

# Columbia Green

May 2015

Commercial News

UF/IFAS Extension  
Columbia County  
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## Inside this issue:

Urban Turf Fertilizer Rule	2
Fertilizer Applicator Certification	2
Renewing a License	2
Activated Charcoal for Chemical Spills	2
Bulk Mulch Math	2
Hitchhiking Termites in Mulch?	3
Name That Bug	3
New North Florida Tree Book	3
LCLM Workshop Thursday, June 4th	4



## Mulch is Good... but too much of a Good thing is Bad

### Beautiful and Healthy

A mulch layer around trees and shrubs, ornamental plant beds and bare ground provides many benefits. Mulching is one of the Nine Principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™. These nine landscaping principles are recommended not only to enhance the beauty of gardens and landscapes, but to protect Florida's natural resources and preserve the state's unique beauty.

### Simple facts about mulch:

- Organic mulch materials improve soil fertility as they decompose.
- Mulch buffers soil temperature, keeping soils warmer in winter and cooler in summer.
- A mulch layer can inhibit certain plant diseases.
- A layer of mulch helps to reduce evaporation and minimizes water needs for established plants.
- Fresh mulch inhibits weed germination and growth.
- Some mulches improve soil aeration, structure and drainage.
- Mulch around trees and shrubs (not against the trunk) eases maintenance and reduces the risk of damage from string trimmers.
- Mulch gives planting beds a neat and uniform appearance, adding a contrast of color and texture that complements plantings.

### How much is too much?

If mulch is applied too deep, it can lead to the degradation of a landscape. Yes, too much of a good thing is bad... but try to convince the client who wants the look of fresh mulch in her plant beds.



### Facts to share with clients based on UF/IFAS research:

- For well-drained sites, apply a 2–3 inch layer of mulch around plants.
- “Volcano mulching,” or applying it too deeply, can block oxygen and result in root rot and plant stress.
- Pull mulch back from trunk and root flare so bark doesn't stay moist, promoting rot and disease.
- Thick mulch layers can mat down, causing rain water to flow away.
- Thick mulch is home for rodents and pests who feast on tree bark.

### 2 ways to Beauty and Health

1. Remove some old mulch when you freshen the color up with new mulch.
2. Rake or turn the mulch to expose the under-layer that hasn't been bleached.

## Updated Urban Turf Fertilizer Rule

On January 8, 2015, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) adopted changes to the statewide Urban Turf Fertilizer Rule. The changes were in response to the culmination of 8 years of turf research conducted by the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) turf scientists. This research was funded by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

### What are important changes?

- The term “**Actively Growing Turf**” was added
- “Apply only to actively growing turf”
- The amounts of nitrogen for spring, summer and fall
- Modified application recommendations and limits for different lawn grass species
- Front of bag will prominently display coverage in sq. ft.



### Do you have a Limited Fertilizer Applicator Certificate? Don't delay! Enroll today!

GI-BMP Class. Thursday, June 18

Alachua County Extension. Call (352) 955-2402

## Renewing Your Licenses

LCLM - Limited Commercial Landscape Maintenance  
Must be renewed Yearly. 4 accepted CEUs. \$75

LL&O—Limited Lawn and Ornamental  
Renewable every 4 years. 4 accepted CEUs. \$25

Ornamental and Turf  
Renew every 4 years. 4 core CEUs and 12 approved category CEUs. \$100 Public. \$250 Commercial.

PCO—Pest Control Operator, Lawn and Ornamental  
Renew Yearly. 2 Core CEUs and 2 L&O CEUs. \$150

**Option for missing renewal deadline—Retest and Pay Questions?** Contact Nichelle at 752-5384

## Activated Charcoal to the Rescue

Activated charcoal is a porous, soft black substance made from heating carbon-based materials such as hardwoods and coconut shells. It absorbs 100 to 200 times its own weight and is strongly attracted to organic pesticides. The chemicals bind to the charcoal, which keeps them from contaminating soil and water resources.

Use activated charcoal to clean up and reduce effects of spills from organic pesticides, some petroleum products, and hydraulic fluids. It's especially beneficial for sites that might be close to a water source or well. To use, work the charcoal into the contaminated soil to a depth of six inches.

If you want to grow crops or landscape plants, or establish turf in areas that have previously been treated with herbicides, and residues are still in the soil, use charcoal to neutralize the pesticide. Like mediating spills, work the charcoal into the top six inches of soil. You can also apply a slurry mix of one pound of charcoal per one gallon of water for each 150 square feet.

Removing residual and spilled chemicals will help restore soil health in contaminated areas and prevent further contamination of other resources.

### Activated Charcoal for Pesticide Inactivation

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/wg065> by Fred Fishel, UF/IFAS

### Bulk Mulch Math

Bulk mulch is sold in cubic yard volumes. To calculate how much you need, measure the area to be mulched, in square feet. (Ex—10' x 10' = 100 sq. ft.)

Next, convert the desired depth to a fraction of a foot. For example, 3" divided by 12" equals 1/4 ft, or .25 ft. Multiply this fraction by the sq.ft. area you are going to cover. ( Ex—.25 ft x 100 sq.ft. = 25 cubic ft.)

Convert to cu.yd. by dividing the cubic ft by 27. (Ex— 25 cu. ft. / 27 = .926. So you need about 1 cu.yd. to cover 100 square feet with mulch at 3 inches deep)

For Professionals

## Termites in your bagged mulch?

Every year there are rumors that go around about termites being spread around the county in bags of landscape mulch. The authors of the UF/IFAS document found at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in651> entitled 'The facts about termites and mulch' believe that the greater risk to structures are from termites already established in the yard as opposed to any termite stragglers that may be brought in on bags of mulch. Although termites can be found in mulch, their survival is improbable. First, they would have to survive the chipping process to create the mulch. Once separated from the colony, their ability to survive further decreases. Finally, even when they are found in mulch, mulch-fed termites have a low survival rate.



The use of used railroad ties or large pieces of salvaged timber, however, may be problematic with the movement of invasive species such as the Formosan subterranean termite. These large chunks of wood may contain numbers large enough to sustain the termite's reproductive colony.

Thick layers of landscape mulch placed next to the foundation may be acting more as a bridge for existing termites to move from the landscaped areas into the house without contacting areas applied with termiticides. Mulch keeps more moisture and stable temperatures in the soil below, which provides a better environment for the termite.

The termite's worst enemy is dryness. Strive to keep mulch at a minimum, if at all, next to the foundation walls. Avoid placing plants that need watering near the foundation, also. A great recommendation is to separate the planting beds from the house with at least a 10 inch strip of stone or gravel. This provides a hot, dry barrier between the moist, cool mulch and the home's foundation.

**Need to name that bug?** Your local Extension Agent is always willing to help you identify that bug, but when she can't, experts are standing by at UF to help identify any insect or related arthropod. If your mystery creature has six or more legs, the UF Insect ID Lab is the place to send your sample.

When you send a specimen to the Insect ID Lab, manager Lyle Buss will review it, identify it and respond with the result. If it is an unusual specimen, he forwards it to a specialist within the UF/IFAS Extension System or the Florida Department of Agriculture, Division of Plant Industry. Mr. Buss will send you the final identification results. The UF Insect ID Lab serves as the hub entomology component of the Southern Plant Diagnostic Network

The fee is \$8.00. The form and directions for sending samples are at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/SR/SR01000.pdf>

## Trees: North & Central Florida

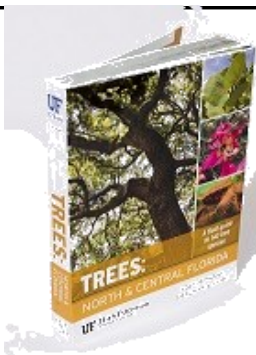
A field guide to 140 common tree species

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## Limited Commercial Landscape Maintenance Workshop

**Location: UF/IFAS Extension, Columbia County**  
**971 W. Duval St. #170, Lake City, FL 32055**  
**When: Thursday, June 4th, 2014 8:15 am - 3:15 pm**

Certification to apply herbicides, insecticides and fungicides to ornamental plant beds, plants, driveways, sidewalks and path areas (Also know as roundup license)

**6 total CEUs.** 3 Core, and 3 L&O, LL&O, or LCLM  
**LCLM Certification**— obtain the 6 approved CEUs needed  
**LICENSE RENEWAL - Attend partial day for renewal CEUs**

8:15 Registration and Pretest

### Session Topics:

Pesticides and Environmental Concerns, Herbicides and IPM,  
Pesticide Label and the Law, Common Weed ID,  
Major Insect Groups, LCLM Laws and Regulations

**3:00—3:15** Application Info, CEU Distribution, Posttest

### 3:30 Test Option

Take exam immediately after training **ONLY** if you bring all the completed paperwork. Paperwork includes completed application, completed proof of insurance form, a 2" x 2" headshot photo, a \$150 check payable to FDACS, and a picture ID.

Download forms for Limited Commercial Landscape Certification at:  
[www.freshfromflorida.com/Business-Services/Search-by-Business/Pest-Control/Forms-and-Publications](http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Business-Services/Search-by-Business/Pest-Control/Forms-and-Publications)

**Pre-study recommended. FDACS charges you \$150 for each retake!**

Purchase books at UF/IFAS bookstore [www.ifasbooks.com](http://www.ifasbooks.com). 1-800-226-1764

**\$30 Registration payable to Columbia County 4-H . Lunch is included.**

**Pre-registration is required**

Call Linda at 386-752-5384