

October Gardening Guide

By: Patricia Porchey

The end of summer marks the time to fertilize lawns and landscape plants. The rainy season is ending and many of the nutrients have percolated through the soils. This year, however, there are some new rules to follow. Sarasota County Commissioners enacted the Fertilizer and Landscape Management Code in an attempt to reduce pollution to our waterways as a consequence of excessive fertilization.

Fertilizer applications are prohibited during the rainy season months of June through September. During the wet season, fertilizer applications often leach quickly through the soils without being absorbed by plant roots or become part of the surface runoff. Consequently, fall is the preferred time to fertilize.

The University of Florida has long been advocating the use of slow-release fertilizers in lieu of water-soluble fertilizers in the landscape and turf. Now the county is requiring fertilizers with an analysis containing no less than 50% slow-release nitrogen be used. It also reinforces the University recommendation of no more than 1 lb. of nitrogen per 1000 square feet per application.

There is credence to the old adage that less is better than more. Consider our native plants and how they've prospered without our helping hand with generous amounts of fertilizer.

Other important considerations in the new ordinance, Ordinance No. 2007-062:

- Impervious surfaces (such as sidewalks and driveways) are to be kept clear of fertilizer.
- Broadcast spreaders are required to have deflector shields.
- A ten-foot buffer zone around water bodies and wetlands are to be kept fertilizer free.
- Vegetative materials, especially grass clippings, cannot be allowed to end up in stormwater drains or water bodies.

Continue to conserve water as our total rainfall is twenty inches below the normal level and we are entering a drier season. Consider replacing water-thirsty plants with drought-tolerant plants. The Master Gardeners are holding their third annual plant sale at Bee Ridge Park on October 13 from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.. An extensive palette of native and drought-tolerant plants will be available as well as information about the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods program. The park is located at the corner of Wilkinson and South Lockwood Ridge Roads.

Blooming & planting guide

Vegetables & herbs: Basil, beans, beets, Borage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celery, chervil, collards, coriander, cucumber, cumin, garlic, leek, lettuce, mustard, onions, parsley, peas, radish, rutabaga, spinach, strawberries, thyme, tomato, and turnips.

Annuals: Ageratum, Alyssum, Begonia, calendula, Celosia, Coleus, dusty miller, geranium, Impatiens, Lobelia, marigold, Melampodium, nasturtium, pansy, petunia, Salvia, snapdragon, and Zinnia.

Perennials: Agapanthus, beach buttercup, blue daze, calla lily, Chrysanthemum, cigar plant, Coreopsis, Crinum lily, Dianthus, elephant ears, Gaillardia, Gerbera daisy, gloriosa lily, iris, Liatris, Pentas, Salvia, Shasta daisy, society garlic, and Verbena.

Fruits in season: Atemoya, avocado, banana, carambola, citrus (calamondin, lemon, and lime), fig, guava, hog plum, kumquat, muscadine grape, papaya, pecan, persimmon, pomegranate, sea grape, sugar apple, and tamarind.

Blooming plants: Allamanda, bird-of-paradise, bottlebrush, Bougainvillea, Cassia, Cordia, dwarf Poinciana, false dragonhead, firecracker plant, firespike, goldenrain tree, Mexican heather, oleander, Philippine violet, red and yellow shrimp plants, rouge plant, Plumbago, rose, Salvia, thryallis, Turk's cap, Thunbergia, and Tibouchina.

Upcoming educational classes:

You can now register for classes online <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/EdSched.htm> or call 861-9900.

- “Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles” at North Port Library, October 2 at 12:30 p.m.
- “Irrigation Efficiency” at Shamrock Park, October 4 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles” at Venice Library, October 11 at 10:00 a.m.
- “Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles” at Gulf Gate Library, October 12 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles” at Fruitville Library, October 15 at 2:00 p.m.
- “Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Workshop” at Twin Lakes Park, October 17 at 4:00 p.m.
- “Rodent Control” at Shamrock Park, October 18 at 2:00 p.m.
- Fertilize Appropriately” at Shamrock Park, November 1 at 2:00 p.m.

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.

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