

## February Gardening Guide

By Patricia Porchey

This is the year that mango trees' florescences were absolutely magnificent; that is, until the recent cold front came through. Now many of the cream-colored flowers and new fruits have turned brown and are no longer viable. Fortunately for mango owners, this is one tree that often has a second fruit set so more florescences may still occur this winter.

In addition to fruit trees, other landscape plants were also affected by the cold temperatures. Some plants' green leaves now look sunburned or have bronzed coloring on the topmost leaves. Leaves have completely dropped from other branches.

You may look around your landscape and think you have no cold-induced injuries on your plants. However, nature doesn't always show us the impact of stress immediately. Some plants may not drop their leaves until a few days or weeks have passed. What were once flexible green branches may then be brown and brittle.

Whenever attractive plants look unsightly, the temptation is to immediately get out the pruners and remove the naked branches. Few plants will actually die; instead they will only suffer some peripheral damage on the outermost branches. It's better to wait until the end of February or first of March when the forecast ushers in only warm springtime temperatures. If you prune now, new flushes of growth encouraged by pruning will cause the plant to be more vulnerable to cold damage should the temperatures drop again. This is one time to let patience rule.

This is also a good time to inventory those plants that are more cold tolerant and those that are more susceptible to damage. This will guide you in your future landscape plant selections and also where to plant them on your site. Only those plants that are most cold tolerant should be located on the north and northwest side of your property where the cold attacks are most brutal.

The end of this month also is the time to fertilize all your plants. Apply no more than one pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet to turf grass and make sure the nitrogen and potassium are at least 50% slow-release form. Nitrogen is the first number on the bag and potassium is the third number. The middle number can be 0 because phosphorus is naturally-occurring in our soil and is generally not needed. This can be applied twice a year. Do not apply any fertilizer within 10 feet of a water body.

If you have palms, apply a palm fertilizer marked 8-2-12+4Mg with the nitrogen and potassium in a 50-100% slow-release form. Mg is magnesium, the ingredient in Epsom salts, but magnesium alone is not sufficient for healthy palm growth. If you are fertilizing palms in a turf area, it is preferable to use the palm fertilizer instead of the turf fertilizer. This means the bag contains 8% nitrogen, 2% phosphorus, 12% potassium and 4%. This can be applied twice a year.

Citrus and other fruit trees need to be fertilized with citrus fertilizer marked 8-2-8 or its equivalent with the nitrogen in 50% slow-release form. Vegetables and annuals need to be fertilized with slow-release fertilizers whenever possible. This can be applied twice a year.

If weeds, such as crabgrass, were a problem last year, apply a pre-emergent herbicide to lawns or beds to help control seed germination. If you plan to do some hand weeding or other disturbance to the soil, do that first before applying the pre-emergent. Always read

the label before applying an herbicide to a turf area to make sure it's labeled for your type of grass. If your St. Augustine grass has been invaded by Bermuda grass, there is no selective herbicide that will kill Bermuda without also harming the St. Augustine.

### **Blooming & planting guide**

- Vegetables & Herbs: Anise, basil, beets, borage, cantaloupe, carrots, catnip, celery, chervil, chives, collards, comfrey, coriander, corn, cucumber, cumin, dill, eggplant, endive, garlic, green beans, kohlrabi, leek, lemon balm, lettuce, marjoram, mint, mustard, onion, oregano, parsley, peas, pepper, potato, pumpkin, radish, rosemary, sage, sweet potato, tarragon, tomato, turnip, and watermelon.
- Annuals: Ageratum, alyssum, Amaranth, Begonia, browallia, Calendula, Cosmos, dusty miller, Gazania, geranium, Lobelia, marigold, nasturtium, pansy, Petunia, Phlox, Salvia, snapdragon, Statice, stock, strawflower, and Verbena.
- Perennials: African iris, Agapanthus, Amaryllis, Amazon lily, aster, Aztec lily, Caladium, Canna, calla lily, Clivia, Crinum lily, Dianthus, foxglove, Gerbera, hollyhock, Shasta daisy, society garlic, spider lily, Tithonia, and Viola.
- Fruits in Season: Banana, black sapote, carambola, cherimoya, citrus (calamondin, grapefruit, key lime, lemon, lime, orange, and tangerine), Indian jujube, kumquat, loquat, Mysore raspberry, papaya, and strawberry.
- Blooming plants: Bush daisy, Bottlebrush, Bougainvillea, Carolina yellow Jessamine, Chinese hat plant, fuchsia skullcap, Kalanchoe, lion's ear, orchid tree, palm grass, Poinsettia, powderpuff plant, purple Tabebuia, silver trumpet Tabebuia, trumpet vine, Turk's cap and Walter's Viburnum.

### **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.

- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles, Elsie Quirk Library, 10:00 a.m. Feb. 3
- Step by Step Florida-friendly Landscape Training (5 sessions: Feb. 4, 11, 18, Mar. 4, 11), Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. (\$20.00 fee)
- Valentine Topiary, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. Feb. 4
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles, Venice Library, 10:00 a.m. Feb. 5
- Snakes of Florida, Jacaranda Library, 10:00 a.m. Feb. 5
- Non-native Invasive Plants, Shamrock Park, 2:00 p.m. Feb. 5
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles, Gulf Gate Library, 1:30 p.m. Feb. 6
- Organic Vegetable Gardening, Orange Blossom Community Garden, 18<sup>th</sup> & Orange, 1:00 p.m. Feb. 7
- Ants, Ants, Ants, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. Feb. 11
- Rodent & Mole Management, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. Feb. 18
- Ants, Ants, Ants, Shamrock Park, 2:00 p.m. Feb. 19
- Organic Vegetable Gardening, Laurel Community Garden, 509 Collins Rd., Laurel, 10:30 a.m. Feb. 21

- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Creating Your Florida Yard, Fruitville Library, 2:00 p.m. Feb. 23
- Seasonal Landscape Problems, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. Feb. 25
- Least Toxic Pest Control In & Around the Home, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. Feb. 25
- Insects out There-What Bug Is That? (2-hour nature walk), Red bug Slough, Beneva Rd. between Proctor & Clark, 10:00 a.m. Feb. 27

**For information**

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 a.m.-Noon and 1:00-4:00 p.m. (941-861-9807). We have weekly satellite help desks at the four south county libraries and at the **Downtown Farmer's Market** every third Saturday of the month.

(Patricia Porchey is an Urban Horticulture Agent with University of Florida/IFAS Sarasota County Extension. Website: <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu>)

Submitted February 26, 2009