Reducing our Dependence on Oil

The recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has the makings of an enormous environmental disaster. Oil is still leaking out of a broken underwater pipe more than a month after the initial explosion that caused the spill. The damage to the environment will be considerable, and the fragile coastal wetland areas and the fishing industry (shellfish, shrimp, and fish) of Louisiana are already feeling the impact of the spill. Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and possibly the coastal eastern states of the United States may feel the effects of the spill later. The thousands of miles of shoreline, and the abundance of wildlife in the region, as well as the impact to the fishing industry can make this an environmental and economic disaster that is well beyond the scope of other spills.

While we cannot change what happened, we can evaluate our dependence on oil and try to reduce it. In our area, Sarasota County, many residents live in community associations. When the landscapes in those communities were designed, little or no consideration was given to the resources needed for maintenance. Vast lawn areas require regular mowing, and plants that grow taller than desired, require regular pruning. Mowing and pruning is mostly performed by machinery that runs on gasoline. Most people are aware of the gasoline needed for driving their cars, but often forget that the maintenance of their landscapes also requires this resource, in addition to other precious resources such as water.

By incorporating Florida-Friendly Landscaping principles in our landscapes we can reduce gasoline use, conserve energy, reduce our carbon footprint, and reduce the oil needed to produce energy. For instance, the Right Plant, Right Place principle suggests selecting plants according to their mature size. This means that for planting under a window, plants should be selected that only grow to about three feet high, to avoid constant pruning to maintain a certain height. It is also important to consider mature plant width. If a bed is only three feet wide, only plants that grow to that width should be used. Consider replacing narrow strips of turf, which cannot be irrigated or mowed adequately, with mulch or groundcover and modifying large turf areas by expanding shrub beds in order to reduce mowing needs. Planting deciduous trees to shade the southwest corner of the home in summer, will greatly reduce energy use.

The Water Efficiently principle recommends conserving water by adjusting the irrigation system seasonally (there is less need for irrigation during the rainy season and the winter months); using rain gauges and rain shut-off devices; grouping plants with similar needs together; irrigating plant beds separately from turf areas; incorporating low-flow micro-irrigation devices in the existing planting beds; and capping irrigation heads in areas with mature xeric plants. Conserving water in the landscape will not only conserve a precious resource and reduce stormwater runoff, but will also reduce the energy needed to run pumps, etc., reducing the oil needed to produce the energy.

Visit http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu, for more information about Florida-Friendly Landscaping.

To get the latest updates on the Deep Water Horizon oil spill and for volunteer opportunities visit the website of the Gulf of Mexico Sea Grant Programs at: http://gulfseagrant.tamu.edu/oilspill/index.htm


**Lonicera sempervirens**

**Coral Honeysuckle**

The native Coral Honeysuckle is a vigorous twining vine. Fortunately, unlike the Japanese Honeysuckles, it does not spread out of control. It has delicate striking two-inch long, trumpet-shaped crimson flowers that appear from early spring until late summer and sometimes even almost year-round if temperatures stay mild. The flowers are particularly attractive to hummingbirds but are not fragrant. The flowers also attract butterflies and the small round fruit are a food source for birds. The dark green, smooth leaves form a nice background for the flowers. Coral Honeysuckle is often used to cover fences, lampposts, and mailboxes. It can also be trained onto an arbor or trellis and provides good, thick coverage when grown in full sun. It can also be grown in filtered light. Like Carolina Jasmine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), it is sometimes used as a groundcover. Coral Honeysuckle may die back during a hard freeze but recovers quickly.

Coral Honeysuckle tolerates most soil conditions and, once established, only requires additional irrigation during periods of extreme drought. Pests and diseases are not a major concern. The plants should be spaced 36 to 60 inches apart. As with many vines, some training may be necessary to direct growth. Often, the vines accumulate foliage on top of a fence or other structure but yearly heading back can encourage growth close to the ground. Coral Honeysuckle is generally easily available from local general and native plant nurseries.

For more information about this or other plants, also see http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody or www.floridayards.org.

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**Pruning Landscape Trees**

While pruning at the time of planting appears to have little if any positive impact on tree survival and growth, many trees that mature at heights greater than 40 feet will need regular pruning in the first 25 years after planting in order to establish or maintain good structure. Pruning care in the first 25 years after planting is of great importance. If you cannot arrange for such care, consider planting fewer trees and using the savings on tree care. When a tree possesses good structure at the time of planting, pruning should not be required for several years after planting. Trees with minor structural problems, such as a double leader in the top-half, can be pruned at planting to correct the problem.

Topping or rounding over is the practice of shearing off the top of a tree, thus removing branches and stems without regard to tree structure. Topping creates a hazardous tree because the cut stub is open and susceptible to decay organisms. The sprouts, which grow in response to topping, are not well secured to the topped branch and can easily split from the tree as they grow larger. Pruning trees to retain natural shape, however, encourages the long-term health of the tree. Small cuttings from pruning trees and shrubs can be used as mulch in planting beds and around shrubs.

Select a certified arborist to evaluate your trees annually and to perform the necessary work. See www.floridaisa.org for information on how to select an arborist, or contact the Cooperative Extension Service to request publications on proper pruning techniques.
CALENDAR
To register by phone, more classes and class descriptions, please visit our website at http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu; click on Education Calendar on top of the page.

July 2: 2:00pm - Fri  Gulf Gate Library
Snake – Annemarie Post

July 7: 10:00am – Wed  Twin Lakes Park
Butterfly Gardening – Angela Antonucci

July 7: 1:00pm – Wed  Twin Lakes Park
Partnering with Pollinators – Fred Santana

July 10, 10:30am – Sat  Longwood Park
Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Creating Your Florida Yard – MG Yard Advisors

July 13: 1:00pm – Tues  Twin Lakes Park
Good Bugs in the Garden – Fred Santana

July 15: 2:00pm – Thurs  Shamrock Park
Rodent and Mole Management – Fred Santana

July 21: 1:00pm – Wed  Twin Lakes Park
Living Green: Water Use at Home – Betty Alpaugh

July 22: 1:00pm – Thurs  Twin Lakes Park
Is that Spider Dangerous? – Fred Santana

July 27: 1:00pm – Tues  Twin Lakes Park
Ladybugs in Your Neighborhood – Fred Santana

July 28: 10:00am – Wed  Twin Lakes Park
Grow Your Own Bouquets – MG

July 28: 1:00pm – Wed  Twin Lakes Park
Energy Incentives for Homeowners – Betty Alpaugh

August 4: 10:00am – Wed  Twin Lakes Park
Composting Made Easy – MG

August 4: 1:00pm – Wed  Twin Lakes Park
Household Pests – Fred Santana

August 6: 2:00pm – Fri  Gulf Gate Library
Butterfly Gardening – Angela Antonucci

August 10: 10:00am - Tues  Twin Lakes Park
Butterfly Predators – Fred Santana

August 11: 10:00am - Wed  Twin Lakes Park
Butterfly Gardening is Fun – MG

August 11: 1:00pm – Wed  Twin Lakes Park
Universal Design: Aging in Place – Betty Alpaugh

August 12: 2:00pm - Thurs  Shamrock Park
Is that Spider Dangerous? – Fred Santana

August 14, 10:30am – Sat  Longwood Park
Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles – MG Yard Advisors

August 18: 10:00am – Twin Lakes Park
Termites in the Home – Fred Santana

August 25: 10:00am – Twin Lakes Park
Energy Incentives for Homeowners – Betty Alpaugh

August 25: 1:00pm – Twin Lakes Park
Invasive Insects – Fred Santana

August 25: 4:00pm – Twin Lakes Park
Irrigation 101 – Angela Antonucci

September 1: 10:00am - Wed  Twin Lakes Park
Seasonal Landscape Problems – MG

September 1: 1:00pm – Twin Lakes Park
Green Pest Management – Fred Santana

September 3: 2:00pm – Fri  Gulf Gate Library
Trees in the Landscape – Annemarie Post

September 7: 10:00am – Twin Lakes Park
Rodent and Mole Management – Fred Santana

Grant Information
The 2011 Community Education Grant program from the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) offers grants up to $5,000 each. The categories are: flood protection, natural systems, water conservation, water quality and watersheds. The deadline for submission is Friday, August 20, 2010, 5:00pm. Application information is now available at www.WaterMatters.org/communitygrants Applications for the next Sarasota County Neighborhood Grant cycle are due in August of 2010. The Grant will only fund landscaping projects that conform to Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles. For more information about this program, visit www.sccgov.net For more information about Florida-Friendly landscaping, contact Annemarie Post (see contact info below).

The Bay Partners Grants, available from the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, promote environmental education, awareness, community involvement and stewardship, see www.sarasotabay.org.

Editor; Annemarie Post  Extension Agent Environmental Horticulture
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UF/IFAS Sarasota County Extension
Florida Friendly Landscaping™ Program for Community Associations
6700 Clark Rd.
Sarasota, FL 34241

Current Resident or

Rain Barrel Workshops

UF/IFAS Sarasota County Extension
Twin Lakes Park
6700 Clark Rd

Saturday, July 17, at 10 AM
Saturday, August 21, at 10 AM
Saturday, September 18, at 10 AM

After the workshop Sarasota County will sell rain barrels @ $37, including tax. Payment may be made by check or cash (exact change only).

Register online, see: http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/EdSched.pdf

Call 232-2267 for more information

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