Giving Palms a "Hurricane Cut" Is A Bad Idea

By Jane Morse, University of Florida, Pinellas County Extension Agent

One of my all time pet peeves is the so-called “hurricane cutting” of Florida’s beautiful palm trees. Despite the best efforts of horticulturists and arborists throughout the state for many years, over-pruning is still going on. Some property owners are convinced that the practice saves money and protects their homes, but a hurricane cut will actually hurt your tree and your wallet. If someone tries to talk you into this improper “maintenance,” please – for the sake of your tree – say “no thanks.”

Besides leaving ugly palms in their wake, a hurricane cut has many other negative consequences. For one, the fronds provide a much-needed wall of protection around the palm’s bud. Exposing the bud by removing too many fronds can allow more damage to occur during a storm, potentially causing injury or even death to the tree.

In addition, removing a lot of green fronds deprives palms of food and nutrients that allow them to grow and protect themselves from insects and disease. A weakened palm is more susceptible to damage and death from a storm.

Over-pruning also may contribute to reduced winter hardiness.

As a general rule, palms should never have fronds removed higher than horizontal. Picture a clock – the outline on palm canopies should never be higher than the 9 o’clock to 3 o’clock position. Hurricane cuts remove fronds much higher than horizontal, at a 10 o’clock and 2 o’clock position, or worse yet an 11 o’clock and 1 o’clock position. The angle of the frond coming off of the trunk should be no less than a 90 degree angle.

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You may think that yellowing fronds are unsightly and should be removed, but yellowing lower fronds on a palm indicate a nutritional deficiency. The palm is taking nutrients from these lower fronds and transporting them to the newer growth in an effort to survive. This is a palm that is in trouble. Removing these lower yellowing fronds takes away this resource of nutrients that the palm needs. Palms in this condition should only have completely dead fronds removed and need to be started on a fertilizer regimen. Many palms die because of nutritional deficiencies.

Palms have very specific nutritional needs that can only be met by using a specific palm fertilizer with a nutrient ratio of 8-2-12-4 Mg or 8-0-12-4 Mg with all of the micronutrients in a sulfate form and 100% of the nitrogen, potassium, and magnesium in a controlled release form. You can call the Pinellas County Extension Service at 727-582-2100 on Mondays, Tuesdays or Thursdays to request a free list of nurseries that carry this product.

Please remember, however, that in Pinellas County you must wait until Oct. 1 before applying a fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorus. Any landscape, including grass, within 50 feet of any palm should receive this same palm fertilizer. It may take up to a year to see complete recovery of a palm, with a full canopy of green fronds as the payoff.
When hiring someone to prune your trees be sure to verify that they are insured for property damage, personal liability, and worker’s compensation. You can be held responsible for medical bills and lost wages for injured workers if you hire an uninsured company. Ask to see it in writing.

The next time someone comes knocking on your door and tells you that “Your palm needs a hurricane cut,” please tell them “No thanks, I know better.” Your palm tree and your wallet will thank you.

For more information please see these University of Florida/IFAS resources:
Palm pruning: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep443; Fertilization of palms: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep261
YouTube video about palm pruning: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tr76hXRHBoA

Fascinating Firebush
By Jane Morse, University of Florida/IFAS Extension Agent, Pinellas County

Firebush (Hamelia patens) is a wonderful Florida native shrub that is very attractive to wildlife. Thanks to its beautiful orange-red tubular flowers, the first ruby-throated hummingbird of the season visited my garden recently. The blooms and their nectar are a magnet for the hummers as they pass through the state on their fall migration.

The firebush nectar provides better nutrition than a sugar-laden hummingbird feeder solution. And, in addition to hummingbirds, firebush provides food for many other birds that feed on nectar, berries or insects.

As I admired the beautiful flowers, I began to notice all of the wildlife that was busily hovering, climbing or sitting on the foliage or sipping nectar from the flowers. Big, boisterous native bumble bees and honey bees were buzzing from flower to flower. I saw long-legged flies (beneficial), carpenter ants, lady-beetle larvae (beneficial), and a leaf-footed bug. Several species of butterflies (gulf fritillary, giant swallowtail, zebra longwing, yellow sulfur) also came to visit the plant. I suppose it is like a Thanksgiving dinner for wildlife. It provides different foods for all of them to enjoy.

This popular shrub makes a great screen or border to hide a fence or view of the neighbor’s house. It can grow from 3 to 12 feet tall and 3 to 8 feet wide. It can tolerate almost any soil condition and is quite drought-tolerant. It blooms profusely almost all year long. It can take sun to shade, but flowers much better in the sun. It can tolerate salt drift back from the oceanfront. The only thing it can’t tolerate is cold. This is a south Florida plant that will do well, without cold damage, most years in Pinellas County. If it does get frozen down to the ground, it will come back in the spring. Since the fruit is favored by birds you may get free plants popping up in the landscape.

Try planting firebush in your landscape. I think you will love it as much as I do.
Always On Guard Against Harmful Invaders

By MG Ellen Mahany

Florida is a state ever subject to new invasions by plant killers. This was the message of Doug Gaskill, the guest speaker at the August meeting for master gardeners.

Gaskill, who has a master’s degree in microbiology, serves as the author of the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Division of Plant Health, Plant Protection and Quarantine (USDA APHIS PPQ).

His duties are as weighty as the list of acronyms standing for his division: early detection of exotic plant pests and diseases; prevention of off-shore spread through shipping, coordination of pest detection with neighboring states, and continued tracking of known invaders.

Florida’s Vulnerability: Gaskill commented that harmful insects arrive by sea, for instance, in cargo packing materials, through the state’s various seaports, and by land through tourists’ vehicles, including RVs. Yet another source is infected firewood. Obviously, so many potential sources for invasion put our indispensable plants at risk.

A Current Concern: Because Gaskill is in charge of trapping insects for surveys, it is understandable that he was the first scientist to find evidence of the redbay ambrosia beetle (Xyleborus glabratus) in Pinellas County, discovered in May in two swamp bay trees in John Chestnut, Sr. Park in Palm Harbor. This insect carries the laurel wilt fungus (Raffaelea lauricola), affecting trees of the laurel family, including the redbay, the avocado, and others. Gaskill said that this beetle is attracted to the particular chemical smell of the laurel family.

Cause of Disease: This tiny Asian wood-borer, pictured here, was first discovered in the United States in Georgia in 2002, but is now found in thirteen states. The fungus responsible for laurel wilt disease is carried in spores (called conidia) in the beetle’s mouthparts and deposited in the sapwood of a tree as food for the adult and its larvae. Moving through the tree’s system, the fungus blocks the flow of water and nutrients, causing the tree to wilt and then die. As the disease moves down from the crown, it discolors leaves to red or purple and sap to black or brown, killing the tree in just a matter of weeks. Meanwhile, new beetles emerge from the trunk to attack other trees.

Effects of Disease: Wildlife is dependent upon redbay trees for seeds, fruit and foliage. Commercial avocado growers in South Florida are concerned about any further spread of laurel wilt that could kill their trees. Of course, home owners are losing beautiful trees in their landscapes. Thus, it is imperative to limit the disease by chopping down and carefully disposing of affected trees.

Other Destructive Invaders: According to Gaskill, these are among the reasons we have to battle not only the redbay ambrosia beetle, but also the emerald ash borer, the Asian long-hair beetle, the giant palm weevil, the brown marmorated stink bug, the bean plataspid, the duponchelia moth, and, not as much fun as its name, the Tuta absoluta tomato leaf miner, pictured on left.

Sadly, it was clear from Doug Gaskill’s talk that in time the list can only grow longer. For more information about each of these insects, go to “USDA-APHIS PPQ,” and under “Related Topics,” choose “Plant Pest Control Information.” By sharing the knowledge gained from this speaker and from this USDA site, Master Gardeners can warn fellow Floridians about unknown threats to our environment.
FBG Foundation Update

By CHUCK SCAFFIDI, FBG Foundation President

What’s new? There is always exciting new news about the Florida Botanical Gardens. From my daily observations from wandering through the gardens I have been enjoying the comments from visitors and surprised that even in the oppressive afternoon heat people are seeing our new plant additions. My thanks to all the volunteers that are making this happen, even though the mornings are just as oppressive. We escaped Irene’s fury, and we all hope that was the first and last hurricane of this season.

In addition, we are always thinking about new projects. Now in the planning stage is adding a vinery garden where a butterfly garden was located at the exit from the Palm Garden. Since there is a retention pond in that area our thinking is that maybe a new children’s water conservation station should be part of it. Your help in giving us ideas or help in implementing it are more than welcome.

The Wedding Garden mosaic project is finished!! All the glass tiles are in place and all that remains is cleaning up the area. Our Foundation treasurer Erhan Ozey, using his engineering talents, has been supervising this effort with our Contractor, and doing a lot of the work himself. Both of us are retired engineers and appreciate the challenges that we faced in completing this beautiful enhancement to the wedding garden. Bringing more attention and visitors to the Gardens was always a goal of this ambitious undertaking. Many thanks to all the folks who made the dream of the mosaic a reality. I was surprised when ABC action news asked to do an interview Monday (Aug 29) as we were completing the last bit of tile installation. You can view it at: http://www.abcactionnews.com/dpp/news/region_pinellas/mosaic-covers-unsued-fountains-and-creates-a-new-focal-point-in-florida-botanical-gardens

Speaking of our annual holiday extravaganza, plans already are well underway for an even more spectacular light show than last year’s. Plan to stop by between Nov. 26 and Jan. 1. We are repeating the Gift and Plant sale Dec. 11, many vendors have already reserved a place, and the popular Dog Parade Dec 31. Of course, more help is always needed, so check with me to learn how to get involved.

Another exciting and ambitious project is Diggin’ the Arts, which the FBGF will be presenting next May in partnership with some of the area’s big name arts organizations. Again, we would love to put you to work. Ideas, energy, enthusiasm and creativity are always needed.

Extension has also invited us to play a part in creating a model community garden at the site on the FBG complex where the Pinellas County Green Home was originally to be built. We’ll need Foundation members to join the planning and implementation group. Please let me know if you are interested in this project.

I recently attended a seminar to learn about LinkedIn a new and becoming more popular social media site for professionals. I'm a member and was curious if there were marketing advantages for the Foundation to be a member. I learned a lot but I will need to do more research to construct a site. Please let me know if you want to help me.

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 727-2-2117.

Sometimes we forget we have a back door. Take a walk and see the artificial pond and colorful landscape right outside the door.
We're Tweeting Up a Storm

To see what our followers are saying, all you have to do is go to our website or , 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 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.)

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 below and click on the green sign up button at the top of the page. 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 to Wayne Ozug for posting these beautiful garden photos. Keep an eye out for yours in future issues.

View the rocking chair at right on Facebook, or better yet visit the FBG Foundation gift shop to get a close-up view. Yes, this one-of-kind rocking chair can be purchased so take a look at it up close.

The rocking chair has a story: “Thanks to MG Marie Singer's suggestion for a "chairs for charity" style fundraiser for the Foundation, there is a hand-painted antique rocking chair for sale in the gift shop. Gift shop Manager Stacey Zidi donated her grandmother's chair and St. Pete artist and FBGF volunteer Mary Klein painted it a bright green and covered it with colorful flowers. Perfect for rocking grandchildren.”
Thanks to Local Nurseries, FBGF Members, 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nursery Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art Stone Orchids</td>
<td>3611 Tyrone Blvd, St. Petersburg</td>
<td>727-345-6733</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country Club Nursery</td>
<td>9850 Starkey Road, Largo,</td>
<td>727-397-4438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DragonFly Garden</td>
<td>730 Broadway, Dunedin</td>
<td>727-734-4900</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earthscapes Garden Room</td>
<td>816 Alt. 19 N, Palm Harbor</td>
<td>727-786-4859</td>
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<tr>
<td>Esperanza’s Garden Center</td>
<td>6001 Haines Road, St. Petersburg</td>
<td>727-742-8499</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jene’s Tropicals</td>
<td>6831 Central Ave., St. Petersburg</td>
<td>727-344-1668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy’s Korner Nursery &amp; Tree Farm</td>
<td>6095 Haines Road North, St. Petersburg</td>
<td>727-525-9640</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earthscapes Garden Room</td>
<td>816 Alt. 19 N, Palm Harbor</td>
<td>727-786-4859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Harbor Nursery &amp; Landscaping</td>
<td>450 Riviere Road, Palm Harbor</td>
<td>727-784-2992</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminole Nurseries</td>
<td>6230 102nd Ave. N, Pinellas Park</td>
<td>727 545-9619</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summerwood Gardens, Inc.</td>
<td>1171 Tarpon Springs Rd, Odessa</td>
<td>813-920-2153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twigs and Leaves</td>
<td>2131 Central Ave., St. Petersburg</td>
<td>727-822-5400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow Tree Nursery</td>
<td>4401 49th St. N, St. Petersburg</td>
<td>727-522-2594</td>
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Click on [facebook] to get map directions and hours of operation.
Volunteer Opportunities and Announcements

The Boys and Girls Club of Tarpon Springs has won a grant from the Green Education Foundation to build a garden. We have been invited to participate in the one-day build. The build is scheduled to happen on Sept. 17 from 8 a.m. until noon. Breakfast and lunch will be provided for volunteers. They’d like four MGs. Two people have signed up so there is room for 2 more!

Bob Albanese is still looking for donations of full size pink and white pentas cuttings for the landscape. He wants the old un-improved varieties which are better butterfly and hummingbird attractors and more resistant to root born soil diseases. If you have these and would like to share, please contact him at ralbanese@pinellascounty.org.

Attention Help Desk MGs: extra volunteers are needed for the Help Desk on Monday, Oct. 24 and Tuesday, Oct. 25 so that staff can attend important training sessions. Two MGs on the phones and two MGs at the desk would be great. Please consider helping out. With the reduced budget it’s difficult to accommodate for staff training, which is so important. Your time would help our horticulture staff stay abreast of the latest information. Thank you to those of you who signed up already- we need just a few more!

The Humane Society of Pinellas County is looking for some Master Gardener help with a landscape design for their facility that is sustainable and beautiful. They are interested in providing space in the design for educational elements that interpret the Florida-Friendly principles used in the landscape, so this is a great opportunity to educate the public while helping a great organization.

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.

Volunteer Hours for Master Gardeners Only: We are now able to collect all of your hours in the MG VMS online. Now you can track all of your Pinellas County volunteer time in one place! For any non-Master Gardener work, simply choose the following project category: X_NON-MG Pinellas County Volunteer Hours. Some examples of volunteer time that can go in this new category include working at the FBG gift shop or on the Wedding Garden mosaic project.

This means that Master Gardeners can report all of their time in the new system and will no longer be logging into the County VSP. The system is web-based, secure and user-friendly. You can even jump on from your web-enabled cell-phone if you like. Go to https://florida.volunteersystem.org and click on the New USER tab. For those who are unable to input hours, we will still provide a log book.

Volunteers, other than MGs, will continue to use the County VSP system and log book next to the help desk. Please adhere to the policy described at left.
Heritage Village Collecting Items for Fall Flea Market/Book Sale

The Pinellas County Historical Society is collecting items for the upcoming Heritage Village Flea Market/Book Sale. The sale, held during the annual Country Jubilee on Saturday, October 22, is a major fundraiser for Heritage Village. Clothing, shoes, TVs or computer donations cannot be accepted, but almost all other items are welcome. Items to be sold include books, tools, dishes, silverware, sports equipment, craft items, toys, games, linens, jewelry, accessories, antiques, collectables, furniture, decorative items, seasonal decorations, house wares and much more!

Donations may be brought to the Heritage Village office any time that the Village is open to the public (Wednesday through Saturday between 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and Sundays from 1-4 p.m.) between now and the sale. Arrangements may be made ahead of time for special or large drop-offs of items by calling the Historical Society at 727-582-2233 and leaving a phone number so that an appointment can be arranged. Thanks to all for your support of Heritage Village!! Visit: [http://www.pinellascounty.org/heritage/](http://www.pinellascounty.org/heritage/)

Heritage Village volunteer Daniel Peacock (son of Cindy Peacock) is looking for Master Gardener help with a project in the Garden for the Blind at Heritage Village. It sounds like a great way to explore a plant palette that would enhance the other sensory experiences—not just vision. He needs your creative expertise! If you would like to be a part of this fun and exciting project I will get you in touch with Daniel.

Exciting Changes—coming to our demonstration gardens, including rejuvenating the gardens on the north side of the Extension building. Once the areas are designed, we will be looking for help. If you are interested, contact Theresa Badurek or Terry Berube

Lake Seminole Presbyterian Church is holding a Farmers Market on Oct. 22nd from 9am-2pm. They have offered us a space to have a booth to represent Extension. We need some Master Gardener help to staff this booth. It sounds like a fun event with food and fun shopping and even classic cars!

Do you like working with youth? Solid Rock Community School in the East Lake area is looking for your help! They are looking for a short presentation (about 20-30 min.) on either wildflower or butterfly gardening. The date is flexible, but the science group meets on Fridays between 12:30-3pm over the next 6 weeks. The audience is 9th and 10th graders who are interested in the environment. The science teacher would also like some expert help on building a wildflower or butterfly garden if you are inclined to get even more involved.

The PAL (Police Athletic League) organization is planning a community garden in the Lealman area. The project is in the preliminary stages,

Are you creative and artistic? We need an artist to paint a rain barrel that will be used for demonstrations. Contact: Dale Armstrong, Coordinator Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program Phone (727) 582-2108 darmstrong@pinellascounty.org

Updated!! The Top of the Bay Garden Club is looking for speakers. Here is a list of the preferred dates and topics they are interested in: (these can be switched around if you like a topic but need one of the other dates) a. African Violets, Jan. 2012, b. Groundcovers, Feb. 2012, c. Hibiscus, Mar. 2012 They meet on the 3rd Monday of the month at 7pm. Speakers begin at 7 and have about 20 minutes. There is time for a few questions and then refreshments are served.
Thank you so much for all that you do!

By THERESA BADUREK, Urban Horticulture Extension Agent

Education

- **Garden Yard Tour** - See you in the fall.

- **MG Update** – On Sept. 8 9:00 am subject to be determined.

- **The International Master Gardener Conference**—will be in West Virginia in October. For details, go to [http://image.ext.wvu.edu/](http://image.ext.wvu.edu/)

- **For more upcoming Extension classes please visit our new registration**: [http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/calendar.shtml](http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/calendar.shtml)

Earn Continuing Education Credits—MGs can earn up to four continuing education credits by completing Plant ID Modules at [http://gardensolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/mastergardener/outreach/plant_id/index.shtml](http://gardensolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/mastergardener/outreach/plant_id/index.shtml). 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. (This is a change of venue.) 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.

- **Planting Pinellas blog** Check it out at [http://plantingpinellas.blogspot.com/](http://plantingpinellas.blogspot.com/)
  Contact Theresa Badurek at 727 582-2109 or [tbadurek@pinellascounty.org](mailto:tbadurek@pinellascounty.org) to follow up on any of the items.

By THERESA BADUREK, Urban Horticulture Extension Agent

This month’s “Plantcetera” feature is dedicated to all of you! As you may have seen in a recent MG Digest email, Pinellas County Master Gardeners are volunteer superstars! You have volunteered 25% of all of the Master Gardener hours for the entire South-Central District in Florida in the last quarter. That’s a big deal and I thank you all! Your entire community benefits from all of your hard work. Your time includes 4,104 hours of volunteer time and 292 hours of continuing education- in only three months time! Please keep up the amazing work!

Your efforts are being noted (and lauded) by many, thanks in part, to the new MG VMS system. This is a great tool for the University of Florida and the County to easily see what a valuable resource Master Gardeners are. Please keep logging those hours and contacts in the system. If there is anyone out there who would like a refresher on how it works or has any questions at all, please let me know.

Thank you so much for all that you do!
Contact me at 727-582-2109 or [tbadurek@pinellascounty.org](mailto:tbadurek@pinellascounty.org)
MG update Sept. 8. Subject to be determined.

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?