

August Gardening Guide
By: Patricia Porchey

Have you ever walked under a tree and become enveloped in a spider's web? Does the image of a huge venomous spider immediately come to mind? Almost all spiders pose no danger to humans. Widow spiders are the only naturally occurring venomous spiders in our area. The feared brown recluse spider does not occur in peninsular Florida. It, and other closely related recluse spiders, has occasionally been transported to Florida, but the State has immediately exterminated them. Contrary to the movies, widow spiders are not as aggressive as depicted. The more common and abundant brown widow spider is quite timid in nature and not likely to bite unless trapped against a person's body. Both black and brown widows are easily identified by the red or orange colored hourglass markings on the underside of their abdomens. The good news is that spiders are considered beneficial because they feed on numerous insect pests and other spiders.

Do you ever worry about venturing outdoors in the evening that bats will attack you? Bats are actually beneficial insect predators that feed on all kinds of night-flying insects, including mosquitoes. They eat close to their own body weight in food each night. How about snakes? They kill rodents that might otherwise eat our fruits and vegetables. Even that nuisance mole is beneficial. He devours root-eating insects while aerating your soil and depositing fertilizer.

The Florida House is hosting Creepy Crawly day on Saturday, August 19. This is a chance to allay those unfounded fears and get the real scoop on insects and critters. By promoting creepy crawly natural predators in our landscape, the need for harsh chemicals can be reduced or eliminated.

Gardening activities:

- Build a bat house and watch their dusk departure to feed on mosquitoes.
- Relocate uninvited spiders from the interior to the outside of your home without killing them.
- Watch lizards snap up insects escaping from the water when you irrigate your plants.
- Plant colorful foliage plant as well as flowers to add interest to your landscape. Coleus and caladiums are not just for shade anymore.
- Plant larval food plants and see butterflies lay eggs that will eventually become new butterflies.
- Plant a diverse garden to encourage the presence of parasitic and predatory insects that attack and prey on pest insects.
- Continue monitoring for chinch bugs in St. Augustine and mole crickets in Bahia grass.
- Get your exercise by stomping those mounds made by moles.
- Green up your lawn with chelated iron.
- Remove seeds from crape myrtles to encourage a second bloom.
- Amend garden plots before planting vegetable seeds later this month.

- Monitor for lace bugs on avocado and azaleas plants and control with horticultural soap or oil.
- Admire the snake sunning itself on your walkway (the juvenile black racer is oftentimes mistaken for the pygmy rattler)
- Before killing that unfamiliar insect, take it to the extension office for identification.

Upcoming educational classes:

You can now register for our classes on line @ our website

<http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/EdSched.htm>

- “Africanized Honeybees” at Twin Lakes Park, August 16 at 1:00 pm. Call 861-9900 to register.
- “Pests in and around the Home” at Shamrock Park, August 17 at 2:00 pm. Call 861-9900.
- “Creepy Crawly Day” at Florida House, August 19 from 1–4:00 pm. Justin Matthews of Matthews Wildlife Rescue will present a 45-minute talk on critters, such as raccoons, armadillos and other wildlife at 1 p.m. He will also be bringing some of his rehabilitated animals. Representatives from the Florida Panther Project and Mosquito Management will be present to answer questions. Entomologist, Dr. Fred Santana, will be available to identify insects brought in by the public in appropriate containers. Pre-registration is not required.
- “Invasive Plants” at Shamrock Park, September 7 at 2:00 pm. Call 861-9900.

Planting guide

Annuals: Begonia, Celosia, Coleus, Cosmos, Dahlia, dusty miller, marigold, Portulaca, periwinkle, Salvia, and Zinnia.

Perennials: African iris, beach buttercup, blackberry lily, bush daisy, Caladium, Coreopsis, firespike, Gaillardia, Gaura, goldenrod, Iris, Jacobinia, Kalanchoe, Mexican petunia, milkweed, Pentas, Salvia, society garlic, and Verbena..

Vegetables: Broccoli, celery, collards, corn, eggplant, okra, onions, pole beans, pumpkin, southern peas, summer squash, and watermelon.

Blooming plants: Allamanda, bird-of-paradise, Cordia, crape myrtle, golden raintree, goldenrod, Ixora, Lantana, Magnolia, Oleander, orange jasmine, yellow Poinciana, red and yellow shrimp plants, rouge plant, Plumbago, thryallis, and Tibouchina.

Fruits in Season: Avocado, banana, Barbados cherry, blueberry, carambola, citrus (calamondin, lemon, and lime), cocoplum, fig, guava, kumquat, longan, mango, monstera, muscadine grape, papaya, pineapple, sea grape, and sugar apple.

If you have questions concerning your landscape, please call or visit our office at Twin Lakes Park on Clark Road east of I-75. The **Master Gardener Help Desk** is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 am-Noon and 1:00-4:00 pm (941-861-9807). Our satellite help desks at five county libraries are open throughout the summer.

(Patricia Porchey is a Horticulture Courtesy Agent with University of Florida/IFAS, Sarasota County Extension)