



UNIVERSITY OF  
**FLORIDA**

**EXTENSION**

Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

# Growing Concerns

News & Information for the Horticulture Professional

Oct-Nov-Dec 2005

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Dave Palmer

Hillsborough County Extension Service  
5339 S. CR 579, Seffner Fl., 33584  
(813) 744-5519 fax (813) 744-5776

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## Cool Weather is Coming!

And none too soon. The sanity of many in the green industries is tied to a breath of cooler, drier air. At this writing (Sept 14) the rainy season appears to be over. It's been another wet season. Read the soggy climate details in Bits & Pieces on page 6.

I hope you got a chance to go to FNATS in Orlando - it's always an amazing and educational experience.

Invasive insects continue to make inroads across the state. Africanized bees ( page 2) and pink hibiscus mealybug were found recently in Hillsborough County. A new disease of citrus (page 3) was recently identified - as though citrus didn't have enough problems. Our new forester, Rob Northrop identified a puzzling problem in West Central Florida - see Sand Live Oak Mystery (pages 4 & 5).

Don't forget - CEU season will be upon us shortly. Check out the calendar of events on page 7 and plan to get the CEUs while they're available.

And then there are the words that are hard for me to say... I'm leaving the position of Professional Services Hort Agent of Hillsborough County. I'm not leaving Extension, but there's not enough room for a complete explanation here - read the details on page 2.

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# Goodbye - sort of...

Some of you may be aware that over the years I've actively tried to use technology to increase my productivity and make Extension information as widely available as possible.

Last summer I finished my Masters degree in Instructional Technology (it means using computers for education).

Recently **I've been offered a position** in Extension, helping teach other Extension agents (in 12 counties between Pinellas County and Naples) what I've learned about technology, and helping them integrate technology into their jobs. After 25+ years in various horticulture industries, it was difficult to imagine not being in horticulture but eventually I came to realize that the time has come for me to tackle a new challenge.

While I'll be starting the new job in October, **I've been asked to remain available** (on a part-time basis) to the industry until my replacement can be hired, which may take 4-6 months. So I'll still be here to answer calls and help as best I can part time. I'll have to reduce my hort-related activities to find time to begin my new responsibilities. **Please bear with me** as I figure out how to "ride both horses" temporarily. I know the newsletters will have to be put on hold. To compensate I'll try to post regular updates on the **ProHort** website in the "**Hot Topics**" area.

By the way if you might be interested in being the Hort agent in Hillsborough County, check out the details and requirements at <http://personnel.ifas.ufl.edu/countylisting.htm#Permanent%20Status%20Accruing%20Positions>

Thank you to everyone I've worked with over the past 7 years. **You've been a joy to work for... and to work with. You're the greatest!**

**Always remember that you're unique... just like everyone else.**

## Africanized Bees

Sometime over this past summer, a small colony of bees swarmed from a ship at the Port of Tampa, taking up residence in a cardboard container wired to a nearby fence. Luckily, the bees had made their new home in one of 21 traps at the port that monitor African colonies arriving aboard ships.

Next month, DNA tests will confirm whether the colony was an Africanized honeybee hive, or a wild swarm of docile European honeybees. A positive test for African honeybee DNA won't be surprising. One more batch of African bees will have hitched a ride into the state, part of an invasion Florida has been unable to repel.

"Every one we've found, we've eradicated. But we're certainly not getting them all. We'll have to deal with them in years to come," said Jerry Hayes, chief of apiary inspections for the agriculture department. In Florida, no attacks on humans have been confirmed.

About 100 of the roughly 150 African bee colonies in Florida have been found in Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco or Manatee counties. Inspectors found the first African bees at Tampa's port in 2002.

Most of the African bee colonies probably flew off freighters from Central America. Inspectors take place every three weeks. The inspections usually turn up at least one colony. Colonies have been found in at least six other counties, including Hardee and Highlands. "My personal fear is they may have set up housekeeping in the Everglades years ago and are moving north," Hayes said.

*(Source: "Aggressive African Bees Here To Stay, Keepers Fear" By NEIL JOHNSON Tampa Tribune Published: Aug 1, 2005)*

# Citrus Greening

A new citrus disease recently raised its ugly head. It's called citrus greening. It's a bacterial disease that attacks the vascular system of citrus. Citrus greening infects most citrus species, hybrids, cultivars, and some citrus relatives. It severely affects most sweet oranges, mandarins, and mandarin hybrids. Once affected, there is no cure.

The disease is difficult to recognize in the field. Early symptoms of citrus greening disease are small yellow leaves on one limb or section of the tree canopy. The most characteristic symptoms of citrus greening are leaf mottling that often ignores the leaf veins. The newest leaves may show symptoms resembling zinc deficiency, while older leaves have the characteristic greening mottle. Other symptoms are yellow shoots, twig die-back, poor flowering, and stunting. Fruit is small, poorly colored, and/or lopsided. Fruit taste is bitter, medicinal, and sour. Seeds usually abort, and fruit set is poor. Symptoms vary according to cultivar, tree maturity, time of infection, stage of disease, and other abiotic or biotic agents that affect the tree. Chronically infected trees are sparsely foliated and display extensive twig or limb dieback. Lab tests are required for final confirmation.

Citrus greening is spread by insects called psyllids. It can also be transmitted by grafting, by dodder (*Ed. Note: Dodder is a weed - see Sep 2005 Retail Gardener for an article on Dodder*), and possibly by seed. Even though the pathogens are bacteria, the disease does not spread by casual contamination of personnel and tools or by wind and rain. Visit the State citrus greening website at <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/enpp/ento/citrusgreening.html>

## Equipment Theft Ring Busted

The Sheriffs' Department of Ventura County announced that it has effectively dismantled a criminal organization responsible for construction site burglaries, rental equipment thefts and **landscape equipment thefts** that have plagued Southern California and the Southwestern United States for the past 3 ½ years.

The four-month investigation resulted in the recovery of more than 25,000 pieces of stolen property valued at \$3.5 million. The investigation resulted in the arrest of 28 people so far and the seizing of more than \$200,000 in cash. About a third of the pieces have been returned to their owners. Victims included contractors, landscapers and equipment rental companies in nine states.

The Daily News of Los Angeles reported that much of the equipment was sold at swap meets, while other pieces were sent to Mexico and other countries.

### A few more aphorisms:

**A few fries short of a Happy Meal**

**A few peas short of a casserole**

**Skylight leaks a little**

**No grain in the silo**

**All foam, no beer**

**As smart as bait**

## SOD continues, but makes few headlines

Phytophthora ramorum (aka Sudden Oak Death) has been detected at 86 U.S. nurseries this year, said Olaf K. Ribeiro, owner of Ribeiro Plant Lab Inc. in Bainbridge Island, Wash. The locations are in: CA, 56; OR, 15; WA, 9; GA, 4; SC, 1; TN, 1. There are several reasons why the disease hasn't made national headlines in 2005, he said. State and federal officials believe they have the pathogen under control, the news media considers it "yesterday's news" and the disease hasn't been found at a large nursery this year. The pathogen hasn't turned into the threat to the nation's forests that some feared, Ribeiro said, but it could become a major nursery problem as nursery culture favors development of the pathogen. (*Source: Weekly NMPRO e-mail for September 13, 2005*)

# Sand Live Oak Mystery

Over the past spring and summer, Urban Forester and Extension Agent Rob Northrop has been chasing a mystery. The victims are sand live oaks (*Quercus geminata*).

Sand live oaks are very similar to live oak (*Quercus virginiana*). Its species name, *geminata*, means twins and refers to the paired acorns of the tree. The leaves

of sand live oak are distinctly more curled under at the margins and have obviously sunken veins on the upper surface. Sand live oak grows smaller than live oaks and is generally found on drier, more sandy sites. Sand live oak is sometimes planted as a roadside ornamental tree, because of its small, compact size and attractive, dark green foliage. This tree is found in the Atlantic coastal plains from southeastern Virginia, south as far as central Florida and west into Mississippi. Sand live oak grows best in deep, sandy soils. It prefers fertile, sandy sites, with partial shade and is often found in scrub habitats, or along sandy, coastal dunes.

What Rob found was an epidemic of sorts. Over the course of several months he fielded calls from Odessa and Lutz, Brandon and Valrico, south Tampa, north Tampa and west to Dunedin. He visited 19 neighborhoods with acres of sick trees. The problem seemed to affect only sand live oaks, which, unlike other oaks, have multiple trunks. New trunks grow from the roots of older ones, so what appears to be 30 or 40 trees, technically may be just one. Rob saw no sign of insects, no sign of disease. Just a few small, deformed leaves and lots of dead ones.

He talked to Tampa's urban forester, Steve Graham, and other experts before contacting Dr. Ed Barnard, the state forest pathologist. Dr. Barnard felt the problem was important enough to travel to Tampa in July. Late that same month, the sick trees began putting out some new growth. The leaves were tiny but offered live samples to study. Rob gathered some and sent them to Dr. Barnard. What they revealed, at three different sites, was powdery mildew. Finally, Barnard and Northrop agreed: The problem is powdery mildew.



**This whole neighborhood has experienced leaf drop.**

**The problem with the gene pool is that there is no life guard.**



**An example of the leaf distortion caused by powdery mildew.**

"It's a first for me, and I've been here 27 years," Barnard says. "It's the largest outbreak of a foliar disease on oaks that I've seen in Florida. It's unprecedented in that nobody recalls seeing anything quite this dramatic." This species of the disease, not yet identified, affects only sand live oaks. And it's not supposed to kill the trees. "If they kill their host trees, they've just killed their food source," Dr. Barnard says. "The understanding of co-evolution is, 'I'll take a few of your leaves but please don't die 'cause I'll need you the next time.' "

The fungus is always around but requires a special set of conditions to emerge and thrive. It winters in the leaf buds but won't become active unless the weather is cool and the air moist at bud break in the spring. After bud break, if conditions are warm and humid, it survives by using the leaves for nutrients and water. If the trees remain leafless and the disease shows up again in the spring, they will endure a second season of a starvation diet, unable to produce adequate energy through photosynthesis.

What can you or your customers do? If your sand live oaks' leaves are small, deformed and sparse, they likely have powdery mildew. Forester Rob Northrup says you should do nothing to encourage new growth or to treat the fungus.

- Do not fertilize.
- Do not trim.
- Do not apply fungicide.

He continues to monitor 19 sites with extensive disease.

Rob Northrup is the Urban and Community Forester with the Hillsborough Extension Office, part of the University of Florida. He can be reached at (813) 744-5519 X 106. For more information on urban forestry, go online to [urbanforestry.ifas.ufl.edu](http://urbanforestry.ifas.ufl.edu).

## Bits & Pieces

I spoke briefly to Dr Eileen Buss, an entomologist in Gainesville. She'd been called to look at some properties here in Hillsborough County concerning **pesticide resistance in chinchbugs**. While there has been little research on chinchbug resistance to products other than Dursban, Dr. Buss believes that the observational evidence strongly points toward a **growing resistance to pyrethrins** in general, and especially to bifenthrin (Talstar). At the moment unfortunately, there are few products to rotate with the pyrethrins to slow resistance. (*Source: personal communication with Dr. Buss*)

**Soil saturation** has been a major problem in West Central Florida for the last 3 years. For comparison purposes, "normal" summer rainfall in Tampa is 19.59 inches (**records go back to 1890**). In 2003, following a 3 year drought, the rainfall total for the summer (Jun, July & Aug) was 31.72 inches, **62% above normal**. Rainfall for summer 2004 was 33.38 inches, **70% above normal**, and afterwards we had a series of hurricanes that dropped **another 12.49 inches of rain** in September. Following the hurricanes and through the summer of 2005, we've had near-normal to slightly above normal rainfall. The result is that the soil has been saturated with water for much of the past 3 years.

Plants everywhere are stressed. There's been a **higher than normal incidence of disease** in turf, plants and trees and a higher than normal incidence of disease related to soil saturation and of plants dying from that disease. **Drought tolerant plants** that thrived during the 2000-2002 drought have been the hardest hit.

## The Best Websites

**Woody Ornamentals** - <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/> This is a huge and wonderful site listing a ton of information on trees shrubs, groundcovers, and palms.

**Tree Care** - <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/maturetreecare/index.htm> Another website by Dr Ed Gilman full of good info on the selection, installation, pruning and maintenance of trees.

**Palms in the Landscape** - <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/palmindex.htm> Everything you need to know about palms.

**Featured Creatures** - <http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu/> This is the definitive list of bugs in Florida. Hundreds and hundreds of detailed descriptions, life cycles and control options.

## New or Interesting Publications

**CIR1466: Florida's Native Bromeliads**

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW205>

**CIR1471: An Overview and Informal Key of the Ferns of Florida**

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW217>

**CIR1047: Transplanting Palms**

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP001>

**ENH 884 - Weed Management in Home Lawns**

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP141>

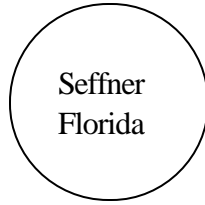
**My doctor gave me 6 months to live, but when I couldn't pay the bill he gave me 6 months more. Walter Matthau**

# Calendar of Events

- Oct 4 & 5 - Hazard Trees, and Trees, People and the Law** - Tampa, 5.5 ISA CEUs 5.5 SAF CEUs, see the website at <http://www.arborday.org/hazardtrees/> or call toll free 1-888-448-7337
- Oct 5 - Limited Commercial Maint, Limited Structural & Limited L&O Exam Prep Class** - Sandford for more info, 8 Limited Commercial CEUs, see the brochure at <http://landscape.ifas.ufl.edu/pesticide%20training/pat2005.pdf>
- Oct 20 - Fertilizer Rodeo** - Collier County, for more info call 239-353-4244 or see the webpage at <http://collier.ifas.ufl.edu/Horticulture/2005%20Classes%20July%20Update.pdf>
- Oct 25 - Palm Landscape Management Update** - Sarasota, Selby botanical Gardens see the flyer at <http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu/Palm%20Mgmt05.pdf> or call 941-861-9821(Sarasota) or 941-742-5986(Manatee) many CEUs offered
- Oct 25 - New Grasses Field Day** - Avon Park - see the webpage at <http://www.environmentalturf.com/events/rsvp.php> **Note:** You **must** pre-register before Wed October 19th by calling 863-452-6595 or by registering on the website many CEUs offered.
- Oct 31 - Spanish Language ID cardholder training**, Ft Myers see the website at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Horticulture%20Classes/Cardholder%202005.pdf> or call Letha at 239-461-7514 for more information L&O CEUs
- Nov 3 - Common Plant ID** - Collier County, for more info call 239-353-4244 or see the webpage at <http://collier.ifas.ufl.edu/Horticulture/2005%20Classes%20July%20Update.pdf>
- Nov 13-16 - 2005 Fla Mosquito Control Assoc Annual Fall Meeting** - Hawk's Cay Resort - Duck Key (Mile Marker 61) Fl. When Available, details will be posted on <http://mosquito.ifas.ufl.edu> Public Health CEUs
- Nov 15 & 17 - Limited Commercial Maintenance Exam Prep Class** - Sarasota - call 941-861-9821(Sarasota) or 941-742-5986(Manatee) 8 Limited Commercial CEUs
- Nov 18 - Proper Pruning & Site Design and Selecting, Planting and Maintaining Trees** - Collier County, for more info call 239-353-4244 or see the webpage at <http://collier.ifas.ufl.edu/Horticulture/2005%20Classes%20July%20Update.pdf>
- Nov 18 - Limited Commercial Maint Exam Prep Class** - Seffner, Call Bob Kessler, at 772-562-1442 for more info. 8 Limited Commercial CEUs
- Nov 21-22 - General Standard and Ornamental & Turf Pesticide Training in SPANISH**- Lee County see the webpage at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Horticulture%20Classes/General%20%20and%20O%20T%202005.pdf> or call Letha at 239-461-7514 for more information Core CEUs, O&T CEUs
- Dec 1 & 2 - Great Southern Tree Conference** - Gainesville, Hilton Hotel & Conf Center for more info see the website: [www.fngla.org/](http://www.fngla.org/) FNGLA CEUs ISA CEUs
- Dec 7 - Landscape Plants - Pest Problems & Solutions** - Palmetto Call 941-861-9821(Sarasota) or 941-742-5986(Manatee) Ltd CEUs, O&T CEUs, & Comm L&O CEUs
- Dec 8 - O&T Exam Prep Class** - Sanford, for more info, see the brochure at <http://landscape.ifas.ufl.edu/pesticide%20training/pat2005.pdf>
- Dec 13 - Core/Private Applicator Ag License Training and Testing** 9-11 am. Manatee County Extension Service , Palmetto. 2 Core CEUs offered. Tests offered immediately following training. Call 941-722-4524 for more info

When someone says "A penny for your thoughts?" and you put your two cents in, what happens to the other penny? George Carlin

Hillsborough Extension Service  
5339 S. County Road 579  
Seffner, Fl., 33584-3334



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Dave Palmer