

Charlotte's Garden

Charlotte County Master Gardeners

April 2008

25550 Harbor View Road, Unit #3 * Port Charlotte, Florida 33980 * (941) 764-4340 * <http://charlotte.ifas.ufl.edu/>



Plant Life Line

Doodle and Lady

By Donna Worthley

A Good Bug Duo For Your Garden!

Doodlebugs, a term coined by children in the southern United States, are truly Ant lions. These insects are common in Florida since Florida has the richest ant lion fauna in the eastern United States with 22 species of ant lions. Four species are found only in the Florida Keys.

Although most people associate them with the funnel-shaped pitfall traps, most of the genera have other habits often reflected by their movements which can be very fast across the surface of the sand (*Brachynemurus*); slow, creeping movements (*Dendroleon*); or fast backward movements under the sand (*Vella*).



They dig cone shaped pits in sandy soil and trap ants as food.

They are beneficial insects that should be left alone because they are a "free landscape pesticide"—they eat many insect pests.

Eggs hatch into hungry ant lions. They dig a shallow upside-down cone-shaped pit up to an inch deep. As they move across the sand, they leave spiral-shaped trails. This curious motion gives these critters the nickname "doodlebugs."



As the circle grows ever wider and deeper, the doodlebug throws out the soil with its head. A

pit can be built in 15 minutes. Finally it buries itself so that only the head, with large menacing looking mandibles, is above ground at the bottom of the pit.

See DOODLE | P4

Spring makes everything young again except man.

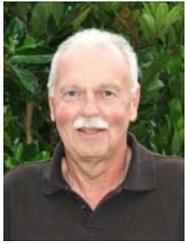
- Richter

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President Message

by Al Webb

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February 29th (the extra day we got because of Leap Year!) will always be a memorable day for me. A packed bus loaded with Master Gardeners and some guests made its way to the Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens in Delray Beach. The Gardens were more breath-taking than I anticipated. What a beautiful tranquil place to spend part of the day. We topped the afternoon off by visiting the Orchid Society's Museum adjacent to Morikami Gardens. All of us who had cameras had a field day!!



it operates. Additionally, Steve Lawrence made an interesting and informative presentation regarding "Charlotte County Utilities Phase II Water Restrictions, revised February 1, 2008." We all received a copy of Charlotte County Utilities Phase II Water Restrictions. If you did not get a copy, you might want to stop in and pick one up. Unauthorized watering will hit you in the pocketbook. First offense—written warning; Second offense--\$250 fine; Third or subsequent offense--\$500 fine. You may want to tell your neighbors of these changes. We concluded the meeting by passing around a pad of paper asking for your suggestions for topics for our upcoming meetings and ideas for field trips. Monica Zander single-handedly supplied refreshments for the group. **THANK YOU, MONICA!!**

For our April meeting, Holly has arranged for some of the "future Master Gardeners" to make a 10-15 minutes presentation to our group. Please, let's try to fill the room and make the members of the new class feel welcome!! In addition, Bruce Merges will be reviewing suggestions we received during the March meeting regarding meeting topics and field trip ideas. Refreshments will be provided by Ellen Brown, Phil Brown and Kathy Fixmer.

Reminder: If you wish to continue your active status as a Master Gardener for 2008, you MUST complete the Master Gardener Recertification form and return it to the Extension Office. A new listing of Master Gardeners with addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses will be published when all recertification forms have been completed and received by the Extension Office.

Finally, Malleucca mulch is available once again. Our minimum order is 18 skids, with 70 bags per skid. The cost is \$119 per skid, which equates to \$1.70/bag. Your minimum order is one skid, but you may purchase more than one skid. Money will be collected before placing the order. The mulch will be delivered to the Extension Office service area, to be picked up by the buyer. Make checks payable to Friends for Extension and give them to David Smith, as he is coordinating this year's sale.

Quote of the month: "You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give." Winston Churchill

Our March M.G.A. meeting was also very interesting and informative. Thanks to Dale Watson we all have a better idea of what "Friends for Extension" is all about and how

Directors Message

by Ralph Mitchell



I want to start by thanking all of the Charlotte County Master Gardeners for contacting their Legislators and University of Florida Trustees on our behalf and letting them know the importance of the County Extension Service. This outreach has been helpful, and we all appreciate your time and consideration. For now, we continue to press on and meet the need for horticultural knowledge wherever we find it! The 2008 Master Gardener Training Program is going great with four (4) classes completed as of the date of this writing. The Training seems to move along very fast which must mean that everyone is enjoying the program and increasing their understanding of many horticultural topics.

Our area has had a little rain lately, but things continue to be droughty, and common sense watering in consideration of our County Water Restrictions must be upheld. Using FYN Water Conservation suggestions is always a good idea.

My own garden is emerging slowly but surely and is keeping me busy, especially with more daylight at the end of the day. I am just about ready to pull out my old broccoli and collards as they have served me well, but are just about done. In one newer part of my garden, I have planted peanuts (I don't like to eat peanuts, but like to grow them!). Other plantings include "Red Pontia" potatoes started with sections of seed potatoes; a grain type of sorghum called "Texico"; and some cowpeas of the variety "Mississippi Silver." I have also mixed in a row of "Jade Hybrid" and "Apricot Twist" sunflowers just for color and interest. In the "starting transplants department," I have started a new ivory white cherry tomato called "Italian Ice." a dark purple, snake-shaped eggplant called "Waimanalo," and, for the first time a hybrid chile pepper for roasting called "Big Chile Li Hybrid."

My Emerald blueberries are loaded and ripening fast. My Tropic Beauty peach is also well filled with peaches. My two strawberry guavas are presently loaded with flowers,

but have in the past not set very much fruit. I also recently dug up and divided into three pieces a fakahatchee grass clump which I grew from seed last year. It grew from a small seedling into a huge clump in about a year. I planted the divisions on the edge of small dry pond that should look nice when the rains return.

Work continues to increase as Holly, Allison, and I move forward into 2008. Again, thank you for your assistance, support, and hard work that are making our Horticultural Extension Program vital and a shining model!

Have a good April and pull some weeds for your health!

Fritz's Puzzle

W	C	O	L	D	R	R	H	T
O	I	C	E	A	I	O	U	O
N	G	N	I	R	P	S	R	R
S	U	N	T	O	H	E	R	N
L	L	A	F	E	D	R	I	A
S	U	M	M	E	R	I	C	D
S	R	E	W	O	L	F	A	O
L	I	G	H	T	N	I	N	G
W	N	T	H	U	N	D	E	R

- | | | |
|---------|-----------|---------|
| Air | Hurricane | Spring |
| Cold | Ice | Summer |
| Fall | Lightning | Sun |
| Fires | Rain | Thunder |
| Flowers | Rose | Tornado |
| Hot | Snow | Winter |

Find the secret word with the remaining Scrambled letter!

WINA

All Master Gardeners

**IF YOU HAVE AN ADDRESS, E-MAIL
OR PHONE NUMBER CHANGE
PLEASE CONTACT HOLLY SHACKELFORD**

Florida Yards & Neighbors

by Allison Steele



As some of you know, I am working on my M.S. in Environmental Science at Florida Gulf Coast University. I have finished course work and am now focused on my research and thesis. For the past two years, I have been part of a working group at FGCU designing a sustainable landscape for an affordable housing community near the school. Unfortunately, that project has recently fallen through. The upside of this otherwise annoying occurrence is that I now have the ability to create a project collecting scientific data from a sustainable Florida-Friendly landscape in *Charlotte County*. What a novel idea! I'll let FYN volunteers know more as it gets closer, but I am hoping it happens sooner rather than later, and I might need some help planting!

Next month, some county employees in the Murdock building are going to be creating a rain garden with their children on "Bring Your Kid To Work Day." They are in desperate need of plants and rooted cuttings, so if anyone has anything suitable for a rain garden to donate, please bring it to the office. We'd really like to have them within the first week in April. Thank You!

DOODLE from P1

They wait for an ant or other insect to slip on the loose sand and fall in. As they slide over the edge and into the pit, the large jaws of the waiting ant lion paralyze the ant with an injection of poison. The ant lion then sucks out the vital juices. The juice-less skeletal remains of the prey are thrown out of the pit. When prey manage to stop their slide into the crater, the ant lion throws sand at its next meal, causing the captive to lose its grip and continue the inevitable fall to its doom at the bottom.

Ant lions have forward-pointing hairs on their bodies that help anchor them in the soil. This allows them to capture struggling prey much larger than themselves. Winged adult ant lions that are laying eggs may even be captured and eaten by their younger relatives.

Watch the [The Ant Lion Pit](#) for videos of these fascinating

animals as they feed and grow, and how and where to find ant lions. Also visit the University of Florida website <http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu/> for more information.

Is it ladybug, lady beetle or ladybird? Whatever name you call it, this insect is easily recognized by all in the garden.

Ladybird is a name that has been used in England for more than 600 years for the European beetle *Coccinella septempunctata*. As knowledge about insects increased, the name became extended to all its relatives, members of the beetle family Coccinellidae. The lady for whom they were named was "the Virgin Mary," and common names in other European languages have the same association (the German name *Marienkafer* translates to "Marybeetle" or ladybeetle).



Worldwide, nearly 6,000 species of ladybirds are known, of which 98 are currently reported to occur in Florida. Some of these 98 are considered to be **native**, and others to be **adventives** ("having arrived from somewhere else and established feral populations"). Among the adventive species, some were **introduced** (introduced deliberately), and others are **immigrants** (having arrived by any means except deliberate introduction).

The larvae of the Ladybird/beetle/bug is voracious when it comes to feeding on other insects. As a matter of fact the larvae of various species of ladybugs will feed on whiteflies, mites, cottony cushion scale, mealy bugs, armored scale insects, scale insects, and aphids. Adults and larvae of 12 Florida species (the tribe Coccinellini) probably feed primarily on aphids. Ladybird larvae and adults may supplement their normal prey in times of scarcity with other types of food, such as flower nectar, water, and honeydew. Visit the University of Florida website <http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu/> for more information.



Treasurer Report

Prior Month (Jan. 2008) Balance:	\$ 671.40
Monies Received & Deposited (Jan '08):	\$ 50.00
Cash on Hand:	\$ 0
Total Amount of Checks Written:	\$ <u>22.64</u>
Checkbook Balance:	\$ 698.76

Happy Birthday

APRIL

Joanne Hubbard	2th
Vanda Wright	3rd
Dale Watson	7th
Ella Mae Sifferd	9th
Louise Foley	10th
Maureen Groff	21st
David Schurr	29th



Floral Designer with business skills for upscale garden shop. Respond to abetterlook@aol.com

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden

BOTERO, CHIHULY AND LICHTENSTEIN AT FAIRCHILD: Three great artists. One incredible place.

Come and experience **Fernando Botero's** monumental sculptures, **Dale Chihuly's** *A Garden of Glass* and Pop artist icon **Roy Lichtenstein's** sculptures. Now through May 31, 2008.

Dear fellow Master Gardeners:

As you know, the economy is not great, and our area has been particularly hard hit. As a Family Support Worker with Healthy Families Charlotte County, I face hungry families and their children everyday. A lot of these are the working poor and struggle to get by. Food baskets are set up in the Extension office for non-perishable food items, as well as toiletries, cleaning supplies, and the like. Dollar Tree Stores are a great place to pick up these items at little cost, and it means so much to the families and homeless that frequent our food banks.

Alison will call me when the baskets are full. I will then deliver them to the neediest food banks. As our collections increase, we can cover more food banks around the county. Please help! You can bring your donations to the Master Gardeners meetings, or drop them off anytime you're in that area. You may even drop them off at my house: 628 W. Olympia Ave, Punta Gorda, and I will get them delivered. I wish you could see the joy on the faces of the volunteers when they see the contributions. It truly makes a difference....

Thank you all,
Rae Carey



Malleucca mulch is available once again. Our minimum order is 18 skids, with 70 bags per skid. The cost is \$119 per skid, which equates to \$1.70/bag. The minimum order is one skid, but you may purchase more than one skid. If you want only 1/2 a skid you will need to find another person to purchase the other 1/2.

Money will be collected before placing the order. The mulch will be delivered to the Extension Office service area, to be picked up by the buyer.

Make checks payable to **Friends for Extension** and give them to **David Smith**, as he is coordinating this year's sale. Telephone: **941-625-0806**



A Greener Thumb

By Sidney Tatum

As I've been driving around Deep Creek, I've noticed how green and healthy most of the palms are looking. Many new varieties: royal, Bismarck, Christmas and foxtail palms have replaced the queen palms destroyed by Hurricane Charley. One homeowner has a lovely triangle palm. The Canary Island Date palms, phoenix reclinas and sabals are looking good. Most of the remaining queen palms in Deep Creek now have multiple drooping long green fronds. This is how queen palms should look. There are a few sad queens that have been pruned too severely and are exhibiting pencil necks and only a few (4-6) whisker like fronds at the top.

To keep palms in prime condition, please consider the following:

Fertilize your palms 3-4 times a year starting in January. Apply 1.5 pounds of fertilizer per square feet of canopy. The fertilizer formulation for palms recommended by the University of Florida is 2N:1P: 3K:1Mg (N=nitrogen, P= phosphorous, K= potassium, Mg= magnesium) **plus** the minor elements Fe (iron), B (boron) and Mn (manganese). There is one caveat: it is almost impossible to find this 2:1:3:1 blend in garden centers! Packaged palm fertilizers are available, and those are the only mixtures the homeowner can buy. It is important to keep the K level as high or higher than the N level, and the blend must contain Mg and the minor elements. Because we have so much phosphorous in our soil, complete absence of P in the mix is permissible---but **the other elements must be present.**

The fertilizer should be a **slow release** form (for up to 3 months) and should be applied uniformly in a circle about a foot away from the base of the palm. Do not use fertilizer spikes.

Keep lawn fertilizer at least 50 feet away from your palms. Turf formulations contain high nitrogen, and too much nitrogen will upset the N:K balance required by the palms. The good news is that a palm special fertilizer is good for

everything in your landscape-turf to shrubs to trees. Thus, you can consider it a multipurpose fertilizer.

About 1 inch of water per palm per week is needed during the dry season. If you have planted your palm correctly, there should be no drainage problems.

If you have a synthetic weed mat around the base of your palm, remove it to allow the fertilizer to reach the roots of the palm. Organic mulch is preferable to rocks. Keep organic mulch away from the base of the palm (or trees or shrubs) to discourage rot.

Fertilizing regularly and correctly will prevent nutritional deficiencies, which are not easy to correct and may take a year or more of frustrating work---during which your palms will look ugly and you will be frustrated. Don't use home remedies if your palm has a nutritional deficiency. **Start and continue a good fertilizer program.** For severe problems, consult the Extension Office.

Prune your palms correctly. Cut out only dead (brown) fronds, not yellow. Some palms have yellowish fronds naturally. A yellow frond on an otherwise green plant is translocating nutrients to other parts of the palm or the palm may be starving if you have not been feeding the plant. Wait until the frond turns brown to remove it. You may cut out the seed pods of queen palms. It is easier to remove the flower bud than to wait until the seed pod develops- avoiding lots of pollen and later, thousands of hardy seeds.

Hurricane season will be upon us soon, but you should not "hurricane cut" your palms. Severe pruning damages the plant, sets it up for infection, and upsets its nutritional balance. During Hurricane Charley, damaged queen palms were broken off at the base or uprooted. Their fronds did not come loose and go flying around the neighborhood.

Avoid injury to your palm to prevent entry of insects, bacteria, or fungi. Apply copper fungicide to a wound and watch for any signs of problems.

Do not panic if your palm is not perfect. Scale insects will appear, some fronds will be distorted from time to time, and there may be some minor leaf spots. If you suspect a severe problem, please call the Extension Office. Meanwhile, just keep on keeping on with you good cultivation program and enjoy your wonderful palms.

Habitat for Humanity House

The Florida Friendly Yard that was planted at the Habitat for Humanity model home in Punta Gorda had somehow become neglected and overgrown. Saturday, March 15th, a group of very brave and hardy MG's showed up to begin reclaiming this little jewel of a garden. They worked right through the rain and chilly breeze and got a lot done. Here are some pictures to inspire **YOU** to help the next time a work session is held!



The following letter was written in response to Bruce Merges, who wrote to express his support of UF's IFAS. Good Job!!!



Board of Trustees

226 Tigert Hall
PO Box 113150
Gainesville, FL 32611-3150
352-392-1311
352-392-9506 Fax

March 4, 2008

Bruce Merges
Vice President
Charlotte County Master Gardener Association
25550 Harbor View Road, Suite 3
Port Charlotte, FL 33980

Dear Mr. Merges,

On behalf of our Board of Trustees, I would like to thank you for writing to express your support of UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

We remain committed to supporting the education and outreach mission of IFAS, even as we face very challenging budget times. As the state's land grant university, we fully recognize the important role which agriculture plays in our state's economy and we want to continue to help address any future challenges it may face.

I am sure you are aware of the difficult economic environment in which we find ourselves. Our leaders are working hard to develop a cost-reduction plan which will likely impact all areas of our university. After successive years of across-the-board cuts, it becomes increasingly difficult to meet our cost-cutting requirements without some targeted and strategic reductions. However, I assure you that this process will carefully balance the needs of our students, as well as, our community outreach.

Thank you for your support and your concern.


Dianna F. Morgan
Chair

Meeting Time and Date

April 2, 2008

Extension Office

10 AM—Noon

Hostess for April

ELLEN BROWN

PHIL BROWN

KATHY FIXMER



The Education Committee will have a planning meeting on May 7 at 9:00a.m. prior to our regular MGA meeting. New members are welcome!

Our staff apologizes to Kathy Mullis and Kathy Fixner for omitting their birthdays in the March edition. Happy belated birthday, ladies!

Plant Clinic staff for the Charlotte Regional Mid-County Library were inadvertently left out of the March edition. Don and Brenda Hanak staff that clinic on the first Thursday of each month, and Harriet Paulsen and Wilma Carroll staff the clinic on the third Thursday of each month.

Buttonwood

Provided By:
Kay Hoffmeyer Haller

Conoarpus erectus



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Common Name: Buttonwood
Botanical Name: Cococarpus erectus
Mature Size: 30–45 feet high – 20-30 feet wide
Growth Rate: Moderate
Light Requirements: Full Sun
Drought Tolerance: High
Salt Tolerance: High
Cold Hardiness: 10b – 11
Fertilizer Requirements: Low
Soil pH: Alkaline
Leaves: Evergreen, round.
Flower: Insignificant orange, purple-green flowers in the summer.
Fruit or seeds: Hard brown oval less than 0.5 inches
Pests or Diseases: Sucking insects cause sooty mold.
Uses: Specimen plant or informal/formal hedge. Residences, parks, boulevards, medians, parking lots.
Propagation: Seed, cuttings and air layering
Comments: Evergreen; High salt tolerant; excellent sea-side plant. Silver and green varieties available.

CHARLOTTE COUNTY EXTENSION SERVICE AND MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

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