An Exciting Week of MG Educational Field Trips
By CHUCK SCAFFIDI, MG

On Tuesday May 15 the week started with a bus load of 55 MGs heading east to BOK Sanctuary, Lake Wales and then Hollis Gardens in Lakeland. The next day, a smaller contingent led by Pam Brown staffed an IFAS information booth at EPCOT, Disney World, Orlando. Finally at the end of the week, Friday May 18, some of us journeyed to UF in Gainesville to attend Floriculture, an IFAS Trial Garden program.

Participating in all three drained my brain and body, but reflecting on what I learned, it was a memorable experience. I encourage all to share in these trips. Trip articles with photographs follow:

- MG Odyssey to Bok Sanctuary & Hollis Gardens

By PAT DIETERICH, MG

May 15th dawned cool, clear and blissfully smoke-free for 55 Pinellas County Master Gardeners headed to central Florida for a spring outing. Our first stop was historic Bok Sanctuary outside of Lake Wales. After Hurricane Charley devastated the area in 2005, a crew of MG’s, led by Pam Brown, traveled here for a vigorous work day helping to clean up and to restore the propagation area. In gratitude, Bok invited Pinellas County MG’s for a return visit. Started in 1922, Bok Sanctuary remains a tranquil oasis, perched on Iron Mountain, the highest point in peninsular Florida. We were pleased to see very few signs of hurricane damage, and enjoyed a delightful stroll through the grounds, thoroughly admiring the myriad plantings.

The next stop on our “adventure tour” was downtown Lakeland, where we were treated to a delicious box lunch at a lakeside pavilion, courtesy of MGAA and the proceeds of our Plant Sales. Next, we were greeted by Bill Koen, director of Horticulture for Lakeland City Parks, and a favorite speaker for our group. Bill and his assistants gave us tours of Hollis Garden, a fabulous city park on the shore of Lake Mirror. Though only 1.2 acres in size, Hollis makes a considerable impact. A formal garden themed to represent the history of Florida from prehistoric times through the present, Hollis teems with interesting plant life and inspiring design features.
Various garden "rooms" feature Central Florida natives, native trees, butterfly plants, herbs, etc. This gem of a garden is patterned after one the Hollis Family enjoyed in Florence, Italy, and its classic features are an interesting backdrop for many tropical plants. Ever generous with time and information, Bill boarded the bus with us as we drove past many other parks and plantings in the area. We enjoyed his narrative and appreciated his generosity, as he donated many interesting plant specimens—the key to these gardeners' hearts! MGAA presented a donation to Hollis Garden to demonstrate our gratitude.

Our final stop was an unscheduled-but-timely visit to the Discovery Garden outside the Hillsborough County Extension Service office. This small area is named for Bette S. Walker, former executive director of the Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers, and is designed as a teaching garden as well as a showcase for the horticulture industry. The site uses garden "rooms" to demonstrate the nine principles of the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program. Highlights include various water elements, a sensory garden, and clever use of hardscape elements, including trellises and containers. A potting shed/storage area was particularly appealing. Weary, but enriched and inspired, we headed west, delighted with yet another fabulous field trip.

**MG Support at the EPCOT Flower and Garden Show**

By BESSIE MORSE, MG

On May 16th we got to Epcot an hour early for the 10 am booth opening. Since we were early, we all went to Soarin, the California ride in "The Land" which was really awesome and definitely a white knuckle experience even though the seats actually only lifted about 10 ft off the ground.

Debbie, a Disney cast member in charge of landscaping, helped us set-up our booth and answered questions for us. The featured speakers were close by. They asked us to come and clap for some kids who participated in some of the kid’s activities there.

At the IFAS booth, we spent most of the time pointing out the free literature, answering horticulture questions; also we handed out maps, and told people that the first aid station was just around the corner. A few visitors were Master Gardeners from around FL just stopping by to say hello. We spent a lot of time talking to Extension agent Becky Jordi from Nassau County (near Jacksonville). She only has 25 master gardeners with only 18 active and they just landscaped the front of the main county building, mostly with trees as that is her interest. They are so far north that some of our plants can’t grow there. She talked about how big a risk she was taking planting thyrallis and seemed very nervous about having decided to do that.

We got back to Extension around 8pm. On the whole, the day was more fun than work but then I had not been to Epcot in a very long time. The grounds were very colorful but not a lot of variety in the planting. The topiaries were interesting in their choice of materials.

**Sign up next year!**

at:  [http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/master_gardener/index.shtml](http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/master_gardener/index.shtml)

Continued on page 3
Visiting UF Floriculture Field Day
By BESSIE MORSE, MG

The University of Florida Master Gardener Floriculture Field Day was a perfect ending for an educational week because it helped explain why Bok Towers, Epcot and Hollis Gardens with such different gardens used the same plant materials. Looking at the testing beds was just a small part of the Field Day. Graduate students gave us insights into three research projects and we had two lectures on pests and pesticides as well as a slide show on the seeds offered by Pan American Seeds through the major seed catalogs.

UF’s annual Floriculture conventions are the plant industry’s Fashion Week for Annuals. The UF field trials proof the winners for plant breeders and large commercial buyers by graphically showing which flowering annuals used for bedding and containers best survive Florida’s climate extremes.

There is a similar but much larger national show held annually in April spread over 27 venues in California’s ideal growing conditions. However, California does not have to contend with Florida’s high heat, torrential down pours and hard frosts so what works for the rest of the country may not work here. In contrast, plant performance in Florida’s spring often translates into summer conditions for many other parts of the country, so tests here are useful indicators for national performance.

Since the largest plant breeders are located in Europe and Asia, which don’t have our climate, they send commercially available plants to UF for field-testing. The university monitors the plants and gives the breeders feedback thus enabling them to tweak a plant’s performance. The testing grounds serve a dual purpose by allowing large commercial buyers to see and compare the performance of the newest releases under similar growing conditions, which is why the three gardens we have seen recently had the same material. They had been just as impressed as we were when seeing those particular plants in UF landscape.

UF overlaps two sessions of trials, a winter and spring. The smaller winter tests are started in October from seedlings provided by the breeders and transplanted outside in mid-November. While the winners of the trials are awarded in April, the plants are not removed from the beds until June 1 or sooner if 50% of the plants are dead. This gives them an opportunity to look at extended season performance. These tests also provide data to commercial growers on growth habits of cultivars in minimally heated northern greenhouses where the indoor temperatures are the same as our outdoors.

Breeders pay an entry fee to participate in the trials and may sponsor an entire bed or just one plot. The trials are a self-supporting project of the university and receive no funding from the school.

The Spring/Summer plants arrive in February and are planted into the garden in late March. Performance is measured bi-weekly from April through July, but the plants are not physically removed until mid-August.

Both tests measure for plant branching, which translates into more flowers, foliage color, number of flowers, and presence/absence of insects or diseases. Insects do occur. I was surprised to see the field test bed of the floating flowered Guara (Whirling Butterfly) had a major infestation of the rather pretty blue Cuphea Beetle.

All plants are treated alike by being potted in the same containers with the same mix and given an equal amount of Osmocote 9 month formula fertilizer and then, soon after planting, sprayed twice with a liquid fertilizer. After that they have to survive whatever the weather brings on their own. Though the plants are watered by drip irrigation (covered by the mulch) if most of a bed starts to wilt. Plants are not pinched or deadheaded to promote flowering during the trials.

The spring testing grounds consists of fourteen 120’ long sandy beds amended with mushroom compost and then topped with bark mulch that is tilled into the ground once the plants are removed. As a result of several years of soil amendments, the beds, once flush with the ground, are now raised about 6 inches. Within the beds, 3’x 3’ plots of 9 plants each showcase 680 cultivars from 21 suppliers.

The winter test area has 8 beds for 105 cultivars from 6 breeders. This section was added in 2005 after a cold winter delayed growth so much that the plants

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were just starting to reach their peak when they were removed to make way for the spring tests.

The plants are rated on a scale of 0 to 5 with zero being a dead plant and 5 having peak performance of vigor and flowering. Since the plants are rated every 2 weeks over several months, it is not possible for a plant to maintain a 5 rating as flowering occurs in cycles. Plants that earn an overall average rating of 3 or more are the outstanding performers though those with a 2 are also quite good. Besides giving the breeders feedback on individual plant performance, UF posts the results on their website: http://trialgarden.ifas.ufl.edu.

In addition to the trial beds, 174 containers were scattered around the grounds. These featured groups of plants or individual plants grown in the greenhouse just for the field days. The containers help viewers see different plant combinations as well as feature plants like calibrachoa that grow better in containers than in the ground or petunias that prefer light shade to the trial beds’ full sun.

We were given two catalogs from the breeders. Fischer Geraniums 2008 was more than just a listing of what plants they had available to growers. It had a large section on various pests and diseases that each type of their geraniums would most likely get, the various pesticides listed by ingredients as well as brand name and the amount to use. This information was very similar to what we heard in our talks by UF Phil Harmon and Eileen Buss. The catalog also had information on growth retardation.

Plants outgrowing their pots before being sold are problems for commercial growers. A growth retardant that lasts about 6 days, the average time a plant sits on a commercial shelf, is often applied. UF does research on that issue as well as helping with plants wilting due to high heat or humidity and improper watering. The university research team led by Paul Fisher is looking into developing a retardant that helps the plants cope by closing the stomata (pores) under the leaves. It is a fine balance as the stomata are the plants’ way of breathing. This same group is also identifying the proper amount of fertilizer in a grower’s pot. Because plugs are so small, minor differences in watering and fertilizing can radically change the soil pH level thus affecting a plant’s growth and leaf color. Yellow leaves are a major clue that a plant needs more fertilizer.

Another research group, which includes one of the speakers Emily Stefanski, is interested in marketing because Florida produces 69% of all the foliage plants in the country. They want to help the industry capitalize on the growing interest in container gardening thus expanding the product lines beyond dish gardens. The group tested 3 different containers located at 3 different areas in the stores (where a customer first walks in, endcaps, and where the containers would traditionally be located) to see which led to the most purchases. Their goal is to increase the container visibility in stores, find new ways to use foliage plants as well as create marketing kits for stores and wholesalers. Penny Nguyen presented the most visually impressive research project. She is developing 'Copper Penney,' a beautiful trailing copper colored coleus. To arrive at this cultivar, she started with 27,000 plants that she narrowed to 500 for further trials and cross breeding to arrive at a plant that was more prostrate than upright and did not flower too quickly. Once a coleus flowers, it expends most of its energy on the flowers making the foliage dull and lifeless.

Once the cultivars are developed they are offered to the breeders who then patent the plants. The university gets royalties on every plant produced. In the last 4 years, UF researches have developed 21 cultivars that have been picked up by breeders. A new cultivar typically takes 7 to 10 years to be developed. The university looks at more than just coleus. In 1988, they created the first new caladium cultivar in 30 years. They are currently studying dieffenbachia and lisianthus among others.

Ninety-eight master gardeners from around the state attended UF’s Floriculture field day including nine of our own MGs. This was the first annual event. So mark your calendars to attend next year’s visually impressive and informative treat.
Plant of the Month in our FBG
By JAMES STEVENSON, Public Education Specialist, FBG

I have the distinct pleasure of arguably the best office space in the entire Extension building, for I have an unbroken view of the Potato Tree. Now, it is often very unfortunate that we HAVE to give plants common names, and this is one of those cases. Potato Tree. How romantic. Its proper name, Solanum macranthum is far more descriptive. It is the “solanum with BIG FLOWERS!”

This plant stops 99.9% of the Garden's visitors every day, with its continuous floral display. Resembling (and related to) the familiar "yesterday, today and tomorrow bush" the flowers of S. macranthum change from saturated deep blue-violet to periwinkle, to white over their developmental period. All three colored flowers will appear on the plant at the same time. The fruit is a large berry, like its cousin the tomato, but is not known to be edible. In fact many if not most members of the family Solanaceae contain toxins; many of which can be deadly.

Solanaceae is a large family containing approximately 80 Genera such as Lycopersicon (tomato), Nicotiana (tobacco), Capsicum (peppers), Petunia and Datura (angel's trumpet).

Within that family, the genus Solanum, to which our potato tree belongs is itself a large genus containing about 1,000 species. Among the most familiar solanums are the eggplants (S. melongena) and potatoes (S. tuberosum).

Despite its arresting beauty, the potato tree is not widely cultivated in the warm climates where it will thrive. Naturally occurring in South America (where a vast diversity of Solanaceae may be found), it was introduced to Western science in 1814.

In Florida, this plant was used as root-stock for the naranjilla, which is S. quitoense, a tart to sweet fruit whose Spanish name means "little orange." South Florida researchers were studying this plant as a crop in the late 1940s, when a hurricane wiped-out the experimental fields. The idea to graft naranjilla onto S. macranthum roots to provide wind resistance worked, but unfortunately the naranjilla never really caught on in the US (it is very popular in South America).

The flowers are slightly fragrant, but contain no nectar. The bees and wasps that pollinate it are collecting pollen to make into bee-bread to feed their young. Flies feed on the pollen as well.

Our plant is three years old, and has not endured a hard freeze, so we are not sure how well the top would fare in a cold winter. In fact, we may need to do some judicious pruning to rein the beast in!

In the mean time, I, like so many visitors, will continue to enjoy its beauty all the year-round.
Sustainability at Florida Botanical Gardens

Begin the Journey

MARY CAMPBELL, Extension Director

The Florida Botanical Gardens at Pinewood Cultural Park will inspire and educate visitors by showcasing flora, fauna and natural resources in surroundings that motivate the visitor to practice environmentally sustainable techniques.

The Florida Botanical Gardens mission statement was developed to provide a vision for the central focus of the gardens in 1998. Sustainability is a very worthy focus for the gardens and will provide a model for our community to understand sustainable practices. Extension has a committee working on how to best implement the practices and educational interpretation to fulfill the original mission of the gardens. How do we model for our community sustainable practices through the gardens?

There are several primary themes that we will be able to expand on and new ones that we will be able to add. The Florida Friendly landscaping principles need to be in obvious use whenever visitors roam the gardens. It is not always easy to "practice what you teach", but we should be able to showcase things like "right plant, right place", with how we select and properly place natives and non-natives, based on cultural requirements.

Reduce, reuse and recycle is an important principle for our community and we now have a community recycling location near the Extension building that will also be a way to easily dispose of paper, plastic, newspaper and aluminum cans from our campus. Reducing the waste stream and reusing or recycling products saves both the energy to produce new products and the waste stream. Composting our organic waste from the garden will be increased so that we can showcase for our community how we put nutrients back into the soil from where they came and can reduce chemical fertilizers that may ultimately pollute our watershed.

Water conservation is a critical part of any process to be sustainable. Increasing population is straining available water resources in some areas of Florida. Rain barrels and cisterns will provide new ways to save water, as well as removing sprinklers in areas that are well established and do not really need supplemental water. As new plant selections are made, they will be grouped by water needs and more plants will be showcased that require little or no additional irrigation.

A new Master Gardener program to grow vegetables in the raised beds at the gardens will be a great example of how homeowners can produce fresh and healthy foods from their yard. A new "Market in the Park" farmer's market, starting November 3, 2007 at Extension, will bring local farm produce to this urban area. We can support local farming which helps preserve local green space and reduce the fuel required to transport food. The average travel for many foods we purchase at our grocery store is 1500 miles. That adds to the carbon footprint of our country, which right now is four times that of other countries. We each have a carbon footprint based on how much carbon dioxide we generate in our normal daily life, such as, travel, food production, clothing production and our household. If you would like to calculate your carbon footprint go to: http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/ emissions/ind_calculator.html

Or ecological footprint: http://www.earthday.net/footprint/index.asp

Help us make our garden sustainable and be a model for our community. Find out more about Sustainable Living on the new Solutions for Your Life website: http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/

Check Your Green Commitment - Take A Pledge! Let us know you are a Master Gardener and we will provide those names for recognition in the next newsletter.

http://www.pinellascounty.org/forms/sustainability_form.htm
SCALLION
Allium fistulosum

Scallions are a part of the lily family that also includes leeks, garlic and chives. When an onion is harvested before the bulb forms and when the green tops are about as thick as a pencil that is when it is referred to as a scallion, green onion or spring onion. Scallions can be grown from seed with a longer harvesting time or you can purchase the small dried bulbs commonly referred to as onion sets at garden centers and have fresh scallions ready for harvest in literally weeks. This makes them an ideal vegetable for children to grow since they are quick, easy and rewarding. For best results choose a sunny location and build a raised bed at least 2’ X 3’. Fill with a fertile, free-draining soil and amend with well-rotted compost. Plant onion sets at a depth of 1” and space 2-3” apart. Water thoroughly and keep the medium evenly moist. When tops are about 1’ tall they are ready for harvest. Pull gently near the base of the scallion and the plant should ease out of the ground, roots and all. To grow more scallions, cut the root end off your recently harvested scallion and plant back in the ground.

Recipe for Couscous with Apricots, Almonds & Scallions
Great served warm or cold!

1 cup couscous
1 ½ cups hot water
10 dried apricots
¼ cup whole almonds, toasted
2-3 scallions
2 handfuls fresh mint leaves
2 handfuls fresh cilantro leaves
½ lemon, juiced
2 tbl. extra- virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Put couscous in a bowl, pour hot water over it and stir with a fork to combine. Cover and let sit 10-15 minutes, then uncover and fluff with a fork. Put the apricots, almonds, scallions, mint and cilantro on a cutting board and coarsely chop everything up; add this to the couscous. Add lemon juice, drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Toss gently to combine.

RESURRECTION
By Jude Bagatti, MG

Discarded by the dumpster in clay pot desert dry, parched stem and sadly drooping leaves I sought to rectify.

To make room on the balcony, my plants I rearranged. Though watered and encouraged, this one remained unchanged.

For energy, I moved it close to healthy greenery. In sun and shade I gave it time and then just let it be.

Surprise awoke my sleepy eyes one early April morn. An orchid bloomed a dazzling white. Both it and I reborn!

Man vs. Plant
By NANCY BEVILACQUA, MG

As a newcomer to Florida, I didn't realize we'd purchased a house with “growing pains.” Between our home and the neighbor’s, a live oak loomed, surrounded by a mat of 6” oak seedlings. In my ignorance, I thought it would be easy to get rid of them.

I found that cutting off the tops did nothing. The little trees came back to life within days. There were thousands of them. I repeatedly cut them to the ground using a hedge trimmer. My neighbor used Round Up, but neither method killed them off. Wary of chemicals, I put down a thick barrier of newspaper and covered it with mulch. This worked well for several months. Then I noticed shoots coming up around the base of the tree, and a dense crop creeping up the wall of the house.

That summer I began training as an MG. After we studied trees, I got out the tape measure. Our towering oak was a mere 8’ from the foundation, so we hired an arborist to remove it. He assured me that the oak mat would die once the tree was gone, but it didn’t. Now that light conditions were better, it grew like crazy.

Fleeting notions of using a blow torch went through my head. The last thing I wanted was to dig those roots out, but it seemed like the only option. A shovel wouldn’t penetrate the mat. I discovered that a pitchfork, sunk deep, could lift the roots. For a while, we had lots of exposed roots, like a weird sculpture. The persistent tree-lings kept on growing, even after this shocking treatment. These bundles of roots were tedious to cut off with pruning shears. I found I could twist them like giant spaghetti on the pitchfork, breaking some off in the process. It was a daunting task. For weeks, I'd wrestle with a new section and fill bins for the trash man. I thought we’d finally gotten somewhere.

Returning from a month away, I was discouraged to see that the little trees had returned. Reluctantly, I sprayed some brush killer. Within a week, the mat was crisp and dead, and so far, there are no signs of life returning. All along, I’d assumed we were battling sprouted acorns. But as we’re replanting, we see that many of these 1/8” woody roots were growing from the larger roots we’re now removing. The stump was ground out, but what a labyrinth of roots remains.

Meanwhile, the replacement trees (planted 25’ from the house) are doing fine. They're winged elms.
**IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **MG Update**
- **MGAA**
- **Sign up for FBG Membership**
- **Plant Sale Update**
- **Volunteer at the Botanical Bounty Gift Shop**

The Gift Shop will be open Monday through Friday, 10-5, until Labor Day. We are short of volunteers - if you know of anyone who can help during the summer, please contact me at the number below. New items will be arriving for summer- pink or lime ladies tees embroidered with the FBG logo, new FBG totes in light blue/black or lime/black, plus a new FBG license plate that I hope each one of you will want to display proudly on the front of your vehicles! Many thanks to all of you for your continued support! Your business is appreciated.

Stacey P. Zidi

**Call 582-2251 or szidi@pinellascounty.org.**

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**MG UPDATE—Friday, June 8th, 10am**

by Pam Brown, Urban Horticulture Extension Agent

Storms and Trees: The importance of trees in our environment, proper pruning techniques, how trees behave in storms and the latest research on which trees survive best and which trees are likely to fail in high winds.

**MG Advisory Association, Chuck Scaffidi, Chair**

The MGAA documents are available for all MGAA members on request. They detail how MGAA operates and is organized, as well as the duties of committees.

Thanks to MG Joanne Kliesh MGAA received a $250 charitable grant from the Wal-Mart/Sam’s Club Foundation. Joanne is a full time worker at Sam’s Club where she found out about the Volunteer Always Pays program they offer. Sam’s Club, to promote community volunteer involvement, offers this grant program to their employees if they also volunteer more than 25 hours at a non-profit organization. Maximum grant is $250 which we received as a 501(c)3 Association.

Joanne has over 100 volunteer hours at Extension so far this year, and she tells me she also works part time at Lowes. How does she do it? Thanks again Joanne for making this happen!! It will add funds to our worthy community MGAA projects.

Our MGs carts are showing their age and are in dire need of repair or replacement. Since they are so heavily used, they have served us well. The plant sale committee is looking for someone who is mechanically inclined and willing to be responsible for the care and maintenance of these carts. Also, set a budget for spare parts and new wagons for possibly annual replacements. Please let us know ASAP if you are willing to tackle this job.

At the last board meeting we approved:

- A $5,000 additional CD purchase for our reserve fund.
- A yearly total contribution budget of $5,000 for charitable institutions.

**No MGAA meeting in June.**

**PLANT SALE UPDATE, Linda Alcorne, MG**

We currently have about 3000 plants propagated excluding herbs. We have voted to make the plants sale on Sat. Oct 6 from 8 to 9 for FBG members and MGs, with gates open to the public from 9 till 12. This will allow all of us to enjoy lunch together followed by clean up. No changes to the Friday afternoon sale for all those working Saturday. Also a moderate price increase in our basic landscape plants with 1 gallon plants at $1.50 and 3 gallon plants at $4.00. Other plants will be specialty priced.

Most of our team leaders have agreed to continue. We need team leaders for security, set up, education, 2nd thyme, clean up and pricing. If you are interested see me. We will have foster parents for specific plant categories to oversee plant lists, needs lists, plant sources etc. We currently have Jessica for orchids, Linda C for hanging plants and dish gardens, Nancy for flowering vines, Cheryl for herbs and myself for ground covers. If you would like to assist in this see me. We have historically had bromeliads, flowering trees, trees, fruit trees, shrubs, flowering shrubs, tropicals, palms, natives, pond plants, cactus and succulents, lilies and bulbs, butterfly and perennials, ferns, house plants and shade plants. If any of these are your particular favorite or you would like to suggest another, this is an opportunity to help really develop the category.

We have a weekly schedule of plants for the green house teams to concentrate on. We will also take cuttings and seeds for future sales. We currently have plenty of plumeria, corkscREW willow and acacia. Our wish list includes but is not limited to tababuia, jacaranda, chaya, texas olive, christmas ornament, avocado and any others you can think of.


See you in the greenhouse, Linda A.
**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES & EVENTS**

**For June and July**

- FBG Children’s Trail
- Habitat for Humanity
- Pinellas Living Green Expo

**AVAILABLE NOW FOR SALE**

Several plants in a pot for $3

Yellow bulbine, *Bulbine frutescens*

Full sun, light shade, evergreen, clump-forming succulent. 1.5'H, 2' W. tall spike of small yellow flowers. Stalk to 2-3' above foliage. Call Mary Ellen Warner at 367-2580 to arrange plant pick up at the Extension. Cash or check payable to MGAA.

Learn more about the plant: [http://www.azarboretum.org/plantlist/yellowbulbine.htm](http://www.azarboretum.org/plantlist/yellowbulbine.htm)

**“FBG CHILDREN’S TRAIL” COMMITTEE MEETS**

Recently the committee to create a “Children’s Trail” at the Florida Botanical Gardens held its inaugural meeting. Master Gardeners Lou LaGrande and Pat Dieterich, working with Chuck Scaffidi, have volunteered to represent our group in this exciting endeavor. Director Mary Campbell expressed her desire to create a vehicle that not only provides children with exposure to botanical gardens, but also offers educational possibilities and yet is whimsical and fun. And that is where you come in, dear fellow MG’s. We hope to provide inspiration for a new generation of gardeners, and we need your ideas and opinions. We have a hunch you just may have visited children’s gardens elsewhere. What did you like? What worked best? Any ideas for a theme? How could we make it appeal to the senses? How might it tie in with our current gardens? Though we’d like it to be unique to FBG and a special drawing card, what have you experienced elsewhere that we might consider? Please share your thoughts as soon as possible with Chuck Scaffidi, at cascaffidi@juno.com. As always, you are our best resource—thanks for the input!

**Habitat for Humanity**

Our first planning meeting for landscaping the women’s build for Habitat for Humanity is scheduled for Thursday, June 7 at 10:00 at the Extension. From there we will go to the build site not far away. Plans are to look at the site and begin the design phase on that day. All those interested meet at 10 on the 7th or give me a call if you are not able to make this meeting and are interested in joining this project. Linda Culhane 530-1250. e-mail: lbculhane@verizon.net

**On June 16 and 17, the Pinellas Living Green Expo** will be held at the Coliseum in St. Petersburg. Pinellas County is a sponsor and Extension will be providing several programs. The Extension Sustainability Program Area will have a booth – **Check Your Green Commitment!**

We need about **20 volunteers (2 hours each from 9 am – 5 pm)** to talk to visitors, and ask them to fill out a pledge. We will hand out a magnet prompt. We will be asking visitors for e-mail addresses to do some follow-up surveys. T-shirts and an orientation will be provided to the volunteers.

 Hopefully a few volunteers may want to continue to work with us on sustainability and do some follow up for the pledge. **Sign up sheet posted on MG hallway bulletin board.**


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**Children’s “Whimsical” Garden Trail**

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SAFETY NET

By PAM BROWN,
Urban Horticulture Extension Agent

Watch out for heat-related illness. Even short periods of high temperatures can cause serious health problems. Monitor your activities and time in the sun to lower your risk for heat-related illness.

- Drink plenty of water throughout the day to replace lost fluids. Don’t wait until you’re thirsty to drink.
- Avoid drinking liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar, especially in the heat. These actually cause you to lose more body fluid.
- Take breaks often. Try to rest in shady areas so that your body’s thermostat will have a chance to recover. Stop working if you experience breathlessness or muscle soreness.
- Pay attention to signs of heat-related illness, including extremely high body temperature, headache, rapid pulse, dizziness, nausea, confusion, or unconsciousness.
- Watch people who are at higher risk for heat-related illness, including infants and children up to four years of age; people 65 years of age or older; people who are overweight; people who push themselves too hard during work or exercise; and people who are physically ill or who take certain medications (i.e. for depression, insomnia, or poor circulation).
- Eat healthy foods to help keep you energized.

Information obtained from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website at: http://www.cdc.gov/women/owh/gardening/

Changes In the Wind
Vernon Bryant, Horticulture Manager

"There is nothing permanent except change" - Heraclitus

To all my MG friends - I wanted to let you know about a change that is coming at FBG. Sometime later this summer I will move to the Pinellas County Parks Office in downtown Clearwater to start a new phase in my career. This move is being afforded me by a reorganization in the Park Department. As a new operations manager with the Department I will take on a larger part of the oversight of a number of Park Department’s functions in addition to continuing to provide leadership for the basic maintenance of the FBG. All of the details of this move are not entirely complete and so all I can tell you is that I am moving and taking on more responsibility. What we know for now is that I will also manage the Park’s Nursery and Tree Crews and that we are going to form a roving mowing crew that will take care of many of the Park Department’s non-park properties. Mowing at places like boat ramps, beach accesses, the Botanical Gardens and even our own Ochs property will be my responsibility. The department is hoping to save money by centralizing this and a few other functions. We are striving in this day and time to be a leaner and more effective county government - using our tax dollars more frugally and wisely.

On the flip side, as I move on I will not be as intimately involved with the day-to-day activities of the gardens. Pam and her crew along with James Stevenson will be taking on a larger role in the Gardens and that will also mean that they will really need to depend on your continued support. I wish to thank each of you that has worked with me over the years to build this great garden. I will miss working with you, but I hope that you will continue to invite me to your great pot-luck events.

I will be sure to inform you of all the details as we figure them out. In the meantime, keep gardening and making the FBG beautiful.

By PAM BROWN,
Urban Horticulture Extension Agent

I would like to thank all of the MGs who went to EPCOT to answer questions in the Master Gardener Information Booth. The day that I went was fun – except for Chuck losing his wallet. It does Pinellas County Extension proud to have MGs willing to answer questions from people from all over the world in some cases.

I forgot to put this in the May newsletter – it is very important that anyone volunteering on our grounds be registered as a county volunteer - even if it is just for one day or one event. Carol has Short Term Volunteer forms that need to be completed prior to the date that the person will be here. This will allow all persons volunteering to be covered by Workers Compensation in case of an accident. So, if you have a friend or spouse who will be helping out in any capacity, please remember to let Carol know so that the proper forms are in place.

Hopefully our frantic spring will slide into a slower summer. It is getting quite hot out and if you are working outside, remember to wear a hat and sunscreen and bring water to drink. Also, take frequent breaks. You are important to us and we want to keep you safe.

The date has been set for another Master Gardener College class. This one has a limit of the number of 25 people that can be accommodated in the class and the roster will be filled by the first to sign up on the sheet on the back hall bulletin board. Designing Outdoor Garden Rooms will be held on October 1 from 8:30 to 3:30. There will be a classroom session from 8:30 – 11:30 here at Extension, then a break for lunch (bring a bag lunch) and then a field trip with tour in the afternoon.

The 2007 State Master Gardener Continued Training Conference has been scheduled for October 22-24 in Gainesville at the Reitz Union on the University of Florida Campus. The keynote speaker is Dr. Bob Lyons. I studied at Virginia Tech when he was the youngest full Professor in the Environmental Horticulture Department. He is a great speaker and a wonderful photographer. I am looking forward to hearing him speak again.

Have a wonderful June!

♥Pam
What to do During a Drought

By JANE MORSE, Commercial Extension Agent

Don’t mow. Turf already under drought stress will be even more stressed if mowed. The leaves of the grass support the root system. The shorter the grass is mowed, the shorter the root system. If you must mow, mow at the very highest setting and make sure the blades are very sharp. A clean cut will lose less water than a ragged cut.

Don’t fertilize. Fertilizing will increase the plants need for water. Fertilizer will also promote new growth which is tender and cannot withstand drought.

Do water deeply. Apply ½ to ¾ inch of water to the landscape. This amount of water will penetrate about 8-12 inches deep in the soil. When plants are watered deeply they develop a deep root system that is better able to withstand drought. Look for signs of wilt before watering again.

Do use mulch. Mulch helps to prevent water loss from the soil, decreases runoff, and insulates the soil so it does not get too hot. Using organic mulch (like pine bark or oak leaves) will improve the water and nutrient holding capacity of the soil and will even add nutrients to the soil as it breaks down. Keep mulch away from the stems of plants. Large particle mulch (pine bark) can be put down about 3 inches thick. Mulches that form a mat and don’t allow water to percolate through as easily (oak leaves) should be put down about 1 inch thick.

Do remove weeds. Weeds compete with plants for water and nutrients. Hand pull if possible. Herbicides don’t work as well when plants are under drought stress and are not actively growing. Mulching will also help to suppress weeds.

Use plants that can tolerate our wet to dry weather extremes. Replace plants that die or require lots of water with drought-tolerant ones. Try using native plants that are suited to Florida’s extremes in weather. Many are drought and flood tolerant. Wait for the rainy season before re-planting.

If water use is so restricted that landscape plant survival is in question, here are some drastic measures that can be done to save plants:

- Water plants only when they start to wilt.
- Use mulch.
- Prune plants severely to reduce leaf area.
- Remove weak plants.
- Thin dense beds of plants to reduce competition among plants, pull out weeds.
- For Bahia grass lawns, stop watering and allow the grass to go dormant. Bahia grass will turn brown, but will recover well once the rains resume.

2007 June

SAT JUNE 2 & SUN JUNE 3 10AM-4PM
- Pepperfest ’07 at Sand Key Park, Clearwater

TUES JUNE 5
10AM & 6:30PM
- Learn about selecting, planting & maintaining palms at Extension

THURS JUNE 7, 10AM
- Habitat for Humanity Landscape Planning Mtg at Extension

FRI JUNE 8, 10AM
- MG Update - Storms & Trees

SAT JUNE 9, 9AM
- Storms & Trees at Taylor Park, Largo

SAT JUNE 16 & SUN JUNE 17, 9AM-5PM
- Living Green Expo at the Coliseum in St Petersburg

TUES JUNE 19 & WEDS JUNE 20, 2PM
- Butterfly Gardening at the Palm Harbor Library

WED, JUNE 27, 1-2PM
- Herb and Organic Gardening At the Pinellas Park Library

Looking Ahead!

SAT, JULY 7, 9-10:30AM
- Rain Barrel Workshop at Extension

SAT, JULY 28, 10-11AM
- Identifying & Controlling Invasive Plants at Weedon Island Preserve Environmental Education Center

For more details on some of the events listed go to the calendar on the Pinellas County Extension Lawn & Garden website.

http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/calendar_hort.shtml
Good Work Volunteers!

REMINDERS

- **MG Update**
  Friday, June 8th, 10:00AM Gardenia Room
  Pam Brown discusses Storms & Trees

- **AM & PM Discovery Tours**
  Tuesday, June 12th, 7:00-8:30AM at FBG
  Thursday, June 14th, 6:00-8:00PM at FBG
  FREE, limited to 30 participants.
  Phone 727-582-2581 to reserve your spot.
  More information on the Pinellas County Extension Lawn & Garden website

- **MG/IFAS Horticulture Tour of San Francisco & Yosemite**
  Trip information already e-mailed.
  Down payment due Friday, June 15th.