

Urban Horticulturer

November 2001

Dear Reader

I apologize for not sending out a newsletter for the month of October. I will try to do better in future months. In this newsletter, you will find what is called a purge form. Every two years, we are required by State of Florida law to purge our mailing lists. This means that we must ask our readers to indicate if they want to continue to receive our literature-in this case the Urban Horticulturist. I have included this form which you must return to me at the Polk County Cooperative Office. Also, on this form you will find a short survey. This information is very helpful to me in designing my future extension programs which will better serve you-the public. This survey is purely voluntary. If you choose not to fill out the survey, but want to continue to receive the newsletter, just sign the form and return it to me.

TURF

Sod Renovation-Now is a good time to replace those voids in your St. Augustine turfgrass. This is the time of the year when drought stress is the least. Spray the area with a non-specific herbicide like Round Up. Wait for 7-10 days and then remove all dead grass and weeds. If you have a typical droughty sand for soil, it is a good idea to amend the area with peat moss and/or organic material such as composted manure. A water insoluble nitrogen fertilizer, like Milorganite, could also be added. Till the area to a depth of 6-8 inches.

It is a good idea to have the soil pH checked at this time and add lime if necessary. St Augustinegrass does best at a pH 6.5, while bahiagrass does best at a pH of 5.5. As you know, the Master Gardeners conduct pH tests once per week at the Polk County Extension Office. Or you can request a soil sample kit from the Extension Office, take your soil samples and send them directly to the University of Florida. Results will be sent directly to you in 2-3 weeks.

Before laying sod or planting plugs, wet the area well. Make sure you buy good quality sod. Look for weeds such as bermudagrass which is very difficult to remove after the fact. Keep the soil moist, but not over-watered. In 2-3 weeks give a light feeding with turf fertilizer. Keep watching for chinch bugs and sod web worms because they may still be active.

Mowing and fertilizing-Continue to mow, however you may be mowing mostly weeds as November temperatures decline. It is best to keep these weeds mowed and not to let them go to seed. You may not need to mow more than once every other week. It is just about too late to fertilize and use chemical herbicides for weed control. However, it is still O.K. to use a winterizer fertilizer, which is generally available at local garden centers. Make this fertilizer application before the end of the month.

An application of potassium may be helpful for building root systems. Potassium needs to be thoroughly washed into the soil with

irrigation to prevent leaf damage.

Some spot treatment for weed control can be made at this time of the year, but as the temperatures decline the grass becomes more sensitive to herbicides.

Pests-Mole crickets and chinch bugs may still be around so keep an eye out for these pests.

Over seeding-If you have areas, such as under oak trees, that are void of grass and usually are covered with summer weeds that die in the winter leaving bare ground, you may want to consider overseeding with ryegrass. It is easy to establish this grass, and it looks good, but be prepared to mow it.

FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING

I expect some of you fall gardeners are harvesting snap beans, cucumber and summer squash that were planted during August and September. After harvest, don't let the ground sit around idle. There are more vegetables to be planted in the fall than at any other time of the year and will survive cold weather, such as cabbage, lettuce, broccoli, Brussel's sprouts, beets, carrots, onions, and more (double cropping). Call and request a gardening guide which lists most common vegetables along with planting date and other pertinent information.

Double cropping-Remove the old plants with the roots. Remember to follow the first crop with a crop from a different family (beans followed by cabbage). Till the soil and add organic matter such as composted manures. It probably would be a good idea to test the pH and adjust if necessary.

Thinning Seedlings-This is one of the most important garden operations. It is difficult to sow small seeds far enough apart to permit the plants to make the best development. Carrots

for instance should be thinned first when they are 2-3 inches tall, so that they are about 1 inch apart. They may then be left until they are ready to be eaten, when alternate plants may be pulled and used, leaving room for others to grow. Pull surplus turnips when they are 4-5 inches tall and use for greens. Turnips, rutabagas, and other root crops should be thinned when the tap root becomes fleshy. Onion from seed, and radishes, may be left in the ground until those that are thinned are large enough to eat. Plants thinned from beet rows may be used for greens.

Mulching-Add a small amount of mulch to keep new seeds and plants moist. There are a number of readily available mulches such as hay, pine straw, leaves, saw dust, wood shavings, pine bark, newspaper, black or colored plastic.

Fertilizing-Fertilize monthly with organic matter or garden fertilizer. It is sometimes a good idea to use a garden fertilizer with micro-nutrients, because organic matter usually does not contain essential plant micro-nutrients.

Pests-There are several worms that attack cole crops (cabbage, broccoli, etc.) which may need to be controlled. B.t. (Dipel or Thuricide) works quite well. Stay alert for other pests that may be present after planting. Pick off the pest or use natural controls. Safer soap or dish soap and water work well for control of aphids and whiteflies (dish soap with degreasers may damage plants).

Container Gardening-As I usually do every year, I planted tomatoes in buckets. Normally, I don't recommend planting in August, but this year I tried one bucket of Better Boy. I had a few problems at first, with fruit set, bacterial disease, and whiteflies, but I am now ready to eat my first tomatoes.

Planting in August is more of a risk from disease, insects and heat, but ripe tomatoes will be earlier. I will let you know next month about the quality of my fruit.

FALL ANNUALS

Garden centers are full of cold season annuals including pansies, snapdragons, and petunias. They can be used in many ways-old flower beds, hanging baskets, planters, and dish gardens. These plants like cold weather and can even stand a light freeze.

Before planting remove all the older plantings from the soil. Add lots of organic matter such as peat moss and composted cow manure (2-3 inches). Also, add 2 pounds of a 6-6-6 fertilizer per 100 square feet. Slow release fertilizers are even better. Till the fertilizer and organic matter into the soil to a depth of 6 inches. Be careful not to set the plant too deep. Moisten the soil when the surface becomes dry to the touch. Fertilize monthly.

I think snapdragons are my favorite. Small, medium and large cultivars are available to fit most gardening needs. They come in most any color except blue. They should be grown in full sun to lightly shaded areas. Make sure to stake taller varieties to prevent wind damage. They should be fertilized once a month with a good garden fertilizer. Remove old flower heads to encourage new blooms. Control caterpillars with B.t. and aphids with Safer soap.

Annuals can be damaged by nematodes. These are small microscopic worms present in most Florida soils and can be very damaging to susceptible annuals. Therefore, it is best not to grow the small annual in the same place year after year. The nematodes can be killed with soil fumigation, but this must be done by a professional. Soil solarization is the only other option.

COLD WEATHER

The first frost should not arrive for about a month, but the temperature will continue to drop. Finish fall fertilizing as soon as possible. You may want to use a low nitrogen fertilizer such as a 2-10-10 to discourage excessive new growth. Make sure you have 3-4 inches of mulch near the base of plants. Move cold sensitive plants to warmer locations. Water only when the soil is dry one inch beneath the surface. Don't prune plants that develop winter dormancy such as ligustrums, crape myrtles, viburnum, and azaleas.

Now is the time to decide what materials you have for frost and freeze protection and what plants that you are going to protect. Assemble coverings that can be used for cold protection, such as sheets, blankets and commercial freeze cloth. I believe freeze cloth is available locally and works well to protect plants from the cold. Last winter, I protected snap beans in my garden and pentas in my landscape with several layers of a heavy freeze cloth. Light bulbs can be used under freeze cloth to maintain higher temperatures for very cold sensitive plants. Just remember to remove the light bulb the next morning when temperatures rise or the plants could get cooked.

MISC. NOVEMBER GARDENING

Vegetables to be planted-Beet, broccoli, Brussel's sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celery, Chinese cabbage, collard, endive, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard, onion, sweet pea, radicchio, radish, rhubarb, spinach, Swiss chard and turnip.

Herbs-Anise, arugula, basil, chive, cardamon, chervil, cilantro, coriander, dill, fennel, garlic, lavender, lemon balm, lovage, Mexican tarragon, mint, nasturtium, oregano, parsley,

rosemary, sage, sweet marjoram, thyme and watercress.

Flowers-Ageratum, alyssum, baby's breath, black eyed Susan, bush daisy, calendula, California poppy, candytuff, carnation, cat's whiskers, chrysanthemum, cleome, cornflower, delphinium, dusty miller, foxglove, gaillardia, geranium, , goldenrod, heliotrope, hollyhocks, Iceland poppy, impatiens, larkspur, lobelia, ornamental cabbage and kale, pansy, petunia, phlox, salvia, shasta daisy, snapdragon, stock, sweet pea, verbena, viola and wax begonias.

Camellias-This is a good time of the year to buy camellias. As they come into bloom, you can pick the color you like best.

Water Restrictions-You probably have heard or read through the media that the water restriction in Polk County will be revised effective November 12. Watering will be increased to two days per week. Even numbered addresses may water Tuesday and/or Saturday. Odd number addresses, or at locations where no address can be determined, may water on Wednesdays and/or Sundays. Low volume irrigation such as drip lines, soaker hoses, hand held hose or micro-jets may water any day of the week. New plantings may be watered for up to 60 days any day of the week. All watering should be done before 10 am and after 4 p.m.

Reclaimed water can be used any day of the week, however SWFWMD is asking for businesses and homeowners to voluntarily conserve reclaimed water by irrigating during non-daylight hours and limiting irrigation to no more than 3/4 inch of water. Reclaimed water is mostly limited in Polk County to commercial uses such as at cemeteries and golf courses. However, some reclaimed water lines are being installed in new developments.

Master Gardener Calendars-Besides the purge notice and survey, you will find a Master Gardener 2002 Calendar order form. This calendar promises to be better than last, and boasts a hand painted cover. This cover was painted by one of our Master Gardeners.

Have a good gardening day,

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Polk County

For gardening information
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>

For Polk County Extension Information
<http://polk.ifas.ufl.edu>