April Gardening Guide 2012
By Patricia Porchey

Q: The news keeps talking about us being in a drought and yet we are only permitted to water once a week. Shouldn’t we water more often when there is no rain?

A: Quite the contrary, we need to conserve water even more during a drought. In a normal year, we would have received approximately 9.5 inches of rain by the end of March; however, we’ve had less than three inches this year.

Here are guidelines to the water restrictions in unincorporated potions of Sarasota County. Even numbered addresses can water on Tuesdays and odd numbered addresses can water on Thursdays; however you are only allowed to water once per day either before 10:00 a.m. or after 4:00 p.m. Before 10:00 a.m. is the preferred time as watering in the evening allows moisture to remain on leaves and encourage disease. For more information:

These restrictions apply to all automatic in-ground irrigation systems and sprinklers connected to a hose except those using reclaimed water. Any non-lawn area may be watered as needed at any time with a hand-watering device that has a shut-off nozzle or with micro-irrigation.

New lawn and other landscape installations may be watered on any day of the week during the first 30 days of the establishment period and up to three times per week during the second 30 days of the establishment period. However, the hourly restriction must still be abided. The goal here is to initially water new plants daily and then wean them off gradually to the once per week schedule.

Research has shown that frequent shallow watering makes the plant roots remain in the upper inches of soil. However, if you do a deep watering, ½-3/4 inch, once per week, the roots go deeper looking for more moisture. Subsequently, this allows that plant to become more drought tolerant.

Only watering your plants when they show signs of wilt will also increase their drought tolerance. Grass blades will fold, leaves will go limp, leaf color will be dull and footprints will be left in the lawn – the plants are telling you they are thirsty. Letting grass grow higher during a drought also encourages deeper root growth. For more information:
http://collier.ifas.ufl.edu/CommHort/CommHortPubs/TurfDrought.pdf

Arbor Day is April 22. Plant a tree!

PLANTING GUIDE
Vegetables & Herbs: Anise, basil, beans, borage, cantaloupe, chervil, comfrey, corn, cucumber, cumin, horehound, lemon balm, marjoram, mint, okra, oregano, peas, summer savory, sweet potatoes, tarragon and thyme.
Annuals: Amaranthus, aster, Celosia, Cleome, Coleus, Cosmos, dusty miller, Gazania, geranium, Impatiens, Lobelia, morning glory, Nicotiana, ornamental pepper, Pentas, periwinkle, Phlox, Portulaca, Salvia, Torenia, Verbena and Zinnia.

Perennials: African iris, Amazon lily, Aztec lily, blue daze, blood lily, Caladium, Canna, Coreopsis, Crossandra, Dianthus, Gaillardia, Gaura, Gerbera daisy, Gloriosa lily, milkweed, Mexican heather, Philippine violet, rain lily, Salvia, Scabiosa, shell ginger, shrimp plants, Tithonia and Verbena.

Fruits in Season: Banana, blueberry, carambola, citrus, (calamondin, grapefruit, Key lime, lemon, lime, and orange), kumquat, loquat, Mysore raspberry, Surinam cherry, and strawberry.

Blooming Plants: Amaryllis, avocado, azalea, bottlebrush, Bougainvillea, confederate jasmine, dwarf Indian hawthorn, Jacaranda, Jatropha, Cordia, Lantana, Macadamia, Magnolia, Nasturtium, orchid tree, rose, society garlic, Simpson’s stopper, trumpet trees, and Turk’s cap.

Upcoming educational classes:
Call 861-5000 or register on-line http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu/ for the following classes.
- Creating Your Florida Yard, North Port Library, 6:30 p.m. April 3
- Rain Barrel Workshop, Phillippi Estates Park, Noon April 4
- Native Plants, Gulf Gate Library, 1:30 p.m. April 6
- Trees and Shrubs, North Port Library, 6:30 p.m. April 10
- Butterfly Gardening, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. April 11
- Companion Planting for Successful Organic Gardening, Phillippi Estates Park, Noon April 11
- Butterfly Gardening, Jacaranda Library, 10:30 a.m. April 12
- Propagation 101, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. April 18
- Worm Composting, Phillippi Estates Park, Noon April 18
- Non-native Invasive Plants, Shamrock Park, 2:00 p.m. April 19
- Rain Barrel Workshop, Englewood Sports Complex, 10:00 a.m. April 21
- Cover Crops for Successful Organic Gardening, Phillippi Estates Park, Noon April 25
- Butterfly Gardening, Garden of the 5 Senses-North Port, Noon April 26
- How to Grow & Maintain a Healthy Lawn, Phillippi Estates Park, Noon May 2

GETTING HELP
The Master Gardener Help Desk is available to answer your questions, 861-9807, mghelpdesk@scgov.net. Walk-ins are welcome Monday-Friday from 9-Noon and 1-4 p.m., Twin Lakes Park, Clark Road east of I-75.
Satellite Help Desks: weekly at four South County libraries, every 1st and 3rd Monday at Gulf Gate Library, every 4th Saturday at Fruitville Library, every Wednesday at Phillippi Farmhouse Market, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. and every third Saturday at the Downtown Farmers’ Market, Sarasota.

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