



# The Compost Pile

*...for discerning weeders*

A Newsletter of the Okaloosa County Master Gardeners Association — August 2010

## Why The Everglades

Lynn Fabian

Periodically we see a lot of news information about the restoration of the Everglades. For as long as I can remember, "THE EVERGLADES" has been a deep, dark, mysterious place that both attracts and repels me, in about equal proportions.

A comment at the July MG meeting by our speaker, president of the local Audubon Society, started me thinking about the Everglades and how the recovery of this 'River of Grass' is progressing. Restoring the Everglades has been a rallying cry for conservationists for many years.

Sometimes more immediate news pushes other stories off the front pages. The fact that most environmental recoveries take decades to be effective often relegates this news to the 'slow news days'. For the Gulf Coast, the big story the past few months has been oil.

So why should we care about some swampy land in South Florida? Since becoming a state in 1824, "two-thirds of our original freshwater wetlands have been filled or drained. (Priceless Florida, 2004, pg. 127).

The Everglades is just the poster child for what we have all lost or hope to preserve. — Lynn

*The Everglades is a test. If we pass it,  
we get to keep the planet*

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas*

## Who Was Marjory Stoneman Douglas?

She was a politically conscious journalist and outspoken about many causes and movements over her lifetime. She was born in Minnesota in 1890 and moved to Miami after college and a short marriage.

She worked for the paper that was to become The Miami Herald and wrote The Everglades: River of Grass (1947) as a contribution to a series called Rivers of America. It was a wake-up call to save the Everglades. The book was compared to Rachel Carson's Silent Spring. She died in 1998.

## Why Restore the Everglades?

The restoration of the Everglades is a thirty year, almost \$11 billion project. Obviously it will not be done quickly. There are many interests to be considered and agencies to be satisfied before the job is finished. It is a joint effort for Florida and the federal government and involves spending on both sides.

It may never be finished. Just how good is good enough? The federal government is spending millions to acquire the rights to protect wetlands now in the hands of private owners. The owners will keep title to the lands. One tract is the Fisheating Creek watershed that drains into Lake Okeechobee and Okeechobee feeds into the Everglades. (Article from Miami Herald by Mike Schneider, 7 July 2010)

You can't draw a line and say "here it begins". It is more like pulling a thread and moving the world. Everything is all connected.

"The plans to restore the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee — Florida's Liquid Heart — are complex, long-term and dynamic. The plans are the result of years of scientific research and yet, because of their very nature, they are a work-in-progress. The plans address all aspects of restoration and

ensure the right amount of water of the right quality gets to the right place at the right time.

Improved [water quality](#) and [water flow](#) are two important features that are the backbones of restoration. It is Florida's hope that residents and visitors alike should have the opportunity to visit this majestic and captivating ecosystem and see its expansive sawgrass marshes, teeming wildlife, flowing waters and towering blue skies. Through partnerships and plans, the Everglades will be a healthier place than it is today, will remain strong and healthy in the future." <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/evergladesforever/restoration/default.htm>

To see a map of the area covered by the Everglades, click on the link above and select Everglades Restoration Map from the list.

The entire Everglades once covered more than 6,250 square miles but has shrunk by half that today. Now the other half is covered with home, farms and drainage canals to make the land habitable. Each homeowner and farmer has to be considered in this restoration process.

## Did You Know?

Although 75% of the Earth's surface is covered by water, only 0.6% of it is fresh water and available to be used in the home. Florida is among the top states for water withdrawal from ground and surface sources. In north-central Florida, the average per-person use of water is about 150 gallons. That's almost double the

national average! <http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/gc/harmony/water.htm>

That seems to be a per day average. The actual amount of water available is more like 0.1% because much of the fresh water is frozen in the polar regions. — Lynn

*All the water that will ever be is, right now.*

*National Geographic, October 1993*

## Interior Wetlands

Adapted from *Priceless Florida*

*For those of you who have completed or are working through the Master Naturalist program much of this will be an oversimplification of what you have learned. For the rest of us, what follows is a brief overview.*

It should come as no surprise to you that Florida is fairly flat. Two hundred years ago, the wetlands were much more prevalent than today. South Florida was three-quarters wetlands.

Priceless Florida states that wetlands are areas whose soils are relatively wet. (Go figure!) Our "interior wetlands include bogs, marshes and swamps with standing or flowing water". (pg. 123)

The major interior wetlands in Florida range from the Apalachicola River floodplain east to the St. Johns River marshes down to the Everglades and the Big Cypress Swamp and marsh and many lesser spots in between. No part of the state is without wetlands in one form or another.

Our wetlands help to purify much of the water that flows into the bays and oceans that surround the state. Appalachicola Bay is one of the greatest seafood nurseries in the world. Wetlands also recharge the aquifers from which our drinking water comes.

Restoration of these wetlands to a purer state is a worthy goal but there are people living and working in these areas that think it presumptive (if not downright un-American) of us to want to change the lands and lively hoods they have come to enjoy.

All of the natural ecosystems in Florida are valuable in and of themselves. They are worth preserving and restoring as much as possible. Living and working in Florida means we need to find ways to impact the environment in the least disruptive way possible.



<http://www.basinalliance.org/Stormwater/NPDES.htm>

The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance is “committed to sustaining and providing optimum utilization of the the Choctawhatchee Basin Watershed”. What can you do to help?

Remember the *Guide to Florida Friendly Landscaping*? If you have lost your copy, search [solutionsforyourlife.com](http://solutionsforyourlife.com) to download the handbook. Of the nine sections in the Guide, five of them directly relate to preserving the quantity and quality of water in any area.

- #2: Water efficiently
- #3: Fertilize appropriately
- #4: Mulch
- #8: Reduce stormwater runoff
- #9: Protect the waterfront

In my neighborhood there are storm water drains that lead directly to the bay. Large quantities of water pour off our roofs, sidewalks and streets. Some rain is absorbed through the turf, brick patio and flower bed areas but much of it is lost.

When water flows across the land it picks up detritus and carries it to the sea. We save some runoff water in a water barrel and use it later but the great volume is lost to our use.

“Our yards and neighborhoods are channels to our waterways. Your yard is the first line of defense for preserving Florida’s fragile environment. The health of Florida’s estuaries, rivers, lakes, springs and aquifers depends partly on how you landscape and maintain your yard. You don’t even have to live on the water to make a big difference. Rain that falls on yards, roads and parking lots can wash into waterways or leach into ground water, carrying pollutants — including fertilizers, pesticides, animal waste, soil and petroleum products. Improperly applied fertilizers and pesticides from residential areas pose a serious threat to the health of Florida’s waters.” FFL, p. 6.

*We never know the worth of water  
till the well is dry -- Anon.*

While July is not the optimal time to plant a tree here in the Panhandle, you may be giving some thought to a more carefree garden for next summer! With that in mind, why not consider adding a chaste tree to your landscape?

Formally known as *Vitex agnus-castus*, this small flowering tree thrives in our heat and humidity, tolerates anything-but-soggy soil, and boasts beautiful spikes of lavender flowers in summer.

Sometimes classified as a deciduous shrub, the chaste tree is fast growing, and can reach 15-20 feet tall and wide, so give it room to stretch. The leaves are soft, gray-green, hand-shaped and fragrant.



Chaste tree blooms are adored by bees and butterflies, to the extent that the tree is often planted by honey marketers to ensure a good supply.

These trees are exceptionally hardy. In February, I transplanted a rather large specimen from a fellow Master Gardener's landscape. By June it was

bursting with bloom as if it had never been disturbed.



Chaste tree have no major pests, but can be prone to root rot if the planting site is kept too moist. It is moderately salt-tolerant and basks in a full sun location.

Although not widely available at local garden centers, the chaste tree is worth seeking out if you have a proper place to plant it. White and pink cultivars may also be found if you prefer. Then next summer, sit back and enjoy the show!

Have you recorded your hours for the month (or year???) . Surely I am the only one who needed to enter a full six months to catch up! Use the on-line system <<https://florida.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cf>>. It truly is easy to use and I think once we become accustomed to it, we will find it a time saver.

Hint-Hint!! Don't forget...if you write an article for *The Compost Pile* you can record the research you do and the time spent writing as volunteer hours. — Lynn

## Landscape Question of the Month

Marilyn Kosher

*This article is a continuation of an article printed in the July Compost Pile. In July Marilyn wrote in "Yard Gone Wild" about homeowners concerned with Trumpet Creeper and Japanese Honeysuckle.*

### English Ivy

Most everyone is already familiar with the identity of this green invader – English Ivy,



*Hedera helix.* We all know and love the look of English Ivy, but is it a valuable landscape plant or a men-ace? That depends on who you ask. I was not able to find any official University of Florida negative information on English Ivy. It has been studied under IFAS Assessment of Non-native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas. The conclusions drawn by this IFAS Assessment are that English Ivy is not considered a problem at this time and it may be

recommended by IFAS faculty for use in landscapes. Currently, it has been found in Florida natural areas, but is considered to have a low ecological impact and low potential for expansion. This last IFAS assessment was accomplished in 2005 and is scheduled for reassessment in 10 years. It seems I have about a five year wait to see if my concerns are verified scientifically! Until then, I'll use the evidence of my own eyes and other organization's experience to temper my use of English Ivy.

The US Forest Service has highlighted English Ivy as a Weed of the Week. Their publication states that English Ivy is reported in more than 25 states from New England through the southeast to Texas and up the west coast. It is known to be invasive in 18 of those states; some of them are our close neighbors (Georgia and Louisiana). English Ivy is described as an aggressive invader that threatens all levels in forests and open areas. It spreads along the ground as well as up into the forest canopy. Vines climb tree trunks then extend out and encircle branches and twigs. This proliferation, blocks most of the sunlight from reaching the leaves of the host tree. Within a few years, the host tree loses vitality and eventually dies.



The same report indicates English Ivy displays some toxic characteristics. Glycoside compounds in the ivy can cause vomiting, diarrhea, nervous conditions and dermatitis in susceptible individuals. Although not mentioned by the US Forest Service, English Ivy can also be poisonous to your pets. The US Forest Service is blunt in its recommendations for control and management of English Ivy. Its Weed of the Week information states “Do not plant English Ivy.” They recommend cutting the climbing vines and pulling the vines up by hand, bagging and disposing of the plants. The final US Forest Service recommendation falls under the heading chemical control and is again similar to those previously recommended for the Trumpet Creeper and the Japanese Honeysuckle. The US Forest Service states the vine can be controlled using available herbicides such as Triclopyr in accordance with label directions and state requirements.

According to the US National Arboretum, “English Ivy, *Hedera helix*, is one of the most popular ground covers in North America. However, its potential for escape is notorious. In the Pacific Northwest, English Ivy invades the forest floors. Its evergreen leaves smother other native forest plants by denying them light. Interestingly, English Ivy only reaches maturity

and goes to seed after it has grown up a vertical surface. If you are willing to prune it regularly to contain it, it does not pose a threat. English Ivy is not a good choice, though, if you want a low maintenance garden. You may want to replace it with native plants.”

The Southeast Exotic Pest Invasive Plant Management Manual provides familiar control procedures. Their management recommendations are very similar to those described by the Texas Invasives Database for Trumpet Creeper and to those of IFAS for Japanese Honeysuckle, but go into more detail. See the referenced website for details of the control procedures. And, like our other “yard gone wild” species, English Ivy isn’t all bad, if you are a mosquito or a rat looking for a good habitat!

So where does all this information leave us? Well, if I had to answer any homeowner questions about this plant or use any of this information myself, I’d caution us all to be very, very careful in using English Ivy in the landscape. And I’d suggest that if any of it is already growing in the yard, close monitoring and diligent management is critical to keep it “captive”, otherwise, these plants could likely become the yard!

**References:**

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Plant Guide for Trumpet Creeper

[http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg\\_cara2.pdf](http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_cara2.pdf)

Texas Invasives Database – Trumpet Creeper

[http://www.texasinvasives.org/invasives\\_database/detail.php?symbol=MAUN3](http://www.texasinvasives.org/invasives_database/detail.php?symbol=MAUN3)

Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, University of Texas Austin, Native Plant Database – Trumpet Creeper

[http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=cara2](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=cara2)

Plant Management in Florida Waters, IFAS, UFL

<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/guide/invplant.html#native>

Invasive Species Management Plans for Florida, IFAS, UFL <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/node/239>

The United States National Arboretum

<http://www.usna.usda.gov/Gardens/invasives.html>

Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council Invasive Plant Manual  
<http://www.invasive.org/eastern/eppc/HEHE.html>

US Forest Service, Weed of the Week  
<http://www.invasive.org/weedcd/pdfs/wow/english-ivy.pdf>

IFAS Assessment of Non-native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas  
<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment/conclusions.html>

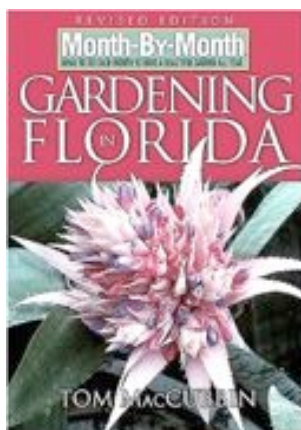
Invasive Plants of the Southeast  
<http://www.se-eppc.org/pubs/gpca.pdf>

## Book Review

Klare Fox

### ***Month-by-Month Gardening in Florida***

*By Tom MacCubbin*



Beginning with an interesting Florida history lesson, author Tom MacCubbin shares the joys and challenges of Florida gardening with lessons gathered from his thirty years as a Florida County Extension agent.

A general overview explains the ten categories of plants to be covered in a unique, month-by-month guide. From annuals to vines and everything in between, pages are full of information on planning, planting, care, watering, fertilizing, and potential problems. Most monthly pages include a boxed-in section with a special tip. For example, the box on the month of May in the shrub section tells how to change the color of hydrangea blooms.

At the end of each section is a chart listing selections especially suited for Florida, along with the plant's average size at maturity, season of interest, light requirements and the Florida location they most prefer.

Ending the book is a chapter addressing pest control in Florida and a special section on cycads.

This book would be especially helpful for gardeners new to Florida, but also makes a great quick reference book for anyone who loves the garden all year long. You can find [Month-by-Month Gardening in Florida](#) on the Master Gardener Reference Library bookshelves and at local "big box" home improvement stores. The book can be checked out from the county library system.

<http://readokaloosa.org/>

ISBN 1-59186-235-3

## Coming Events

### –MG General Meeting Wednesday, Aug 4th, 9:00a

- Crestview Landscape Workday, Any time you want to pull a weed. Contact Marg for scheduled work days.
- 2010 New MG Training Class, Fridays, Aug 13 - Nov 19
- Aug Board Meeting, place TBA, Aug 18th, 9:30 a
- Plant Clinic, Wednesday, Aug 25th, 10a-1p
- Nursery Workday, Friday each week, 10a-2p

## President's Message

Mike Crow

Greetings, Master Gardeners

Chaud, Heib, Póλοι, Caldo, Caliente, H O T! No matter how you may say it, the meaning is the same. The weather is balmy and warm. Our residents are slowing down in their yards and staying inside. Our calls are few and questions are minimal. Does this mean a time of rest for our association? August brings us a new class of Master Gardeners to educate and mentor. Can you remember when you were an Intern? The opportunities afforded you? Fourteen new faces will have the same opportunity this month. They bring with them a passion for learning. We bring our knowledge to pass on. Together we build a stronger association. Take the time to attend



their training. Share your energy and passion for nature. Some may be selected to mentor. Others may be directly involved in the curriculum. No matter how large or small your involvement; it is still involvement. Thank you for what each of you do for Okaloosa County and her residents. I will not be in attendance for the August meeting as I have family commitments. Have a great meeting.

*Etre Sûr et Sain. Est impliqué et conscient des besoins de la nouvelle classe. Nous étions une fois dans leurs chaussures. Ils comptent sur nous pour la direction. Merci.*

V/r  
Michael 

While researching a homeowner question recently I entered the plant name in Google and to my surprise had a “hit” on . . . *The Compost Pile!* Surprise, surprise. It was a reference to an article that appeared in 2005 about living Christmas trees.

We picked up a copy of *The Tennessee Conservationist* at a state park in Tennessee. Interesting to read that we are fighting some of the same invasive species as they are. From page 27, “Cogongrass. . . [is] a federally listed noxious weed and is considered to be the worst invasive threat in the Southeast”. The article goes on to say that cogongrass has taken over more land area than kudzu in some southern states. We’re fighting the same enemy on different fronts.

All of our State Award entries have been turned in and Larry will have them in the mail very soon. Now comes the hard part. . .waiting to see how we fared. Lockey felt we had a good chance if we presented the work done in the Nursery, on the Web Site, and with *The Compost Pile*. General, Extension Awareness and County MG Newsletter are the three categories we entered.

I was going to make some jokes about how hot it has been but it is too hot to joke about it. Take care of the pets, those special plants and especially yourselves while we wait for the weather to moderate.

*Timing has an awful lot to do  
with the outcome of a rain  
dance*

So go ahead and dance any time you get the chance!

Keep in mind that Larry has traditionally welcomed us at the training sessions for the new Master Gardeners. It is good to let him know you are planning on attending. This is a great review. . .sort of like going to a revival. . .we can all use a little religion (or relearning!) now and then.

Hope you are having a wonderful summer.

See you in August. —Lynn

For Those Who Are French Impaired. . .(like me), Mike said. . .

*Be Safe and Healthy. Is [Be] involved and aware of the needs of the new class. We were once in their shoes. They count on us for direction. Thank you.*

## About Us

*The Compost Pile* is a publication of the Okaloosa County Master Gardeners Association.



Okaloosa County Master Gardeners Association is a volunteer organization sponsored by Okaloosa County Extension and the University of Florida IFAS.



The Foundation for the Gator Nation...an equal opportunity institution.



Lynn Fabian, Editor  
Ed Fabian, First Reader  
Marg Stewart, Web Site Coordinator