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

Azaleas, magnolias and Indian hawthorn with no spring flowers, shrubs with gaping holes and naked bottoms, trees with multiple trunks or few interior branches are all cause for concern. But before you pull out the pruners, chainsaws and loppers, your plants will be happier if you learn the basics of proper pruning. Here are some things you can do to prune like a professional.

First of all, it’s about timing. Pruning done in the late fall or early winter stimulates new growth, especially if we have a mild winter. This new growth is very tender and is easily damaged, even by a light frost. It is much better to wait until spring bud-break before pruning. This will reduce the risk of cold damage.

Plants that produce their flowers on last year’s growth, such as azaleas, magnolias and Indian hawthorn, must be pruned after they bloom in the spring, and pruning must stop after June when the new buds start to form.

Plants that produce flowers on this year’s growth are usually pruned while still dormant (January/February), or just before the spring growth flush. These plants include hibiscus, allamanda, plumbago, frangipani and rose. To encourage the most plant growth, prune just prior to the first spring growth flush. To slow growth and keep plants smaller, prune just after each growth flush. Most evergreens, such as podocarpus, holly, ligustrum, juniper and wax myrtle, can be pruned anytime.

Secondly, it’s about the cut. There are only two proper cuts. One is called a reduction cut and it removes a larger branch back to a smaller side branch. The second is called a removal cut and it removes a side branch from a larger branch. Flush cuts and topping are harmful and should not be done. When removing branches that are an inch and a half in diameter or larger, use the three-cut method. This keeps the branch from ripping down the side of the trunk. This method starts with a cut on the underside of the branch about 15 inches from the trunk. The second cut is made downward from the top of the branch a few inches out from the first cut. The third cut is the removal of the stub that is left.

Thirdly, it’s about shape. Shrubs should be pruned so that the base is just a wee bit wider than the top. This allows sunlight to reach all the leaves of the plant and will thus produce a plant that has leaves from top to bottom, rather than the shabby looking shrub that has no leaves at its base. Trees should be pruned so there is only one major trunk with evenly spaced side branches. Removing all the interior branches of trees, called lion-tailing, is a harmful practice and should be avoided. Thinning is done from the outside in, not the inside out. Palms should never be pruned above the horizontal line of 9 o’clock and 3 o’clock. Another good rule to follow is to only remove a third of a plant’s entire mass when pruning.

For more information and diagrams, google “Pruning Landscape Trees and Shrubs IFAS”, “Pruning Palms IFAS” or “Disinfection of Horticultural Tools IFAS,”

For free help with your lawn and garden questions, the Pinellas County Extension Service is just a phone call or visit away. We are located at 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, next to the Florida Botanical Gardens and are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. To speak with a horticulturist, call 727-582-2110 Monday, Tuesday or Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon or 1 to 4 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays or Thursdays. You can also visit our website at www.pinellascountyextension.org
Butterfly Plant of the Month at FBG

Plumbago: Both A Nectar and Host Plant

By Ellen Mahany, MG

Plumbago or Cape Leadwort (Plumbago auriculata), placed prominently at Butterfly Station, is one of the rare butterfly attracters that serve as both a nectar and host plant.

Somewhat vine-like, Plumbago thrives along fences and can be used as a hedge or foundation plant and in a pot or planter. This popular, low maintenance, evergreen perennial grows best in full sun and adapts to a variety of soil types.

As a nectar plant, it provides nutrition for several adult butterflies, including the Cloudless Sulphur, Eastern Dogface, and several members of the Swallowtail family: Polydamus, Eastern Tiger, Black and Giant. Although swallowtails are larger butterflies, because they flutter while feeding and remain air bound, they can obtain nectar from flowers like plumbago blossoms that cannot support their weight.

Credits: Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Butterfly Garden, Okeechobee, IFAS

As a host plant plumbago provides nutrition for the larvae of the minute Cassius Blue butterfly. No more than half an inch at full adult wing span, the Cassius Blue shares its Gossamer Wing family trait of smallness. Although this common garden inhabitant is often overlooked, a fluttering group on Plumbago bushes creates a pretty sight of ever-moving whitish specks.
Cassius Blue Upper and Lower Wing View  Credits: Jerry Butler, University of Florida

The Cassius Blue belongs to the subfamily of blues. The upper side of the wings is blue and the hind side is white with two eyespots. Males have a brighter color than females. Males fly swiftly but erratically, while females slow down to find larval plants.

Egg, Larva and Chrysalis  Credits: Jerry Butler, University of Florida

Females set the flattened, whitish-green egg singly on Plumbago blossoms, buds or developing seed pods. In Florida there are four larval instars, or periods between each molting. Mature larva, only half an inch at maturity, is green with faint darker or white markings. As is true of other butterfly species, some wasp species may insert eggs into the larva to feed upon its body or eat the larva and pupa. The well-camouflaged tan pupa has darker markings and numerous short white hairs.

This butterfly lives in Central Florida from May through September and year around in South Florida, producing multiple generations annually. When Cassius Blues visit plumbago for sale in nurseries, they sometimes inadvertently become transported to more northerly regions, but cannot survive cold winters.
Going Green In Honor of St. Patrick

Photos and story by Joanne Drake, MG

Welcome spring with the color green and honor St. Patrick at the same time. Planning for this time of year … we planted broccoli, collards, spinach, green tomatoes, lettuce, Swiss chard and other salad greens a couple months ago. They are at a mature stage now and looking good. Good enough to harvest! Last year we weren’t so lucky with broccoli forming florets because the plants were planted too close to each other. They should be about 18 inches apart.

We were pleasantly surprised with the results!

We tried using a Grow Box this year and had very good results. Rewarded with an abundance of tomatoes … we were very popular with friends and neighbors who wanted to cook up a mess of fried green tomatoes. We were so happy with the grow box that my husband Davis gave me another for Christmas! I think I may even get a third this month for my birthday. I’m a happy gardener!

Going green is the way to go. We feel so much healthier eating fresh veggies and being outside tending the garden. No pesticides are used but we do campanion gardening that seems to be controlling the pests.

A Masters Gardeners Tour

By Debra Kramer, MG Trainee

A perfectly sunny afternoon helped shine the spotlight on the Florida Botanical Gardens during a recent garden tour with an enthusiastic group of approximately thirty Master Gardeners (MGs) from Hillsborough County. I have toured the FBG numerous times with family and friends but this was my first experience touring a garden with MGs. I was struck by some interesting differences:

“Name That Plant!” -- MGs are unable to walk past a shrub or flower without giving it a name. No individual plant was able to remain anonymous while this group of MGs worked together to identify each one.

“Carpe Diem” — In addition to giving it a label, MGs like to toss Latin scientific names back and forth. And you thought Latin was a dead language?

“Wanderlust” — trying to keep a group of MGs focused on one area of the garden became an exercise in futility. Before long, the magic of the FBG worked its spell on the visitors. The group spread out to individually examine plants up close, stare at water features, admire a single hibiscus bloom or chuckle at the humorous root system of the screw pine pandanus.

Touring the FBG with this knowledgeable group from across the bay reminded me that no matter what the background or particular interest of a Master Gardener, the common thread of appreciating and enjoying nature is a bond we all share.
Big Winds Moon
February 19-March 20

By Jude Bagatti, MG Volunteer

With this moon, a year’s worth of monthly Medicine Wheel commentary, which began last March with the first Budding Trees Moon of Spring, comes to an end. This third and last Moon of the North retains Waboose as Spirit Keeper; Buffalo as its Animal; Winter, its Season; Midnight, its Time of day; and White, its Color. Its Powers are Purity and Renewal.

Sun Bear’s Medicine Wheel has this to say: “People born during this time are Cougar people. These people, like the Cougar, are cautious, not willing to reveal themselves until they are sure of those around them. They are just, intuitive, gentle, creative people, though they can have sharp claws if attacked. They must learn to have a greater sense of reality, and not to be so easily hurt. Their Plant is the Plantain; their Color is Blue-Green; their mineral is Turquoise, and their Elemental Clan is the Frog Clan.” Pisces is their astrological counterpart.

In tradition, South American Aymara people had Huayra Tata, god of wind, who controlled breezes, winds and hurricanes of the Andes Cordillera. Raising Lake Titicaca waters, the god created rain thereby fertilizing his wife, Pachamama, goddess of Earth.

Not counting the sustained huffing and puffing of Tallahassee blowhards, we too have wind “gods” interacting with the forces of nature: storm chasers, cloud seeders, pilots flying into the eye. Unlike Sun Bear’s, Florida’s “big winds moon” would occur between June and November. Most Florida residents know about big winds first-hand. My own direct hurricane encounters have included clashes with Donna, Cleo, Charley, and indirectly, with Wilma in 2005 as I arrived at Miami International Airport from overseas travel. But my most hair-raising brush was with the wrath of Andrew. That date, August 24, 1992, remains etched in my brain.

Crossing the ocean, Columbus-like, Andrew eyed Florida as if drawn by a fatal attraction, and discovered Miami-Dade County. He penetrated our coast and culture, finding natives as defenseless against his intrusion as they were against the 1492 explorer’s, 500 years prior. Our populace barricaded windows, slammed doors in Andrew’s face, and fled from the shore. But it wasn’t fast or far enough. Suburban hoods, not beach condos; country walks, not city towers; low profiles, not high rises, crashed and smashed.

I lived on the third and top floor of a South Miami apartment, just beyond the evacuation zone. Andrew was a violent entity pounding at my door in the dark and what I felt was fear. That, and helplessness, for I was alone with no one to be afraid with in the sleepless night. What if he forced his way in through the flimsily-taped jalousies or the unboarded sliding glass doors? Who could hear or help? I wished I’d parked my old car in a garage somewhere rather than the exposed lot of our building. My walls shook with each gusty blast. Cracking, creaking sounds from unknown sources propelled me from room to room. The toilet bowl became animated, gasping and choking like someone in a watery death rattle.

At 1:00 a.m. I actually tried to sleep, but the shrieking wind, screaming to get in, and the constant shake, rocking and rolling outdoors made rest impossible. Andrew’s sound and light show demanded attention. He played his wind instrument all night with rising and falling high-pitched whines and low moans. A percussion section from hell banged out a cacophony of booms, bumps and heavy metal clatter.

Adding to my isolation, the 9-volt battery which tested “good” in the store, failed to run my radio. I missed updates by weatherman Bryan Norcross. Yet inexplicably, the land line phone still worked. I could have called China in the midst of chaos, but nearby Coral Gables Hurricane Center was dead.

Through a half inch opening of blinds, I watched a transformer shower sparks before exploding. The sky undulated in eerie greenish light. A sudden racket sent me scurrying away from the window. Any minute I expected the gutters, which were flying off the roof, to rip through screens and panes and come careening into my living room. Another peek revealed that a heavy cement planter I decided was safe to leave on my balcony, was inching its way across it. Tall trees which had shielded the balcony were flattened, allowing ruinous views.

Andrew was bad company, a master of the one-night stand: wham, bam. By the cold light of dawn he took off and by what he left, it was plain he’d had no respect at all. Turns out, aside from a dampened rug and spirit, I had no power, no water, but no damage. Even my car survived. Ravages of heart and mind would come later when for days I rode with volunteers in caravans through devastated, unidentifiable rubble-strewn neighborhoods of Homestead and towns south, bringing water, food and hugs. Andy, Sandy: go blow.

Contact Jude at 727-322-6211 or heyjudebagatti@msn.com
The Burmese Python Problem

By Joan Johnson, MG

While the Chinese celebrate the Year of the Snake, Southern Florida is chafing from an overabundance of Burmese Pythons. The python, molurus bivittatus, is a subspecies of the Indian Python, native to the tropics and sub-tropics of South and Southeast Asia. Whereas, the Indian Python is partially protected, in the native habitat because it is valued for its fine skin and meat, and medicinal fat, the python in the Everglades is causing a remarkable decline in wildlife, most noticeably the Key Largo wood rat, and wood storks, both considered endangered species.

It advances on its prey with quivering tail, mouth open, and strikes with teeth that are inverted so that the prey cannot escape. Then the prey is constricted by coiling around it. The jaw bones are not connected. The largest prey recorded was a 76 pound deer, consumed by a 16 foot python! In 2006, an aerial photo of a 6 foot gator semi-consumed by a 13 foot python caused a sensation and went viral on the internet. After eating, the python is not likely to move for some time, which would make it easier to catch.

Python Challenge 2013

There are an estimated 10’s of thousands of python in the Everglades, after being considered “established” in the year 2000. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation admit eradication is an unattainable goal, but for the purpose of studying their spread, has initiated a month-long Python Challenge. The hunt and capture are not permitted in the National Everglades Park, but are in Francis S. Taylor WMA, Rotenberger WMA and the Holey Land WMA. The Holey Land WMA got its name from the pock marks caused from its former use as a bombing range. The pythons may be captured by hand, net, or snare. Firearms or machetes may be used to humanely euthanize by targeting the head. Pythons are non-venomous, but likely to bite when captured.

At least 1,000 hunters have qualified for permits, but capturing the python has proven elusive. About 3 pythons a day were captured initially. The hunters are equipped with GPS and are instructed to record the location of the capture. The pythons like to warm themselves in the sun but are found close to the water of canals and levies, on rock piles or gravel roads.

Permits cost $25.00 and expire December 31st of each year. New applications will be received in early April. The prize for the longest python captured is $1,000.00. The prize for the most pythons captured is $1,500.00.

The results of the Python Challenge: 68 pythons were harvested. Ruben Ramirez caught the most with 18 pythons. Paul Shannon harvested the longest snake at 14’ 3”.

The Calnan Nature Centers, 3450 Artiz Avenue, Fort Meyers, will host an Exotic Pet Amnesty Day on Saturday, March 2nd, 2013.

Florida Has Four Seasons?

By Melinda Vargas, Volunteer Board Member

It always amazes me when people say “there are no seasons here in Florida.” However, this peninsula has very definite and sometimes extreme seasons. Our winters are much more subtle than the northern climates of course, but when you become familiar with the plants, and wildlife here you will also become familiar with Florida’s ethereal seasons.

Visiting the Florida Botanical Gardens is a great way to educate one’s self on Florida’s seasons, and biodiversity. We are partnered with the Pinellas County Extension that has a plethora of resources to share with you as well. Visit often during each season to learn which plants are blooming, and what wildlife species are visiting. Over 150 types of bird, mammals, and reptiles (many on the endangered species list) have been seen at our gardens. We have an awesome state-of-the-art interactive website that will show you what’s in bloom by season. We have numerous migratory birds, and plants in full bloom in the “dead-of-winter.”

Florida has the largest biodiversity of any other state in the union, and we have four distinct seasons too! Experience Florida’s subtle seasons at the Florida Botanical Gardens. Sign-up for one of our free garden tours and learn more about our Florida seasons, the plants, and the unique animals that live here, and how you can welcome them into your landscape.
Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation Update
By Chuck Scaffidi, FBG Foundation President

The next Foundation board meeting is on March 15 and visitors are welcome, especially anyone who may be interested in joining the board. By attending a meeting, you will get a better understanding of our organization and goals, and hopefully you will choose to become a board member.

What are we working on now? “Diggin the Arts” on May 5, a repeat of last years highly attended successful event. Not too late to join the Diggin team. This is another event conceived and chaired by Barbara Goss, so give her a call at 727-442-0537. Following are the highlights of this event and you can also click to keep informed as this event evolves. Highlights follow:

Diggin’ the Arts, Sunday, May 5, 2013 10 am to 4 pm

Our second annual collaboration with the leading art institutions in Pinellas County include the Museum of Fine Arts of St. Petersburg, the Morean Center for Clay, the Florida Craftsmen, the Dunedin Fine Arts Center, the Dali Museum, The Suntan Arts Center and the Beach Arts Center. Enjoy museum-developed activities for the entire family. Opportunity drawings for hand painted rain barrels, also designed by each museum will be available for purchase.

Rain Barrel Competition: Each museum will decorate a rain barrel for a drawing, as well as the Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation. Participants will purchase raffle tickets from a roving volunteer and deposit tickets with their name and address in the vase at each Museum’s table. Winners will be drawn during the show by the MC.

Plein Air competition: The non-juried event will feature local artists painting in any path in the Gardens. The artists register at 10 am, begin painting anywhere in the Gardens. At 3:00, the work will be judged – Best of Show-$200, First Prize-$150, second- $100; 2 Merit Awards – Certificate and Botanical Bounty Gift Shop Gift Card. Plein Air painting permits viewers to watch the artists at work –an intriguing experience. Visit

We also plan to support two new events the “Pinellas County Fair” March 20-24 where the foundation would have a booth to showcase the FBG, sell foundation memberships and brand the FBG Foundation. Many, many volunteers needed to help the foundation staff the booth and help fill the jobs listed on page 10 to support the fair. The Second event is “A French Market” as advertised below. The Foundation will have a information/membership booth. Please visit and if you choose to participate please contact Terry Berube at 501-3787.
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 FBG news between Green Leafs.
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.)

And Share Your 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. 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.”

Special Announcements
The St. Petersburg Master Gardener Speaker Series is now being held at the Garden Club of St. Petersburg. (It was formerly held at the library). The address for the Garden Club of St. Petersburg is: 500 Sunset Dr S, St Petersburg, FL 33707
Special Announcements

FREE
Food Growers Classes!

Want to grow your own fruit and vegetables? Walk out into your yard and graze? Eat what you’ve grown yourself? Meet with other home gardeners and Pinellas County Master Gardeners to share tips and how-tos?

Come visit our informal food growers club. No reservation necessary.

Meetings are held
Mondays, 7 pm

Suncoast Mission of Rest
5625 Park Blvd
Pinellas Park, FL 33781
(Entrance in the back)

For information, call 727 391-9590 or 727 420-6184

Our Gardening Friends are invited to
Bill and Sandy Huff’s annual
BONFIRE AND WIENIE ROAST

Wednesday,
March 13, 2013
11 am to 3 pm

$3 gets you hotdogs, buns, sodas, and fixings. Please bring a side dish to share, clippers to take cuttings, a chair, and old clothes you’ll get smoky!

Sandy and Bill Huff
3530 Fairview St.
Safety Harbor Fl 34695
Cell 727 420-6184

Directions from Phillippe Park: Go north on P. Parkway 1 block. Turn left/west on Fairview. At the top of the hill, turn into the driveway marked Shady Oak Farm. Go PAST the blue house, past the pond, and turn between 2 white sticks to the back acre. Parking by the barn is limited, but you can park on Fairview, beside the pond, or at the front of the house on the cement driveway.
Pinellas County Fair

Coming to Tropicana Field, St Petersburg, FL

March 20 - 24, 2013
WED & THURS: 5 P.M. TO 11 P.M.
FRIDAY: 3 P.M. TO MIDNIGHT
SATURDAY: NOON TO MIDNIGHT
SUNDAY: NOON TO 8 P.M.

Volunteer Services is looking for volunteers to staff our booth – please reserve your times.

We would like to have 3 to 4 volunteers per shift.

Wed, Mar 20th 5-8 pm  Sat, Mar 23rd 12-4 pm
Thurs, Mar 21st 5-8 pm  Sat, Mar 23rd 4-8 pm
Fri, Mar 22nd 3-6 pm  Sun, Mar 24th 12-4 pm
Fri, Mar 22nd 6-8 pm  Sun, Mar 24th 4-8 pm

Please contact Carol Barkalow, Volunteer Services at 464-5579 or 727-742-3630, or cbarkalow@pinellascounty.org to sign up.
Help Restore Weedon Island Preserve’s Environment on Saturday, March 9th

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program and other partners have been studying the Feather Sound portion of western Old Tampa Bay to determine why seagrasses aren’t returning as quickly as they are in other parts of the bay. Scientists tested the water quality, monitored seagrass in the area, and calculated the amount of pollution that may be entering the bay from runoff and other sources. With help from national experts, they developed recommendations to improve the condition of the water by restoring the wetlands that line the shoreline.

The project team is now working to restore more than 30 acres of marsh and mangrove wetlands in the area along Feather Sound Drive, including around the borrow pit and near Ulmerton Road. This area is considered part of the Weedon Island Preserve. Construction for this phase began in the fall and will be completed by March, 2013. This includes removing invasive, exotic vegetation such as Brazilian pepper that can choke out native plants. Once the exotic species are removed, native marsh grasses and shrubs will be planted that will provide habitat for wildlife and help clean runoff before it enters the bay.

This phase also includes restoring more natural water flow within the mangrove area and re-creating an important and highly impacted habitat called a saltern, which is a valuable seasonal feeding area for birds.

So, how can you get involved in this exciting project? The Tampa Bay Estuary Program, Tampa Bay Watch, Pinellas County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District are hosting a volunteer event to plant native wetland grasses and shrubs around the borrow pit. Lunch will be provided to all registered volunteers!

Event details are below:
Date: Saturday, March 9th
Time: 8:30 AM – Noon
Location: Feather Sound Drive
To Wear: Shoes that tie (no flip flops, sandals or Crocs)
Clothes and shoes you don’t mind getting dirty
Hat, sunscreen, bug spray, and garden gloves
To Bring: Towel to dry off and plastic bag for wet shoes
Re-fillable water bottle. Coolers of water will be located throughout the project site to refill your bottle.

To Register: Contact Rachel Arndt at ranrdt@tampabaywatch.org or (727) 867-8166 x233. Registration is required and is limited to 75 participants. Residents of Feather Sound and the surrounding community will be given first opportunity to participate, so invite your friends and neighbors and sign up today! Lunch will be provided to all registered volunteers.

The Feather Sound Project has been supported by Pinellas County, Southwest Florida Water Management District, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Tampa Bay Estuary Program, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Tampa Bay Watch and Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. For more information on the project, please contact Lindsay Cross, TBEP, at lcross@tbep.org or (727) 893-2765.

Your help is needed to restore native plants and beautify the area around the borrow pit along Feather Sound Drive!
Record Your Volunteer Hours
Please Remember to Sign Out!

The computer program for logging volunteer hours is next to the help desk. Make this your first stop and last stop. You must sign in and sign out when you are at Extension. When the computer is not functioning you can still log your time in the book. Those who volunteer at other facilities should e-mail hours after each visit.

When not at Extension, please e-mail your hours to: cseaffidi@co.pinellas.fl.us

Direct questions to volunteer coordinator Chuck Scaffidi or assistant Emma Eshbaugh.

The County VSP system and procedures applies only to non-MG volunteers.

Education

MG Update—will be at Weedon Island. Our very own Sea Grant Agent Libby Carnahan will be teaching us all about mangrove ecosystems. March 8th, 9am-11am. Pack a lunch and stay longer for a hike if you like!

Introduction to Plant Identification- Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center - Pinellas County Extension, Saturday, March 23, 2013 from 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM, Tarpon Springs, FL.
Join a local Extension specialist and examine the basics of plant identification, from using simple keys to identifying critical characteristics that will help any would-be botanist in the field. An emphasis will be placed on flowering plants, but ferns will be included as well. Registration is required and all materials will be provided. Wear comfortable shoes, as part of the class will be outdoors. Free, registration required. At: http://www.eventbrite.com/event/5022440254/eorg#

Education Credits-Extension classes:
Please register at: http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/calendar.shtml
MGs can earn up to four continuing education credits. Modules at: http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/mastergardener/outreach/plant_id/index.shtml
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– Free classes every second Thursday of the month from 2:00-3:30 PM and 6:15-7:45 PM at the Palm Harbor Library, 2330 Nebraska Ave. To register http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/ click the “Registration” tab and then click “Extension Service.”

St Petersberg Community Library MG Class Series- Free classes offered at the main branch of the St. Pete Library located at 3745 Ninth Avenue N. To register http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/. Click the “Registration” tab and then click “Extension Service.”

“Planting Pinellas” visit blog http://plantingpinellas.blogspot.com/

Extension Classes and Tours-Visit Lawn & Garden - Pinellas County Extension on-line calendar for a list of classes where most are being offered free or at a discount to MGs, volunteers and FBGF members with a membership card. Also, sign up for a garden tour.
Special discount offer for Rain Harvesting Workshop

Volunteer Opportunities and Announcements

Help Desk– Please look at the VMS help desk calendar and see if there is a time that works for you. If you are a regular at the help desk please be sure you are signing up to avoid scheduling confusion.

MGs needed–MG Sally Ervin is looking for help at Lowes: MGs that would like to volunteer at the Clearwater Lowe's outreach Extension table on Saturdays anytime from 10-2 (can be 1 hr to 4 hrs) should e-mail Sally at servin307@hotmail.com. Lowe's is located on Gulf to Bay near US19

MG Sandy Huff is doing an amazing job working with The Suncoast Mission in Pinellas Park to teach people in need how to grow their own food. She is searching for a Master Gardener who saves seed. This is a topic they want to learn more about as soon as possible. If you can share this info with them it would be most appreciated. Also, she needs more veggie gardening experts to assist. Sandy is also just fun to work with! Please let me know if you want to join the team. You can also email Sandy at HuffSandy@aol.com
There is a rising tide of interest in **urban agriculture**- including home gardens, school gardens, and community gardens. **We must find more ways to help people with this new focus in order to keep Extension and the Master Gardener program relevant.** We are forming some exciting new teams and training to accomplish this and I hope many of you will feel called to get involved. Also, in an effort to be more organized I am asking all of you for help. You have done a great job of using the MG VMS to track hours and sign up on calendars, but the VMS can do much more. **There are several new teams forming and I ask you to sign up for these "projects"- whether you are already involved or just wish to be in the near future:**

- **We need more help at the Extension Lawn and Garden Help Desk.** We still have several shifts that are not covered by MGs and our goal is full coverage. Please sign up and help us fill in the gaps in coverage. Only MGs who work at the Help Desk or any MG Plant Clinics will be eligible for the new advanced diagnostic training.

- **We are creating an MG email response team. This is a great project for those who want to volunteer from home.** We are going to set up an email "tree" for client questions. If you are interested and want to learn more please sign up for the project "Email Response Team" in the MG VMS. I will contact those who are interested to set up a kick-off meeting to get your ideas on how we can make this a success.

- **Finally, we are putting together a school and community garden team to help address the overwhelming number of requests for help in these locations.** Please add the project "School/Community Garden Team" in the MG VMS if you are already working in school/community gardens or are interested in getting involved in the new team. Please add this project if you would like to be a part of this so I can send out invitations to the first team kick-off meeting. We will talk about the needs of the community and how we can meet these needs as a team and hopefully have a great time doing it.

I hope you are all as excited as we are- and I hope you will join some of these new initiatives as well. **These new teams will be a great way to expand your knowledge while helping your fellow citizens and being part of a really fun group.** Thank you!!!

Theresa Badurek
727-582-2109 tbadurek@pinellascounty.org

“The first supermarket supposedly appeared on the American landscape in 1946. That is not very long ago. Until then, where was all the food? Dear folks, the food was in homes, gardens, local fields, and forests. It was near kitchens, near tables, near bedsides. It was in the pantry, the cellar, the backyard.”
— Joel Salatin, *Folks, This Ain't Normal: A Farmer's Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and a Better World*

Q: What do you get if you divide the circumference of a pumpkin by its diameter?
A: Pumpkin pi.

**Volunteer Opportunities and Announcements Continued**

- **Pinellas County Extension will have a booth at the Pinellas County Fair, March 20 -24.** [http://www.pinellascountyfair.com/](http://www.pinellascountyfair.com/) If a volunteer gives 10 hours they get free parking, entrance to the fair and a t-shirt. The more the better of course. Please let me know if you are interested in being at the Extension booth and I will get you more information.

- **Allendale United Methodist Church** in St. Petersburg is planning to host a community event for "Earth Day" on Saturday, April 20th, from 10 am-2 pm. They are seeking speakers and displays related to sharing information about adopting practices for more sustainable living and preserving the health and beauty of our state ecosystem. They are requesting a MG to either give a talk or staff a booth about composting. They also have a community garden, and if you are interested, they would love to have someone build a compost area near the garden with the help of the event attendees. Basically they want to learn all about compost and would love your involvement at any level you would like to offer. If you are interested I will put you in touch with their event coordinator right away!

- **55+ community in Largo** is looking for a speaker on citrus care and disease. They need someone on April 24 at 10:30 am. They would just like a short 20 minute talk to give them some guidance and they usually get a pretty good turnout that time of year- about 50. Like many Pinellas County residents they are having trouble with citrus and need our help.
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 many 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:

| Art Stone Orchids  | Country Club Nursery  |
| 3611 Tyrone Blvd, St. Petersburg | 9850 Starkey Road, Largo, |
| 727-345-6733 | 727-397-4438 |

| DragonFly Garden  | Earthscapes Garden Room  |
| 730 Broadway, Dunedin | 816 Alt. 19 N, Palm Harbor |
| 727-734-4900 | 727-786-4859 |

| Esperanza’s Garden Center  | Hawaiian Orchid Connection  |
| 6001 Haines Road, St. Petersburg | Note:* (10% off all purchases) |
| 727-742-8499 | 6260 Seminole Blvd, Seminole |

| Kathy’s Korner Nursery Inc. (10% off trees)  | Jene’s Tropicals  |
| 6095 Haines Road North, St. Petersburg | 6831 Central Ave., St. Petersburg |
| 727-525-9640 | 727-344-1668 |

| Palm Harbor Nursery & Landscaping (10% off cash and carry)  | Seminole Nurseries  |
| 450 Riviere Road, Palm Harbor | 6230 102nd Ave. N, Pinellas Park |
| 727-545-9619 | 727 545-9619 |

| Summerwood Gardens, Inc.  | Twigs and Leaves  |
| 1171 Tarpon Springs Rd, Odessa | 2131 Central Ave., St. Petersburg |
| 813-920-2153 | 727-822-5400 |

| Willow Tree Nursery  | Wilcox Nursery  |
| 4401 49th St. N, St. Petersburg | 12501 Indian Rocks Road, Largo |
| 727-522-2594 | 727-595-2073 |

| Hazel’s Garden & Nursery  | Sunscape Plant & Tree Nursery  |
| 5063 Dartmouth Ave, St. Petersburg | 4730 CR 16 St. Petersburg, FL 33709 |
| 727-321-4599 | 727-347-2915 |

Note:* Only FBG Foundation membership applies
2013 March Dates to Remember

- MG Update-March 8, 9-11am at Weedon Island
- Help Restore Weedon Island-March 9
- A French Market-March 16
- Pinellas County Fair-March 20-24

Thank You, Volunteers!!

MG Plant Clinic at the Palm Harbor Library –Wednesdays from 10 AM to 2 PM
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://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/calendar.shtml?cmd=opencal&cal=cal6