

### **Dates and Events** (events are free unless noted)

**Nassau Extension Plant Clinics (10am-2pm): Jan 8 and Jan 22** (Monday), Yulee County Bldg. (86026 Pages Dairy Rd.)  
Bring your sick plants in a bag for diagnosis.

**Weds. Jan. 10– 10-11:00am** – “*Citrus*”, Yulee County Bldg., 86026 Pages Dairy Rd., Yulee

**Weds. Jan. 24– 10am-11:00** – “*Fruit Trees for NE Fla.*”, 86026 Pages Dairy Rd., Yulee.

**Tues. Jan. 9, 7 pm, Wild Amelia Wild Nite** — “*Marine Science Research Institute News*”, Peck Center, 516 S. 10<sup>th</sup> St., Fernandina.

**Sat. Jan 20, 9am-3pm** – “Beaches and Barrier Island Symposium” \$50, register on Coastal Wildscapes website.  
(Location is in Richmond Hill.)

### **Garden to-dos for January**

Plant flowers such as carnations, pansies, petunias, snapdragons, dianthus, foxglove. Vegetables - peas, beets, broccoli, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, radishes, turnips, and cauliflower can be planted, as well as fennel, garlic, borage, lavender, parsley, rosemary, and thyme. Don't fertilize flowers this month. Plants need less water in winter, but if a hard freeze is predicted watering 24-48 hours in advance will help protect your at risk plants, especially citrus. Don't do any major pruning, especially on flowering trees, but you can prune dead limbs, suckers, and crisscrossing branches. You can also transplant dormant plants, but be sure to water.

If you had a real Christmas tree, consider using it in the garden. Sink the trunk into the ground (you may need to stake it to have it stand up straight). The birds will enjoy using it for cover and in the spring you can use it as a support for vines such as morning glory, moonflower, and cypress vine. Or peas and cucumbers. Protect plants that are marginally hardy with mulch, sheets, or even cardboard stapled around the trunks of grafted trees to prevent dieback. Even just putting them on the porch will help. Spanish moss is a great (and free) insulator. You can use Christmas lights under a cover to help keep very delicate plants warm.

### **The Garden Maven's Advice to the “Floralorn”**

*Dear Garden Maven,*

Can I plant coontie palms at this time of year? What is their preferred location? Any other tips for making them look their best?

*Garden Dominatrix*

*Dear “Dom”,*

Coonties (*Zamia pumila*) grow in almost any light situation, from full sun to dense shade, but are happiest in part shade. They are a drought tolerant low maintenance ground cover (tall) or foundation plant. They are also called Arrowroot, Seminole Bread, and Comfort Root. In the past the underground caudex was processed (it is toxic in its unprocessed state) to make arrowroot flour. The native coontie population in Florida was nearly eradicated in the early 1900's because of this. Coonties are cycads, not palms, and are among the oldest plant forms in existence.

Is January a good time to plant? If the plants are in pots it might be good to wait till February to plant them in the ground. They would probably be okay now, but with nighttime temperatures in the low 40's forecast, it can't hurt to wait a few weeks and plant during somewhat warmer weather.

Coonties have a long tap root, and are susceptible to root damage when moved, so plant them where you want them to stay. They grow slowly. Plant on 12-20 inch centers for a ground cover, 3-5 ft. centers otherwise. The 3-5 ft. spacing will help prevent scale, which is their main pest. Be careful of the roots when planting from pots. Fertilize with palm fertilizer beginning in March. New leaves are usually sprouting in late spring. Male cones produce pollen in late winter and early spring. Female cones release their shiny orange seeds in late fall. They can be grown in pots, but are happiest in the ground. All in all, an easy and rewarding plant to grow.

*The Maven*

**Plant Hero of the Month:** Firespike is still going, along with many other plants. And of course, camellias!