



The Green Gazette

The Collier County Master Gardener Newsletter
Volume 2 Issue 1 February 2011

Coordinator's Corner *By Cathy Feser, Urban Horticulture*

Welcome...to our first 2011 edition of the Green Gazette in a year already blooming with changes. Enjoy the always-evolving beauty of the Horticultural Learning Center gardens on the Extension Office grounds, a result of continuing Master Gardener handiwork. The Garden Workshop Series is underway at Unity of Naples, featuring a diversity of topics and speakers. Go behind the scenes of area agricultural and horticultural operations during the March 16th Collier County Ag Tour. And have all of your garden and landscape questions answered virtually any day of the week through email, phone or walk-in visits to our many Master Gardener Plant Clinics located all around the County. All of these changes would not be possible without the dedicated volunteer service of our many Collier County Master Gardeners, and the support of all of the staff in the Extension Office.

There is a season for everything, so with a mixture of sadness and joy, I am drawing my season as Urban Horticultural Agent to a close, and taking the next steps along my horticultural journey. But I am confident that the Master Gardener program in general, and the Green Gazette newsletter under the guidance of its Master Gardener Editor Mary Jane Cary in particular, will continue to provide you with timely, useful and interesting information. Let's keep growing!



The Frugal Gardener

By Leah Ray

So what is more important to save — your money, your resources, your time? In my case, it's *me*. I need all the help I can get with my aging body. Whatever eases the load on everything from my back to my eyes- I am for! Here are some savers for you. The Garden Gazette would love to hear about some of your "savers" too.

Save your eyes! Can't read that bottle of fertilizer or pest control label? Use the internet. Type the name of the product + LABEL and you will find an easy to read label that you can further enlarge to view ALL that fine print.

Share a delivery fee for soil, mulch, or sod by sharing a truck load with your neighbor.

Save your Christmas tree. Use it as a natural looking place to hang orchids and such.

More tips on page 2



2011 Garden Workshop Series Continues through March 17

By Kris Morton

The five lectures remaining in our 2011 Workshop Series promise to be a wonderful lineup of interesting topics on a variety of subjects.

We are always asked to suggest landscape plants with long-lasting color and minimal upkeep. An old standby is coming back into popularity. On **Thursday, February 17**, Terry Seeley from the Croton Connection in Loxahatchee, FL will discuss the almost limitless **Croton leaf forms and varieties** available for year round color.



Thursday, February 24 brings Ray Pelletier of Ray's Lawn & Garden located here in Naples. Ray will talk about **Perennials, Woody ornamentals, and New Arrivals**, and where to plant them all.

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Garden Workshop Series Continues through March 17

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Authors Gary Schmelz and Gary Stacell will be our co-presenters on **Thursday, March 3**, and will speak about the beautiful **Wildflowers of SW Florida**. Their presentation will include a virtual walk to explore and appreciate the beauty Nature provides us.

This is the fourth year that we have offered a "garden" tour, open only to Series ticket holders. This year it will be an **"Orchidaceae Tour."** If that sounds interesting to you, be sure to sign up for the Series no later than February 24th in order to attend this year's tour on **Thursday, March 10**.

And if you are running out of space to plant, whether in a yard, lanai, or courtyard, you'll want to attend the final Workshop of our 2011 series. On **Thursday, March 17**, Mike Malloy of Naples Butterfly will show us **How to "elevate" our gardens** with trellises, vines & more.

The Garden Workshop series continues every Thursday from 10 — 11:30 a.m., at the Unity of Naples Church, 2000 Unity Way (located behind Seacrest School on Davis Blvd.). Cost is \$7 per lecture, or \$25 for the entire series. More information is available through the [Collier County Extension Office website](#).

The Frugal Gardener

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Protect your vehicle's interior from spills by spreading an old shower curtain underneath plants or compost bags during transport.

Save your time and money by foregoing pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides on a set schedule. Instead, be a scout, examining plants regularly, and treating only when needed to restore plant health.

Save more time and money with great free advice When you're searching the internet for plant, landscape or gardening issues, just type the term followed by a comma and ifas (for Institute of Food & Agricultural Science). This action will provide you with the most accurate information based on the University of Florida's research for our area. Examples: Pygmy Date Palm, ifas or crabgrass, ifas.

Use shredded recycled paper as a soil amendment or compost it.

Speed the composting process by running those too-ripe fruits and vegetables in your food processor, then adding to compost pile. You can also speed yard waste decomposition by running a weed whip inside a large trash can filled with lawn debris.

Extend the life of your mulch paths by using old lanai screen or cardboard as a base.

Create your own free mulch by raking all those fallen oak leaves into your existing mulch.

Water thirsty plants when changing out your aquarium or fish tank. Your plants will appreciate the drink.

Use Rain barrels to store water for irrigation. Even with little or no rain, you can fill them up with tap water. At least the chlorine will dissipate.

Save seeds for sharing in empty, clean prescription or spice bottles. Include a label for identifying seed variety.

Grow basil or other herbs in a vase for ready kitchen use, AND to produce root cuttings for sharing.



Create starter pots from empty toilet tissue and paper towel tubes. Cut them into 2" pieces, fill with seed starter soil, and plant seeds. Whenever the seedlings are ready, you can plant the whole thing, container and all, in the garden.



**We'd love to hear (and publish)
YOUR nifty, thrifty tips!
Email them to the Frugal Gardener
at CollierMG@ifas.ufl.edu**

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Top Zone10 Performer

By Faye Hunt

The palmate leaves of this stunning *Hibiscus acetosella* 'Maple Sugar' variety resemble those of the Japanese maple. Leaf shades vary from dark maroon, to bronze colored, and may exhibit varie-



gated leaves and stems as well. The foliage is very textural, and is particularly attractive when backlit with sun or artificial light.

This Hibiscus is heat tolerant and low maintenance in part sun to full sun locations. The flowers are small (2" in diameter), and can vary from deep crimson to a pinkish-purple. But the contrasts among the leaf and flower colors, as well as the intricate leaf shapes and textures are its strength. Birds, including hummingbirds, find plenty to enjoy here as well.

In your landscape, this hibiscus looks lovely when planted among large-leaf plants, like bananas or cannas, or surrounded by ornamental grasses.

Since the 'Maple Sugar' Hibiscus is not particularly full, plant several close together to create a bushier appearance, or pinch back new shoots to encourage branching. Typically reaching 3-5 feet in height, they can be cut back at any time, and are easily shaped to contain growth.

If you'd like a real show stopper container, try 'Maple Sugar' as the 'Thriller' plant (for height and drama) along with pentas, zinnias, verbena, foxtail fern and sweet potato vine!

Other names you may see for this plant include African Rosemallow, False Roselle, Maroon Mal-low, Cranberry Hibiscus or Red-leaved Hibiscus. But by whatever name, give this versatile, graceful hibiscus a try.

See [UF Article ENH44 Hibiscus in Florida](#) for more general hibiscus care information.

Limes...How Sublime!

By Mary Jane Cary

If you enjoy drinking fresh-squeezed limeade or other lime-juice based drinks, or cooking Mexican, Latin, or Indian cuisines, an inexpensive year-round supply of fresh limes can be as close as your backyard. Our Southwest Florida climate is ideal for growing your own Tahiti Lime *Citrus latifolia*. Also known as the Persian Lime, this seedless fruit is borne year-round on a small tree, with a dense, rounded canopy reaching 20 feet high and wide. Fragrant white flowers appear in clusters all year, with the heaviest bloom from February through April. Honeybees and other insects frequent the blooms, but pollination is not required for setting fruit.



Limes mature 90–120 days after flowering, depending on temperatures, with the heaviest fruiting during June, July and August. Fruits are ready for harvest when they reach 1-3/4" in diameter, with dark to medium-dark green color, and will retain their freshness for 10 days when refrigerated.

Young Tahiti Lime trees can produce 8–10 pounds of fruit during their first year, with yields continuing to increase as well-managed trees grow and age. Certified disease-free trees should be planted in a sunny, well-drained location at least 15 feet away from buildings, power lines and other trees. Avoid planting in areas that flood or remain wet after summer rains. Fertilize every 2-3 months during the first year with available mixes such as 6-6-6-2 or 8-3-9-2. See [UF Article HS8 Growing Tahiti Limes in the Home Landscape](#) for more tips on care and management.



And if symptoms appear of either of two serious diseases, [Citrus Canker](#) or [Citrus Greening](#), contact the [Extension Office](#) for the latest treatment guidance.

But by planting certified disease-free stock in the right environment, and maintaining tree health, you can enjoy local, fresh limes for years to come.

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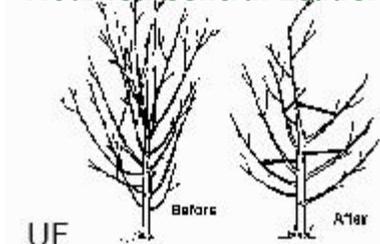
Your Dooryard Fruit Orchard - Pruning

By Mary Jane Cary, with [Spanish Edition](#) and [German Edition](#) by Betzy Hussmann

The cooler temperatures and sunny skies of this time of year are perfect for spending a little quality time in your dooryard orchard. Just as we focused on the recommended practices for planting and caring for young fruit trees in our [December 2010 issue](#), we turn our attention during February and March toward training young trees into future fruit producers, and pruning mature trees for continued enjoyment.

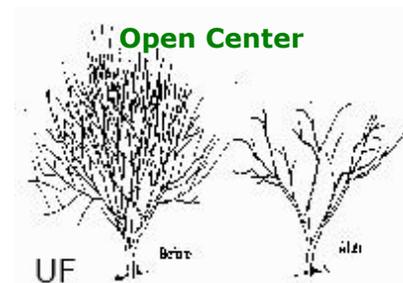
Managing a fruit tree's height and canopy enables adequate light and space for fruit development, and assures fruits within easy reach when harvesting. According to [UF Article HS889 Your Florida Dooryard Citrus Guide—Pruning](#), citrus trees need little pruning unless required for tree health or fruit production issues. Almost all pruning of other fruit trees should be done during the winter dormant period, particularly if extensive pruning is required. And this February appears to be a great time for completing this task, since the probability of extreme cold spells and potential frost damage is now waning.

Modified Central Leader



Training new un-branched fruit trees during initial planting enables better fruit production and minimizes the need for corrective pruning. Fruit tree varieties are typically trained using one of two methods. The **modified central leader** method, shown at left, is typically used to shape apple and pear trees, or for Loquat or Japanese plum varieties when an upright shape is desired. After planting, select a bud on the central leader about 3 feet above the soil surface, and remove all terminal growth above this bud to encourage lateral growth. During the following dormant period, select one of the vigorous shoots emerging from this central leader head-back cut as the modified central leader, and remove all other competing lateral shoots. Also remove all lateral limbs within 20" of the soil surface. Finally, identify at least 2 – 3 well-spaced scaffold limbs with wide crotch angles that radiate from the tree's central leader for retention, and remove the rest. Spacers or spreaders can be used to widen limb crotch angles for added limb strength. Continue annual pruning during the winter dormant period, including scaffold limb selection, until 5–7 well-spaced scaffold limbs have been established.

The **open center method**, shown at right, is predominantly used for peaches and nectarines, and for plums when a horizontal shape is desired. During initial planting, the central leader is cut about 3 feet above the soil surface to encourage lateral shoot development. During the first spring, 3–5 evenly spaced limbs that radiate in a north-south-east-west orientation are retained, with other shoots and low-growing suckers removed. This pruning process is then repeated annually during late December or early January for the second and third winter seasons.



For more mature trees, thin and renew laterals annually, removing crossing or crowded branches, water sprouts, root suckers, and growth that inhibits sunlight and air movement in the tree canopy. Always remove dead, diseased or damaged wood. The ideal tree canopy is low enough for easy fruit harvesting, yet high enough for easy fertilization, weed management and irrigation maintenance. And while overall tree height varies by fruit tree species, maintaining fruit tree heights in the home landscape between 12 - 15 feet is a general guide. In fact, training young trees and maintaining mature tropical fruit trees at a reasonable height will also reduce potential storm damage to the tree and surrounding landscape and structures. For additional information on training and pruning fruit trees, see [UF Article HS82 Pruning and Training Fruit Trees](#) and [UF Article HS1111 Training and Pruning Florida Peaches, Nectarines and Plums](#).

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Now Playing In SW FL Gardens...

By Leah Ray

It's been a chilly winter, that's for sure. But we all know you are already thinking about your garden and what's to come soon. Even though I grow very little from seed, I get so inspired by the mailbox full of seed catalogs. Here are some outdoor activities that will keep you busy.

Vegetables: Best bets are sweet potatoes, cantaloupe, eggplant and squash for late spring harvest.

Turf: The lawn is probably a little anemic looking. Use a slow release fertilizer with a weed and feed. Apply a pre-emergent weed killer to the lawn now to prevent germination of warm season weed seeds. It's all about timing. Be sure to calculate your square footage and apply according to the label. Crabgrass may be controlled by spot treatment or digging it up. Replace with sod. The industry calls it R & R (Roundup & Replace).

Pruning: The end of the dormant season is a good time to prune trees, and shrubs. Flowering trees should be pruned after the last flowers fade but before new buds set. Again, it's all about timing.

Fertilization: Feed palms, ornamental shrubs, tropical and subtropical fruit trees, and vines. Bananas need fertilizer once a month only in the warm months. Mulch them by the foot not the inch.

House Plants: Be sure to take those colored killer foil wrappers off your poinsettias. Keep them alive through March. Pot them up and trim 1/3. Try to avoid watering Christmas cactus another month. Sometime in March, trim the ends of the cactus and begin more frequent watering and feedings.

Irrigation: Start the year off right by making saving water a priority. The majority of landscape plantings are more drought tolerant than you think. Learn how to operate your irrigation timer.

Citrus: It's a good time to check citrus trees for scab disease. Apply a copper fungicide when new leaves appear and again when 2/3 of the flower blossoms have fallen. Fertilize- keeping in mind that the frequency and amount depends on the age and size of the tree.

Orchids: Continue *weekly weakly* feedings with a fertilizer solution. Treat a potted orchid more like a cactus (dry) and it will do much better. April will be a better month to do divisions.

Leaf Litter: If fallen oak leaves are creating a heavy blanket over the lawn, the grass will see it as mulch and will react as if you have mulched it. Rake it. If you don't want all those leaves, please contact me. I'll take them! Be aware that freshly fallen leaves can tie up nutrients. Try to compost them a bit.

Calendar

See [Collier Extension Calendar](#) for more details.

All events held at Extension office unless noted.

Call 239 353 4244 to register for all classes.

February

- Feb 1** [February South FL Garden Calendar](#)
- Feb 3** Garden Workshop Series "Gardening in Small Spaces," at **Unity of Naples, 2000 Unity Way.** 10:00—11:30 a.m.
- Feb 10** Garden Workshop Series "Roses and Victoria Water Lillies in SW Florida," at **Unity of Naples, 2000 Unity Way.** 10:00—11:30 a.m.
- Feb 16** Florida Seafood Sustainability and Safety Brown Bag Webinar "Grouper." To sign up, [contact Bryan Fluech](#), CC Sea Grant Extension Agent.
- Feb 17** Garden Workshop Series "Colorful Crotons," at **Unity of Naples, 2000 Unity Way.** 10:00—11:30 a.m.
- Feb 24** Garden Workshop Series "Perennials, Woody Ornamentals and New Arrivals," at **Unity of Naples, 2000 Unity Way.** 10:00—11:30 a.m.
- Feb 24** [Garden Workshop Series season ticket registration](#) for March 10th garden tour eligibility ends today.

March

- Mar 1** [March South FL Garden Calendar](#)
- Mar 3** Garden Workshop Series "Wild and Wonderful Wildflowers of South Florida," at **Unity of Naples, 2000 Unity Way.** 10:00—11:30 a.m.
- Mar 10** Garden Workshop Series Orchidaceae Tour for Season Ticket holders only.
- Mar 16** [Collier County Ag Tour.](#) Contact Extension at 239 353 4244 for tickets.
- Mar 16** Florida Seafood Sustainability and Safety Brown Bag Webinar "Shrimp." To sign up, [contact Bryan Fluech](#), CC Sea Grant Extension Agent.
- Mar 17** Garden Workshop Series "Going Vertical in your Gardens," at **Unity of Naples, 2000 Unity Way.** 10:00—11:30 a.m.
- Mar 22** [Florida Master Naturalist Program Coastal Module](#) registration closes. [Contact Bryan Fluech](#), CC Sea Grant Extension Agent, for details. First class is March 30 at **Rookery Bay NERR.**

April

- Apr 1** [April South FL Garden Calendar](#)
- Apr 1** **Next MG Green Gazette newsletter**

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Your Dooryard Fruit Orchard - Fertilizing

By Mary Jane Cary, with [Spanish Edition](#) and [German Edition](#) by Betzy Hussmann

We can save our time, money, effort, and our environment by understanding when and how to fertilize. While we may cease fertilization of many of our Southwest Florida plants with few consequences, fertilization of fruit trees is needed to maintain healthy trees capable of producing high quality fruits to eat.

In addition, over-fertilization is just as harmful as under-fertilization or improper nutrient applications. For example, excess nitrogen produces lots of leaves....instead of fruits! And "too much of a good thing" can pollute and injure plants and their surrounding environment. So to optimize our dooryard orchard fertilization efforts, the University of Florida recommends first, identifying the appropriate nutrients for each type of fruit tree, and then applying those nutrients according to two schedules; one for young non-bearing trees, and a second schedule for established and mature trees.

Young non-bearing citrus trees should be fertilized three times annually, right before SWFL growth flushes occur in February, May-June, and October, with a balanced fertilizer such as 8-8-8 (equal amounts of Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium). Look for "Citrus fertilizers" in garden centers with slow-release Nitrogen, and micronutrients such as Magnesium (1.6%), Manganese (0.4%), Copper (0.4%) and Boron (0.2% or less). Be sure to spread fertilizers evenly across the soil, taking care to avoid trunk contact. Listen to this [Gardening in a Minute audio](#), and read [UF Article 867 Citrus Culture in the Home Landscape](#) and [UF Article 888 Your Florida Dooryard Citrus Guide—Bearing Trees \(Years 3 to 5+\)](#) for more details.



Young low-chill peach trees planted in our sandy soils need a balanced fertilizer with a 12-4-8 formula, including 1-2% Zinc Oxide and micronutrients. For more information about fertilization quantities and timing, see the [UF Article HS348 Florida Subtropical Peaches: Production Practices](#). And if you are experimenting with new low-chill apple varieties, [UF Article HS764 Low-Chill Apple Cultivars](#) recommends using a balanced fertilizer with a 10-10-10 formula.



As your fruit trees mature, monitoring for nutrient deficiencies and adjusting your fertilizations may make more sense. Nutrient deficiencies typically appear as a regular yellowing pattern in the leaves, as the example at left. See [UF Article HS 797 A Guide to Citrus Nutritional Deficiency](#) for more examples and recommendations, or contact a Master Gardener Plant Clinic for additional assistance.

Contact a [Master Gardener Plant Clinic](#) Near YOU!

Call us at (239) 353 2872, email CollierMG@ifas.ufl.edu, or Walk In

Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays

9 am — Noon and 1 — 4 pm

Collier Co Extension 14700 Immokalee Rd.

Tuesdays

9 am — Noon

Naples Regional Library 650 Central Ave.

Thursdays

9 am — Noon and 1 — 4 pm

Naples Botanical Garden 4820 Bayshore Dr.

Saturdays

10:00 a.m. — Noon

Home Depot at Davis & Airport-Pulling Rd.

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