



Conservation Notes

February 2020

Upcoming area events:

Now-March 30 - Registration open for the 2nd Annual West Pasco Audubon Nature and Wildlife of Tampa Bay Photography Competition. Visit the West Pasco Audubon webpage for more info.

February 7-13 - Winter Shorebird Count

February 15-18 - Backyard Bird Count. Check gbbc.birdcount.org for information on how to participate.

February 15 - Frogs! 10:30-12:00 Brooker Creek Environmental Education Center. Learn about Florida's frogs and the challenges they are facing.

February Monthly Gardening from UF:

Annuals/Bedding plants: Plants that perform better in the cooler months include petunia, pansy, verbena, dianthus, strawflower, and lobelia. Protect from frosts and freezing temperatures.

Bulbs: Many bulbs can be planted now. Provide adequate water for establishment and protect from cold weather with mulch. Some examples include Amazon lily, crinum, and agapanthus.

Azaleas: With azaleas in full bloom this month, now is a great time to select varieties to add to the landscape

Palms: Give cold-damaged palms proper care to encourage their recovery.

Roses: Prune roses this month to remove damaged canes and improve the overall form. After pruning, fertilize and apply a fresh layer of mulch. Blooming will begin 8-9 weeks after pruning.

Shrubs: Fertilize shrubs by spreading fertilizer evenly over the soil surface and watering it in. Follow with a fresh layer of mulch to conserve moisture and reduce weeds.

Lawn: Apply a preemergence weed killer (not a "weed and feed") to lawns this month to prevent germination of warm-season weed seeds. Apply when temperatures rise to 65°F for 4-5 days. Timing is important for good control.

Citrus and other fruit trees: Fertilize now if not done in January. Frequency and amount of fertilization depend on the age of the tree. Check citrus trees for scab disease.

Apply a copper fungicide when new leaves appear and again when two-thirds of the flower blossoms have fallen.

Florida Native Plant Spotlight: by Mary Ellen Gotto

Purchase to Planting -- Now that you have decided to plant a Florida Native plant, found the appropriate spot in your yard, and decided on size of plant needed, color, and blooming time, the next step is to purchase your plant. Remember -- you will not find a native plant at big box stores or local nurseries. Nature Coast Chapter of Florida Native Plant Society has a plant sale on March 28th from 10 am to 2 pm at Heritage Park on Route 41, north of SR 54. Two members of the native plant chapter have nurseries in Land O Lakes: Karen's Wildflowers at 813-528-2368 and Cypress Acres (David) at 813-406-3313. Both will help you select appropriate plants for your landscape. Planting-- when you bring home your native plant, water it daily until it is planted. To plant, dig a hole slightly larger than your plant's roots. DO NOT amend the soil or add any type of fertilizer. Loosen the roots if they are tight (pot bound) and place them in the hole with the plant slightly higher than the surrounding soil. Fill in the hole with soil from the surrounding garden, cover with whatever mulch you use and press the soil gently around the plant. Most important-- water at planting and continue watering daily for one week. No further irrigation is needed. And, now, enjoy watching your new plant grow!

Two trellis plants that are blooming now in my gardens:

CORAL HONEYSUCKLE (*Lonicera sempervirens*). This semi-evergreen twining vine grows on a fence, arbor or trellis. This plant likes full sun to partial shade. The red to orange flowers boom Spring to Summer and in Fall, red berries replace the flowers. These flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies. The red berries attract birds.

CAROLINA YELLOW JESSAMINE (*Gelsemium sempervirens*). This perennial evergreen vine can also be a mounding ground cover. Full sun is best for flowering. These yellow, showy, fragrant flowers bloom late Winter to early Spring (December to March). Both hummingbirds and butterflies are attracted to these flowers.



Florida Friendly Landscape Suggestions from UF IFAS:

- Avoid shearing shrubs, topping trees, and over-pruning palms.
- Regularly check rain or soil moisture sensors to make sure they are operating correctly. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ae221>
- Install a rain shut-off device or soil moisture sensor to automatic irrigation systems. It is required by law. Check regularly for proper operation. (pages 14 and 19) <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ae221>; <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ae437>
- Maintain a 2- to 3-inch layer of organic mulch over tree roots, shrubs, plant beds. Pull mulch away from base of plants
- Avoid planting invasive plants in your landscape (page 9). <https://assessment.ifas.ufl.edu/>
- Remove invasive exotic plants.
- Reduce stormwater runoff and pollutants by using mulch or other porous surfaces (pavers, bricks, gravel, etc.) for patios, walkways, or driveways. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep408>