Spring is such an active and colorful time of the year for our yards, that we gardeners are sharing our tips and plants. We are so busy in fact that I am not going to keep you. This month Joe Mahoney takes a break from his grass series to tell us about lilies in Florida. For color in your yard, Ed Bull is talking KO roses and Ed Rhinehart is giving us Container Tips. Brooke tells us how to add color with native plants and Jim Davis gives us advice on ornamental grasses. Well, that’s about all for me; it’s time to go put on the sunscreen and hat. I’ll see you in the garden.

Lilies for the Landscape
Joe Mahoney

The traditional flower for this season is the Easter Lily. These beautiful potted plants are used to dress up our churches and homes, but they will be difficult to coax into bloom again. An Easter Lily bulb needs 6 weeks of 40 degrees to flower again - an unlikely occurrence here in Florida. So enjoy the fragrance and beauty of these potted holiday plants, but look to Amaryllis, Daylilies or some of the following lilies for your Florida Yard.

Several area landscapes now have Amaryllis bulbs open with red, pink, and white colored blooms. These large-flowered, brightly colored species and hybrids produce 8 to 12 inch diameter blooms on hollow stalks. Flower stalks grow 2 to 3 feet tall between long flat leaves and may bear 4 to 6 blossoms. Large bulbs may produce a second or third flower stalk when the flowers on the first or second stalk begin to fade. Amaryllis can be used as foundation plantings, placed in beds close to the house, in tree islands or in borders. Keep in mind the house color and choose flower colors that will complement your home and landscape. Care of Amaryllis is easy - be sure to provide good soil, drainage and lots of water. Keep ahead of the weeds and add fertilizer 2 to 3 times during the growing season. Remove dead blooms before seeds are produced or flowering in the following season will be reduced.

Daylilies are among the most popular herbaceous perennials grown in Florida. They adapt well to home landscape planting. Plants are available in a wide variety of flower colors: yellow, orange, red, pink, purple and near-white. As with the Amaryllis, use several plants massed together and choose colors that will not clash with the home or with each other.
Lilies (cont’d)
Place daylilies in full sun or filtered shade. Adding organic materials to planting beds will improve flowering. Spring or fall plantings are ideal, but fall planting will allow the plants to become established before the blooms appear in the spring or summer, depending on the variety. Plants are set one to two feet apart in mulched beds, and will need to be thinned out in 3 to 5 years. Keep up with the water and fertilizer to produce larger numbers and sizes of blooms.

There are many other lily-like flowers that grow from bulbs that can grow in your Florida yard, including the African Lily (Agapanthus), Aztec Lily, Canna Lily, Crinum Lily, Spider Lily, Gloriosa Lily, Iris, and Gladiolus. There are also several native wildflowers that produce lily-like blooms with very little maintenance: Blazing Star (Liatris), Dixie Iris, and Rain or Zephyr Lilies. Plant lilies in your yard and enjoy year after year.

Tips for Successful Container Gardening
Ed Rhinehart

The addition of flowering containers is an easy and simple way to enhance your landscape. Over the years, I have used these six easy steps. The first step is the selection of a container. Whatever you use, be sure that there are drainage holes in the bottom of the pot. If your pot is very decorative or ornate, use a very simple selection of plants. Secondly, use quality potting soil. I have found success with adding one third sphagnum peat moss to two thirds potting soil. Mixing it together makes it lighter and more airy.

Pick a location for the container. Is it sun or shade? This will help you decide which plants to purchase. Be sure all the plants have the same light requirements. When selecting the location, be sure the container can be moved easily and protected during the winter season.

Now, let’s select the plants for your container. Consider colors and size of each plant. Will you include a plant that cascades over the sides? Do you want some that will add height? Which plants will be the belly or girth of the container that will fill the middle? Think about the color scheme. Do you want complimentary colors or contrasting colors? Be sure that the plants you select will work in the correct season.

The fifth step is keeping the plant watered. Be sure to water at soil level, use tepid water and water in the morning. Use the tip of your finger to test the soil. Lastly, be sure to fertilize your containers. I use a slow release fertilizer like Osmocote or Dynamite. Be sure to read the label to know how much to use.

Containers are great fun and truly brighten up your landscape!
Enjoy!

Knockout Rose Care
Ed Bull

‘Knockout’ roses are one the most insect and disease resistant roses. They normally do not need to be sprayed for fungus or bugs, but you should inspect your ‘Knockout’ at least once per week to be sure they are disease free. Should you find insect damage on your roses, you should spray with horticulture oil. The best types of oil are Neem, paraffinic, fish emulsion, and/or sesame oil. A fungus such as black spot will require spraying with a fungicide. The oils and sprays should always be applied per the directions on the container.

Pruning: ‘Knockout’ roses are self dead heading, but if you would like them to quickly repeat bloom, dead heading the spent blooms will speed up the bloom cycle. Something else that will help to improve the health of the plant is to remove all foliage within 6 inches of the ground. Roses need lots of air and this will help with air flow plus give it extra disease and insect resistance.

Feeding: It is best to use a timed release fertilizer every 3 months starting in April. Examples of brands are; Osmocote, Vigoro Rose Food or Bayer Rose food. If you prefer to use organic rose food such as Riveting Rose, you should apply 2 cups per plant to start and ½ cup every month after the first treatment.
Florida friendly plants are recommended by UF/IFAS Sumter County Extension due to their ability to thrive with few, if any, fertilizer and pesticide applications. Many Florida friendly plants are beautiful without regular maintenance. For constant summer blooms try one of these Florida friendly plants. Agastache blooms purple from June until the first frost in Central Florida. It will thrive in full sun and well drained soil. Pollinators such as honeybees and halictid bees will be attracted to the purple blooms. Agastache will be damaged during freezing temperatures, but will return in the late spring. Sunshine mimosa or powderpuff is an excellent groundcover for a full sun spot and sandy soil conditions. It can be used as a replacement for turf and as a low growing ground cover. This pink blooming ground cover will be nipped by a frost, but will recover in Central Florida. Blanket flower is a Florida native wildflower that blooms throughout the summer. It is tolerant of hot, dry environments. It is commonly planted on roadsides or in medians. Like most wildflowers, blanket flower is an annual, but it will reseed readily if grown in an area without a weed mat or without thick mulch. In Central Florida the mother plant will come back year after year, but each year the overall appearance and vigor will decrease. It is best to pull out the mother plant once it has gone to seed and let the new blanket flowers take its place. Rosin weed is a wildflower native to the southeastern United States where it reaches heights of three to four feet. This yellow flowering native is an extremely hardy wildflower and will reseed freely. Rosin weed will be damaged in a frost but it will come back vigorously in the spring. Unlike many wildflowers species, the mother plant will be a wonderful addition to the garden year after year. This plant will bloom from the end of May up until the first frost. It will be hard to find at most retail garden centers but should be easily located at native plant nurseries.

Tip of the Month:  
The hot summer months are soon approaching. Now is the time to put down a 3 to 4 inch layer of mulch to conserve water and minimize weeds. Please try to use mulch other than cypress (save a cypress tree). Rock can be used, but it gets very hot and does not break down into nutrient rich soil for the plants. Keep rock away from the base of plants and never put any mulch right up next to the tree.

Ornamental Grasses  
Jim E. Davis  
Florida Yards and Neighborhoods  

Ornamental grasses are gaining in popularity with gardeners. The selection is vast. There are many sizes, shapes and colors out in the market. Ornamental grasses can either be evergreen or deciduous. Evergreen grasses do not die back and do not need to be pruned back every year. The decidous grasses are those that die back or turn brown during the winter months and emerge in the Spring. Most ornamental grasses, once established, are very drought tolerant and are resistant to pests. One of the most popular ornamental grasses is Purple Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*). Muhly grass is a native evergreen species that grows to about 3 to 4 feet. This is a clumping grass with narrow foliage. During the fall months, muhly grass produces red/purple stamens. Flowering will continue through early winter. A white flowering variety is also available, though it is much harder to find. Muhly grass looks great when planted in massess. Consider planting it under palm trees or the corners of your house.
Another popular grass is Cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*). Cordgrass is widely used around ponds to prevent erosion. This is a grass that can tolerate both drought and flood conditions. Cordgrass is a creeping, native evergreen grass. Cordgrass has smooth foliage and can grow to 3 to 5 feet. Cordgrass looks best when planted as a specimen plant or in groups of three.

Purple fountain grass is yet another very popular ornamental grass. (*Pennisetum setaceum* ‘Rubrum’) Purple fountain grass produces narrow purple leaves and burgundy flowers throughout the growing season. Purple fountain grass is a non-native clumping deciduous grass that grows to about 3 to 4 feet tall. This grass will turn brown in the winter and will need to be pruned back early spring to remove the dead foliage. Plant ornamental grasses in mass for best effect. For more information: go to [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep233](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep233) for a complete list of ornamental grasses used in the landscape.

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**Q.** Can you help me with this bug problem? There is a black residue on my shrubs and crape myrtles, also on my Little Gem Magnolia. I have used Dawn soap mixture in the past, but I really need to get rid of residue and not just clean the leaves. Any suggestions or directions? Thanks, Carol Bennett

**A.** Without seeing it, it is difficult to say exactly what you have. It sounds like it is the residue left over from a scale insect. First you have to get rid of the scale and clean the black film off the bottom of the leaves. A strong hose will work. Unfortunately, scale and white flies are a pest on magnolias. Insecticide Soap or horticulture oil is the best remedy. You do need to spray at dusk when the temperatures are cool. Please check the horticulture label to make sure you do not burn plants by spraying when it is too hot. Some oils cannot be used over 85 degrees. The underside of every leaf will need to be treated. This might take repeated applications until the infestation is gone.

**Q.** I have little gnats flying around my houseplants. They don't seem to be eating the plants, but are very annoying.

**A.** These little creatures are living in the soil in the pot. You can spray the soil lightly with a horticulture oil to smother them or try spraying lightly with a bug spray like Home Defense. Again spray only the soil and spray lightly.

**Q.** My lawn has brown patches and does not look as good as I would like. Should I start some sort of treatment.

**A.** Come to one of our plant clinics and bring pictures/samples of damage. You will need to find out what the problem is before starting any treatment. Many lawn problems mimic insect damage. Confirm the damage is being caused by insects before applying a pesticide.

* You can send questions to [mailto:plantclinic@aol.com](mailto:plantclinic@aol.com). Attach any pictures to your e-mail.

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