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Spring/Summer Gardening Tips

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newsletter

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Temperatures this winter were colder than average. The National Weather Service officially certified this as the fourth coldest winter on record.

We have been through a period of warmer than normal winters and this is making the temperatures seem worse. In January there were 12 days with minimum temperatures below freezing and reports of a low temperature of 17 degrees in some areas. More importantly, the 12 days of freezing temperatures almost came on consecutive days. There were freezing temperatures 12 of 13 days from January 2nd through January 14th.

Rainfall has generally been adequate to make supplemental irrigation unnecessary this winter, but has turned dry since late February and drought stress is common in northeast Florida. Some areas of northeast Florida are under serious drought pressure.

Here are some gardening suggestions for summer:

1. The St. Johns River Water Management District irrigation rules state that you can only water once a week this time of year. Be sure your timer is set properly and turn the irrigation system off during periods of wet weather.
2. Chinch bugs are out damaging St. Augustine lawns. Watch for brown areas that continue to spread.
3. Palms that were damaged during the winter should have all brown fronds removed. If the frond is not completely brown, leave it until it is completely brown. Fronds with some green are still making food and helping the plant recover. When they are all brown the food making has stopped and they are no longer useful. Watch damaged palms for attack by palm bud weevils this summer. They tend to attack weakened palms.
4. Watch annuals, pyracantha and junipers for spider mite damage. These small pests are almost invisible and feed on plants by sucking juice out of the leaves. They generally live on the underside of leaves and when the population gets large, you can often see a webbing material going from leaf to leaf. These pests reproduce quickly and can go from egg to egg-laying adult in just 7 days. If plants are being damaged, spray with malathion or insecticidal soap 2 times 7 days apart. Follow the directions on the label when mixing the insecticide.
5. In August begin watching for sod webworm and armyworm damage. These are lawn caterpillars that feed on the leaves of grasses. They prefer tender grasses and are usually a problem on bermuda and St. Augustine lawns first. They will attack all types of lawns if the population is high enough. The grass will look as if it has been mowed very low. The damaged areas should be treated with an approved insecticide. It may not be necessary to treat your whole lawn for the worms. Spot treating reduces the amount of insecticide we are applying to the environment.
6. Late spring is when mole crickets mate and lay their eggs. This is a serious lawn pest which can kill a lawn by loosening the soil and damaging the root system. Pest control professionals can apply fipronil and give season long control of this pest.
7. Flowers you can plant each month:
June: Celosia, coleus, crossandra, exacum, hollyhock, impatiens, kalanchoe, nicotiana, ornamental pepper, portulaca (rose moss), salvia, torenia, vinca (periwinkle), and zinnia.
July: Celosia, coleus, crossandra, exacum, impatiens, kalanchoe, nicotiana, ornamental pepper, portulaca (rose moss), salvia, and vinca (periwinkle).
August: Coleus, and salvia.

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