



Conservation Notes

December 2019

Upcoming area events:

December 7 - Pasco Household HazMat Recycle. Pasco county recycling officials will be at the West Pasco Government Center, 7530 Little Road New Port Richey, from 8-2 accepting hazardous household goods for recycling. This includes electronics, car fluids, pool chemicals, batteries, paint, pesticides, herbicides, and cleaning chemicals. It's a great opportunity to do a late fall clean-up and ensure environmentally dangerous items are disposed of responsibly!

December 17 - Christmas Bird Count. Come join us for this national annual birding event and help document our local avian population. Contact Christine Rowland at president@westpascoaudubon.com to participate.

December Monthly Gardening from UF:

Annuals/Bedding plants: To add color to the winter garden, plant masses of petunia, pansy, and snapdragon.

Cold protection: Prepare now to protect tender plants should cold weather threaten.

Lawn disease: Continue to watch for brown patch and large patch, fungal diseases that cause areas of grass to turn brown. Since treatment is difficult, prevention with proper cultural practices is key. These diseases become active when the soil temperature, measured 2-4 in. deep, is between 65°F and 75°F and go dormant when the weather warms in May.

Soil test: Consider performing a soil test if plants do not perform as desired or if new plantings are planned.

Compost/mulch: Use fallen leaves to provide the carbon ingredient needed for successful composting and also to make a good mulch

Landscape and garden pests: Continue monitoring and treat as needed. While cooler weather generally means fewer pests, some populations actually increase at this time of year.

Florida Native Plant Spotlight: By Mary Ellen Gotto

Choosing Florida Native Plants for Your Landscape -- Many factors must be considered when choosing a Florida Native plant. Some conditions in the landscape include sun/shade, dry vs. wet areas, soil pH, flower/foilage color and more. I will discuss many of these in future newsletters.

Size is one of the most frequently overlooked considerations when choosing plants. A motto of the Master Gardeners and Native Plant chapters is "Right Plant/ Right Place". It is extremely important to know the mature size when choosing plants for your landscape. The mature size is a factor as to where native plants should be planted. Are they too close to a building? Is their height blocking a view out a window or from a lanai? Short plants will not grow into a privacy hedge and wide plants will crowd other plants. When I first started using Florida Native plants, I made most of these mistakes - did not know how large a plant in a 4" or 6" pot would grow! All the plants purchased at our Nature Coast Chapter plant sales in March and October includes information cards addressing mature size. Information on Florida Native plants can be found at FNPS.org.

Compact Wild Coffee, "Little Psycho" (*Psychotria nervosa*) -- This is a multi- stemmed evergreen shrub with attractive dark, shiny green leaves and showy maroon to scarlet fruit in the Fall. This is an excellent small specimen plant.

Best feature: fruit is showy and attracts wildlife and is eaten by blue jays, cardinals and catbirds. In the Spring, flowers attract bees and other pollinators. It readily self-seeds.

Flowers: small, white clusters in Spring and Summer that develop into fruit by Winter.

Soil: moderately drained, neutral to slightly alkaline. It is somewhat drought tolerant and salt tolerant.

Light: sun to partial sun.

Size: Height- 2-6 ft. Width - 1.5 -3 ft.

Comments: There is also a large wild coffee plant for shady areas. Its height is 5-15 ft. and width is 3-6 ft.



Florida Friendly Landscape Suggestions from UF IFAS:

- Schedule a free irrigation inspection. Contact your local Extension office or utility for availability of this service.
- If free irrigation inspections are not available in your area, hire a Florida Irrigation Society (FIS) "Water Auditor" to inspect your system.
- Use a rain gauge to measure rainfall and irrigate only during prolonged dry periods.
- Make a rain barrel to collect and store rainwater for use on plants.
http://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/water/articles/pdf/rain_barrels.pdf
- Install a cistern for non-potable water use.
- Compost yard and kitchen debris. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep323>