soil.

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ss657>

Collaborative Planning for the Future of Water Resources in Central Florida: Central Florida Water Initiative

Will we have enough water to meet future demands?

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ss657>

Learn all the latest UF research at
Edis.ifas.ufl.edu

A Beginner's Guide to Water Management —Muck: Causes and Corrective Actions.

Attention lakefront homeowners! Muck is yuck, but needs smart management.

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fa200>

Sunshine Spotlight: Neta Goes Native

Neta's yard is different, *nice* but different, compared to a typical Florida yard. There is a minimal amount of turf grass among the varied textures of different shrubs, palmettoes, cycads, mulch and rock, along with pops of color from flowers and berries. Neta's yard is dominated almost entirely with native plants, which has resulted in a wildlife-loving and drought-tolerant landscape.

Neta made this transition slowly as she learned through friends the benefits of Florida native plants. She says, "Initially, I went on field trips with an ornithologist I worked with. He fascinated me and opened my eyes to nature and encouraged me to be more observant. He was not just an expert on birds but all wildlife and told stories how the native plants and native wildlife have relationships to the benefit and survival of both." Ultimately Neta created a natural Florida ecosystem on her suburban lot.

Neta has since become a member of the Florida Native Plant Society (www.fnps.org) and its local Seminole County Chapter, Cuplet Fern. "[This group] offers me more opportunities to learn about the natives with people more knowledgeable than me and share what I've learned with those just starting."



Why are native plants so important?

Among the many benefits, I believe there are three significant benefits of native plants. 1) Because native plants have adapted over time to our soils, climate, wildlife, disease, and pests, resulting in less maintenance for us, harmful chemicals to people, children, pets, and wildlife are not needed. 2) Using Florida native plants mitigates the loss of our wildlife habitat. One example of our native wildlife is native bees, about 300 different species in Florida. Most live underground. They do not make honey but are primarily important because they pollinate flowers for new generations. 3) Florida native plants represent our unique and natural heritage. They distinguish and differentiate our state from other states by how we and they developed geologically, historically, and climatically.

Florida is very special and we need to celebrate and promote that.

Why do you believe in Florida-Friendly Landscaping?

I believe in and use the nine Florida-Friendly landscape principles in my own yard because they promote common sense gardening for a sustainable and healthy environment – no pollution in water and yard, lower maintenance when you know the plant and what it needs to flourish, provide food and homes for wildlife where existing habitat is destroyed, and conserve water.



What's the most important thing a homeowner can do?

Add Florida native plants in your yard using the nine Florida-Friendly Landscape Principles. Observe and continue to learn.

Your Yard Calendar

What sights in your yard do you get to look forward to? Flowering trees and frolicking critters will make their debut at different times of year. Yard maintenance can also be most effective when paired with the seasons.

July

Flowering: Firebush, Crapemyrtle, Hibiscus, Southern Magnolia

Wildlife: Later this month, young alligators will begin to hatch. Mosquitos and chiggers are abundant. Shorebirds are nesting—keep dogs from disturbing them.



To Do: Check trees for damaged or weak branches to prepare for hurricane season. Use the summer heat to solarize the vegetable garden for fall planting. Prune azaleas no later than mid-July to protect next season's developing buds.

August

Flowering: Jatropha, Plumbago, Swamp mallow, Dotted Horsemint

Wildlife: The first flocks of blue-winged and green-winged teal arrive to winter. Sea turtles are hatching.



To Do: Look for nutrient deficiencies on palms and ornamental plants due to rapid growth and leaching rains. Cut back and remove spent blooms for flowering annuals and perennials to extend bloom season into the fall. In particular, pinch back poinsettias and mums to allow buds to form for winter blooms.

September

Flowering: Buttonbush, Turk's Cap Mallow, Goldenrod

Wildlife: Manatees may begin to concentrate in warmer waters around rivers, bays, and near power plants. Listen for the Spadefoot toads after heavy rains.

To Do: Prepare the fall vegetable garden. Divide and replant perennials and bulbs that have grown too large or need rejuvenation.

Remember **Summer Restrictions** are in effect from June 1—September 30.
Use fertilizers that contain iron and other micronutrients, but not nitrogen or phosphorus.
You may water twice a week but account for rainfall.

Learn more at:

Central Florida Gardening Calendar:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep450>

Florida Wildlife Extension, Wildlife Happenings:

http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife_info/happenings/

Upcoming Events

Compost and Mulching

Saturday, July 8, 9:30 -11:30 am. Extension Auditorium
Learn how to take yard and kitchen scraps and turn them into rich additions to your landscape in this compost and mulching class. Register online at <https://seminole-composting.eventbrite.com> Cost: \$5.00

Top Ten Mistakes Homeowners Make in Their Yards
Wed, July 19, 6:30—8:00 pm, 911 Wallace Ct., Lake Mary.

Are you guilty of the top ten common mistakes that homeowners do to damage their yards and waste resources? Find out how to correct them in this class! Register online at <https://ffltoptenmistakes.eventbrite.com> Cost: Free

Rain Barrel Workshop

Tues, July 25, 2:00—4:00 pm and 6:30—8:30 pm, Extension Auditorium

Save water and reduce stormwater runoff by building a rain barrel to take home!

Register online at: <https://seminole-rain-barrel.eventbrite.com> Cost: \$20.00

Landscape Design

Wed, Aug 9, 6:30 –8:30 pm. Extension Auditorium.

Are you thinking of redoing your landscape? This class will cover the basics on which plants will work best in your yard and how they can be arranged. Register online at <https://ffl-landscape-design.eventbrite.com> Cost: \$10.00

Backyard Habitats

Wed, Sept 20, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Extension Auditorium

What potential does your yard have to attract Florida wildlife? This class will teach you about plants and landscape features that should attract birds, butterflies, and a host of other critters! Register online at <https://seminole-backyard-habitats.eventbrite.com> Cost: \$5.00

Gardening Old Wives' Tales: Those That Work and Those that Don't!

Wed, Sept 27, 6:30—8:00 pm, Extension Auditorium

Are some gardening tricks handy tips or pure hogwash? We will get you on the right track! Register online at: <https://gardeningoldwivestales.eventbrite.com> Cost: \$5.00

Fertilizer Workshop!

How can we have healthy lawns and clean waterways? Get the scoop on the new fertilizer ordinance and learn, hands-on, the best management practices. Please register at <https://seminole-fertilizer.eventbrite.com>. FREE.

Extension Auditorium. Multiple Dates/Times:

Wednesday, July 12, 6:30 — 8:30 pm

Saturday, July 22, 10:00 — Noon

Saturday, August 5, Time and location TBD

Wednesday, August 16, 6:30 — 8:30 pm

Thursday, September 14, 6:30 — 8:30 pm

Saturday, September 23, 10:00 — Noon

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Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ PROGRAM



FLORIDA YARDS & NEIGHBORHOODS



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Florida-Friendly Landscapes protect Florida's unique natural resources by conserving water, reducing waste and pollution, creating wildlife habitat, and preventing erosion. Any landscape can be Florida-Friendly if it is designed and cared for according to the nine Florida-Friendly Landscaping principles. Seminole County's program is a partnership between the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service, the Public Works Department's Watershed Management division, and local government, including the cities below.



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