

Ask an Agent

By: Patricia Porchey

There are notches on the edges of my crape myrtle leaves. What is causing this?

A new invasive pest, the Sri Lanka Weevil, came to our county three years ago. It is feeding on about 70 different plants in our landscapes including crape myrtle. Other host plants include areca and pygmy date palms; black olive, bottlebrush, oaks, red maple and mahogany trees; avocado, citrus and loquat fruit trees; Hibiscus, Plumbago and numerous other ornamentals. Presently, there are no insecticides listed for use on fruit trees to control this insect; however, there are some insecticides to control leaf-feeding insects on ornamentals. To avoid spraying, hand picking and dropping into a bucket of soapy water is an option. If a shrub is heavily infested, lay a cloth or an open umbrella underneath the plant and shake it. The weevils will fall onto the cloth or umbrella and can then be disposed of in the soapy water.

I need to fertilize my lawn. What should I apply?

The restricted season, June through September has just ended and now you can apply nitrogen and phosphorus to your lawn. However, it's important to remember the amounts you apply are still restricted. Only one pound of slow-release nitrogen (at least 50%) can be applied to 1000 square feet of turf at one application with a maximum of four pounds per year. Because phosphorus is a naturally occurring nutrient in our soils, it doesn't usually need to be applied. Its application is limited to 0.25 pounds per 1000 square feet or 0.5 pounds per year.

If you have turf within 50 feet of palm trees, the recommendation is to use palm fertilizer in lieu of turf fertilizer. A slow-release palm fertilizer with 8-2-12 ratio is recommended.

Why can't I grow beautiful Hibiscus and Ixora like you see at the nursery?

The problem may lie with your soil pH. The target pH for these plants and other acid-loving plants, such as gardenias and azaleas, is 5.5. Newer homes, where topsoil has been brought in, may have a pH as high as 8.0. In our sandy soils, it is only possible to lower the pH temporarily with the addition of sulfur. A better solution would be to select plants that will tolerate the higher pH.

You can have your soil tested at the Extension office for a nominal fee.

GARDENING

OCTOBER 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, 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, 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.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Master Gardener Plant Sale, 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Oct. 10, Bee Ridge Park, Sarasota

Watershed Awareness Event at Florida House, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Oct. 17, 4454 Beneva Road, Sarasota

CLASSES

Step by Step: Florida Friendly Landscaping is a series of five classes covering how to create and maintain attractive landscapes that protect Florida's natural environment. They are being offered at two locations: October 1, 8, 22, and 29 and November 5 at the Venice Library, 10:00 a.m.-Noon; and October 5, 12, 26 and November 2 and 9 at Twin Lakes Park, 6:30-8:30 p.m. There is a \$20.00 registration fee.

Household Pests, Shamrock Park, Oct. 1, 2:00 p.m.

Organic Vegetable Gardening Orange Blossom Community Garden, 18th & Orange, Oct. 3, 1:00 p.m.

Rodent & Mole Management, Twin Lakes Park, Oct. 7, 1:00 p.m.

Creating Wildlife Habitat In and Around Ponds, Shamrock Park, Oct. 15, 2:00 p.m.

Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Creating your Florida Yard, Fruitville Library, Oct. 19, 2:00 p.m.

Partnering with Pollinators, Twin Lakes Park, Oct. 21, 10:00 a.m.

Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles, Twin Lakes Park, Oct. 21, 1:00 p.m.

Organic Vegetable Gardening Laurel Community Garden, Forest & Collins Roads, Laurel, Oct. 24, 10:30 a.m.

Color in the Winter Garden, Twin Lakes Park, Oct. 28, 10:00 a.m.

Chinch Bugs & White Grubs, Twin Lakes Park, Nov. 4, 10:00 a.m.

Florida Buggy Critters: The Bad, Good & Harmless, Shamrock Park, Nov. 5, 2:00 p.m.

Attract Wildlife, Gulf Gate Library, Nov. 6, 1:30 p.m.

Organic Vegetable Gardening Orange Blossom Community Garden, 18th & Orange, Nov. 7, 1:00 p.m.

To register, call 861-9900.

GETTING HELP

The Master Gardener Help Desk is available to answer your questions. Email: mghelpdesk@scgov.net. It is open Monday-Friday from 9-Noon and 1-4 p.m. Phone: 861-9807. Office: Twin Lakes Park, Clark Road east of I-75.
Satellite help desks: Weekly at four South County libraries and every third Saturday of the month at the Downtown Farmers' Market, Sarasota.
New location: Every fourth Saturday of the month at the **Fruitville Library Reading Garden**, 10-Noon.

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

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If you have questions, you may submit them to ppochey@scgov.net. Subject line: Gardening question.