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Coordinator's Corner

Did you know that carefully placed plants deter litter, graffiti, and crime, making neighborhoods and downtowns cleaner and safer?

Attractive landscapes are indicators of people who care. Statistically, the more plants you have, the lower the crime rates.

It also is true that interesting median plantings or borders along roads can help calm

drivers, slow traffic, and even designate thoroughfares or parking areas. Attractive civic plantings relay to visitors that they have arrived at a special place, promoting jobs and tourism.

As stewards of these "welcome mats," we should do our part by creating or maintaining an aesthetically pleasing environment. The natural beauty in trees,

shrubs, and flowers enhance our home. It brings in visitors, new residents, and ultimately attracts employers to our community. It all starts with planting a garden.

Karen Stauderman

Karen Stauderman
Master Gardener Coordinator
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Beach Sunflower (or Dune Sunflower)



This sunflower, *Helianthus debilis*, belongs in the Asteraceae family and grows from Southeast Texas to Florida's West Coast (zones 8-11).

It likes full sun and well-drained, sandy soil. *Helianthus* is highly salt tolerant

with yellow flowers and purplish brown center disks that bloom throughout the year. Its small fruit is sought out by birds and mammals.

This plant makes a good ground cover for frost-free areas. It is actually a reseeding annual that behaves like a perennial and also can be propagated easily by seed. The plant does not need excess fertilizer or irrigation, less is best, too much will slow growth and cause plant decline as well as having too rich a soil. For maintenance, periodic removal of spent plants is needed.

Except for *Galliardia Pulchella*, it is the most suitable for dry, sandy soil with brilliant color, ease of growth, and freedom from pests.

This plant, which is one of 150 species of sunflowers (which includes the giant sunflower and the Jerusalem artichoke), is being used more frequently in beachside landscapes. It makes a really pretty groundcover. To see an example, there is an especially lovely coverage in front of a business on West Granada in Ormond Beach.

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fp245>

Marty Borkosky ('80)

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Check out the Small Farms
website at
<http://smallfarms.ifas.ufl.edu/>



Photo courtesy of
Joy Hudson ('11)

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THE BACKYARD

GARDENER

Rugose Spiraling Whitefly

Be on the alert for the rugose spiraling whitefly, *Aleurodicus rugioperculatus* Martin, a new exotic whitefly in South Florida moving its way to Central Florida according to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry (FDACS-DPI).

This new exotic whitefly was collected from gumbo limbo in Miami-Dade County in 2009. The rugose spiraling whitefly, aka gumbo limbo spiraling whitefly, *Aleurodicus rugioperculatus* is thought to be native to Central America and has become so pestiferous in South Florida.



Photo by USDA

The whitefly is becoming common in Broward and Monroe counties, especially in the Florida Keys. Records from Indian River and Polk counties indicate that it may be able to survive in Central Florida. Over 60 plant species are recorded hosts for the rugose spiraling whitefly. The trees most seriously affected are gumbo limbo, palms, and the Florida black olive.

Infestations can become

extremely dense, with almost complete coverage of the lower leaf surface by multiple generations of whiteflies. Adults are small



Photo by USDA

and gnat-like and take flight easily, appearing as clouds around the foliage. Distinctive egg spirals are seen on leaves, but with no developing larvae or pupae on the plant.

Whitefly numbers can become so great that females are forced to lay their eggs on nearly any surface. Not only do the whiteflies cause stress to the plant by removing water and nutrients, but the sticky residue they excrete, called honeydew, covers leaves and promotes the growth of a fungus called sooty-mold.



Credit
Iosborne@UF-IFAS MREC

Ants protect the whiteflies and prevent predators and parasitoids from attacking the immature whitefly, a natural control of the population. Homeowners

are plagued not only by the decline in the health of their plants, but by the honeydew, sticky wax, and bodies of dead adult whiteflies that fall onto cars, patios, patio furniture, and into pools, clogging water filters.

At least one wasp species, *Encarsia guadeloupae*, and a beetle predator have been observed feeding on rugose spiraling whitefly infestations. Good control using systemic insecticides, either as soil drenches or trunk injections, can be achieved, but reapplication is necessary to prevent reinfestation from untreated neighboring trees.

For small plants, washing the foliage with a jet of water or with a detergent spray will dislodge many of the pupae and clear the leaf.

For more information go to the web site below. Contact your local county Extension office for sightings of this pest.

<http://mrec.ifas.ufl.edu/Iso/WHITEFLIES/rugose/Rugose.html>



Credit
Iosborne@UF-IFAS MREC

Ti Plant - (Cordyline) - Hawaiian Ti

The ti plant, pronounced tee, is a beautiful, tropical, evergreen shrub which almost became the symbol of luck for Hawaii. With shades varying from black to red, light green and pink, it keeps its color through the deep shade in winter. In the tropical world, it is crowned, "King of Tropical Foliage".

Ti grows 3-15 feet, depending on variety of which there are many, and although it has low-salt tolerance it can grow beachside. It is zoned for I I, but it has been known to freeze in Volusia County. If frozen, it usually comes back in the spring.

It most likely came to Hawaii from

the Himalayas, Southeast Asia etc., where, in Hawaii, ti plants are used extensively in hedges and landscapes. Ti plants stress when grown outside, by direct sun exposure, insects, and drought conditions.

Many of the highly colored named cultivars are propagated by terminal stem cuttings (tips) which are directly stuck in the pots, then eventually sold. Terminal cuttings usually require intermittent mist applications until sufficient roots are present to prevent necrosis of leaf tips and lower leaf loss. Like several of the dracaena and yucca species, ti plants also can be propagated from cane pieces (large leafless stem cut-

tings) ranging from a few inches to much larger. Plants perform best with air temperatures between 65°F - 95°F. Ti can tolerate lower and higher temperatures, but growth rate will be reduced. Fertilize plantings with a balanced liquid or slow release fertilizer for best results.

It makes a nice vertical accent in gardens with lovely feathery blooms, but as it ages, it can become scruffy looking. The leaves make attractive accents in holiday flower arrangements and festive placemats.

For more information go to: <http://mrec.ifas.ufl.edu/foilage/folnotes/cordylin.htm>

Marty Borkosky ('80)

Cicadas

If there is an affinity to be had toward any insect, the cicada might be it. Sum-



mer just wouldn't be right without the hypnotic calls of the cicadas, like the song of the sirens of mythical lore which was irresistible to sailors. The sound is a mating call, produced by timbals, drum-like structures which vibrate an air sac in the abdominal area of the insect. Only the males produce the sounds, and the females answer with wing flip signals.

The enchanting music occurs only when the insects are mature and this takes several years. After mating, the females lay their eggs in the woody tissue of branches. When they hatch, the nymphs fall to the ground and burrow in to feed off plant roots. During the years they

live underground; they molt four times. Then, they come to the surface and climb to a sturdy trunk or stem to molt one final time. We see their empty skeletal shells, but they have since flown up to the tree canopies where their mating cycle begins. The adults never live more than a few weeks.

The beauty of this insect is that they are mostly all good. They harbor no organisms harmful to man. Cicadas cause minimal economic damage to plants, provide food for birds and mammals, and do not bite or sting. Cicadas are in the order Orthoptera, which includes crickets and katydids. Also called locusts, the swarms of cicadas you've heard about are from a species called magicadas that emerge from woodlands every 13 to 17 years in vast numbers, actually a defense strategy of

safety in numbers. Florida does not have these "periodical" cicadas, but we are blessed to have 19 other species here. They are identified by the length of their forewings. Crickets and katydids call at night, but cicadas woo during the day and at dusk. Each species differs in habitat and their songs are unique too! As examples, the seaside cicada has a continuous slow and loud zit-zit-zit while the glass-winged cicada, partial to oaks, has a faster and softer zit-zit-zit. The olympic cicada likes pines and waste fields. Its song is continuous (<http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/misc/bugs/cicadas.htm>).

We may not like insects in general, but the cicada is one of the least unlikeable and when their song ends, we mourn the end of summer.

Rebecca Turner ('06)

Plant Blindness

If you are asked what is in this picture, what would you say? Most likely you would notice the kittens (or puppies). Seldom would you point to the millions of grass blades.

What does it take to get you to notice the plants around you? Urban people in particular, suffer from 'plant blindness.' This is not a physical condition, but a common phenomenon. Dr. James Wandersee (Louisiana State University) & Elisabeth Schlusser (Miami University), professors of botany, were the first to define plant blindness as "the inability to see or notice the plants in one's own environment." It also leads to a) the inability to understand the plants importance in the biosphere, b) inability to view their beauty and uniqueness, and c) the inferior perception of plants to animals, leading to the wrong conclusion that they are unworthy of human consideration.

Understandably, our brain blends plants visually. Most people tend to see plants as a 'green blur' in a backdrop. However, those people with previous knowledge and cultural events with plants tend to pay more attention to them.

This is especially true with food. Urban populations seldom see food growing in its true form as seeds in a garden, crop growth, and later harvesting. Mostly, they view food in pre-packaged containers and sold in grocery stores. If plants are used in cooking, medicine, or décor, they are more likely recognized. So how do we bring about a change in ourselves and the next generation?

Studies have determined that individuals prefer to view objects that

are between 0° to 15° below an imaginary horizontal line that corresponds to their own eye level (59° for females and 64° for males). The name for the term is *15° Laboratory*. Strange name, but it has merit. This Laboratory uses visual perception, visual cognition, and science learning to improve understanding of plant sciences.

This is important when designing plant displays to attract children's and adult's attention within that visual zone. This can be evident at our local theme parks. Katy Moss Warner, former Director Disney's Horticulture and Environmental Initiatives at Walt Disney World recounts, that over the years, Disney theme parks were highly touted for their park cleanliness. Today, the park's greatest achievement is ambiance. This success is due in part to the impact of colorful hanging baskets that are strategically positioned throughout the park.

Look around you. Which locations in your town stand out as visually friendly? Or is nature's greenery drowned out in a visual flurry of noise and colorful signage to stimulate your interest? Explore your own neighborhood perhaps you can enhance your own landscape's visual interest by positioning your flowering plants, trees, and flowers to be eye catching at 15°. Allow yourself and your family to reconnect with nature in your everyday environment by exploring meaningful educational and cultural experiences with plants in neighborhoods, public spaces, and backyards. You may be surprised at how jam-packed our area is with natural wonders.

Donkey's Ear

Kalanchoe gastonis-bonnieri, or donkey's ear gets its name by the shape of the leaf. Grown best in full sun to light shade it is very drought tolerant. In fact, it thrives in dry conditions. *Kalanchoe* does great in pots and looks stunning in hanging baskets.

Offspring bear on the tips of the leaves and are easy to remove and propagate to create new plants to



share. This plant is monocarpic; it dies after flowering. This succulent makes a great indoor plant free from frost.

Birgit Kiessling ('10)

Lucky Gardener



How lucky does one have to be to find one of these beauties blooming in the garden? I'm feeling pretty special for the last couple weeks watching nature's "spider flower" bask in the sun and light up my backyard.

No planning involved or even a guess this would be my year to enjoy mother nature's gift to me. Just count me as one lucky gardener!

Barry Brassard ('07)