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Backyard Gardener

VOLUSIA COUNTY EXTENSION

AUGUST 2013

Lawn Irrigation – Again???

Joe Seward

UF/IFAS Volusia County Extension
Urban Horticulture Agent



Every summer, it seems, we become inundated with calls from folks who are having problems with various weeds and fungus issues in their lawns. Some of this can be chalked up to lots of rain (typical in Florida) and high temperatures which many fungal diseases and weeds thrive upon. Given time, many of these seasonal maladies will go away. However, sometime our (people) activities will exacerbate the problem and lead to frustrating and more serious problems.

Lawn Irrigation – (Does My Lawn Really Need Water Today???)



In central Florida, as throughout the state, we are faced with water restrictions. Here, in Volusia County, we are allowed to water twice per week (on certain days) during daylight savings time

and once per week during Eastern Standard Time. So, let's say that, at your home, you are allowed to water on Mondays and Thursdays. Many will water on those days regardless of what occurred on Sunday or Wednesday. In other words, let's say we received a significant amount of rain on the day before our prescribed day to water. Many will water anyway. This is very wasteful and can contribute to many lawn weed and disease problems as well.



On the other hand, let's say that it didn't rain on the day before our prescribed day and we have our irrigation timer set to come on. However, the forecast is for rain tomorrow. Again, it is our day and we water the turf only to have it rain the day after. Again, this is just as wasteful and possibly detrimental to the health of our turf.

What I am saying here is that rain counts! Whether it occurs before or after we water our lawns, pay attention to the weather! Even though you might have an automated irrigation system, you are still

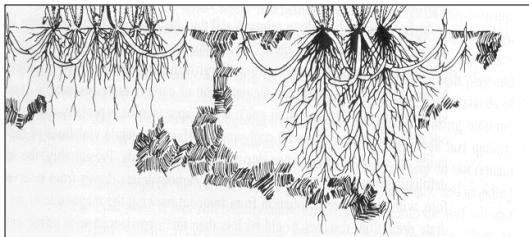
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in control! All irrigation controllers have an on and off switch. If it just rained or, is about to rain, go out and turn it off. Also, please keep in mind; rain shut-off devices are good (sometimes) at telling you when it *did* rain but, they aren't good at telling you when it is *going to* rain!

Conditioning Your Turf to Grow Well with Less Water

When you begin to condition your turf to grow well with less water, several things (all good) will happen. You will have fewer weeds, fewer incidences of disease problems, grass will grow slower (less mowing) and, you will save money on your water bill!

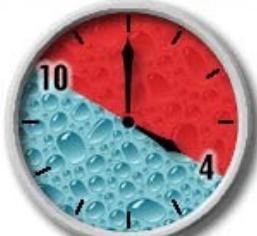
Wait, you say you have your own well. Great! How much do you pay each month to pump the water out of the ground? Yes, even if you have your own well, you will save money because you will spend less on electricity.



So, how do you condition your lawn to grow with less water?

First, go out and turn your automated sprinkler OFF! Start observing your lawn daily. As long as it is green, growing and looking good, leave the sprinkler off. When the grass blades start to fold; and the lawn may take on a bluish-green cast; turn the sprinkler system on (as long as it is your day). Continue this procedure indefinitely. What you will notice is; at first the interval between watering may be fairly close. Over time, the interval will increase to the point that you may not need to water your turf at all between rainfall events.

**No Watering
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**



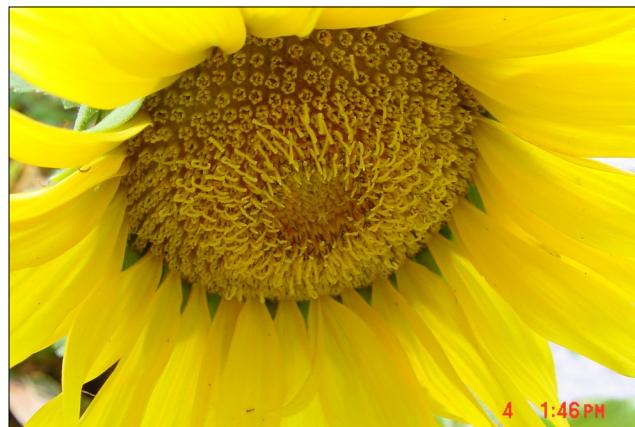
What is happening is, by withholding water, the turf is forced to send roots deeper into the soil profile to find water. Over time, the turf will develop a more extensive and efficient root system that is better able to withstand dry conditions for longer periods of time. You can also facilitate this process by aerating the turf yearly. This will, over time, relieve

soil compaction and promote a deeper root system. This is especially important is you live in a newer (less than 10 years old) home or development.

Saving money is the key. By watering less, you are spending less money. By promoting a growing environment that is less conducive to weeds and diseases, you are also spending less money. By not having to replace grass that has been killed by any one of the various turf diseases associated with too much water, you save money. Oh, and by the way, you are creating a lawn that is more "Florida Friendly!"

The Bottom Line

Just because we CAN water twice per week doesn't mean we HAVE TO water twice per week. Plants don't grow according to a schedule and they shouldn't be watered according to a schedule. Water them when they NEED to be watered. You will be helping to save our most precious natural resource and will save money at the same time.



Pachypodium baronii

Family: Apocynaceae (a-pos-ih-NAY-see-ee)
Genus: *Pachypodium* (pak-uh-PO-dee-um)
Species: *baronii* (bar-oh-nee-eye)

Pachypodium baronii also known as bontaka is a flowering succulent shrub native to Madagascar. In the Dogbane family it has a bottle-shaped silvery-gray trunk with cylindrical branches at the top. The spines are paired, small and tend to smooth over time. The leaf is 1 to 3 inches long, medium green with a midrib that is pale green. The flower is brilliant red, the only pachypodium with a red flower. It blooms, produced serially over a 6 week period in mid spring. Deciduous in winter it is very frost tender. If kept in a warm place will grow up to 3 feet.



Propagation is either by stem cuttings or seed, if cutting allow stem to dry. From seed germinate in a damp paper towel.

Pachypodium baronii require full sun in well drain soil. It is suitable as a house plant but highly unlikely to bloom indoors. It is drought tolerant but likes frequent watering during the growing period during the summer.

Pachypodium species do not exude a milky latex. Rather, the sap is always clear. Unlike other plants in this family such as the Plumeria which when wounded produce a milky white latex sap. All parts of the *Pachypodium* species are poison and if you are wounded may be painful and slow to heal.

I have two *Pachypodium baronii*, one was propagated by seed and one by stem cutting. They are both in clay pots with well-draining soil. I did bring them in this last winter when temperatures dropped below 40. I found to my dismay that the plant is phototropic and curves toward the sun and since I was moving them around this year I now have one with a twisted look.



The one grown from seed lost all its leaves in late winter but the stem cutting retained a few. I have not had flowers as yet but I have found that many of my pachypodiums bloom when they want in this climate. In fact one of my larger pachypodiums just finished blooming and it was supposed to bloom early spring. I have been told that this plant is one of the species more difficult to grow but so far have had no problems. The rule of thumb with this species is water in the summer and sparingly in the winter.

Myrna Moore

A FLORIDA ORCHID

Years ago, my Tampa daughter, gave me a start of an orchid. She had large hanging baskets of it and was told it was a native Florida orchid. Since then I have casually searched library book to identify it.

Surprisingly, I found a small book entitled "100 ORCHIDS FOR FLORIDA" at the New Smyrna Beach Public Library; written by Jack Kramer, published by Pineapple Press, Inc., Sarasota, Florida, copyright 2006.

He has written many books on orchids; since moving to our paradise of sunshine and warmth - Naples, Florida, he touts growing orchids outside. If you are comfortable with the temperature, the

plants will do just fine outside with proper care. His book is very informative and only 120 pages.

About my orchid - I am sure it is an *Epidendrum orienianum*. There are many varieties and colors coming from Mexico, Central America, Brazil and yes, even Florida. Colors from pink to lavender to brick red, they like climates that are mild all year and will do well in the garden. Mine has always been outside and looks like the "Butterfly Weed". Since the book says to repot it each year, which I have never done, I think I will do it soon.

For good information about Florida orchids, read this book.

Marty Borkosky

August and September Calendar of Public Events

Event	Date	Location
NSB library series	8/5/13	NSB Library
All you ever wanted to know about seeds	8/6/13	Ormond Beach Library
Operating and maintaining your irrigation system	8/8/13	Debary Historic Hall
Sugar Mill Garden Q&A	8/21/13	Sugar Mill Gardens
All you ever wanted to know about seeds	8/22/13	Ormond Beach Library
Herbs and Culture	8/22/13	Debary Historic Hall
Home and Garden Show	8/23/13	Daytona Beach Ocean Center
Home and Garden Show	8/24/13	Daytona Beach Ocean Center
Home and Garden Show	8/25/13	Daytona Beach Ocean Center
Fall Vegetable Gardening - Cost: \$5	8/24/13	Volusia County Ag Center
2013 Florida Pomegranate Annual meeting & Conference	9/13/13	Lake Alfred
Sugar Mill Garden Q&A	9/18/13	Sugar Mill Gardens
2013 Landscape Show	9/19/13	Orange County Convention Center
Upgrading your landscape	9/19/13	Debary Historic Hall
2013 Landscape Show	9/20/21	Orange County Convention Center
2013 Landscape Show	9/21/13	Orange County Convention Center
Succulents	9/19/13	Ormond Beach Library
Growing Strawberries in the Home Garden - Cost: \$5	9/28/13	Volusia County Ag Center

**For more details Master Gardeners should check the VMS calendar.
The general public may contact the Volusia County Agricultural Center.**

**Volusia County Agricultural Center
3151 E. New York Ave. (S.R. 44),
Deland, FL 32724**

At the Volusia County Fair Grounds

West Volusia... 386-822-5778 Daytona Beach... 386-257-6012 New Smyrna Beach... 386-423-3368

DCA – Honey Bee Dating

DCA stands for Drone Congregation Area. This is where male bees (drones) gather waiting to mate with a virgin queen. Drone Congregation Areas are generally any where from six to twenty-five meters in the air. On windy days, however, the DCA will be lower to the ground allowing the bees to conserve energy. If virgin queens do not show up at a particular DCA the drones will fly to another DCA. Drones can detect the scent of a queen in order to home in on her. For the final approach, however, they use their sight. This is why drones have such huge eyes (see picture) compared to workers and queens.



Queen Worker Drone

Why certain areas become DCAs is not known. What ever the reason it must be a powerful attraction as some DCAs have been known to exist for as long as 30 years. A colony does not normally contain drones for a full year so they cannot transfer information to younger generations. The queens leave the colony to mate only when very young again eliminating transfer of information among generations. How the drones and queens know where the DCAs exist remains a mystery.

Drones and queens do not feed while on mating flights so the flights only last for twenty to thirty minutes. After this time the drones and queens must return to the hive to feed. Drones do no work in the hive. Their only purpose is to mate with the queen assuring genetic diversity. That's good news about being a drone. The bad news is that the drone dies at the instant of mating. Hopefully, for the benefit of the colony, the queen will

mate with at least fifteen drones. This allows her to lay and fertilize a huge number of eggs over a long period of time keeping the colony strong and productive. A queen, during the best times of the year, will lay 1,500 to 2,000 eggs per day. This is an amount of eggs equal to her body weight.

A common question that comes up is why doesn't the queen mate in the hive with the colony's drones? The drones in the colony are her brothers. Mating with these drones would lead to serious genetic issues. The bees have a way to avoid inbreeding. The drones from a particular hive congregate in a DCA that is relatively close to their hive. The queen, in her 'wisdom', flies to DCA that is considerably farther away from the hive than the DCA her offspring drones use. How do they know to do this? Whoever can answer that will be a potential Nobel Prize candidate.

Researchers actually have to hunt randomly for DCAs. They will go to a likely DCA area to test it. Here they send up small helium balloons to various heights. These balloons carry conical shaped nets with an open bottom. Hanging below and within the net are small black lures (think sugar cubes). These lures are soaked with queen essence pheromone. If the area is a DCA the drones will home in on the pheromone and then sight on the lure. Once at the net they will move up into the net attracted by the lures further up. Not being 'smart' enough to think to fly back down they remain trapped in the net. At this point the researcher lowers the balloon and captures the drones for study. Most such attempts to locate DCAs are not successful.

Lagniappe: Drones do not have a stinger. They cannot hurt you. Queens have a stinger and can, unlike the workers, sting more than once. Queens, however, tend not to sting except to kill rival queens.



Ed Williams

Family Photo Album



**Papilio Amaryllis
Margarita Walker**



**Crinum-Procerum
Red-Form
Myrna Moore**



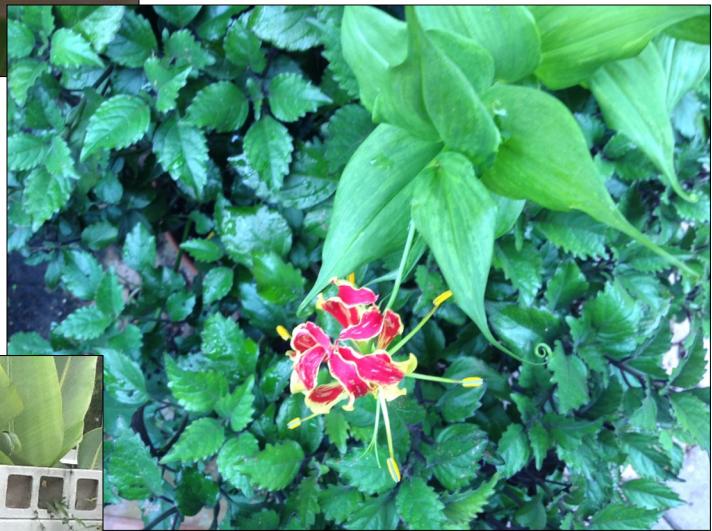
**Plumeria
Margarita Walker**

Family Photo Album

**Peggy's Pink
Plumeria cultivar
Kathryn Kovach**



**Aztec Gold
Plumeria cultivar
Kathryn Kovach**



**Gloriosa Lilly
Myrna Moore**



**Vertical Garden
Patti Shawen**

Recipes From The Garden

Oriental Salad

Compliments of Myrna Moore

1 large bag of cole slaw 2 small with red cabbage
12oz can tuna in water or cooked chicken chopped fine – May use more to taste
2 Shrimp or Beef Raman noodles packs with spices if using tuna
2 Beef or oriental Raman noodles if using chicken
1 20oz can tidbit pineapple drained or (if no fruit) add 2 Tbs sugar
1 small bunch of green onions chopped
1/4 cup of Olive Oil
1/2 - 3/4 cup of spiced rice vinegar
1 gallon plastic zip lock bag
Salt and Pepper to taste

Crush noodles while in bag. Use one gallon zip lock plastic bag and add ingredients. Next add 1/4 cup olive oil and 1/2 to 3/4 spiced rice vinegar. If you want to use pineapple drain and add 3/4 can. I use tidbits pineapple so no mess. If you do not want fruit add 2 Tbs of sugar. Add if you wish small bunch of chopped green onions. Salt and pepper to taste but I have found that with the seasoned packets of noodles I only add some pepper. Seal bag and mix well. Let sit in frig for 4 hours turning every 1h and ready. Will last for 3-4 days if keep cold. Enjoy Myrna

Honey Cherry Granola Bars

Courtesy of the National Honey Board

- 1/3 cup - honey
- 3 - egg whites
- 1/2 teaspoon - almond flavoring
- 1/2 cup - almonds, coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup - butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon - cinnamon
- 3 cups - low-fat granola
- 3/4 cup - dried cherries

Preheat oven to 350°F. Whisk together honey, butter, egg whites, cinnamon and almond flavoring. Stir in granola, almonds and cherries. Spoon granola mixture into 9-inch, nonstick (or well greased) square pan. Using a piece of wax paper, firmly press granola mixture in pan. Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove pan from oven and place on a cooling rack. Cool completely; cut into bars.

Can You Name This?



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BEGONIAS

Begonias are like children. Most are flexible and easy to deal with, but some are unruly and require special treatment. You may need counseling for these. The many types of Begonias are in their own family, the Begoniaceae, one of eight families in the Cucurbitales Order which also includes the gourd family. This Order is characterized by having unisexual flowers, both male and female on the same plant and pollination is by insects. Begonias are tropical plants, the sixth largest group of the angiosperms because they hybridize so readily. The American Begonia Society classifies them as: 1) Cane -like 2) Shrub-like 3) Tuberous 4) Rhizomatous 5) Fibrous-rooted or Wax (the semperflorens) 6) Rex 7) Trailing-scendent and 8) Thick-stemmed. Shrub begonias have many stems branching out from the ground and can be used as bedding plants. The trailing-scendent species both grow along the ground and climb. Thick-stemmed begonias can grow very large and are not featured extensively in home landscapes. Most all Begonias are forest understory plants that thrive in well-drained soil that is neither constantly wet nor completely dried out.

The biggest selling feature for Begonias is that so many of them flower year-round except for the tuberous species which have a dormant period and some of the thick-stemmed. The tuberous plants are commonly used as container plants whereas the semperflorens or wax species are used for bedding. A hybrid of the semperflorens are the Dragon Wings, having

larger leaves and bigger flowers. Since the vast majority of all Begonias are hybrids as well, they cannot be propagated from seed, but by stem or leaf cuttings.

The Rex hybrids are the unruly children. They are grown more successfully in containers. These rhizomatous Begonias require shaded, humid conditions and rich, aerated soil. They keep their coloration best in bright but indirect light. They need to be planted in a peat-based potting mix and watered evenly while not over-watered. The soil can be allowed to dry out only in winter when the plant is dormant. Although they like it humid, you shouldn't spray the leaves as they will turn brown and become vulnerable to fungus, and the beauty of the Rexes is in the beautiful coloration of their leaves. They may get bacterial leaf spot, mildew and botrytis, and especially if their leaves get wet. Fertilizer should not be over-used or they will become scraggly; half-strength is best. They also prefer to be somewhat pot-bound and should be rotated to keep them full looking, and of course they have fragile stems that break easily. As they are tropical, they are sensitive to temperatures below 60 degrees. In other words, if you see a gorgeous Rex at a flower show you may conclude the owner has taken many pains.

Begonias are rewarding plants to cultivate. The variety of their leaves offset by airy blooms will not be overlooked by visitors to your garden, and successfully growing Rex begonias will doubtless double and even triple those rewards.

Rebecca Turner

Answers! Can You Name This?



Tarragon



Scoliid Wasp-
Parasitoids
scarab beetle
larvae that live
in the ground.