



Diggin' Dirt

Inside this issue:

<i>Tomato Pie</i>	2
<i>Book Review Botany of Desire</i>	2
<i>Notes from the Head Gardener</i>	3
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	3
<i>Turf Love</i>	4
<i>EnviroScape Training</i>	4
<i>Minutes from the July 24th MG Meeting</i>	5
<i>News & Notes</i>	6

Unknown Disease Killing Sabal Palms

Excerpted from article by
SARAH LARIMER
(Associated Press Writer)

MIAMI - The sabal palm, Florida's state tree, is under attack by a microscopic killer that has scientists stumped. An unknown but growing number of sabal palms in the Tampa Bay area have died from a mysterious disease that researchers are struggling to identify. Even after scientists pinpoint the disease - and that could take years—they will have to learn what insect spreads it. The disease will be tough to stop.

"It's not simply a matter that we will be able to eradicate," said Monica Elliott, a University of Florida plant pathologist. "That's not very likely."

Sabal palms, also known as cabbage palms, can grow to 50 feet. In the United States, they can be found from the Florida Keys to parts of North Carolina

and can grow in marshes, woodlands or along the coastline. The palm, which is also South Carolina's state tree, is featured in Florida's state seal and was designated the state tree in the 1950s.

Tim Schubert, an administrator and pathologist in Florida's Division of Plant Industry, said it's impossible to say what the disease's eventual effect on the state's sabal palms will be but "it's not going to be good."

"There's going to be fewer palms. They may present a less attractive tree in nature because of this new disease showing up," he said.

This is not the first time iconic Florida trees have been ravaged by disease. The state's orange and other citrus trees are being attacked by canker and greening. Scientists have been unable to stop either.

The new disease destroys the sabal palm and its other victims, which include Canary Island date palms and queen palms, from within. It's a tough diagnosis, Elliott said, often confused with nutrient deficiencies or excessive trimming. First to go are the lower leaves in the tree's canopy, followed by a dead spear leaf. Finally, the palm's canopy collapses.

Understanding how the disease spreads requires a trip back to high school science class.

This is a phytoplasma disease, which means it is a very small bacterium that doesn't have a cell wall. And it can only be transmitted through a plant's phloem, a type of transport tissue similar to veins in a human. The disease has likely found its way to sabal palms' phloem by either a tree- or leaf-hopping insect.

Our next general membership meeting will be held on September 25, 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm in the meeting room at the Bluffton Library. The program will be presented by Richard Wallace, Ph.D., from Armstrong Atlantic University in Savannah. Dr. Wallace is an engaging speaker who will address the many varieties of bananas that can be successfully grown in this area. Time permitting he will also address the rare fruits that will do well here.

Tomato Pie (recipe courtesy Paula Deen)



Beefsteak tomatoes work best in tomato pie

- 4 tomatoes, peeled and sliced
- 10 fresh basil leaves, chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped green onion
- 1 (9-inch) prebaked deep dish pie shell
- 1 cup grated mozzarella
- 1 cup grated cheddar
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Place the tomatoes in a colander in the sink in 1 layer. Sprinkle with salt and allow to drain for 10 minutes.

Layer the tomato slices, basil, and onion in pie shell. Season with salt and pepper. Combine the grated cheeses and

mayonnaise together.

Spread mixture on top of the tomatoes and bake for 30 minutes or until lightly browned.

To serve, cut into slices and serve warm.

The Botany of Desire by Michael Pollan

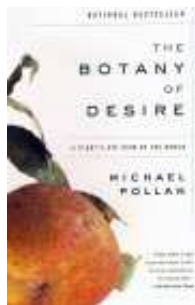
Working in his garden one day, Michael Pollan hit pay dirt in the form of an idea: do plants, he wondered, use humans as much as we use them? While the question is not entirely original, the way Pollan examines this complex coevolution by looking at the natural world from the perspective of plants is unique.

Pollan focuses on the relationship between humans and four specific plants: apples, tulips, marijuana, and potatoes. He uses the history of John Chapman (Johnny Appleseed) to illustrate how both the apple's sweetness and its role in the production of alcoholic cider made it appealing to settlers moving

west, thus greatly expanding the plant's range. He also explains how human manipulation of the plant has weakened it, so that "modern apples require more pesticide than any other food crop." The tulipomania of 17th-century Holland is a backdrop for his examination of the role the tulip's beauty played in wildly influencing human behavior to both the benefit and detriment of the plant (the markings that made the tulip so attractive to the Dutch were actually caused by a virus). His excellent discussion of the potato combines a history of the plant with a prime example of how biotechnology is changing our

relationship to nature. As part of his research, Pollan visited the Monsanto company headquarters and planted some of their NewLeaf brand potatoes in his garden--seeds that had been genetically engineered to produce their own insecticide. Though they worked as advertised, he made some startling discoveries, primarily that the NewLeaf plants themselves are registered as a pesticide by the EPA and that federal law prohibits anyone from reaping more than one crop per seed packet.

From Amazon.com



Notes from the Head Gardener

It is close to a month since I returned from the state Master Gardener Conference in Greenville and I am still in awe of the program and organization that went into producing this event. More than 50 Greenville MG's worked on this for 5 months and their efforts truly paid off for all of us who were fortunate to be there. Laura Lee Rose, Patti O'Riley, Will Balk and I were among the 130 in attendance.

The keynote speakers were Roger Swain, former host of the PBS TV show Victory Garden and Rick Darke, author and photographer. Roger's droll sense of humor had us in hysterics but his message was clear; gardening is a

common denominator that brings people together. He stressed the importance of the MG program and how teaching others to garden also teaches them to respect the land. I was also impressed with Roger's gregariousness. He spoke personally with almost every participant at the conference and seemed genuinely interested in the local programs. The breakout sessions were led primarily by the extension agents including Laura Lee, who demonstrated the Carolina Yards and Neighborhoods program. We also had the opportunity to learn of outstanding projects by other Master Gardeners throughout the state such as the

www.namehatplant.net website. The woman that put this together spent over 4000 hours on it and we just had to give her a standing ovation. We also got to tour the butterfly and history gardens at Roper Mountain Park. The local MG's curate these gardens and give weekly tours to school children and other groups.

On another note, late July is (as usual) hot, hot, hot in South Carolina. Crinum, gingers and other fragrant plants are at their best right now; do take a walk around the garden in the evening and appreciate one of the more wonderful aspects of a Low-country summer.

— Alice Massey



Crinum Fred Howard

A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawn mower is broken.

~James Dent

Upcoming Events

October 17 - 19, 2008

Charleston Garden Festival

Keynote presenters are Allan Armitage, Elizabeth Dean, Doug Tallamy and Urvashi Rangan. The theme is Metamorphosis "Celebrating the lifecycle of the Natural World."

Charleston, SC

www.charlestongardenfestival.org

October 18, 2008

Georgia Master Gardener Association

Fall Conference

Marietta, GA

www.georgiamastergardeners.com

October 18, 2008

Hilton Head Island MG Garden Tours

Bette Manne, 843-342-3434

October 24 - 26, 2008

Historic Beaufort Foundation

Fall Festival of Houses & Gardens

www.historic-beaufort.org

October 25, 2008

UGA Bamboo Farm & Coastal Gardens Fall Festival

Savannah, GA

www.ugaextension.com/bamboo

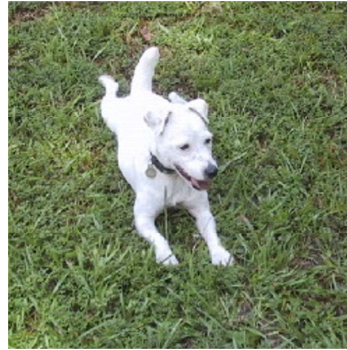
Turf Love



Turf Love will educate homeowners on proper care of their lawns, with emphasis on water conservation, less use of fertilizers, and greater use of buffer gardens to prevent pollutants and runoff from affecting adjacent bodies of water. A two-pronged approach will be used.

One approach involves individual visits to homes. These visits will include homeowner consultations, soil testing, measuring turf areas, and follow-up customized letters

with results and recommendations. An attached colored annual lawn care schedule will address best practices to follow. A



pilot phase starts in November in Sun City where it is expected that 20-40 visits will be requested

initially. This number will increase as the program expands within Beaufort County.

The second approach involves annual workshops where homeowners can hear presentations on various aspects of lawn care from university-based and local experts. Contact Bill Leonard (843-540-3600) if you are interested in helping with this new program.

EnviroScape Training

The EnviroScape is portable, table-top model that provide unique, interactive learning experiences, that makes the connection between what we do on earth and environmental quality. The visual demonstration crosses cultural, learning and age levels, helping people see how they can make a difference in preventing pollution.

It demonstrates point sources and nonpoint sources of pollution -- and the effects of both on

wetlands, estuaries, the ocean, beaches and even coral reefs and shellfish beds.

To demonstrate non-point sources of pollution, cocoa (soil) and drink mixes (chemicals) are placed on the model and rain is simulated. You can follow the flow of rain and what it picks up along the way. Trash and other contaminants can also be placed on the model.

Point sources of pollution and groundwater contamination can be demonstrated as well. For example, a leaking underground storage tank may contaminate groundwater. If this occurs, you'll be able to see such contamination through the side of the model.

Laura Lee Rose will be scheduling a training class in Bluffton soon, contact her for more info.

"The grass may be greener on the other side of the fence , but you still have to mow it."

Minutes from the July 24th MG Meeting

Laura Lee Rose

- Work is underway for the Pritchardsville and St. Helena recycling centers and they should be complete by September 30th; after that, upkeep will be necessary. The Hilton Head recycling center has not begun yet.
- Beaufort Jasper Water Authority: The BJWA wants help installing a rain garden at their main office.
- Bluffton Farmer's Market: The MG booth needs volunteers; there is a sign-up sheet at the booth.
- Hilton Head Plant Clinic: Volunteers are needed for the Wednesday, 9:30 to 12:00 clinic; volunteers are also needed for the Beaufort office.
- Arts and Seafood Festival: October 25th event which may be held at the Heyward House.
- Gardening Courses: Laura Lee will be conducting two gardening courses in Beaufort, one for people who work with the disabled and the other for service men and women at the Marine Corps Air Station.

Contact Laura Lee for any of these opportunities.

Betty Manne presented updates on HH projects next...

- Boys' and Girls' Club: Volunteers work on Tuesday mornings from 9:15 to about 10:30; join them if you can.
- Butterfly Enclosure at Honey

Horn: This project has not started yet; it is anticipated that the museum will be ready to start soon; contact Betty if you are interested in helping in this project.

- HH Rose Garden: Little work has been done on the garden because "roses rest during July."
- Extension Services Offices: The landscaping is on hold for now.
- Library Memorial Garden: The garden is coming along fine.
- HH Welcome Sign: There's been some weeding done recently.
- Pinckney Island Butterfly Garden: Work is ongoing the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month, starting at 9:00 am.
- Tour of MG Gardens: This is scheduled for Saturday, October 18 and will include 9 gardens. Volunteers are needed.
- HHIHS Gardens: George Westerfield said that there's been about 2000 plants put in; he estimates that there are 25 adult volunteers and 100 student volunteers. He's always looking for more volunteers.
- Heyward House: Volunteers will meet the 3rd Thursday of each month, beginning in September; volunteers are needed.

Rent a Master Gardener: This project has begun with 1 house completed so far in Beaufort, and several test gardens. Several gardens have been completed south of broad.

There will be a meeting set up for all those who volunteered for this project.

Laura Lee introduced the guest speaker, John Snow, an arborist. The theme of his presentation was to plant the right tree in the right place. Some questions you might as when faced with a decision about tree selection are:

- Why is the tree being planted?
- What is its use?
- How large is the area in which it will be planted?
- What will be the ultimate size of the tree?
- What type of maintenance are you willing to provide?

Arborist Snow recommended two resources: Landscape Plants of the Southeast and Trees and Shrubs for Warm Climates by Michael Dirr. Some of the points he made were:

- What we're doing is taking trees that are natural to the forest and changing their environment when we plant them in our landscape.
- When the roots of established trees get disturbed, like border trees in landscaped lots, their health is compromised.
- There's no sense fertilizing if you don't know that it's needed; take a soil sample.

Enjoy the summer!

Kathy Rundquist

Lowcountry Master Gardener Association



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LMGA Mission and Goals

The purpose of the association is to educate its members and to support and engage in projects and activities which promote and foster community enrichment, knowledge and enhancement in the areas of horticulture and ecology. The Association shall be organized and operated for the benefit of its members and shall operate on a not for profit basis.

News & Notes



For those of you who remember Teri Hale King, our former Clemson Extension agent; Teri and her husband Ramsey have had a baby girl, Milana Ann, born on May 29. The Kings live at 610 Walnut St., Brighton, CO 80601.



Congratulations to the interns who have reported 40 hours to become Master Gardeners!

They are:
Will Balk ★ Mike Hynes
★ Maureen Hynes ★
Norm Gordon ★ Henry

Fox ★ Nancy Hildebrand
★ Teri Metelak ★ Patty
O'Leary ★ Jenny Staton
★ Christine Rosenbach



Our fearless leader is requesting a group of strong men and tough woman who will be part of a committee to set up and take down the chairs and tables in the Bluffton library meeting room for the MG meetings.



Shortly, all MG's and interns, will be receiving a

renewal form for your LMGA membership in the mail. Our calendar year runs from Sept. 1, through August 31. In order to continue receiving meeting and activity notices and to help us keep our records straight, please return your form promptly.



Welcome to Lynda Gordon, a new Master Gardener from Greenville.