

## **April Gardening Guide (2008)**

By Patricia Porchey

Have your fingers been itching to grab those pruners, loppers, and landscape saws to prune those plants whose growth needs curtailing? Our mild winter has meant more than normal growth spurts for some of our plants. Now is a good time to prune everything except those plants whose buds were set last year and are now ready to open. Spring-blooming plants such as azaleas and dwarf Indian hawthorn are now blooming. Wait until they finish blooming to do any pruning.

How we prune will determine not only plant structure but good health. Remember to leave the “bark ridges” at the top and the “collar” swelling at the base of each branch to promote healing. Do not use pruning paint as this can encourage insects and disease in the wound. There are some plants that tolerate hard pruning such as hibiscus and bougainvillea; however, the rule of thumb is to only remove ¼ of the canopy at one time.

### **Reasons to prune:**

- Cold-damaged branch tips that are dead. Prune back to green growth.
- Stubs left where branches were broken off by the wind. Prune the stubs.
- Branches rubbing each other as a result of new growth. Prune the weaker and less structurally-correct branch.
- Errant new growth. Prune to improve the overall structure.
- Disease-infected branches. Prune six to twelve inches below the infected area.
- Branches touching the house or other structures. Prune to encourage growth in a different direction.
- Dead fronds on palms. Prune only the lower dead leaves and/or seed pods.
- Fruit trees with branches too high to reach the fruit.

If you have more fruit than you cannot possibly eat, there are non-profit agencies where you can take your excess fruit for distribution to needy families. Call our office for a list of places to donate your fruit.

### **Blooming & planting guide**

- **Vegetables & Herbs:** Anise, basil, beans, borage, cantaloupe, chervil, comfrey, corn, cucumber, cumin, horehound, lemon balm, marjoram, mint, okra, oregano, peas, summer savory, sweet potatoes, tarragon and thyme.
- **Annuals:** Amaranthus, aster, Celosia, Cleome, Coleus, Cosmos, dusty miller, Gazania, geranium, Impatiens, Lobelia, morning glory, Nicotiana, ornamental pepper, Pentas, periwinkle, Phlox, Portulaca, Salvia, Torenia, Verbena and Zinnia.
- **Perennials:** African iris, Amazon lily, Aztec lily, blue daze, blood lily, Caladium, Canna, Coreopsis, Crossandra, Dianthus, Gaillardia, Gaura, Gerbera daisy, Gloriosa lily, milkweed, Mexican heather, Philippine violet, rain lily, Salvia, Scabiosa, shell ginger, shrimp plants, Tithonia and Verbena.
- **Fruits in Season:** Banana, blueberry, carambola, citrus, (calamondin, grapefruit, Key lime, lemon, lime, and orange), kumquat, loquat, Mysore raspberry, Surinam cherry, and strawberry.

- **Blooming Plants:** Amaryllis, avocado, azalea, bottlebrush, Bougainvillea, buddleia, confederate jasmine, dwarf Indian hawthorn, Jacaranda tree, Cordia tree, Lantana, Macadamia, Magnolia, Nasturtium, orchid tree, rose, silk oak tree, society garlic, Simpson's stopper, trumpet tree, Turk's cap, and Viburnum.

### **Upcoming classes**

If you want to know more about the environmentally-friendly landscaping known as Florida Yards & Neighborhoods, there are three programs being offered this month. You can now register for classes online at <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/EdSched.htm> or call 861-9900.

- “Alternative Pest Management Practices” at Shamrock Park, April 17 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Creating Your Florida Yard” at Fruitville Library, April 21 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Recycle Yard Waste” at Shamrock Park, May 1 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles” at North Port Library, May 6 at 12:30 p.m.
- “Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles” at Gulf Gate Library, May 9 at 2:00 p.m.

### **For information**

If you have questions concerning your landscape, please call or visit the **Master Gardener Help Desk** at 861-9807. The **Help Desk** is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m.-Noon and 1:00-4:00 p.m. We have weekly satellite help desks at the four south county libraries and every third Saturday of the month at the **Downtown Farmer's Market**.

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Submitted March 31, 2008