Wait Until Mid-April to Fertilize Your Lawn

Many homeowners fertilize their lawns too early. It’s best to wait until your lawn is completely green before fertilizing. Because of our cool nighttime temperatures in spring, this will not be until around mid-April. Fertilizing before the soil temperature is adequately warm results in waste of fertilizer and possible lawn injury. Certain fertilizer elements are not readily available under cool soil conditions and potentially leach below the root zone before the roots are in a position to take in the elements.

In order for our warm season grasses, such as centipede and St. Augustine, to efficiently use fertilizer, consistently warmer nights are required. The best indication that this has happened is when your lawn is completely and uniformly green. Many years, this will be after the permanent lawngrass has required mowing several times.
A word of caution can be said about those weed-and-feed lawn products that say to apply it in late winter. These products are usually high in nitrogen, which may cause your lawn to begin growing too early. If you’re trying to control weeds, it’s best to apply your herbicides separately from fertilizer.

So why not wait to fertilize? You’ll waste less fertilizer, save money and have a healthier lawn in the process. It’s a win, win situation. Give it a try. Wait until mid-April to fertilize your lawn this year.

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Landscape Color

The north Florida landscape is spectacular in spring with all the dogwoods and azaleas in bloom. But spring is more than just dogwoods and azaleas. Many other plants are in flower. And, it’s time to plant many more plants so you will have color through summer and fall.

The native crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*) is in bloom, and spring hummingbirds visit its flowers. The crossvine is semi-evergreen and makes a great covering for a fence or arbor. Plant in light shade to full sun.

Yesterday-today-and-tomorrow (*Brufelsia grandiflora*) blooms heavily in late spring. It is so named because its flowers start out dark lavendar and fade to white in several days, thus appearing different yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Plant where the shrub will receive some shade from the harsh afternoon sun. Give it room to grow to about 8 feet tall and wide.

Painted trumpet (*Clytostoma callistegioides*) is another evergreen spring-blooming vine. Its flowering period typically lasts a month or more. Plant in full sun on a fence, arbor, or trellis. Once established it doesn’t require a lot of water.
Fringetree (Chionanthus virginicus), also known as granddaddy’s greybeard, can be spectacular when in bloom in spring, though its flowering period is only several weeks long. It is a small tree, only growing to about 20 feet. It will grow in partial shade to full sun.

Photo: Michael Demaree

In mid to late March, it’s time to start adding additional color to the landscape. Plant flowers such as pentas that will flower from now until cold weather next fall. Give pentas full sun for best flowering. Hummingbirds and butterflies will visit frequently.

Photo: David W. Marshall

For a low-growing bedding plant that will flower constantly spring through fall, choose trailing torenia. Cultivars such as ‘Summer Wave’ will thrive in the summer heat and the planting will just get thicker and thicker. For best performance, select a spot with morning sun and a little protection from the afternoon sun. Though the plant will tolerate the afternoon sun, it may appear a little bleached out. Plant after danger of frost is past.

Photo: David W. Marshall

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Manage Your Soil

Good soil is very important for plants. Most of us know that soil is where roots grow and where they obtain both water and nutrients. It is also generally known that organic matter helps plant growth. Beyond that we seldom think too much about soil and how we manage it.

But what does soil really do for a plant and how can we affect soil to help our plants do as well as possible?

Surprisingly the biggest limiting factor to root growth and the organisms that live in soil is oxygen. The air in a well aerated soil is similar to that in the atmosphere. The air in a poorly aerated soil is considerably higher in carbon dioxide and lower in oxygen.

Therefore, a good soil needs lots of porosity. Healthy soil is half pore space. This pore space is the area that holds water or air. You can tell a good soil if it feels a little spongy when you walk on it. I find this to be common in wooded areas that are well mulched or in well
tilled gardens. Grass lawns seldom feel this way as they often have highly compacted soils.

To make sure your plants are getting enough oxygen to grow well you may want to test your soil’s drainage. Drainage or percolation can be a good indicator of a soil’s porosity or aeration. If a soil is well drained, it is usually well aerated. If soil is poorly drained, it is poorly aerated.

A soil rich in organic matter will have more organisms alive in it. Organisms such as earthworms will help increase the porosity of the soil.

Photo: Theresa Friday, Santa Rosa County

A simple test that can be done at home to test drainage is to take a 46 oz. tin can (such as the ones that contain tomato or pineapple juice) and remove both ends. Then mark a line two inches from the bottom of the can and pound the can into the soil so that the mark near the bottom of the can is at the surface of the soil. Now pour one quart of water into the can and check the amount of time it takes to drain out. If it takes two or less minutes, your soil is well drained. Two to eight minutes is fairly drained and eight minutes or more is poorly drained. If you are in the last category, you have compacted soil unless you live in a wetland. This means your soil isn’t absorbing much of the rainwater and your plants are limited by lack of oxygen available to their roots.

If you have compacted soil what are your options?

Mulching and leaving grass clippings will help increase the soil’s organic matter. A soil rich in organic matter will have more organisms alive in it. Organisms such as earthworms will help increase the porosity of the soil.

Of course, avoiding compacting the soil in the first place is important. This includes not driving your car on places you wish to grow plants. Direct traffic, including foot traffic and bicycles, into specific areas so you don’t spread the compaction out to other areas.

It is amazing the cumulative effect we have over large areas by the way we manage our soils. There would be much less need for stormwater ponds if we all managed our soils better. Our plants would grow better too.

Encore Azaleas--More Bloom, More Often

Nothing signals spring in the South like the reds, pinks and whites of azaleas in full bloom. Nearly every yard has one. For two weeks out of the year there are flowers everywhere. But the glory fades fast. That is until the late 90’s.

Twenty-eight Encore azaleas have been released since 1998. Robert E “Buddy” Lee, an avid collector and azalea breeder from Independence, Louisiana initiated an azalea breeding program to incorporate fall blooming characteristics into a winter hardy, evergreen azalea. He started his work in the 1980s, working out of his home with the goal of bringing the beauty of spring azaleas to other seasons. As the project grew, he eventually teamed up with Flowerwood Nursery to continue the process that would bring 'Encore' azaleas to the public.

Lee selected the seedling that was to be named 'Autumn Amethyst' in 1986, but did not receive the plant patent until 1998. So far, there are two series of 'Encore' azaleas: the 'Autumn' series and the 'Southern' series. The 'Autumn' series can be grown in Zone 7 or warmer. The 'Southern' series was designed for even warmer climates; they can be grown in Zone 8 or warmer. The 'Southern' varieties are especially good for the Florida panhandle and the Mississippi and Alabama gulf coasts.

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Azaleas are popular plants due to their spectacular flower masses and colors.
Photo: Theresa Friday, Santa Rosa County

Different parents were used for the various cultivars now available. The fall flowering trait primarily comes from Rhododendron oldhamii ‘Fourth of July’ – a cultivar selected from seed collected in 1968 at 2,500 feet up Taiwan’s Mount Tai Tun. The female parent used to create ‘Autumn Amethyst’ was a winter hardy hybrid called ‘Karens’ a cross between ‘Hinodegini’, the old Kurume variety, and \textit{R. yedoensis} var. poukhanense, the Korean azalea.

Encore azaleas are available in an array of colors, growth forms and bloom characteristics. New hybrids provide the traditional spring display during March and April, but they also bloom again in the fall, usually during September or early October. They reliably bloom in the spring and fall, but are never quite as covered with a complete carpet of flowers as you might see on a traditional azalea.

Encore azaleas have the same cultural requirements as traditional azaleas. They should have a pH between 5.0 and 5.5, a well-drained organic soil and water during the summer months. Bloom is heavier in brighter locations, with areas having morning sun and afternoon shade probably the best. If pruning is required to control size, thin them in the spring just after bloom.

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**Preventing Insect Pests**

When it comes to insect outbreaks, we are often caught reacting to a problem. We may only notice an insect infestation when the plant is showing symptoms of damage such as severely chewed leaves, yellowing turf blades, or curled foliage. At this point, we are in a hurry to apply a management technique to stop further plant injury or even save our plant.

In order to save ourselves some worry over insect injured plants and the cost of chemical management treatment, take a more active approach to pest management. Make sure insects don’t get established in your landscape and when insect numbers begin to build, take action at that moment if necessary. The following steps are good to consider to prevent pest infestations from taking over your yard.

- Pest prevention starts at the nursery. Look over each purchase carefully so you don’t take home unwanted insects. Check all leaf surfaces, stems, and branches. Don’t try to save the ‘sick plant’.

- If you install a new plant, match its ultimate size with the proper location. Plants that need routine pruning are higher maintenance and may be more easily attacked by certain pests such as aphids, whiteflies, and scales.

- Manage weeds in garden beds and lawns. Weed plants can be hosts to both insects and diseases allowing these pests to move easily to desirable landscape plants.

- Only use fertilizer when the plant needs it. You can test your soil to make sure there is a need for nutrients or watch plants for the first sign of deficiency. Over-fertilized plants, especially with nitrogen, can be magnets for pests such as chinchbugs, aphids, and leafminers.

- Make sure your landscape has a variety of plants. Beneficial insects will be in higher numbers in landscapes planted with different trees, shrubs, flowering perennials, and groundcovers. Many pest insects can be held in check just by natural means in these types of landscapes.
To ensure proper treatment, homeowners must make a proper diagnosis. This yard is showing a chinch bug infestation. To test for chinch bug presence, use the flotation method: cut the ends out of a metal coffee can and insert the can into the soil surrounding the discolored grass. Use a knife or shovel to dig the edges of the can down 3 inches into the soil. Fill the can with water continuously for five minutes. The chinch bugs trapped in the can will float to the top of the water. Repeat this method at least four times throughout the discolored area, concentrating on the perimeter of the injured spots, to ensure proper diagnosis.

For more information on landscape pest management call your local Extension Office or visit http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IN109.

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Fertilizing Fruit Trees

Fertilizers are materials that contain plant nutrients. The nutrient content and the price per unit of nutrient is one of the most important considerations in deciding what fertilizer to purchase. Also consider the response in soils (acidic or basic), ease of handling, the rate at which nutrients become available to plants, and the presence of minor nutrients in the fertilizer. Only purchase the needed amounts of fertilizer and avoid having to store large quantities around the house.

Fruit trees require a fairly large amount of nutrients in order to develop properly. The proper amounts of fertilizer to apply should be based on a soil test. Keep in mind that some nutrients move very little in soil while others move a great deal. Due to this fact, only apply the recommended amounts of fertilizer to prevent run-off and fertilizer toxicities. For most fruit trees the soil pH should be maintained between 6.0 – 6.5.

Fertilizer should be applied late in fall or early spring. In spring, fertilizers should be applied right before bud break. The amount fertilizer applied depends on the type of fruit tree and its growth status. Trees should be fertilized with enough nutrients to encourage optimal, annual shoot growth and fruit development.

For apple, pear, and citrus trees: For the first four years or so (prior to fruit development) apply 1 pound of 13-13-13 (a balance complete fertilizer) per inch of trunk diameter (the trunk diameter of the tree is measured just above the soil line, above the basal flare). Apply the fertilizer in a circle under the canopy of the tree 6 to 8 inches from the trunk of the tree.

After apple, pear, and citrus trees reach bearing age (4 to 5 years of age), apply 2 to 3 pounds of a complete balanced fertilizer like a 13-13-13 per inch of trunk diameter. Apply the fertilizer in a circle under the canopy of the tree 12 to 15 inches away from the trunk of the tree.

For peaches, nectarines and plums: For the first four years or so (prior to fruit development) apply 1 pound of 13-13-13 (a balance complete fertilizer) per inch of trunk diameter (per inch of diameter of the tree is measured just above the soil line). Apply the fertilizer in a
circle under the canopy of the tree 6 to 8 inches from the trunk of the tree.

For mature or bearing trees, fertilize at the rate of 1 to 1 1/2 pounds of a complete 13-13-13 fertilizer per year of age until trees are 8 to 10 years old. Then apply 8 to 10 pounds per tree annually.

These recommendations are merely a rule of thumb. For proper and more accurate recommendations, a soil test should be performed. These soil test kits may be obtained from the local Extension Office.

For more information on temperate fruit visit: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_temperate_fruit.

What To Do After A Freeze

Florida homeowners enjoy a wide range of landscape and citrus plants and often desire a tropical or semitropical appearance to their landscapes. Many landscape plants are often planted past their northern limit such as here in Northwest Florida, although microclimates differ dramatically. Tropical and subtropical plants can be used in the landscape, but they must be protected or replaced if necessary during cold weather. A good variety of tender and hardy plants should be planted in order to prevent total devastation of the landscape by extremely cold weather.

Immediately after the frigid weather has passed, plants need to be checked for water loss. The foliage could be losing water vapor or transpiring on a sunny day after a freeze while water in the soil or container medium is frozen. Apply water to thaw the soil and provide available water for the plant. Soils or media with high soluble salts should not be allowed to dry out because salts would be concentrated into a small volume of water and can burn plant roots. Root burn can cause the roots to dry out and not take up water to the plant.

Pruning should be delayed till freezing temperatures have passed or until new growth appears to ensure that live wood is not removed. Dead, unsightly leaves may be removed as soon as they turn brown after a freeze if a high level of maintenance is desired. But it is best to wait till all cold weather is gone. Cold injury may appear as a lack of spring bud break on a portion or all of the plant, or as an overall weak appearance. Cold injury is usually found in the upper portion of the plant. Branch tips may be damaged while older wood underneath is free of injury. Cold injured wood can be identified by examining the cambium layer under the bark for black or brown coloration. Prune these branches back to a bud 2-3 inches behind the point of discoloration.

For more information on treating freeze damaged plants, contact your local Extension Office.

Leaf Gall

Leaf gall is a common fungal disease found on azaleas and camellias. Exobasidium leaf gall of azaleas is caused by the fungus, *Exobasidium vaccinii*. Another fungus, *Exobasidium camelliae*, is found on camellias. Its found more commonly on the fall blooming ‘Sasanqua’ varieties.
This disease occurs early in the spring. The new leaves and buds that are infected develop distorted growth. The leaves become thickened, curled, fleshy and pale green to white and in some cases pink. Leaves can be ten times thicker than normal leaves. In the latter stages of the disease, the leaves are covered with a white powdery substance. As the galls age, they turn brown and hard.

When the buds open in the spring, fungal spores are blown by the wind to the plant. Rain can also wash spores from the bark to the plant tissue. Spores overwinter in the bark.

Spores need moisture to germinate. Plants that are grown in areas of poor air movement, deep shade, and high humidity are more likely to be infected. After the plant is infected, a growth promoting process occurs which causes the thickening and distortion of the plant.

The disease usually does not do enough damage to require chemical control. If only a few plants are affected, prune the galls of the plant and throw them in the trash. If chemical control is necessary, mancozeb, copper salts of fatty acids or triadimefon fungicide sprays can be used according to label directions.


Proper Fertilization Affects Turf Performance and Water Quality

Fertilizer is a useful tool in yard maintenance, but it is very important to use proper amounts of fertilizer at the right times of the year. In north Florida, fertilizer should be applied to lawns no earlier than March 1 and no later than mid-September. Our grasses go through a dormant season and too-early or too-late application is wasteful and ineffective. Keep in mind that if your grass seems to be healthy and growing without fertilizer inputs, it may not be necessary to apply at all. In fact, many of the problems we see in our neighboring waters stem from the excess nutrients applied to lawns as fertilizer.

How does too much fertilizer cause a problem in our bays and bayous? Well, in a worst-case scenario, excess fertilizer can lead to fish kills. During irrigation or rainstorms, water running off lawns, athletic fields, driveways, and roads moves to the nearest ditch and storm drain. If there is no stormwater pond to catch and treat the runoff, it goes straight to the nearest water body. When nitrogen and phosphorus in lawn fertilizer drain to water bodies, the nutrients become perfect food for algae, which reproduce rapidly and can begin an “algae bloom”. In ponds or lakes, an abundance of algae can turn the whole water body a pea-soup green. When the algae eventually dies and breaks down, oxygen in the water is used up to accelerate the decomposition process. When oxygen in the water is being used for this, it can deprive fish and crustaceans of the oxygen they need to survive, leading to fish kills and loss of seagrass habitat.

Normal growth and decomposition of algae is a natural occurrence, which typically causes no major environmental hazards. However, it is the overabundance of such algae that causes concern. In addition, excess fertilizer can cause a more immediate problem in your yard, by feeding the weeds you try so hard to eliminate! Grass and shrubs can only use so much fertilizer, so weeds will use what is left over. The excess fertilizer can also lead to rapid grass growth, resulting in thatch. Thatch is an
overgrowth of grass and dying grass which keeps turf from being healthy, encourages fungus and serves as a hiding place for pest insects.

To prevent such occurrences, proper fertilization by all homeowners can make a big difference. Depending on the level of maintenance you desire and the type of grass you have, fertilizer amounts and times differ. For specific guidelines on fertilization for typical north Florida turfgrasses, see Table 5 in “General Recommendations for Fertilization of Turfgrasses on Florida Soils” located online athttp://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH014. As always, a soil test is recommended before beginning any fertilization routine.

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<th>Grass Type</th>
<th>Maintenance Level</th>
<th>March</th>
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C = complete fertilizer applied at 1 lb Nitrogen(N) per1000 sq ft. containing 50% soluble and 50% slow-release N
SRN = slow-release N applied at 1 lb N per1000 sq ft.
Fe = iron (ferrous sulfate or iron chelate) applied to provide green color w/o excess growth, check label for proper rate
For information on higher-maintenance turf, please refer to the “Florida Lawn Handbook”, by Laurie Trenholm and Bryan Unruh, available through University Press of Florida or via Internet sources.

During irrigation or rainstorms, water running off lawns, athletic fields, driveways, and roads moves to the nearest ditch and storm drain.

Photo: Pat Ann, Santa Rosa County

Your Questions Answered

This is an exciting month for the gardener. There’s a lot to do in the garden, and the nurseries are bursting with
beautiful plants. There is still a possibility for a hard freeze, so don’t plant tender selections until mid-April.

I see my neighbors spreading sand on their lawn. Do I need to have this done also?

Topdressing material should be weed and nematode-free soil.

Photo: Bryan Unruh, University of Florida WFREC

Top-dressing your lawn with sand on a regular basis is not a recommended practice. However, it can be beneficial when trying to even out a bumpy lawn. Bumpy, rough, uneven lawns are annoying, difficult to mow, and allows water to puddle—which can damage the turf’s root system.

To fill a low spot, shovel the sand, no more than one-half inch deep, into the area. Use a broom to sweep the sand off the grass blades and sift it down as far as possible. Maintain the lawn normally until the grass has grown on top of the first layer. Repeat until the low spot is filled.

When used to even out a bumpy lawn and done properly, topdressing can be helpful. Done incorrectly, topdressing can be disastrous for the lawn.

The problem is that it is very difficult to evenly spread the sand in a timely manner. Homeowners start with the best intentions of spreading the sand consistently and finishing by the end of the day only to find that the job is tedious and lots of hard work. The sand pile remains in the same spot for days shading out and frequently killing the grass below. Once the initial enthusiasm wanes, just trying to reduce the mountain of sand overcomes the objective of spreading it consistently and evenly over the lawn. The end result is dozens of small mounds of sand all over the lawn.

Routinely applying a layer of soil or sand to a lawn can cause more damage than good. You can introduce weed seeds, nematodes and even diseases with some sources of lawn dressing. Ideally, topdressing soil should be free of weeds and nematodes (sterilized is ideal) and should be of the same soil type as that on which the turf is growing.

My azalea leaves look stippled. Some even look bleached and silvery. What's wrong?

You probably have an infestation of azalea lace bugs. Since its introduction from Japan in the 1920’s, the azalea lace bug has become one of the most serious insect pests of azaleas.

Lace bugs are small insects, approximately 1/8 inch long. They have lacy wings that are partially transparent. Due to their size and color, these insects can be difficult to see on the plant. To help you find them, shake an infested branch over a white sheet of paper. The insects will fall off and are much easier to see and identify.

Photo: Theresa Friday, Santa Rosa County

You can introduce weed seeds, nematodes and even diseases with some sources of lawn dressing. Ideally, topdressing soil should be free of weeds and nematodes (sterilized is ideal) and should be of the same soil type as that on which the turf is growing.
Lace bugs damage plants by inserting their piercing-sucking mouthparts into the underside of leaves and sucking out chlorophyll and other plant fluids. The damage appears as spotted discoloration or bleaching of the upper surfaces of the leaves. Lightly infested leaves have a white-dotted, speckled or stippled appearance. In severe infestations, the leaves become almost white, many of them drying completely and dropping off.

The first step to minimizing damage is to keep your azaleas healthy. Azaleas, which are normally understory shrubs, are less able to tolerate lace bug damage when planted in full sun and suffering from drought-stress. For control measures, refer to the UF/IFAS publication entitled "Lace Bugs on Ornamental Plants" online at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG326 or call your local Extension office.

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Upcoming Events

American Red Cross Home & Garden Expo. Bay County Master Gardeners will present seminars on a variety of topics at the expo. There will be a plant sale and clinic. March 6th - 8th, Central Panhandle Fair Grounds, 15th and Sherman, Panama City. Call 850-784-6105 for more information.

Lawn Care Program. Yes you can grow grass in sand. Learn how to grow and maintain your lawn. March 21st, American Legion Hall, 15th and Sherman, Panama City, 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Call 850-784-6105 to register for the class.

Landscaping Program. Want your landscape to look like the ones on HGTV?? Learn how to landscape, save money and the environment. April 4th, American Legion Hall, 15th and Sherman, Panama City, 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Call 850-784-6105 to register for the class.

Victory Gardens - Homegrown Vegetables and Citrus: Saturday, March 28, 10:00 a.m. - noon. Perdido Bay Community Center, 13600 Innerarity Point Road, Pensacola, FL. Program cost is $5.00 and participants must pre-register by calling Beth at 850-475-5230 or email bbolles@ufl.edu

Build Your Own Rain Barrel: Saturday, April 4, 2009, 10:00 - noon, Escambia County Extension, 3740 Stefani Road, Cantonment, FL 32533. Registration form at: http://escambia.ifas.ufl.edu/ Hort/Rainbarrel_workshop09.pdf. Contact Carrie Stevenson at 850-475-5230 or email ctstven@ufl.edu for more information.

The 12th Annual Emerald Coast Flower and Garden Festival. This family oriented event will be held April 3-5, at the Milton Campus of Pensacola Junior College (5988 Highway 90, Milton, Florida) on the wooded and beautifully landscaped grounds of the campus. Hours: Friday--noon to 5 p.m.; Saturday--10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday--10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Festival is free and open to the public. This community event will include: commercial plant vendors, craftsmen and artisans featuring garden-related items, plant sales by partner organizations (including the Santa Rosa County Master Gardeners) and area Garden Clubs, food booths and entertainment, too.

Panhandle Butterfly House. The Panhandle Butterfly House will open for its 12th season on April 17th. It will be open to the public on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and on Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. For more information, call 850-623-3868 or visit our website at www.panhandlebutterflyhouse.org.
March and April Garden Tips

Flowers

- You can begin planting colorful annual flowers such as ageratum, alyssum, amaranthus, asters, baby’s breath, begonia, calendula, celosia, cosmos, dahlia, dusty miller, gaillardia, geranium, hollyhock, impatiens, marigold, nicotiana, ornamental pepper, pentas, phlox, rudbeckia, salvia, sweet Williams, torenia, verbena, vinca and zinnia.

Ornamental peppers aren’t meant to be eaten, but they can spice up your landscape. They thrive in hot weather conditions and make excellent bedding plants in Florida.

Photo: Theresa Friday, Santa Rosa County

- Caladium bulbs are extremely sensitive to cold soil so there is no advantage to planting early. Purchase caladiums while there is a good selection, but wait until late March or April before planting them in shady beds.

- Begin watching roses for black spot fungus disease (small black spots on the leaves that quickly worsen). Control it by spraying every seven to ten days with a fungicide. Call your local Extension Office for recommended products.

Trees & Shrubs

- Finish pruning summer flowering shrubs such as althea, abelia, oakleaf hydrangea and oleander.

- Delay the pruning of azaleas, camellias, spiraeas, gardenias and other spring flowering shrubs until after flowering is complete.

- Prune any cold weather-damaged plants only after new growth appears.

- If needed, fertilize shrubs and small trees with a slow release fertilizer. A good general-purpose landscape fertilizer is a 15-0-15.

Azaleas are a classic Southern plant, both for the structure they provide year-round and for the magnificent floral displays they produce. Maximize your blooms by pruning only after they flower and stop routine pruning by the end of June.

Photo: Theresa Friday, Santa Rosa County

- Mature palms should receive an application of granular fertilizer. Use a special palm fertilizer that has an 8-2-
12 +4Mg (magnesium) with micronutrients formulation.

- Pick up all fallen camellia blossoms and remove them from your property. This practice helps to prevent petal blight next season.

- Prune ornamental grasses. For more information visit the online publication, *Considerations for Selection and Use of Ornamental Grasses*, at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP233 or call your local Extension Office for a copy.

- Evergreen and semi-evergreen trees such as live oak and laurel oak shed most of their leaves during March and early April. Make plans to recycle these leaves on your property by composting or using them as mulch in vegetable, flower and shrub beds.

Vegetables

- In mid-March, plant vegetables such as bush beans, pole beans, lima beans, cantaloupes, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, okra, southern peas, peppers, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, summer squash, winter squash, tomatoes and watermelon.

- Sweet potato plants (slips/draws) can be set out April through June.

Lawns

- Removing excessive accumulation of leaves from the lawn will increase the effectiveness of fertilizer and pesticide applications.

- If a preemergence lawn herbicide is needed to control summer weeds, it should be applied in early March or when day temperatures reach 65 to 70 degrees F for 4 to 5 consecutive days. Make certain to choose one that is safe on your kind of grass. Call your local Extension Office for a recommendation.

- Wait until early April to fertilize lawns. If fertilized too early, they often respond with yellow spots of iron chlorosis. Use a slow release nitrogen product with a 3-1-3 ratio (like a 16-2-16) or a 1:0:1 ratio such as a 15-0-15.

- Service the lawn mower by sharpening the blade and adjusting the cutting height for your type of grass.

- Anyone considering establishment of centipedegrass from seed should hold off until the soil warms up and stabilizes above 70°F.

- Spring dead spots may be present. Before treating these areas, get a diagnosis. Treat, if necessary, and then patch these areas before weeds invade the bare spots. Sodding, plugging or sprigging helps them to fill in quicker.
## NORTHWEST DISTRICT EXTENSION OFFICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Zip Code</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bay County</td>
<td>647 Jenks Avenue, Suite A</td>
<td>Panama City</td>
<td>32401-2660</td>
<td>(850) 784-6105</td>
<td><a href="http://bay.ifas.ufl.edu">http://bay.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Calhoun County</td>
<td>20816 Central Avenue East, Suite 1</td>
<td>Blountstown</td>
<td>32424-2276</td>
<td>(850) 674-8323</td>
<td><a href="http://calhoun.ifas.ufl.edu">http://calhoun.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Escambia County</td>
<td>3740 Stefani Road</td>
<td>Cantonment</td>
<td>32533-7792</td>
<td>(850) 475-5230</td>
<td><a href="http://escambia.ifas.ufl.edu">http://escambia.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Franklin County</td>
<td>66 Fourth Street</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>32351-1905</td>
<td>(850) 653-9337</td>
<td><a href="http://franklin.ifas.ufl.edu">http://franklin.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gadsden County</td>
<td>2140 West Jefferson Street</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>32351-1905</td>
<td>(850) 875-7255</td>
<td><a href="http://gadsden.ifas.ufl.edu">http://gadsden.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gulf County</td>
<td>200 North 2nd Street</td>
<td>Wewahitchka</td>
<td>32465-0250</td>
<td>(850) 639-3200</td>
<td><a href="http://gulf.ifas.ufl.edu">http://gulf.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Holmes County</td>
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<td>Bonifay</td>
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<td>(850) 547-1108</td>
<td><a href="http://holmes.ifas.ufl.edu">http://holmes.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<td>Jackson County</td>
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<td>Marianna</td>
<td>32448-4022</td>
<td>(850) 482-9620</td>
<td><a href="http://jackson.ifas.ufl.edu">http://jackson.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<td>Jefferson County</td>
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<td>Monticello</td>
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<td>(850) 342-0187</td>
<td><a href="http://jefferson.ifas.ufl.edu">http://jefferson.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<td>Leon County</td>
<td>615 Paul Russell Road</td>
<td>Tallahassee</td>
<td>32301-7060</td>
<td>(850) 606-5200</td>
<td><a href="http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu">http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<td>Liberty County</td>
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<td>Bristol</td>
<td>32321-0368</td>
<td>(850) 643-2229</td>
<td><a href="http://liberty.ifas.ufl.edu">http://liberty.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<td>Okaloosa County</td>
<td>5479 Old Bethel Road</td>
<td>Crestview</td>
<td>32536-5512</td>
<td>(850) 659-5850</td>
<td><a href="http://okaloosa.ifas.ufl.edu">http://okaloosa.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wakulla County</td>
<td>84 Cedar Avenue</td>
<td>Crawfordville</td>
<td>32327-2063</td>
<td>(850) 926-3931</td>
<td><a href="http://wakulla.ifas.ufl.edu">http://wakulla.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Walton County</td>
<td>732 N 9 Street Ste B</td>
<td>DeFuniak Springs</td>
<td>32433-3804</td>
<td>(850) 892-8172</td>
<td><a href="http://walton.ifas.ufl.edu">http://walton.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington County</td>
<td>1424 Jackson Avenue Ste A</td>
<td>Chipley</td>
<td>32428-1602</td>
<td>(850) 638-6180</td>
<td><a href="http://washington.ifas.ufl.edu">http://washington.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gulf County</td>
<td>6263 Dogwood Drive</td>
<td>Milton</td>
<td>32570-3500</td>
<td>(850) 623-3868</td>
<td><a href="http://santarosa.ifas.ufl.edu">http://santarosa.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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