

August Gardening Guide 2008

By Patricia Porchey

Those of you who bought crape myrtles at the Herald Tribune sale last week may have noticed the selective pruning done by the grower to insure good structure on these young plants. Driving on the boulevards and on-ramps to I-75, one can see great examples of majestic looking crape myrtles with full canopies. On the other hand, many commercial landscapes have crape myrtles meant to be specimen plants; however, they have the look coined by Gary Knox of “crape murder.” They have been topped to little stubs just above the main trunk. The plants then struggle to put out new growth in the form of numerous weak sprigs. This type of pruning is unhealthy for the plant and eventually curtails its longevity and its ability to overcome the stress this drastic pruning has on it.

Another misconception is to top large canopied trees for the hurricane season instead of thinning them. Thinning the canopy allows air movement without making the trees more susceptible to damage from insects, disease, and wind as topped trees are. It is important to hire a professional, such as a Certified Arborist who is educated in correct pruning methods, and to expect services that produce a healthy tree after its pruned.

How sad it is to see palms that have been severely pruned with a “hurricane cut” year after year that eventually can’t overcome the stress and die. With more diseases attacking our palms, it becomes even more important to keep them healthy. Your best defense to keep them healthy is by providing proper fertilization and pruning.

Gardening activities

- Solarize the soil in your vegetable garden or other areas of your landscape where nematodes are a problem.
- Monitor hibiscus for pink hibiscus mealybug. Do not treat the plant if the mealybug’s predators, lady beetles and their larval forms, are present.
- Monitor Bahia turf for mole crickets. Free larraflower seeds are available at our office – these plants attract the beneficial wasp predator of mole crickets.
- Monitor St. Augustine for chinch bugs. Treat the infected area only.
- Monitor for sod webworms eating your grass blades. Apply Bt which only targets worms and caterpillars and will not harm any beneficial insects that are present.
- Monitor lawns for possible disease problems with increased moisture from the summer rains. Dollar spot is common on Bahia grass and brown patch and gray leaf spot, on St. Augustine.
- Green up your turf with an application of chelated iron.
- Read the label carefully before applying weed control products to turf since many products cannot be used when the temperature is over 85 degrees.

Blooming & planting guide

- Vegetables (seeds at end of month) & Herbs (plants): Basil, broccoli, celery, collards, corn, eggplant, lemon balm, marjoram, Mexican tarragon, mint, okra,

- onions, oregano, pole beans, pumpkin, rosemary, southern peas, summer squash, thyme, and watermelon.
- Annuals: Begonia, Celosia, Coleus, Cosmos, Dahlia, dusty miller, marigold, Portulaca, periwinkle, Salvia, and Zinnia.
 - Perennials: African iris, beach buttercup, blackberry lily, Caladium, Coreopsis, firespike, Gaillardia, Gaura, Iris, Jacobinia, Kalanchoe, milkweed, Pentas, Salvia, society garlic, and Verbena..
 - Blooming plants: Cordia, crape myrtle, gingers, gloriosa lily, goldenrod, Ixora, Lantana, Magnolia, Oleander, orange jasmine, yellow Poinciana, red and yellow shrimp plants, rouge plant, Plumbago, Thryallis, Tibouchina and Thunbergia.
 - Fruits in Season: Avocado, banana, Barbados cherry, blueberry, carambola, citrus (calamondin, lemon, and lime), cocoplum, fig, guava, jaboticaba, kumquat, longan, mango, Monstera, muscadine grape, papaya, passionfruit, pineapple, sea grape, and sugar apple.

Upcoming educational classes:

You may now register for classes on-line at our website:

<http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/EdSched.htm> or call 861-9900.

- “Creating your Florida Yard” at North Port Library, August 5 at 12:30 p.m.
- “Beneficial Insects: Make Friends with the Good Bugs that Protect your Garden” at Twin Lakes Park, August 6 at 1:00 p.m.
- “Turf Alternatives: Small Plants for Small Places” at Shamrock Park, August 7 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Stinging Insects” at Twin Lakes Park, August 13 at 10:00 a.m.
- “Creating your Florida Yard” at August 18 at Fruitville Library, August 18 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Fertilize Appropriately” at Twin Lakes Park, August 20 at 10:00 a.m.
- “Do It Right the First Time: Landscape Design for Homeowners” at Twin Lakes Park, August 20 at 1:00 p.m.
- “Ants, Ants, Ants” at Shamrock Park, August 21 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Rodent and Mole Management” at Twin Lakes Park, August 27 at 10:00 a.m.