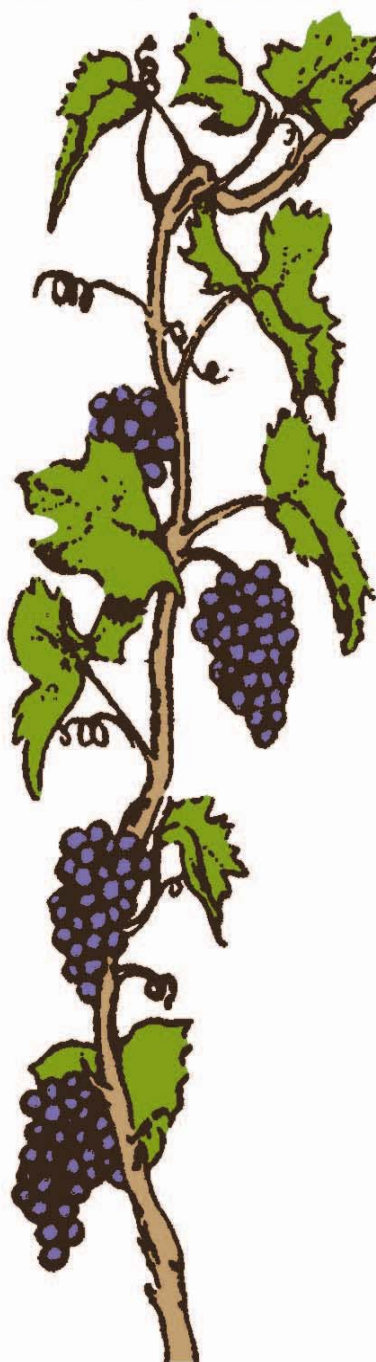


ESCAMBIA COUNTY

February 2010 | Vol. XXII, No 2

Master Gardener's Grapevine



Calendar of Events

2010 MASTER GARDENER TRAINING CLASSES

Wednesdays from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., thru February 24, 2010, See Page 3

FTGA 2010 REGIONAL TURF SEMINAR – MILTON

Santa Rosa County Auditorium, 45430 Jimmy's Way, Milton, FL
Tuesday, January 21, 7:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

JANUARY MG MONTHLY MEETING

Thursday, January 28, 9 a.m., Escambia County Road Prison
Program: Presentation by **Jeff Bohannon**, followed by tour of the facility

MUSCADINE GRAPES & ROSES PRUNING WORKSHOP

Monday, February 8, 9-11 a.m., Escambia County Extension Demonstration Garden

GARDEN CENTER EDUCATIONAL SERIES

"In and Out of the Garden"

Thursday, February 11, 8:45 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Pensacola Garden Center, 1850 North Ninth Avenue, Telephone: 432-6095

FEBRUARY MG EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

Friday, February 12, 10 a.m., Extension Office

PRESIDENTS' DAY

Monday, February 15, Extension Office Closed

FEBRUARY MG MONTHLY MEETING

Thursday, February 25, 9 a.m., Extension Office Auditorium
Program: Master Gardener Project with Habitat for Humanity,
by **Beth Bolles** and **Carrie Stevenson**

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS

Sunday, March 14, 2 a.m.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY Master Gardener's Grapevine

Beth Bolles, Extension Agent III, Horticulture
Carol Lord, Horticulture Technician
John Robinson, Editor

This newsletter is written and compiled by Master Gardeners in support of the Escambia County Master Gardener Volunteer Program. Master Gardeners have contributed more than 124,963 hours of service to the Extension Horticulture Program since 1987, providing services worth \$2,530,501.

Escambia County Master Gardeners Association
Officers – October 2009 – December 2010
Sue Warner, President
Pat Bush, Vice President
Nettie Joseph, Secretary
Clark Cain, Treasurer

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Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person requiring special accommodations to participate in any meeting or workshop noted herein is asked to advise the University of Florida at least 5 working days prior to the meeting or workshop by contacting Beth Bolles at 850-475-5230. If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the University by calling 352-846-1046(TDD).



Beth R. Bolles

Beth Bolles, Extension Agent III Horticulture

Please send articles/newsletter items for the March 2010 Grapevine issue by Monday, February 15.
Send e-mail to Beth Bolles at bbolles@ufl.edu or to John Robinson at flomgoy96@aol.com
—John Robinson, Editor

Visit Escambia County Extension Horticulture and the Grapevine Newsletter online at:
<http://escambia.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/hort.shtml>

President's Message...

Well, I don't know about your yard and garden, but this winter has played havoc in mine! Lots of truly dead things abound. It's so hard that on that first sunny day when the temperature gets around 50 degrees not to run around cutting off all the "dead" stuff. Patience, something I've little of. But I have been able to do some clean up and look over all those fresh, new winter weeds.

One thing I'd like answered: Why does Dave Mills "Nevada" vegetable garden in front of the Extension Service office fare so much better than my "let's grow all our vegetables in raised beds"? I've asked Dave and he just shrugged.

I've checked out the Grow House and if you haven't go out a take a look. It's FULL of plants and most are looking very nice. Only a few may have been zapped, but considering our winter weather it's to be expected. It's a wonder the number of plants the propagation folks have put in there. Lots of work has gone into the construction as well as the plant care.

Our January program, the Escambia County Road Prison will be interesting to say the least. I googled the Prison and there are a couple of articles about it on-line. Try it and you'll get a glimmer of what the facility is all about. It's important for us to stretch a bit and learn about our county. Remember... it's about education!

I'm also excited about Earth Day coming up April 24, 2010. Maybe it's a bit of the throwback to my younger days but I've enjoyed it every year. Be thinking of what Master Gardeners could contribute in the way of programs of interest. And while you're there, it's the best place to people-watch in Pensacola!

Thought for the Month:

With a few flowers in my garden I live without envy.

Lope de Vega, Spanish playwright
1562-1635

**Sue Warner, President, Escambia County
Master Gardeners Association**

From Beth Bolles...

The 2010 record of volunteer service forms will be emailed and mailed very soon to every volunteer. This form must be completed and signed in order to participate in the program. The form also represents your commitment to donate at least 50 hours of service during the year, to follow office policies, and promote the educational mission of Extension.

MG Training

January 27 – Wetlands and Plants

February 3 - Fruits and Vegetables

February 10 – All About Turf

February 17 – Weeds and Management in Beds/Turf

February 24 – Class Wrap up and Examination

Plant Knowledge

The plants to know for the February monthly meeting are:

Pindo palm: *Butia capitata*

Meyer lemon: *Citrus x meyeri*

Taiwan cherry: *Prunus campanulata*

‘Purple Diamond’: *Loropetalum chinensis* ‘Shang-hi’

Request for Educational Information

The Downtown Improvement Board has requested a program from Master Gardeners on container planting. They currently have a beautification program in which residents and businesses purchase a wrought iron basket, plant it with seasonal flowers, and provide necessary maintenance to keep the displays looking attractive. Currently, people may not purchase a basket because they do not know what to plant or how to care for the planter. The DIB would like MG volunteers to prepare a sample basket planting demonstration and discuss plant selection, watering, fertilizing, and any other general care techniques. The ideal time would be a Saturday in March. This would be an excellent community educational program and volunteers have plenty of time to prepare for the session. Let me know if you would like to help. If we do not have a team in place in a couple of weeks, I will begin to make assignments for this project.

Official Extension Policy on Driving and Parking Areas

There is now restricted driving and parking on grass around the Extension office. We recently had a garden visitor step in a rut left by cars, and twist an ankle. Luckily, it was not too serious. Master Gardeners and office staff may only pull along the back grass up to the grow houses for **temporary loading and unloading of heavy materials**. You may not pull anywhere else, including by the side of the shade area with the aquaponics tanks, by the potting shed, or on the other side of the garden by the field. The only exception will be for Chuck and Barbara to spray the roses or garden areas.

The next step if this policy is abused will be to get official statements from County Safety and Risk Management on off-pavement driving around the office. This will probably result in absolutely no driving on grass.

This policy has become necessary to protect garden visitors and make sure that our public garden areas are safe for everyone.

Victory Garden Updates

Thanks to **Ann Luther** who has volunteered to teach the Victory Garden session on Growing Your Own Plants: The Basics of Plant Propagation on Saturday, April 17. Ann will be putting her team together soon to help conduct this session.

The Class of 2010 is very involved in Master Gardener activities. A few include:

Pizza Day camp – Holly Collins, Gwen Conley, Stephanie Gainer, Diana Jepson, Carol Perryman

Phone clinic – Gwen Conley

Tree Giveaway – Doris Collins, Gwen Conley, Stephanie Gainer, Diana Jepson, Carol Perryman

Semmes school garden – Tess Haft

Plant Propagation – Sherry Atkinson, Tess Haft, David Hart, Diana Jepson, Carol Perryman, Marcia Sergent

--Beth R. Bolles, Horticulture Agent

Upcoming Programs for Master Gardener Monthly Meetings

Vice President's Announcements

JANUARY MEETING

I hope you've had a great holiday and are rested up and ready to start off 2010 with renewed energy, ideas and enthusiasm for our projects. In case your January *Grapevine* got buried with the wrapping paper, here's a recap. As was noted in the January issue of the *Grapevine*, the January meeting will be held at the Escambia County Road Prison in their meeting room. We will have a brief business meeting focusing on the 2010 budget and a few other items. The meeting will be followed by a presentation by **Jeff Bohannon** and he will conduct a tour of the facility, with special focus on their horticultural training program and other areas in which the inmates are trained and prepared for jobs when they are released.

Directions to the Escambia County Road Prison from the County Extension Office

North on Stefani Road (approx. 1.3 miles)
Turn left on West Roberts Road (approx. .3 miles)
Turn right on Stallion Road (approx. .4 miles)
Turn left on East Kingsfield Road (approx. 1.5 miles)
Turn right on highway 297A (approx. 1.4 miles)
Turn left at Escambia County Sign - 601 Highway 297A
The Road Prison is on your right with the meeting room clearly marked.

February meeting will feature **Beth Bolles** and **Carrie Stevenson** who will give us a presentation on our project with Habitat for Humanity.

Our **March meeting** will be given by **Libbie Johnson**, Escambia County Extension Office Agriculture, Aquaculture, Natural Resources and Water Quality Agent. She will be discussing agriculture issues affecting Escambia County. This will be a great program for us, since it will be a lead-in to a Farm Tour in April. More details about

this tour will be in the March issue of the *Grapevine*.

---Pat Bush, Vice-President

Wildlife Events for February

- Early Purple Martin scouts will start to appear in Florida this month. Now is the time to raise houses or gourds.
- Male Bluebirds begin checking nest boxes to present to females in a few weeks. Nest boxes for Bluebirds should be placed by the middle of the month for maximum use through the nesting season. Nest boxes should be placed no closer than 100 yards apart to minimize territorial squabbles.
- American Swallow-tailed Kites return to Florida from South American wintering areas.
- Woodcocks begin courtship behavior in north Florida. Listen at dusk for their "peenting" in open fields.
- Ospreys will begin nesting in north Florida.
- Pileated Woodpeckers begin their mating season and will start announcing territories by drumming on various objects including houses and telephone poles.
- Others who are beginning their nesting season include: Little Blue and Tri-colored Herons, Wood and Mottled Ducks, and Snail Kites.
- Purple Finches and Pine Siskins will leave our feeders and begin their migration back to northern nesting areas.
- Alligator Snapping Turtles will start mating this month, with nesting activity throughout the spring.
- Eastern Moles are breeding this month in tunnels under our lawns.
- Pocket Gophers begin their spring breeding season.
- Striped Skunks begin their breeding season.
- Quail and Gray Squirrel hunting season is still open.
- Antlered Deer and Wild Hog general gun season in the Northwest Zone (Panhandle).
- Special archery and muzzleloading for Deer in the Northwest Zone (Panhandle).

—The School of Natural Resources and Environment at the University of Florida.

<http://snre.ufl.edu/pubsevents/wild.htm>

Fruit Thinning Adds Quality

Fruit Thinning is a time-consuming task that is often required to produce good quality fruit. It can be very beneficial for peach, plum and apple trees.

Fruit trees often will set more fruit than is needed for a full crop. Several undesirable things can happen when excessive fruit is left on fruit trees. Weight of extra fruit can cause tree limbs to break. Excessive fruit set often will result in small fruit with poor flavor. Excessive fruit set also can result in alternate bearing in which a tree will produce little or no fruit in the year following a large fruit crop.

Fruit thinning is generally most effective when it is done shortly after fruit set; although fruit thinning a couple of weeks prior to harvest can sometimes result in larger fruit and less limb breakage. Thinning will reduce the amount of fruit being produced, but this can be offset by improved fruit quality and size. The importance of fruit thinning varies with different types of fruits.

Fruit thinning is very important on peach trees. Peach trees frequently set an excessive number of fruit, since a 10% bloom set often will produce a full crop. A very heavy fruit crop can result in poor quality fruit and damaged trees.

Fruit thinning should begin as soon as frost danger is over. An exception to this rule is after mild winters when trees may not have had adequate chilling and do not come out of dormancy properly. A sign of this condition is delayed and non-uniform leaf emergence. There often will be a tuft of leaves near the tip of a stem and no leaves for 10 to 20 inches below the tips. Another sign of inadequate chilling is flowers blooming for several weeks instead of a few days. Thinning should be delayed several weeks if inadequate chilling is suspected, because the flowers are often deformed and many of them will not produce fruit or the fruit that develops often will not grow properly.

Most fruit thinning is done by hand, which is very time consuming. Using sticks to break up fruit clusters and shakers to shake fruit off the trees are less time-consuming methods; however, they do not

produce consistent thinning. The larger fruit often are removed or damaged with these thinning methods.

Fruit are generally thinned to six to eight intervals on limbs. Early peach varieties are usually thinned to 10 inches because of the short time available for the fruit to mature. When thinning, look at the number of fruit remaining on the tree and not at the ground. Looking at the ground will prevent you from removing enough fruit. Thinning is also a good time to remove damaged fruit. A properly thinned mature peach tree will usually have 500 to 700 fruit remaining.

Japanese plums tend to overbear like peaches. Fruit on these plums should be spaced 4-6 inches apart and the fruit clusters should be broken up. Native plums do not need thinning unless heavily loaded.

Apples frequently require thinning. There is usually a naturally occurring fruit drop in June. If excessive fruit remains, the apples can be thinned to 6-8 inches along the limbs. Thinning to one apple per fruiting spur can aid disease control.

Pears are usually thinned only when very heavy crops are set and the trees might be damaged. Thinning is usually done a few weeks before harvest.

Oriental persimmons are seldom fruit thinned unless a heavy crop threatens to damage limbs. Sometimes persimmons will fail to produce a fruit crop the year following a heavy crop. Fruit thinning during heavy crop years appears to reduce alternate bearing.

Grapes, muscadines, citrus, figs, blackberries and blueberries are not fruit thinned. Grapes and muscadines are pruned in the winter. This reduces the number of buds available to produce fruit clusters. Pruning is a form of fruit thinning which results in improved fruit quality and also controls the size of the vines.

Fruit thinning is a task that can increase fruit size, lessen tree damage and reduce alternate bearing.

---**Carol Lord, Environmental Technician
Horticulture**

Demonstration Garden Maintenance - A New Years Resolution

This time of year gives us the opportunity to think about the old year with its good and not so good moments and to contemplate opportunities and optimism for the New Year. I am trying to keep my New Year resolutions few but achievable. I hope you think about one of my resolutions: working more in the Demonstration Garden, and consider whether you can make it one of yours too. To keep the garden in beautiful shape we need more volunteers, especially on a more consistent basis. Beyond the personal benefits of learning more about the plants and our fellow gardeners, results of working in the Demonstration Garden give us a way of serving the greater community through public education and example.

In 2010 we are planning to provide increased communication to the membership on specific maintenance needs in each of the garden areas. This will enable anyone to work any day and any time they choose and still know they are doing the most needed activities. Keep your eyes open for garden needs communication via email, the web-site and posting in the garden. Please make increased participation in the garden one of your priorities in 2010.

---Steve Warner
Garden Maintenance Coordinator

Bug Quote

Through and through the inspired leaves
Ye maggots, make your windings;
But, oh! Respect his lordship's taste,
And spare his golden bindings.

—Robert Burns
(who was actually referring to book-boring
beetle larvae)

The Festival of Flowers theme for 2010 is Stand By Me!

Mobile, Alabama – Providence Hospital Foundation
Presents: The 17th Annual Festival of Flowers,
March 25-28, 2010, Providence Hospital Campus
Mobile, AL

Contact Information:

Festival of Flowers
P.O. Box 850429
Mobile, Alabama 36685
1.251.639.2050
1.877.777.0529
www.festivalofflowers.com
Festival of Flowers Office 251-639-2050
email: hchilders@providenchospital.org

FEBRUARY IS BEST TIME TO PRUNE FRUIT TREES

February is the best time to prune most fruit trees in Pensacola. The coldest part of winter is usually over, and trees will soon be growing and can heal pruning injuries.

Pruning fruit trees can be beneficial in several ways. It improves tree health by removing dead, injured or diseased limbs. It eases harvesting by shaping and reducing tree height. It increases flower production on trees such as peaches that bloom on new growth. It improves fruit quality by allowing more light penetration, which improves fruit color, and by thinning the fruit crop, which improves fruit size and sugar content.

Figs produce fruit on current season wood, although some varieties produce an early crop on the previous season's growth. Figs do not need heavy pruning to produce fruiting wood. Pruning consists primarily of removing inward growth when necessary to keep the tree open. Dead, diseased or damaged wood along with suckers and water sprouts should be removed.

Citrus trees require little if any pruning except to remove broken or damaged limbs. Freeze-damaged citrus should not be pruned until June. The severity of damage can be properly assessed at that time.

A publication on pruning fruit trees can be obtained by contacting your local extension service.

—Carol Lord, *Environmental Technician, Horticulture*



Zinnia 'Zahara Starlight Rose'

(Courtesy All-America Selections)
AAS Bedding Plant Award Winner: Zinnia 'Zahara Starlight Rose'



Snapdragon F1 'Twinny Peach'

(Courtesy All-America Selections)
AAS Bedding Plant Award Winner: Snapdragon F1 'Twinny Peach'



Gaillardia F1 'Mesa Yellow'

(Courtesy All-America Selections)
AAS Flower Award Winner: Gaillardia F1 'Mesa Yellow'



Viola F1 'Endurio Sky Blue Martien'

(Courtesy All-America Selections)
AAS 2010 Cool Season Award Winner: Viola F1 'Endurio Sky Blue Martien'

Photos: All-American Selections 2010 Winners

GARDENING TIPS for FEBRUARY

PLANT

Flower Seeds: Baby's Breath, calendula, California poppy, candytuft, Carnation (China Doll), Dianthus, lunaria, nasturtium, and statice.

Bulbs: Agapanthus, caladium, canna, dahlia, gladiolus (set out a few every ten days to extend blooming period), and gloriosa lily.

Plants: Roses, fruit and ornamental trees, shrubs. If planning to purchase azaleas, begin checking with suppliers to get the color you want.

Vegetable Seeds: English peas, mustard greens, turnips, beets, kale, kohlrabi, radishes, carrots, and Irish potatoes. Old timers recommend planting Irish potatoes on February 14th.

Vegetable Plants: Broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, lettuce, and onion sets.

MISCELLANEOUS

In protected containers, start seeds of coleus, cosmos, dusty miller, petunias, marigolds, impatiens, zinnias, scarlet sage, English daisies and other summer annuals. Start seeds of tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, spinach, lettuce, cabbage, and okra. Herbs to start are basil, borage, chives, parsley, summer savory, and thyme. Place containers in a sunny window or in as much light as possible. Some gardeners water seeds with hot water with the intent to speed up germination.

Water evergreen plants thoroughly when a sudden freeze is predicted. If the weather has been dry, apply water generously to all plants and lawns.

Fall planted strawberries should be well watered or fruit production will be less than satisfactory. If there's been too much rain, watch for slugs.

Resist the temptation to prune cold-damaged trees and shrubs until late winter. Wait until new growth appears so as not to cut away a healthy branch.

Prune established fruit trees before the end of February.

Prune and feed citrus trees. For bearing trees, use a commercial citrus formulation or apply about 1 pound of 8-8-8 per year of tree age (up to 8 pounds). Broadcast

the fertilizer under the tree canopy and water in well.

Prune summer flowering shrubs: Oleander, abelia, roses, cassia, etc.

Prune fig trees. **Figs respond well to small amounts of mixed fertilizer applied once a month during growing season.** To propagate figs take dormant wood cuttings (6 to 12 inches long and up to 3/4 inch in diameter) this month. Avoid weak, slender growth. Cut directly below a node or joint on the stem, stick in well-drained soil and keep moist but not wet. The rooted cuttings may be dug as garden plants this fall.

Fertilize pecan trees: Broadcast 10-10-10 (or similar complete fertilizer) at the rate of two pounds per year of tree age (up to 55 lbs.). Pecan trees need zinc and commercial fertilizers with zinc are available.

Fertilize blueberries with azalea/camellia fertilizer at the rate of one ounce per plant for young specimens; increase the amount to 3 ounces for mature plants.

Fertilize winter blooming annuals with 1½ pounds of 8-8-8 per 100 square feet of planted area, or use a water-soluble fertilizer according to directions.

During the later part of February, fertilize azaleas, camellias, fruit trees, shrubs, vines and ground covers.

Watch for caterpillars (especially on new leaves of hibiscus) and spider mites on all new foliage.

Prepare flower beds and rejuvenate old ones by adding organic matter and fertilizer.

Mulch perennial beds and areas beneath trees and shrubs with three-inch layer of pine straw or shredded leaves to reduce weed populations.

Plan your vegetable garden crop rotation for nematode control. Removing host plants from an area prevents a nematode infestation from building up in the soil. Tomatoes and okra are susceptible while corn and other crops are not.

Soak bare-rooted roses, fruit trees, etc., overnight in a clean container filled with a weak solution of liquid fertilizer to get them off to a quick start.

Gladioli planted in succession plantings from now until mid-March will take about three months to bloom.

Plant nasturtium seeds among spring bulbs about the time bulb flowers fade. Nasturtiums grow rapidly and have showy round leaves and brightly colored flowers (and they're edible!).

Take geranium cuttings now for summer blooming.



Ann and Gwen help clients at the MG phone clinic.



If Sherry knew the prize was this mermaid, she would have kept quiet.



Carol P. teaches youth about herbs at the Pizza day camp.



Three's never a crowd with this group – Doug, Warren, and Dusty teaching composting.



Lyle gives new meaning to 'Wall Flower'.



Carol W. and Pat enjoy a brief moment of rest at a festival.