Healthy Ponds Improve Water Quality

By Mary Jane Cary, Master Gardener

The egrets, marsh rabbits, and otters that call Collier County’s Freedom Park home are not the only beneficiaries of this 50-acre park. While the man-made ponds and natural wetlands here provide recreational enjoyment for area residents, they perform a vital role in filtering and cleansing our water. Likewise, the lakes, canals, and wetlands by our homes and businesses may appear to be natural, but just like those at Freedom Park, they too are designed to slow, hold, and filter runoff.

Our summer rains enable us to enjoy green landscapes and water-based recreation like swimming, boating and fishing. But heavy rains can also cause flooding and runoff, carrying sand and soil, pet waste, landscape debris, fertilizers, car and truck fluid residues, and roadway litter into our waterways. Plus, our sandy soils enable rain and its runoff to flow quickly towards the underground aquifer that supplies our drinking water. So our lakes, canals and wetlands, along with grassy swales, rain gardens and shoreline plantings, play a vital role in slowing this flow, enabling runoff to be cleansed of pollutants before continuing downstream towards our bays and estuaries, or downward towards our aquifer.

Healthy stormwater ponds and wetlands are much more effective at cleansing our future drinking water, so what can we do to help? Continued on Page 2

Gulf Currents

By Mary Jane Cary, Master Gardener and Green Gazette Editor

Whether you’re drawn to Southwest Florida’s beautiful beaches or its inland backwaters, water is a vital liquid currency upon which our economy depends. Our continued enjoyment of all that the Gulf coast has to offer depends on thoughtful stewardship of this precious resource. Join us on August 17th as the Collier Extension hosts a Retention Pond Management Workshop. And thanks to area residents and landscape professionals who follow Florida’s Green Industries Best Management Practices for the Protection of Water Resources, we’re making headway in preventing pollution and conserving our waters.

And whether you’re headed back to school, or just headed for the beach, stay prepared this storm season with UF’s Disaster Preparedness Handbook. Then check out our upcoming events, and head out to join us at the Extension!
Healthy Ponds Improve Water Quality  
Continued from Page 1

Preventing pollutants from entering lakes, canals and wetlands is by far the least expensive and most effective method for maintaining our lakes and wetlands. We can:

- **Use fertilizers and pesticides responsibly**  Fertilize only as needed during active growing season to maintain plant health, using cost-effective slow-release fertilizers. Keep plants healthy, allowing beneficial insects and wildlife to work for you to manage pests. If treatment becomes necessary, use the safest methods first, such as those outlined in the FFL™ Principle 6: Manage Yard Pests Responsibly Guide.

- **Pick up pet waste**  Clean up after pets, even in your own yard. Pet waste can contain bacteria and parasites, such as E. coli, giardia, and hookworm, that can infect people and animals that spend time in your landscape. When allowed to wash into retention ponds, the nutrients in pet waste also promote weed and algae growth, depleting oxygen levels, and degrading pond health. So bag that waste, and place it in the trash. Learn more at UF’s Pick Up After Pets website.

- **Ensure only rain reaches the stormwater drain**  Runoff entering neighborhood storm drains flows directly into our retention ponds. So keep all yard waste, including leaves and grass clippings, plus household and vehicle fluids and cleaning products away. Since your turfgrass and soil are very efficient at removing pollutants and absorbing wash water, park your vehicle on a grassy area when washing it by hand.

- **Add rain gardens, shoreline and littoral plantings**  Rain gardens in low-lying areas slow and hold runoff until it percolates into the soil, while shoreline and water’s edge or littoral zone plants absorb nutrients and pollutants in runoff before they can reach the water. And year-round, these plantings add wildlife habitat and beauty to our landscapes. See UF article CIR912 Wetland Plants for ideas. See the SWFLWMD Citizen’s Guide to Stormwater Ponds for further management information. And visit the Stormwater Pollution Prevention site for more ways you can improve Collier County water quality.

- **Stop leaks and clean up spills**  Properly inflated tires and regular tune-ups reduce your vehicle’s gas use, lower exhaust emissions, and reduce runoff tox- ins. So fix any equipment leaks, and use cat litter or other absorbent material to soak up spills. Sweep litter into a bag, seal, and place in your trash. Find more tips at UF’s You Can Help: In Your Vehicle site.

To learn more about retention ponds, attend the Stormwater Pond Management Workshop on Friday, August 17th, from 1 - 5 pm at the Naples Botanical Garden.

**Top Zone10 Performers**

*By Mary Jane Cary, Master Gardener*

“One plant’s toxic environment is another plant’s Eden” explains aquatic plants. Only 1% of all plant species can live in saturated and flooded soils. But aquatic plants like Pickerelweed *Pontaderia cordata* create shoots above water, while their roots and lower portions of their shoots are below the waterline. This “right place” environment makes Pickerelweed a beautiful choice for ponds and water gardens.

This easy care native reaches 3 - 5 feet high, with foot-long leaves, and spikes of blue flowers in spring and summer. When planted in full sun in about 12 inches of water at the edge of a water body, Pickerelweed attracts butterflies and stabi- lizes pond banks while providing height, color and tex- ture. For further information on Pickerelweed, request UF Article FPS490 Pickerelweed. And for more aquatic plant recommendations, request UF Article ENH988 Florida Native Aquatic Plants for Ornamental Water Gardens.
When I first planned to write an article about rainfall in the middle of our SWFL rainy season, I did not expect the topic of drought to warrant mention! After all, Florida is one of the wettest states in the country, with average annual rainfall totals in South Florida topping 4 feet. But timing is everything, whether we’re talking about Olympic Gold medal swimming or South Florida rainfall.

Take a look at the chart below, which shows South Florida average rainfall amounts by month. Perhaps you knew that over half of our annual rainfall arrives in the four summer months from June to September, compliments of thunderstorms, squalls, tropical storms and hurricanes. This weather pattern seems a small price to pay for eight months of blue skies and sunshine for all that outdoor fun, right?

But gardeners may not agree quite so readily, particularly when we consider the money, time and effort we spend on our lawns, gardens and landscapes. Most of our plantings would thrive if they received a 3/4” weekly rain. But one look at this monthly average rainfall chart shows a different reality that seldom meets our plants’ ideal needs. So what can we do?

First, we can use our understanding of local weather patterns as we choose Florida friendly landscape plants for our gardens. Two of my favorite resources for selecting plants are UF’s FFL Guide to Plant Selection and Landscape Design and South Florida Water Management District’s (SFWMD) WaterWise Plant Guide. Many of the recommended trees, palms, shrubs and ornaments identified in these guides are most likely among your favorite plantings already. But selecting these top Zone10 performers for the right spaces in our landscape is just the start.

Since average SFL rainfall amounts can vary among locations, FFL Principle #2 Water efficiently suggests using a rain gauge in our yards to monitor local rainfall. Wait to apply any supplemental water until the plantings show signs of stress, then irrigate deeply. By doing so, we can improve plants’ drought, pest and disease resistance. Suspending supplemental irrigation during rainy season reduces over-watering risk, which damages plant health. In addition, directing our downspouts and gutters into lawns, planting beds, and rain gardens is one way to move rainwater to locations where it can be absorbed. But re-directing this water flow into rain barrels, cisterns, or containment areas enables us to hold excess rainwater for later use.

Storing rainwater for later use pays off during a drought, which is a prolonged period of time when rainfall amounts remain below normal historical values. Droughts can occur over short or long term periods, with those of longer duration typically producing more severe impacts. According to the latest Drought Monitor for Florida published by FSU’s Florida Climate Center, SW Florida, and Collier County in particular, is still experiencing drought conditions. So just like the thunderstorms that roll through on summer afternoons, drought is part of our climate, come rain or come shine.
The Frugal Gardener

By Leah Ray, Master Gardener

Having a gorgeous garden on a budget is not nearly as hard as you might think. Who needs that perfect nursery plant when you can plant share; get a cutting, a rhizome, or even a leaf from a friend. That’s the fun of it- the challenge! Usually, those types of plants do better anyway. And so many things can be repurposed for the yard. Just keep your eyes and your mind open.

No Plant Lasts Forever Learn how to propagate your specific plant to produce fresh new replacements. See UF’s Plant Propagation site to learn how to save seeds, create new plants from cuttings and layering.

Annuals vs. Perennials Annuals are short lived and expensive. A good alternative is to search out the perennials. It’s like putting money into an investment account. Listen to UF’s Gardening in a Minute audio broadcast on Planting Perennials while you browse perennial plant ideas and care guides.

To Print or Not to Print Avoid the printed document aka dead-tree version, forestware, tree version, or treeware. Save yourself the piles of paper by creating desk top folders and read them on your computer or tablet when you have the time.

Compost Don’t feed the disposal or trash can that wonderful organic material. It’s a diamond in the rough for your garden. All organic material will, eventually, break down into compost. Compost needs air circulation, moisture, warmth, and a ready supply of organic materials, with a balance of nitrogen-rich greens and carbon-rich browns. Bins can be fancy store bought or homemade as the photo above shows.

Free Stones I noticed a landscape supply company was no longer selling decorative rocks. I asked if I could have the display items. They were glad I took them.

Trash to Treasure A neighbor was disposing of a rickety outdoor table, but I was some potential. It is now a very sturdy potting bench, customized to my needs.

Email your nifty thrifty gardening photos to the Frugal Gardener at CollierMG@ifas.ufl.edu
The Green Gazette

She Sows Salt-Friendly Shrubs Down by the Sea Shore

Courtesy of Florida Friendly Landscaping Principle # 9: Protect the Waterfront

By Mary Jane Cary, Master Gardener

With all of the endless choices in landscape plants that grow in our SW Florida climate, decision-making is a necessary tool if we wish to ever move beyond the landscape design planning stage. And for those of us that live within sight or walking distance of the beach or along its salt-water estuaries and bays, our plant selection decisions can result in landscape celebrations or lamentations. Delightful sea breezes can quickly escalate in velocity, stressing plant leaves by removing their outer protective layer of moisture. These winds deliver a second challenge in the form of salt spray which coats plants, paving the way for the salts to draw further moisture out of our plants. Young, tender leaves on plants with low salt tolerance typically exhibit burning of leaf margins and loss of leaves when such conditions occur. Driving rains and heavy surf can also produce similar plant damage. A third challenge for coastal plantings is our sandy soils, known for their lack of organic matter and ability to hold moisture and nutrients. And a fourth challenge occurs when the high alkalinity of our sandy soils lock up many of the nutrients vital to plant growth, so they cannot be absorbed. But in spite of these challenges, there are a number of plants that perform well in coastal environments by expressing some degree of salt tolerance. So the first important step we can take when caring for a coastal landscape is to choose salt-tolerant plants, particularly if we live within 1/8 mile of the beach. Two favorite resources for selecting plants, UF’s FFL Guide to Plant Selection and Landscape Design and South Florida Water Management District’s (SFWMD) WaterWise Plant Guide, include salt tolerance values for listed plants. These guides are most useful if you wish to verify the salt tolerance of specific plants, or if you are browsing for potential plant selections.

But what if you are just beginning a sea-side planting project? UF article ENH26 Salt-Tolerant Plants for Florida includes five tables, identifying salt-tolerant trees, palms, shrubs, ground covers and vines, respectively. Plants in each table are also grouped into high, moderate, and low salt tolerance classes. You’ll find many native plants that have naturally adapted to coastal conditions as well as non-native plants, like the high-salt-tolerant Crown of Thorns Euphorbia milii and Bougainvillea spp.

Whenever you install newly selected plants, be sure to water them until they’re established, continuing with supplemental irrigation as needed.

And should you have less salt-tolerant plants, you can surround them with wind screens consisting of small groups of more-salt-tolerant shrubs or trees. These natural wind buffers will protect your more fragile plantings from high winds and salt spray, so you and your plants can enjoy our Gulf-side oasis.

The Nine Florida Friendly Landscaping™ (FFL) Principles

1. Right Plant, Right Place
2. Water Efficiently
3. Fertilize Appropriately
4. Mulch
5. Attract Wildlife
6. Manage Yard Pests Responsibly
7. Recycle
8. Reduce Storm Water Runoff
9. Protect the Waterfront

See the new Articulate E-Learning Nine FFL Principles Presentation

Listen to UF’s Gardening in a Minute audio broadcast about salt-tolerant plants, and click on the image above to browse related publications.
August is the beginning of the warm season crops, but Labor Day is a good benchmark for SWFL gardeners to get their vegetables in. Good soil preparation and 8 hours of full sun are key to success. We have almost returned to a normal rainfall pattern but, both annuals and perennials are in decline. The unrelenting heat, humidity, and windy storms can wreak havoc on the yard. This means that it may be time to do some replacement plantings. UF’s Florida Friendly Landscaping Program has identified Florida-friendly plants. Their Florida Friendly Plants Database includes both native and nonnatives. You will find nearly 380 trees, palms, shrubs, flowers, groundcovers, grasses and vines that are recommended by University of Florida IFAS horticulture experts. Check it out.

**Vegetables:** Plant Malabar Spinach, bush, lima, pole beans, corn, cucumbers, okra, eggplant, southern peas, peppers, pumpkin, summer and winter squash, cantaloupe, watermelons, and tomatoes, following UF article SP103 Vegetable Gardening Guide. Gardeners that do not have a lot of room might consider planting in containers. Sometimes this is a better way to grow flowers and vegetables as it helps to avoid pests living in the soil. Also use this time to have the soil acidity tested. Most Florida plantings prefer a pH in the 5.5 to 7.5 range.

**Flowers:** Try begonias, celosia, coleus, fire spike, ginger, heliconia, lantana, jacobinia, marigold, pentas, porterweed, portulaca, purslane, salvia, scarlet sage, sunflower, torenia, and zinnia.

**Herbs:** Plant heat tolerant Mexican tarragon, mints, rosemary, and basil.

**Potted Plants:** Transplant root bound foliage plants as the ‘slow grow’ season will be upon us soon.

**Pruning:** Trim trees and palms to prevent wind damage during summer storms. Allow palm fronds in the 9:00 – 3:00 o’clock shape to remain and if they aren’t at least 50% brown, try to leave them, as that is where nutrients are stored. Flowering shrubs like hibiscus, oleander, and crepe myrtle benefit from frequent light pruning. See UF article CIR853 Guide to Pruning Landscape Trees and Shrubs.

**Fertilizing:** The ban on applying fertilizers containing nitrogen or phosphorus continues until September 30th for Naples City residents, according to the Naples City Council Fertilizer Ordinance. Collier County residents are reminded to avoid applying fertilizers during identified Storm “Watch” or “Warning” periods, or when heavy rains are forecasted per the Collier County Florida-Friendly Fertilizer Ordinance. Feed potted plants with a slow release fertilizer. Feed bananas monthly. Remember, you can type the name of the fertilizer or chemical in your browser plus the word “Label” to see a much easier to read format label. See example Neem Oil Label.

**Turf:** Chinch bugs and sod webworms are active, so treat. Read labels carefully and avoid treating stressed turf. See UF article ENY325 Southern Chinch Bug Management for details. If you see little white moths, check your lawn for sod webworm larva and apply Bacillus thuringiensis (BT). Treatments will be most effective if applied in the early evening when larvae begin feeding. Drought, chemical burns, poor mowing and diseases can be mistaken for insect damage. Mow high to encourage a deep root system. Turn off irrigation. If possible, avoid mowing when grass is wet to minimize disease spread. Also, alternate mowing directions and patterns to avoid compaction issues. Remember: Aim for a 20/20 lawn. It looks good at about 20 feet away while traveling by at about 20 mph.

**Weeds:** Still too hot to treat. So pull, spot treat or treat with herbicide and start over.

**Citrus:** Time for final pruning. Also, an indicator of Rust Mite infestation appears in dark brown to black scarred areas. Severe rust mite damage can reduce fruit size. Populations usually decline in August and September, but increase again in October and November, so be ready. Oil should be effective in suppressing rust mites. What’s the difference between Sooty Mold and Citrus rust mite damage? Damage caused by citrus rust mite cannot be physically removed from damaged fruit.

**Poinsettias and Christmas Cactus:** Hard to believe that they will be in their glory in a few months. Time for that final fertilization and pinching of the tips. Feed Christmas Cactus one more time, and begin reducing waterings by the end of September.
**Budding Opportunities**

Collier County communities and organizations recognize the value of our Master Gardeners’ knowledge and experience by requesting their assistance with garden projects. Here are a few of the most recent requests.

Please register your interest, along with your latest volunteer and continuing education hours, in our [Master Gardener VMS](#). Thanks for all you do!

**We Sow to Grow Collier**

- **HLC Gardens Advisors** Assist [Rotaract Naples members](#) with project activities in Extension HLC gardens
- **FYI Yard Advisors** Advise homeowners, and condo/homeowner associations with incorporating Florida-Friendly landscape principles
- **Yard and Garden Show Planners** Help with planning October 27-28 garden show and sale details
- **Plant Clinic Consultants** Identify plants, diagnose pests and diseases and provide gardening solutions to residents. Multiple sites, days and hours available

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**Come Grow with Us**

Want to expand your local gardening knowledge, and share what you learn with others? Then volunteer to [become a certified Florida Master Gardener](#)!

Master Gardeners share the latest University of Florida horticultural recommendations with county residents and organizations as they resolve landscape problems and create gardens, and provide homeowners and Condo/Homeowner Associations with Florida Friendly landscaping guidance.

Learn more about the [Master Gardener Program](#) and [Master Gardener roles](#) before requesting the [Collier County Master Gardener Program brochure](#). Then contact Peggy at the Collier County Extension Office at 239 353 4244 for an application and course details.

Master Gardener Liz Pedersoli assists Rege Malone in the Extension Gardens as they demonstrate propagation methods for a Master Gardener training class.

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**SWFL Gulf & Garden Calendar**

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

All events held at Extension office unless noted. **Call the Collier Extension at 239 353 4244 to register for all classes.**

**August**

Aug 1  **August South FL Garden Calendar**

Aug 1  **Sea Turtle Nesting Season** continues through Oct 31. Please take these steps to share the beaches with our natural wildlife neighbors.

Aug 15  **Manatee Response, Recovery, and Research Seminar**, by Kati Therriault, Manatee Research Biologist, 5:30 - 7:30 pm, [Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center](#), 300 Tower Rd., Naples. $ 10 / person, $ 8 for members. [Click here to register](#).


**September**

Sep 1  **September SFL Garden Calendar**

Sep 8  **Small Farm Acreage “Chickens 101” Workshop**, 1 - 4 pm, Collier Extension, 14700 Immokalee Rd. $ 10 / farm. [Click here to register](#), or contact Robert Halman, Agriculture and Small Farms Agent.

Sep 9  **Florida Master Naturalist Program Coastal System Module Registration Ends**. Last day to register for 4-week program held at [Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center](#), 300 Tower Rd, Naples. Contact FL Department of Environmental Protection’s Renee Wilson for details.

Sep 29  **Small Farm Acreage Hydroponics Workshop**, 9am - Noon, Collier Extension, $ 15 / farm. [Click here to register](#), or contact Robert Halman.

Sep 29  **National Estuary Day celebration**, 10am-3pm, at [Rookery Bay](#).

**October**

Oct 1  **October South FL Garden Calendar**

Oct 1  **Next Green Gazette issue**

Oct 27-28  **Yard and Garden Show**

Details in October Green Gazette

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**The Green Gazette**
The Family Nutrition Program (FNP) has been fortunate to partner with the Collier County Public School District, offering food and fitness classes to hundreds of students each month. Our OrganWise Guys materials enable students to make the connection between body and health, foods they eat, and activities they participate in. FNP also collaborates with school Nutrition Services departments in offering Foods of the Month, which promotes increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low fat dairy foods. Plus, we offer families Fresh2U, a program from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, which showcases seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables grown in Florida. And now, through this column, we'll be bringing these foods to you!

August Foods of the Month are stone fruits and summer squash. Peaches have been especially tasty lately. Did you know that fruit is the “original fast food” – just wash it off and eat it! During these hot, humid days when you don't feel like heating up the kitchen, summer squash is an easy choice: grated, chopped or thinly sliced summer squash/zucchini can be enjoyed in a veggie wrap or in a salad. Bite-size sticks are great with dip, and summer squash, brushed with olive oil, is also great on the grill.

September Foods of the Month are whole grains and tomatoes, joining the Fresh2U fruits of mango and carambola. A meal of whole grain pasta with tomato sauce, served with sliced carambola followed by mango sorbet would be a winner at my house! And so would the following recipe:

**Roasted Tomatoes with Herbs**

- Makes 6 servings
- Non-stick cooking spray, as needed
- ½ tsp pepper
- 6 tomatoes, washed
- 1 Tbsp dried parsley
- 2 Tbsp Parmesan cheese
- 2 Tbsp olive or canola oil
- 1 Tbsp minced garlic

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Spray a large baking sheet with cooking spray. Cut each tomato in half. Place tomatoes on baking sheet, cut side up. Drizzle tomatoes with ½ of the oil and season with pepper.

Cook for 30 minutes, or until tomatoes are beginning to brown on the bottom. Mix the remaining oil, parsley, garlic and cheese in a small bowl. Remove tomatoes from oven and sprinkle the herb mixture over the tomatoes. Return to the oven for another 10 minutes, or until the spices begin to brown. Enjoy!

Recipe courtesy of the OrganWise Guys Inc.

Forward or share this issue to your gardening friends, and Browse the complete library of interactive Green Gazette issues at http://collier.ifas.ufl.edu/HomeGarden/Newsletters.shtml

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“Bring us your tired, your poor, your pest-infested plants, yearning to be healed...”

**Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays**

- 9 am — Noon and 1 — 4 pm
- Collier Co Extension 14700 Immokalee Rd.

**Thursdays**

- 9 am — 3 pm
- Naples Botanical Garden 4820 Bayshore Dr.

**Saturdays**

- 10 am — Noon
- Home Depot 1651 Airport-Pulling Rd S.