May Gardening Guide 2012
By Patricia Porchey

Q: I’ve been told that I can’t fertilize in the summer. Is this true?

A: Unincorporated Sarasota County has a “blackout period” from June 1 through September 30. During these months residents are not allowed to apply any Nitrogen or Phosphorus to lawn or landscape plants. Other restrictions in the fertilizer ordinance reflect the amount of fertilizer that is allowed the rest of the year, as well as its contents.

For example, the county ordinance allows a maximum of four pounds of Nitrogen be applied per 1,000 square feet of lawn and landscape plants per year. The ordinance further states that the Nitrogen product must contain at least 50 percent slow-release Nitrogen. In addition, the State of Florida requires that individual applications not exceed more than one pound of Nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. If your lawn needs some greening up during the summer months, you can apply chelated iron.

Phosphorus use during the other eight months of the year is restricted to 0.5 pounds per 1000 square feet of lawn and landscape plants per year and 0.25 pounds per application.

There’s other important information in the landscape ordinance you should also be aware of. For instance, deflector shields are required on all broadcast spreaders to prevent fertilizer from being applied within ten feet of any water body or wetland or next to an impervious surface, such as a driveway or walk. Additionally, grass clippings and other landscape debris cannot be left in roadways or stormwater drains (we recommend that clippings remain on the lawn to provide fertilizer and reduce debris at landfill). The codes also require that all commercial applicators of fertilizer receive training and certification in Best Management Practices (Sarasota County Extension offers classes throughout the year). To see the complete Sarasota County fertilizer ordinance, go to http://www.scgov.net/

If you are interested in more information on lawn care, check out the “My Beautiful Lawn” lunchtime class series Wednesdays at Phillippi Estates Park, the May 9 class will focus on fertilizing.

You’ll also want to visit www.BeFloridian.org, a new website with lots of news and information just for Floridians about fertilizer use and other ways to protect our bays.

Special Notices:
- Applications are now being accepted for the 2012 Master Gardener Training Program which starts in September.
- The Spring Garden Tour of Florida-Friendly Landscapes is May 6, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Visit our website, http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu/, for more information.

PLANTING GUIDE
Vegetables & Herbs: Anise, beans, black-eyed peas, borage, catnip, chervil, cilantro/coriander, comfrey, corn, cumin, dashen, eggplant, marjoram, mint, okra, oregano, peas, summer savory, sweet potatoes, tarragon and watermelon.
Annuals: Ageratum, Begonia, Celosia, Cleome, Coleus, Cosmos, Crossandra, dusty miller, marigold, morning glory, Nicotiana, periwinkle, Portaluca, Salvia, sunflower, Torenia, Verbena and Zinnia.
Perennials: Blue daze, Caladium, Coreopsis, Dahlberg daisy, daylily, Gaillardia, Gaura, Gerbera daisy, Kalanche, Mexican heather, Pentas, Salvias, shell ginger, shrimp plants, Tithonia and Verbena.
Fruits in Season: Banana, blackberry, blueberry, carambola, citrus, (calamondin, grapefruit, key lime, lemon, and lime,), guava, kumquat, loquat, macadamia, papaya, pineapple, Surinam cherry, and tamarind.
Blooming Plants: Amaryllis, birds of paradise, crape jasmine, daylily, Gardenia, Jacaranda, Jerusalem thorn, Magnolia, Mexican flame vine, natal plum, oleander, pipevine, Plumeria, silk oak, Simpson’s stopper, star jasmine, Texas sage, and Yucca.

Upcoming educational classes:
Call 861-5000 or register on-line at http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu/ for the following classes:
- My Beautiful Lawn: Lawn Fertilization, Phillippi Estates Park, Noon May 9
- Basic Composting 101, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. May 16
- My Beautiful Lawn: Weed Management in Home Lawns, Phillippi Estates Park, Noon May 16
- Edible & Medicinal Native Plants, Shamrock Park, 2:00 p.m. May 17
- Rain Barrel Workshop, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. May 19
- Set for Storm Season: Protecting Your Home with Hurricane Shutters, Twin Lakes Park, 9:00 a.m. May 23
- Set for Storm Season: Preparing Your Home and Family, Twin Lakes Park, 10:30 a.m. May 23
- My Beautiful Lawn: Insects & Diseases, Phillippi Estates Park, Noon May 23
- Brown Bag Garden Series: Growing Herbs in Florida, Garden of the Five Senses, North Port, Noon May 24
- Florida Master Naturalist Program: Upland Habitats Module, Twin Lakes Park, 9:00 a.m. May 26, 27, June 2, 3, 9, 10, 16, 23 (Registration required, $225 fee)
- Set for Storm Season: Protecting Your Home with Hurricane Shutters, Twin Lakes Park, 9:00 a.m. May 30
- Set for Storm Season: Reducing Damage from Trees, Twin Lakes Park, 10:30 a.m. May 30
- Pesticide Safety for Homeowners, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. May 30

GETTING HELP
The Master Gardener Help Desk at Twin Lakes Park is available to answer your questions. Call 861-9807 or email at mghelpdesk@scgov.net. Walk-ins are welcome Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., closed from noon to 1 p.m.
Satellite Help Desks are available at these locations throughout Sarasota County: weekly at four South County libraries, every first and third Monday at Gulf Gate Library, every fourth Saturday at Fruitville Library, every Wednesday at Phillippi Farmhouse Market, and every third Saturday at the Sarasota Farmers’ Market.

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