Summer

June 21st will mark our official slide into the lazy, hazy days of summer. Believe it or not, we are also entering into the rainy season. We’ve seen some sporadic storms that dump rain for 10 minutes and then are off to dampen other areas. Although these rains are welcome, we still need some of those all day drenching rains that will soak down into our parched lawns and fill the reservoirs. (Please don’t hate me, golfers!)

This is also one of the prettiest times of the year here in central Florida. Most of us have our brightly colored annuals planted. The perennials are starting to reach full height and add splashes of color everywhere. Mounds of blue plumbago, yellow day lilies, purple salvia, red roses, and Crape Myrtles adorn the landscape. I often feel bad for our seasonal friends, as they miss the vast array of summer color.

In this month’s Journal, Ed Rhinehart will give us hints on how to keep blooms and color on our flowers throughout the summer by deadheading. Speaking of color, I love the bright splash of color from marigolds. I always use marigolds in my vegetable garden to keep out the rascally rabbits. Howie Johnson tells us why this works and gives us other tips on this colorful summer flower. Joe Mahoney gives us this month’s timely tips on how to keep our lawns fresh and bug free. Jim Davis educates us on that bright yellow and black caterpillar that invades our oleanders every year. If you love oleanders, (and how can you not?), the oleander caterpillar is just part of the process. As always, enjoy and learn from this month’s Amazing Facts and our timely Q & A.

I’ve finished my morning tea and before it gets too hot, it is time to put on my sunscreen, gloves and hat and go out to my garden. See you there.
Here are a couple of tips: If your plant has many small flowers, trim the entire plant at once instead of trying to remove each individual flower. This will stimulate growth. A good use for this type of deadheading would be for dianthus or a mum plant. If your flowering plants are tall, such as the gerbera daisy, cut the stem at the base of the plant. This will give the plant a better appearance. One of the most common plants to deadhead is the marigold. You can use your fingers and just pinch off the spent flowers.

In many of my articles, I have talked about experimenting. In deadheading, you are experimenting. Not all plants respond to deadheading in the same way. It depends on the plant variety, weather, rainfall, etc. But remember, deadheading will not kill a plant and should make them bloom longer. Enjoy!

The Mighty Marigold
Howie Johnson

The marigold with its range of bright and cheery colors is a reliable Florida annual. But don’t think the colors are limited to yellow and orange. Some may actually be red if your definition of red is generous. You may also be surprised to learn there is now a milky white marigold called Vanilla.

The “African” marigold is the big boy in the family, a stout 2-3-footer with heads 2-4 inches wide. These are useable as cut-flowers and are best for spring. The “French” marigold is smaller, only one foot or so. The heads are usually no bigger than ½ to 1 ½ inches across but are produced in abundance. Making this a good bedding plant which will excel year-round.

Marigolds are beautiful, whether used in planters, mass plantings, or borders. When using marigolds in mass plantings, place them at least a foot apart. They’ll fill in to create a groundcover in an open bed or beneath a small tree. Try pairing them with plants that have dark colored foliage to make the flowers really pop. Under good cultural conditions (sun, soil and a little water), marigolds tolerate the summer heat. These summer beauties can be used in that time when other bedding plant options are sparse.

Aside for the wonderful color provided by marigolds, the foliage has a musky/pungent scent said to deter some common insect pests. Marigolds are annuals as tough as nails and easy to grow. They have few problems and bloom in bright, sunny colors. Who could ask for more?

Fun Fact: The common name, "marigold" is derived from "Mary's Gold", and the plant is associated with the Virgin Mary in Christian stories.

The Oleander Caterpillar
Jim Davis

Summer is closely approaching and so is the emergence of the oleander caterpillars. The oleander caterpillar Syntomeida epilais is one of the most common pest insects on the oleander plant Nerium oleander.

Oleander caterpillars are dark orange, have tufts of black hairs covering the entire length of its body, and can grow up to 1” long. Unlike some harmful caterpillars, such as the saddleback caterpillar and Io caterpillar, the hairs do not sting and are harmless to people. The caterpillars emerge from eggs that are laid on the underside of the oleander leaves. Eggs are creamy white in color and average about 12 to 75 eggs. Eggs hatch in about 2 to 6 days, depending on temperature. The first stage (instar) does not feed on the plant, but the young caterpillars eat the shells of the eggs. Once the oleander caterpillar molts to the next larval stage, it then begins to feed on the leaves, favoring the fresh new growth. For about 8 days, caterpillars will be gregarious (like to hang out together). After that time, they will start moving down the plant and will be more solitary. This stage lasts about 19 days, and then the caterpillar will leave the plant to pupate into a moth. Pupae will be found close together under eaves of houses, lanais or any place that gives protection from the elements. Adults emerge some time later. Adults resemble wasps and are commonly referred to as “patriot moths” or “polka-dot wasp moths”. Adults range in size from 1” to 2”, have an iridescent blue or green body, a red abdomen and have white dots on its wings and body.

Management of the oleander caterpillar is based on its lifecycle. Early detection of egg masses or young gregarious larvae is the key to good management. Hand-picking caterpillars or applying a product with an active ingredient containing Bacillus thuringiensis or Bt is the best control method. Bt is safe for humans and only affects caterpillar larvae. Keep in mind, Bt works best when caterpillars are young and actively feeding. Caterpillars must ingest Bt to be effective.
Is the oleander caterpillar really a pest? Well, that depends on the homeowner. Although caterpillars can defoliate a plant, it will not kill the plant. For residents such as myself, I grow oleander for the beautiful adult moth that the caterpillar will grow into. If you only have a couple of caterpillars that are not causing damage, consider letting them grow up and enjoy these gorgeous little beauties in your landscape. For more information: go to http://entnemdept.ifas.ufl.edu/creatures/orn/oleander_caterpillar.htm

Photos: Jim E. Davis

Oleander Caterpillar

The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program is sponsored by the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), the Sumter County Board of County Commissioners, and the Withlacoochee River Basin Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Turf Wars—6
Joe Mahoney

June is finally here. The days are still getting longer and the turf areas are getting warmer. At this time you should begin to have lush growth in your turf areas. It is time to get out and walk your lawn to take note of any problem areas you have had in the past.

A handy tool to have when you are assessing your lawn condition is a digital camera. Take photos that display the date and time, and take the photos so that the entire lawn is covered from different angles. By taking the time to do this now, you will have a valuable reference point for later comparisons. Make sure you save the photos to a location where you will find them easily.

The warmer temperatures will also hatch new generations of lawn pests that spent the winter in your turf. Mole Crickets, Chinch bugs and Billbugs will begin to increase their activity. Grubs will begin to become active and all the insect eggs that were laid in your turf during the early spring will be adult insects.

If you applied high nitrogen fertilizer to your turf, the quick flush of new growth will hide the initial appearance of these insects. All that new growth will also ring a dinner bell for any of these insects that are passing through your neighborhood. Thinking about it is enough to make you start spraying insecticides immediately. However, it is best to wait until an insect problem becomes apparent. With every bad insect that is born, there is a good one that is being born to eat it. If you spray too soon, you will destroy both, but only for a short period of time. Then the cycle will start over again and you will be in the same position.

Try to figure out a tolerance threshold for yourself. How many destructive insects can be present before they become an intolerable problem? With grubs the threshold may be four to six grubs per square foot of turf. You can check for grubs by lifting up a small, one foot square piece of sod to check. When finished, just replace the sod the way it was and give it a drink of water.

You can check for target insects like mole crickets, chinch bugs and billbugs by mixing four tablespoons of dish detergent in a gallon of water and pouring the solution into another one gallon container with the top and bottom cut out. A coffee can works great for this method. If you hold the cut container down so that the solution stays in place, the insects that are present in your turf will surface or try to escape the solution. Do the same thing in a couple of different areas in the turf on each side of your house to obtain a good sample of the insect population. If there were no target insects or only one or two per sample area, you probably do not have an insect problem that requires any insecticide treatment. If there were four or more target insects present, you may want to consider treating the area where the target insects were found. If you only target the areas where the insect pests are found, you save money by reducing the amounts of pesticide you use and you increase the chances for the good bugs that are predatory to take over and control the remaining pest insect population.
For more information and solutions for insect problems in your turf, you can follow these links:
Chinch Bugs: http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/extension.shtml
Mole Crickets and other turf insects: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ig001

For more information about turf care, visit the University of Florida Turf grass science web page at: http://turf.ufl.edu/.

Amazing Facts
Susan League

Did you know that honey bees are the only insect that produces food for humans? A typical hive can make 400 lbs. of honey per year. To make one pound of honey, the bees must visit 2 million flowers, and fly over 55,000 miles. It will be the lifetime work of 300 bees.

Honeybees never sleep. The honeybee flies 15 mph and strokes its wings 11,400 times per minute. Honeybees are the only bee that dies after it stings. Honey is the only food that includes all the substances necessary to sustain life, including water. It also has Vitamin C and many antioxidants.

Private Tomb KV46 in the Valley of the Kings at Luxor contained an interesting find. Vessels were found containing honey that was still liquid and its scent had still been preserved; the honey was over 2,000 years old. So what about that jar of crystallized honey in your pantry? Just remove the lid and put the jar in a pan of warm water and it will liquefy. Honey never spoils.

Here’s an important fact for homeowners. You should not remove bees from your own property? If you stir up a nest and they go to a neighbor’s property and sting them or their pets, you are legally liable. So if you discover bees, call a certified bee-removal expert. It’s safer for everyone.

Bees are responsible for 80% of all fruit, vegetable and seed crops in the United States. Albert Einstein was once credited (although no one knows for sure if he was the source) for stating that “if all the bees disappear, man only has four years left.” However, it is a staggering thought because bees are disappearing.

Florida is one of the top honey-producing states. If you are interested in beekeeping, the University of Florida offers assistance in many areas, including Bee College and a Master Beekeeper Program. Go to http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/honeybee/extension/bee_college.shtml for more information.

Q & A

Q. We just moved here from Ohio and love the Queen Palms. We have heard conflicting opinions on how well they do here in central Florida. Can you clarify this for us?
A. Yes, we can definitely help you out here. Queen palms are a lovely palm but they are not reliably cold hardy. Once the temperature dips below 30 degrees, they will suffer damage and prolonged periods of cold temperatures will kill them. If you have to have a Queen, make sure to plant it in an area protected from the winter winds, say on the south side of your home. It will also have a better chance of surviving the winter if it has had proper fertilization and water throughout the warmer seasons. This way it will be healthy going into the colder months. Your best bet, however, is to not plant a Queen but to substitute the hardier Florida State tree, the Sabal Palmetto.

For more information go to: gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/
JUNE CALENDAR OF EVENTS — Info: 352-793-2728

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<tr>
<td>Every Mon.</td>
<td>9 am- 3 pm</td>
<td>*Plant Clinic</td>
<td>Sheriff’s Annex</td>
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<tr>
<td>Every Wed.</td>
<td>9 am- 3 pm</td>
<td>*Plant Clinic</td>
<td>Bushnell Ext.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Every Fri.</td>
<td>9 am- 12 pm</td>
<td>*Plant Clinic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs. 23</td>
<td>9 am- 12 pm</td>
<td>Demo Garden Teaching Work Day</td>
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Mon. 6 12 pm- 2 pm **Florida Gardens Q & A Panel Discussion** Truman

Thurs. 9 1 pm - 2 pm **Florida-Friendly Landscaping Class**

Tues. 21 9 am - 11 am **New Residents’ Workshop**
Registration Required (352-689-4668) Colony Cottage

Tues. 28 **Twice on Tuesdays - Ticket Required**

*You can send questions to plantclinic@aol.com. Attach any pictures to your email.

**Free tickets available, Tues, June 7, at Savannah or Sea Breeze 9 am to 4 pm, Tues. to Fri. until sold out.**

9 am - 10 am **Crape Myrtles & Hot Flowers** Savannah
1 pm - 2 pm **Crape Myrtles & Hot Flowers** Sea Breeze

**ADDRESSES**

Bushnell Extension Office
7620 SR 471, Bushnell

Savannah Recreation Center
1545 Buena Vista Blvd, The Villages

Truman Recreation Center
2705 Canal St., The Villages

Colony Cottage Recreation Center
510 Colony Blvd, The Villages

Sea Breeze Recreation Center
2384 Buena Vista Blvd, The Villages

Webster Community Hall
SE 1st Street, (off State Rd 471)

Oxford Community Center
4027 CR 106, Oxford

Sherriff’s Annex
Cor Morse Blvd/Rt. 466, The Villages

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