Insects Will Thrive After Warm Winter

By Jane Morse, UF/IFAS Horticulture Extension Agent, Pinellas County

The good news is that Florida enjoyed an exceptionally warm winter. The bad news is that this means bugs of all kinds will be abundant this spring and summer. Mosquitoes, termites, roaches, ants, bees, aphids and mealybugs will all be out in force. What can a person do about this potential onslaught of insects?

Most of the pesky indoor bugs can be kept outside by making your home hard to get into. Caulk cracks. Check screens – optimally 16-18 mesh – to ensure they fit and are free of holes or tears. Trim bushes so they are not touching the building. Make sure doors and windows have good weather stripping. Screen the chimney and other vent flues during mosquito season.

Two keys to controlling cockroaches – one of Florida’s most common household pests – are prevention and sanitation. The highest concentration of cockroaches is usually around garbage cans and refrigerators, so keep these areas clean and seal up garbage so they can’t get to food. Remove their living areas by sealing all cracks and crevices with caulk. Keep mulch and wood piles away from the house. Grocery bags and corrugated cardboard are favorite breeding sites for cockroaches, so store them outside or put them in the trash.

Most insects require a certain amount of moisture to survive. Get rid of sources of water both inside and out. Tighten or patch leaky pipes, drain sinks immediately after use, and empty the pans under refrigerators. Replace the water in pet dishes daily, change the water in bird baths and wading pools every few days, check roof gutters and remove any plugs so they drain well, and eliminate any kind of standing water. A half-cup of water can produce enough mosquitoes to cause a problem. Stock ornamental ponds with Gambusia fish that feed on mosquito larvae and promote good insects such as dragonflies.

Keeping landscape plants healthy will thwart pest bugs. Reducing the growth flushes that attract pest insects can be accomplished by watering and fertilizing only when needed. Watering should be adapted to the weather (temperature and day length) and how much rain has fallen.

Identify bugs before beginning any control measures. There are some beneficial insects that can help take care of pest problems, but only if you don’t kill them. Many times the worst pest infestations can be cured by beneficial insects or by removing highly infested branch tips. If insecticides are warranted, try using those that are less toxic to humans, such as insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils and Bacillus thuringiensis.

If plants are continually plagued by insect pests, consider replacing them with a different kind of plant. Plants that are located in the wrong place or not cared for properly are generally sickly and pest-prone. Choosing the right plant for the site goes a long way towards having a healthy, lower maintenance landscape.

If you feel you must use chemicals as a last resort, try baits to treat indoor pests such as ants and roaches. They generally offer better control than sprays and, in addition, cause less exposure to harmful chemicals.

Bug-proofing a Florida home completely isn’t easy or even possible. But when do-it-yourselfers use a combination of these methods, most pests can be controlled.

For more information on identifying, preventing or treating pests, contact your local University of Florida Extension. Our Lawn and Garden Help Desk is located at 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo and is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. We also have a Lawn and Garden Help Line which can be contacted at 727-582-2110 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. For more information visit our websites at www.AskExtension.org or www.PinellasCountyExtension.org.
The Green Leaf is published by Pinellas County Extension for Master Gardeners and others. The monthly newsletter depends on submission of articles from Master Gardeners, Extension staff and other authors.

Please submit articles and photographs to cscaffidi@co.pinellas.fl.us

The Green Leaf and archives are available on-line by clicking on newsletter

MANAGING EDITOR:
Chuck Scaffidi, MG

We are especially appreciative of staff, MGs, and others who contribute articles, events and other items of interest to The Green Leaf each month. Please submit by the 20th of each month. This will help us assemble and publish the newsletter in a timely manner. Articles should be 700-800 words or less. If you would like a copy of any photograph printed in the newsletter, contact MG Editor Chuck Scaffidi at 727 582-2117.

cscaffidi@co.pinellas.fl.us

Pride & Joy … What’s Your Favorite?

By Joanne Drake, MG

Springtime! We’ve had a mild winter and most plants are looking great. This time of year gardeners are anxious to get outside and garden. It is a great time for vegetable gardening or sprucing up a section of the yard with a new plant, yard art or just come up with a creative combo of plants in one pot.

Master Gardeners have a Pride & Joy when it comes to a special plant, yard art or their special themed garden. I have several gardens … rose, butterfly, and vegetable. I thought it would be fun for any one of us to share a photo or two with a short caption, to be included in our monthly newsletter. I find inspiration hearing about others gardens and photos make it even more interesting.

I’d like to get the ball rolling by submitting my favorite which is my Spring Vegetable Garden. We grow everything we need for a fresh salad … lettuce, tomatoes, bell peppers, Swiss chard, cilantro, radishes, leeks, basil, collards, green beans and Dawn Dewa which is like spinach (eat raw in salads or cooked) … all fresh and nutrient rich. We have our vegetable garden growing in rich earthworm enhanced soil in a sunny area between a small tangerine and mango tree. We use organic methods and also companion gardening … using marigolds along the edge of our garden to help discourage pests.

It would be so nice to see photos and hear about what’s happening in your yard this wonderful time of the year. Garden related articles are always welcomed!

We wish you a great gardening season.

Send articles to Chuck Scaffidi @ cascaffidi@juno.com
Fruitfully Successful
Dr. Hort’s Citrus 101 Lecture

By Angela Strain, MG

Greg “Dr. Hort” Charles shared his citrus secrets this past February 23 with a group of more than 70 homeowners and seasoned gardeners eager to learn from the expert. This presentation was second in a lineup of the Florida Friendly Gardening Educational Series offered by Pinellas County Extension and Master Gardeners.

Each person who registered for this class received a copy of the University of Florida fact sheet, “Citrus Culture in the Home Landscape” that Greg used as a guide for the lecture. He also provided interesting citrus facts, a history of citrus agriculture, and shared tips for growing the best fruit trees possible. Then he opened the floor to questions.

One homeowner wanted to know about the greenish stuff growing on the bark of his tree and another needed to know why the entire tree turned black! Others asked about root stock, brown fruit, and fruit cocktail trees. Some brought examples of infected leaves for Greg to diagnose.

There were so many questions from the floor that Greg stayed longer so every person who had a question could be heard. The presentation ended an hour later than scheduled; and most remained in their seats hoping to absorb as much information as possible in the time they had with Greg.

Every attendee was asked to fill out an evaluation form before leaving and one person was so impressed with Greg that he wrote, “if they had a teacher that was half as interesting (as Greg), I might have continued my education”. I think that says it all!

The next presentation in the South County Florida Friendly series is “Bromeliads” by Marty Baxley of Jungle Gems and will be held on March 22 at the Main Library on 9th Ave. Registration is required at www.pinellascountyextension.org or by calling 727-582-2109.

Your Membership Working for You!

The USF Botanical Gardens is holding their 2012 Spring Plant Sale on April 14 and 15, Saturday 10:00AM to 4:00PM and Sunday 10:00AM to 3:00AM.

General admission is $5.00. However, as a member of the FBG Foundation you fall under the American Horticultural Society Reciprocal Agreement and you may enter free. You membership also allows early entry at 9:30 on Saturday.

Make sure that you bring you membership card with you for identification.

The sale is located at 12210 USF Pine Drive, Tampa, FL 33612 and parking is free.

Further information can be found at http://gardens.usf.edu
Expert on Mycology Presents
MG Update Program

By Ellen Mahany, MG

You may recognize Dustin “Dusty” Purcell in this picture as a familiar face at Florida Botanical Gardens. This multi-talented volunteer is equally accomplished laboring in the gardens or examining microscopic problems behind the help desk.

What you may not know is that Dusty has a Master’s of Science Degree in Plant Pathology (the branch of science that deals with plant diseases) from the University of Florida. He has served as the manager of a mold lab and has had extensive “hands on” experience working at plant nurseries and on farms.

At the February Update for Master Gardeners, Dusty shared his expertise on his favorite subject in a lecture entitled “Mycology for Gardeners.” Mycology is the study of fungi.

We learned from Dusty that the fungal kingdom includes mushrooms, molds, yeasts and mildews. We learned that the main purpose of any fungus is to break down natural components, whether in the wild or in our landscapes. In carrying out this goal, fungi combine good and bad effects.

Dusty explained that underneath it all, in the mulch and the compost and the dirt, mushrooms interact with plants, insects, and other fungi in a positive way to break down the environment. Mushrooms provide “cellulose decomposition.” Dusty comments that decay in nature is important.

Dusty has always been intrigued by mushrooms, the fruiting stage of fungi that show above the ground. He is fascinated by the great variety of forms and growth habits. Dusty provided a scientific breakdown that categorized the hundreds of thousands of fungal species.

Fungi are beneficial when they break down natural materials in the wilderness, allowing room for new growth, and in our backyards when they create compost and richer soil. They are harmful when they destroy desirable vegetation through a variety of diseases. Often hidden from sight, fungi cause most diseases in plants. Other effects of various types of fungi are both good and bad. For instance, Dusty mentioned that edible mushrooms are desirable, but poisonous varieties can be deadly. (Dusty strongly advises against eating wild mushrooms.) Some molds are used in life-saving medicines while others spoil food.

Those of us who have assisted the horticultural staff at the extension desk have seen some examples of the good and the bad effects of fungi in the hands of concerned clients. Here are a few of the possibilities cited by Dusty:

■ An attractive mushroom with a varnished appearance, sometimes called “artist’s conk,” appears around the trunk of a palm suffering from Gandoderma Butt Rot, a disease for which there is no treatment. The mushroom visible above the ground is only a fraction of the harmful fungus below the ground, impossible to remove. (The University of Florida recommends removing a palm suffering from this disease as soon as possible.)
■ Lichen, a greenish discoloration on tree branches and trunks, is a combination of fungi and algae, fed by photosynthesis of the algae, and harmless to the plant.
■ Fairy rings, or partial circles of mushrooms on the lawn, indicate organic matter in the ground, which is slowly being broken down. The mushrooms will continue to appear until the matter has decomposed. These mushrooms could be poisonous but the decomposition process is beneficial.
■ A highly disagreeable odor is the obvious characteristic of the stinkhorn, the common name of one of many varieties of mushroom. It is just doing its positive business of absorbing nutrients and breaking down its surroundings. Fortunately, it disintegrates in a day or two.

Dusty advised wrapping a mushroom specimen in paper, not plastic, and storing it in the refrigerator, when feasible, before bringing it to the extension desk for identification.

Currently, five articles that Dusty has written about fungi are available at the Planting Pinellas blog available at both the Master Gardener Volunteer Management System and the Pinellas County Extension sites. Dusty also provided the name of a book written by one of his professors at the University of Florida, available for perusal at the extension desk: Common Florida Mushrooms by James Kimbrough.

Dusty is a valuable volunteer highly appreciated by both the horticultural staff and fellow volunteers.
No matter how often it happens, I won’t get used to it or take it for granted. It will always amaze my eyes and delight my heart to see the usual White Ibises (mature whites ones and immature mottled browns) shuffling along in yards and the right of way on streets here in Gulfport. Just this morning, after I mowed the sparse dry winter’s growth of weeds and grass, a parade of them strutted by perhaps hoping I had disturbed the soil to uncover some tasty morsels. The Great Egrets visit too, ever on the stealthy hunt for lizards, bugs or handouts, which inadvisably, some folks feed thereby eroding their fear of humans and putting them in harm’s way.

Just as frequently, I go out and find feathered evidence of a hawk’s predatory nature scattered on the ground: the remains of an unlucky dove. At least I hope it was a hawk, or maybe an owl, and not someone’s loose cat on the prowl.

Lately though, I’ve been astonished by less common wildlife appearances right in the heart of the city. No, I have not yet seen a coyote, though sightings have been reported in town. What I have spotted are Wood Ibises, also called Wood Storks. Much larger than the White Ibis, the Wood Ibis or Stork is also white, but has black flight feathers on its wing tips and tail and, unlike herons, flies with its head extended. Its bare head and neck are dark gray, earning it a local nickname of “flint head.” Its long, slightly curved bill is powerful. Usually silent, they have a dull croak. Day after day as I drive by one street in particular, I’ve spotted a group of half a dozen or more. They seem to hang out in one home’s front yard, so I suspect the inhabitant of luring them with food. They stand on the ground or perch on the roof, motionless, looking kind of hunched over and gloomy.

The sight of these Storks in the city is remarkable to me. Back in my University of Miami college days my Ornithology class went on a field trip to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary where we hoped to find the Storks, considered to be in decline. After a patient search, we were excited to spy with binoculars a few of them high in the trees! This is why it is so startling to me to see, without trying, a multitude of them close up in the neighborhood. No field trips necessary!

Yet another recent sighting is even more surreal. One morning early in January, I went out to check my plants. I live on the corner of a residential street. From the corner of my eye, I caught movement and thought I saw the neighbor’s black cat across the street.

I looked closer. It was not the cat. It was a sleek otter checking out the storm drain! I don’t know whether it had emerged from the drain or not. It was simply looking down it. It then went to the other corner on that side of the street and looked at the storm drain there. Finally, it crossed the street slinking right toward me! Still in disbelief, I thought, could it be someone’s pet ferret? But no, it was an otter. Except for a miniscule, short canal blocks away, there is no river, lake or any appropriate body of water nearby. What was it doing here? Noticing me standing and staring, it recrossed the street and loped north on the sidewalk. A driver at the intersection sat watching it too, so I know I wasn’t seeing things. Befuddled, we marveled at it together.

It is always a pleasure to witness creatures free and in the wild. I just wonder if these atypical sightings are indicators of environmental imbalances driving them to forage beyond ordinary bounds, or signs of distress causing odd behavior in our usually shy, cautious wildlife, which normally and wisely so, steer very clear of humans.

For comments/questions contact heyjudebagatti@msn.com or 727-322-6211
Forty couples participated in the sixth annual Valentine’s Day Group wedding ceremony organized by the Pinellas County Clerk of the Circuit Court, Ken Burke. The ceremony was performed under a beautiful picture perfect blue sky in the romantic Wedding Garden at the Florida Botanical Gardens in Largo by the Honorable Thomas H. Minkoff, Circuit Judge. As part of the ceremony, the couples were treated to a beautiful poem written by Myriam Irizarry, Chief Deputy Director, Clerk’s Office, musical serenades by the Charmonizers Barbershop Quartet and Linda Brian, Deputy Clerk.

The ceremony concluded with a ceremonial white dove release, which symbolizes peace, hope and unity. The couples and their guests shared wedding cake and refreshments provided by local sponsors.
Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation Update

By CHUCK SCAFFIDI, FBG Foundation President

The next Foundation Board meeting is Wednesday March 14 and on Saturday March 10 the board is attending a retreat hosted by board member Dianne Giliotti at her home. This gives the board an opportunity to discuss foundation business facilitated by Dianne in a relaxed atmosphere.

We have a lot of projects in the works and are always open to new ideas. The lights team will be meeting on a regular basis after each monthly board meeting so there is no lack of exciting work. So, please see me and we can sit and talk about all the challenges to beautify the Florida Botanical Gardens and the need for volunteers and raising cash. You may also attend a board meeting as a guest to get a better understanding of our organization and goals, hopefully you will choose to become a board member. I promise I will not put too much pressure on you.

Last month I updated our readers on the progress of the new vinary garden and children’s stops. I presented this to Progress Energy and they agreed to donate $1,500 towards the development cost and requested a visit which is yet to be scheduled.

As you can tell, there is a lot going on with the Foundation and at the Gardens. Meeting all our goals will take all the people power we can muster. If you love the Gardens, we’re waiting for you. Bring your friends and neighbors. Or get involved and make new friends. You’ll be glad you did.

If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions, I am always happy to have a visit in the Volunteer Office or chat via email (cscaffidi@co.pinellas.fl.us) or at 727-582-2117.

PS:
I took a break the last week in February to vacation in Costa Rica with my son and his family. A long story behind this, but I wanted to at least say it was a marvelous choice. What a beautiful eco-friendly country and very US friendly. We visited everything that was offered from a volcano, coffee plantation (delicious), jungle and river excursion, to a resort on the Pacific ocean (no zip-lining, I was too chicken). The Flora and Fauna were outstanding and of course no plants in full bloom escaped my camera. A few shots follow:

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New Incentive for Volunteers Working for the Parks and Conservation Resources Department!

Volunteers who work 100 hours in the department starting from October 1, 2011, may earn an annual parking pass usable at the three beach parks where the County collects a parking fee – Sand Key Park, Howard Park and Fort De Soto Park. The pass is registered to one vehicle license number and must be on display when parked at the beach parking. The annual pass normally costs $75 or for seniors $55.

The volunteer must be registered with the county, report their hours worked for Parks and Conservation Resources and request the VSP report of their hours from their Volunteer Coordinator. That report will be used as a voucher for the pass. The pass is good for one year from the issue date. One pass per year per person may be earned.

Nancy Brown, Volunteer Program Coordinator, 582-2460
Chuck Scaffidi, FBG Volunteer Coordinator, 582-2117. For FBG VSP users I will run the report for you.
Price reduction: now $2,989 per person, double occupancy. Includes air fare from New York.

When you book the trip The Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation receives $150 if you mention you are associated with the Gardens. You will receive a $50 dollar American express gift card.
I have more information to hand out, so if you are interested please see me – Chuck

The **CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW and ENGLISH GARDENS** Tour!

*MAY 19 – MAY 26, 2012*

1st Day: Board plane for your transatlantic flight to England.

2nd Day: Arriving in London we meet our tour escort and transfer to your hotel in the English countryside, where we have accommodations for the next 3 evenings. Our scenic drive gives us a preview of the incredible colors and beauty that await us. After checking in and freshening up a bit, we are treated to a welcome cocktail reception, where we have a chance to get acquainted with our traveling companions. A delicious dinner follows. (Dinner)

3rd Day: A drive through the lovely English countryside takes us to today’s destination—Wakewhurst Place. We take a tour of the 465 acre country estate, with its ornamental gardens and temperate woodlands. While seeing the walled gardens, Asian Heath Garden, Water Garden, Lodder Valley Nature Reserve, and, of course, the magnificent Mansion, we’ll be amazed by the fantastic kaleidoscope of colors of the rhododendrons and azaleas that are in full bloom. What a wonderful introduction to the world of English gardens and a great way to begin our tour. (Breakfast)

4th Day: A delightful visit to one of the world’s most celebrated gardens and the pride of England’s National Trust—Sissinghurst Gardens & Castle—is the highlight of today’s touring. Using the property’s brick structures and walls, together with the hedges of rose, yew and hornbeam, a series of “outdoor rooms” with long walking links was created. Some of the sights you will see are the Elizabethan Tower, Yew Walk, Moat Walk, Cottage Garden and the White Gardens. It’s such a pleasure meandering through the intimate Rose Garden, visiting the working vegetable garden or just strolling on the magnificent grounds at Sissinghurst. (B)

5th Day: After checking out of our hotel we drive to Hever Castle for a delightful tour. One of the most celebrated areas of Hever’s gardens is the Italian Garden, which was designed to display William Waldorf Astor’s collection of Italian sculptures. A delightful stroll can be taken along Rhododendron Walk and Anne Boleyn’s Walk (Hever Castle was, in fact, the childhood home of Anne Boleyn). We next visit a private English country home where we are treated to “Afternoon Tea,” with scones and homemade cakes, while overlooking its magnificent gardens. This is always one of our tour’s most memorable highlights. Then it’s on to London, where we have accommodations for the next 3 nights and enjoy another fine dinner. (B, D)

6th Day: We spend the day at the 2012 Chelsea Flower Show. The most famous garden event in the world, the show, which is sponsored by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), has been held in London since 1888. Extensively covered in the media, the show has become an important venue for watching trends in all aspects of gardening and design. Words can’t describe it; you have to see it for yourself. (B)

7th Day: A short drive brings us to the RHS Gardens at Wisley. Considered the flagship garden of the RHS, Wisley captures the imagination with richly planted borders, luscious gardens and the new state-of-the-art Glasshouse. A wonderful farewell dinner is prepared for us tonight. (B, D)

8th Day: We transfer to the airport for our flight home. (B)

Tour package includes round trip airfare, accommodations for 6 evenings, breakfast each morning, 3 dinners, gratuities for the meals, sightseeing, all admissions, the services of a professional tour escort, taxes, transfers and baggage handling in England.

Price reduction: now $2,989 per person, double occupancy. Includes air fare from New York.

Optional 9th day: We take a tour of London today seeing, among other things, Big Ben, the Parliament Buildings, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, Hyde Park, Kensington Park, Piccadilly Circus and the Tower of London. The afternoon is free to enjoy London at your leisure; perhaps to take in a West End theatre production. Additional day includes accommodations, city tour, breakfast, meal gratuities, taxes. Price for additional day: $245 per person, double occupancy; $350 per person, single.

**TRAVEL UNLIMITED** *(800)645-6969*
We're Tweeting Up a Storm

To see what our followers are saying, click on the Twitter icon and follow a couple of simple steps. It’s fun, and a great way to keep up with Gardens news between Green Leaves.

Maybe we can even get a botanical conversation going. Share gardening tips. Ask gardening questions. Tell us how wonderful the Gardens are looking. (All “attaboys” gratefully accepted.)

Facebook Fans Share Their Gorgeous Garden Photos

When you visit the Gardens and take fabulous photos of our trees, flowers, herbs, tropical fruits, butterflies, birds and maybe even an alligator, please share them on our Facebook page. We’re getting more and more fans all the time and if you haven’t signed up, it’s easy to do. Use the link above and click on the f connect symbol. Become a fan today so that you can view visitor photos and comments. You can also share your experience at the gardens on the “Wall.”

Thanks Wayne Ozug
We love seeing your photos on facebook.

Thanks Sherry Noon
for the photo.

Thanks Leigh-Ann Dufresne for the photo.
Volunteer Opportunities and Announcements

- **Help Desk Urgent!** Spring is a busy time. Please take a look at the help desk calendar on VMS and see if there is a time that works for you. Also, if you are a regular at the help desk already, please be sure you are signing up in the calendar to avoid scheduling confusion.

- **FFGC/UF Garden and Design Seminar**-June 19-21 in Gainesville, FL. This event is open only to Master Gardeners and members of the FL Federation of Garden Clubs.

- **MGs needed**-MG Sally Ervin is looking for help at Loews: MGs that would like to volunteer at the Clearwater Loews outreach Extension table on Saturdays anytime from 10-2 (can be 1 hr to 4 hrs). Loews is on Gulf to Bay by 19 e-mail Sally at servin307@hotmail.com<mailto:servin307@hotmail.com

- **MG needed**-Maintaining Your Florida Yard Saturday March 24, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Weedon Island Preserve. Be available as needed during the class.

**Education**

- **MG Update** –Don’t Forget! March MG Update Pig-Out and Celebration Thurs. Mar. 8th from 9am-12ish. Awards celebration and the graduation of the latest MG class. Do not miss this one!

- **Promo video all about Pinellas County Extension**- A short promo accessed through the MG VMS system in the Newsletters/Documents section. If you are giving a presentation you can play this as an opening to showcase all what the Extension offers the community.

- **Earn Continuing Education Credits**- For more upcoming

  Extension classes please register at:
  [http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/calendar.shtml](http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/calendar.shtml)—MGs can earn up to four continuing education credits. Modules at:

  For instance, one CEU can be earned by studying the plants and earning a passing score of 80% on the “Test Yourself” feature. Once a score of 80% has been reached, print the page and submit it to the Volunteer Office.

- **Palm Harbor Library MG Class Series**- Classes are offered on the second Thursday of the month from 2-3:30 p.m. and from 6:15-7:45 p.m. at the Palm Harbor Library, 2330 Nebraska Avenue. To register, go to [http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/](http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/) , click on the Take Action “Register for a program tab” and then click “Extension Service.” You may also call 727 582-2100.

- **St Petersburg Community Library MG Class Series**-Classes offered free at the main branch of the St. Pete Library located at 3745 Ninth Avenue N. To register, go to [http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/](http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/) . Click on the Take Action “Register for a program tab” and then click “Extension Service.” You may also call 727 582-2100.

- **Extension Classes**: Visit Extension’s on-line calendar for a list of classes that are being offered free to MGs, volunteers and FBGF members with a membership card. All others pay a nominal fee. You can register on-line.

- “Planting Pinellas” visit blog [http://plantingpinellas.blogspot.com/](http://plantingpinellas.blogspot.com/)

See Theresa for more details:727-582-2109, tbadurek@pinellascounty.org
Wow-Spring is Really Here Now!

Allow me to interrupt your busy gardening season for a moment. I’d like to take a minute to let you all know what to expect while I am out on maternity leave. My official due date is April 10th. As long as all goes as planned, my last day in the office should be around April 6th. MG Updates will go as planned, although I will not be there. During my absence in April, May, and June I will be available by email all day (8am-5pm) every Wednesday, starting April 25th, so please do not hesitate to email me and I will get back to you on the next Wednesday. I will still be managing the MG VMS, so please keep logging your time and having fun out there! If there is something you need more immediately please let Bob Albanese, Andy Wilson, or Jane Morse know and they will help you or contact me for more information. I plan to return to work part-time in July and August and then return to a full-time schedule after that.

Naturally, the Help Desk is extra busy for spring, and I would like to ask all of you to please consider working more time at the Help Desk. Andy and Bob will be swamped at times, and the more Master Gardeners at the desk, the better. (We don’t want to wear them out!) Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays are phone days and we could use extra help on those days especially. Even if you are less experienced at the Help Desk you can learn while helping us provide great customer service. This applies now and throughout my leave as well. All of us here at Extension appreciate your time and help- thank you!

Also, the Green Thumb Festival is coming up on April 28th and 29th in Walter Fuller Park in St. Petersburg. I have posted sign-ups for this event on the calendar in the MG VMS, so if you would like to participate please go and sign up. It’s a great way to earn some MG hours on a weekend, and it’s just a fun event for gardeners. Volunteers get to park in a special volunteer parking area too- which is great because the parking lot really fills up. Thanks for all you do!
Theresa Badurek, 727-582-2109, tbadurek@pinellascounty.org

Volunteer Opportunities and Education Continued

- "Florida-Friendly Landscaping around Ponds" presented by MGs, Palm Harbor Library will be held on Thursday, March 8 at 2pm and 6:15pm.
- Doris Heitzmann, the Florida-Friendly Landscaping community outreach coordinator from the University of Florida IFAS Extension Service invites homeowners to learn about some simple steps everybody can take to keep ponds and lakes healthy. We will also cover plant selection and design ideas that can once implemented, lead to attractive and beautiful ponds.
Click here to reserve your spot: http://www.eventbrite.com/event/2529620162/eorg
- You can now sign up to volunteer for the Green Thumb Festival in St. Pete on April 28 and 29. The sign-ups are available on the MG VMS so choose your times/days. For more information go to: http://www.stpete.org/parks/greenthumb.
- Woodlawn Elementary School needs your native plant knowledge. Help renovate an existing native plant garden.
  The school is located at 1600 16th St. N. in St. Pete. Teacher is available Tues. mornings or Wed. afternoons.
- The Dunedin Library has requested a MG speaker on July 10 at 7pm. The topic is Night in the Garden. Someone to talk about what blooms at night, etc. Our newest Natural Resources Agent Lara Miller is scheduled to talk the same night about creatures that visit your garden/landscape at night. This would be a great opportunity to meet Lara and co-present with her.
- Indian Shores is starting a brand new community garden using earth boxes. They are currently looking for a dedicated volunteer to hold the position of Garden Coordinator.
- The Clearwater East Library is looking for a MG speaker or two to present gardening programs in May- either the 5 or the 26. Start times can range from 1pm-3pm to suit your schedule. There are also Saturdays available in September and October if you like to really plan ahead! Some of the topics they are interested in are: herb gardening, composting, and natural pest and disease control.
- Pinecrest Place Retirement Community has requested a MG speaker to teach them all about house plants and their care. Event takes place on April 10 at 2pm.
- MG to help design and maintain a display in the Extension lobby. The display will be housed in a tall glass cabinet in the main lobby and can showcase wildlife, plant, ecosystem, etc. educational information that pertains to the natural world. The display would need to be updated/rotated seasonally.
Thanks to Local Nurseries, FBGF Members and MGs Can Save $$ When Beautifying Yards

One of the benefits of Foundation membership and being a certified Master Gardener is getting a 10 percent discount at several local nurseries. Just present your FBGF membership or MG card. We will continue to contact nurseries in the area to secure additional participants. Support our friends at:

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<tr>
<th>Art Stone Orchids</th>
<th>Country Club Nursery</th>
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<tr>
<td>3611 Tyrone Blvd, St. Petersburg</td>
<td>9850 Starkey Road, Largo,</td>
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<tr>
<td>727-345-6733</td>
<td>727-397-4438</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DragonFly Garden</th>
<th>Earthscapes Garden Room</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>730 Broadway, Dunedin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>727-734-4900</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Esperanza’s Garden Center</th>
<th>Hawaiian Orchid Connection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6001 Haines Road, St. Petersburg</td>
<td>620 Seminole Blvd, Seminole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>727-742-8499</td>
<td>Hours: Tues thru Sat 10:00AM to 5:00PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kathy’s Korner Nursery &amp; Tree Farm</th>
<th>Jene’s Tropicals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(10% off trees)</td>
<td>6831 Central Ave., St. Petersburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6095 Haines Road North, St. Petersburg</td>
<td>727-344-1668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>727-525-9640</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Palm Harbor Nursery &amp; Landscaping</th>
<th>Seminole Nurseries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(10% off cash and carry)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450 Riviere Road, Palm Harbor</td>
<td>6230 102nd Ave. N, Pinellas Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>727-545-9619</td>
<td>727 545-9619</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summerwood Gardens, Inc.</th>
<th>Twigs and Leaves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1171 Tarpon Springs Rd, Odessa</td>
<td>2131 Central Ave., St. Petersburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>813-920-2153</td>
<td>727-822-5400</td>
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</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Willow Tree Nursery</th>
<th>Wilcox Nursery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4401 49th St. N, St. Petersburg</td>
<td>12501 Indian Rocks Road, Largo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>727-522-2594</td>
<td>727-595-2073</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:* Only FBG Foundation membership applies

Click on [Facebook](fb://page/123456) to get map directions and hours of operation.
2012 March Dates to Remember

Thank You, Volunteers!!

- Thursday, March 8 at 2pm and 6:15pm "Florida-Friendly Landscaping around Ponds" Palm Harbor Library
- Green Thumb Festival in St. Pete on April 28 and 29
- FFGC/UF Garden and Design Seminar-June 19-21 in Gainesville, FL.

MG Plant Clinic at the Palm Harbor Library –Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Master Gardeners offer diagnostic services along with information about identifying plants, treatment for insects and ideas for Florida-Friendly landscaping.

For details on some of the events listed go to the calendar on the Pinellas County Extension Lawn & Garden website: http://www.pinellascounty.org/scripts/publish/webevent.pl?