



Biosphere Buzz

Volume 1, Number 8

Winter Edition

November, December 2002—January, February 2003



What is an Environmentalist?

One thing I have noted about our many new friends and customers is that they are sensitive to the environmental issues that face us every day. Most are knowledgeable about major problems and many are really interested in what they can do to improve matters. Our focus in the nursery has been on what can be done with the landscape that will make it more valuable to native wildlife and it seems to be helping as we get many comments on how landscapes are now utilized and are more interesting and not just decorative.

There are certainly varying degrees of environmental concern and activism, from those who simply complain without doing anything to those who spend endless hours really fighting the battles. We really need more fighters because our government seems hell-bent on dismantling our best protective laws and policies and the only way to overcome powerful lobbies is to become one. Where we have biological and chemical problems with political solutions (i.e. funding, rule making, policy development and enforcement), the only answer is a large, well-informed, grassroots advocacy movement which can balance powerful lobbies funded by industry or agriculture. Our experience has shown that many elected officials will listen to a well-presented plan to solve a problem if it is reasonable and realistic, with enough people supporting it. At the same time they turn off at a presentation that is only a protest..

It is not easy to organize and sustain an effective advocacy group, no matter how important the cause. It involves a lot of work just to understand the complex issues and to educate and stimulate enough people to join the effort. Current studies also show that fewer young people are joining effective activist groups with the average age in Florida now at 62. (Only 0.3% of activists are in the 18-24 age group)! Our increasing urbanization of Florida will undoubtedly continue this trend of isolating citizens from the natural world and decreasing our sensitivity to ecological problems.

So, where am I going with this? I'm encouraging every one of you to get away from the television and computer, get out into the real world, find an organization that is doing a good job in encouraging changes in our society that will improve the environment and joining in as an active participant. See to it that schools increase the environmental awareness curriculum, starting with kindergarten age. (Studies show that a great deal of the environmental awareness and conscience of a child is developed by the 5th grade)!

If you are not willing to spend time, energy, and money towards environmental goals, don't whine when your quality of life declines to the point where we don't see any quality. If you need some suggestions about good groups, call me. The satisfaction of seeing the changes is well worth the time.....

Jim Thomas

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Some Straight Talk

Perhaps you've noticed you haven't received a newsletter for some time. This is partly because we have been extremely busy and partly because there is not much happening in the garden during the winter. Another problem, however is that it is time-consuming and expensive and, while it was intended as our major effort at advertising, it has not improved sales at all in the year we have been publishing it. We have been told that our marketing is too subtle so here is our new attempt:

"You better get your lazy self outdoors and get your spring garden planned, then get out here and buy some plants if you want more newsletters!"

How's that?

Biosphere Consulting, Inc., 14908 Tilden Road, Winter Garden, Florida 34787

407-656-8277, BiosphereNursery.com

Nursery open to the public, Saturdays, 9 a.m.—3 p.m., or by appointment.

Winter - Time to...

PLANT: This is the time to plant trees. It is still not too late to plant wildflower seeds—order from our website or pick them up at the nursery. You should also be planting cool-loving flowering things for the butterfly garden: ageratum, cornflower, crocosmia, dianthus, lobelia, snapdragon and yarrow. We now have wildflower plants in 4 inch pots which you should use instead of the same old bedding plants—they will bloom longer, be prettier and require less water and fertilizer. This is also the best time to transplant shrubs or trees that need to be moved. Start seeds to be transplanted out as warm weather comes. This is your last chance to plant cool weather vegetables such as beets, broccoli, radish, collards and potatoes. Plant seedlings rather than seeds if you can.

PLAN: Now is the time to re-think your landscape and make plans for a better one. Your plans should include a butterfly garden and we can help you. Check out our website, biospherenursery.com, for a start up list of plants and we'll try to do a sample design in our next newsletter. Your plans should also include a compost pile if you don't already have one. How about a small vegetable garden to grow some fresh vegetables that will not include toxic sprays found on many of the ones from the supermarket? Include a bird bath and feeder if you don't already have them.

FERTILIZE: Hold off on fertilizing until mid-to-late February, then use only what you need for each species.

PRUNE: It's all right to trim Crepe Myrtles now as well as tree branches that are dead or dying. Resist trimming freeze-damaged foliage until mid-to-late February. Trimming too early may stimulate new growth which will be vulnerable to another freeze.

INSTALL: Bird nest boxes are important in any landscape. The species we recommend in Central Florida include a combo for wrens, downy woodpecker and tufted titmouse. Also bluebird, crested flycatcher, flicker, screech owl and wood duck. Check out our website and order them to be shipped or picked up at the nursery. Many of these species will begin nesting in February, so hurry up!

Because of the season, we will just feature trees in this newsletter and because we have a real surplus and tired of re-potting, we are having a major sale on some species. Enclosed in this letter is a flyer we normally only make available to wholesale tree farms. In addition to the species listed here on sale we have many other kinds and some larger ones which will be at reduced prices.

Planting Trees and Shrubs During Winter Months

This is the time of year for major tree and shrub planting and transplanting. There are several advantages in planting during the winter instead of waiting until spring. The plants are not actively growing during this time and less apt to be injured from shock of planting and the weather and moisture during the winter season is very conducive to good plant adjustment as well as good working weather for the gardener. Woody plants will have time to get root systems established, giving maximum growth during the spring and summer growing season. Research shows that roots of plants continue to grow and develop during mild winter days, even though foliage does not.

The success of your landscape will depend greatly on your ability to select plants which will fit in your particular landscape and situation. Trees are always a must in most landscapes whether their purpose is for shade, windbreaks, food, setting or atmosphere, to add color and beauty with bloom and foliage, or to add esthetic and real estate value to the property.

The ideal landscape tree does not exist. Trees which have desirable features also have those that are undesirable. A tree may have beautiful flowers in the spring, followed by undesirable fruit or seed pods in the fall. If a tree is a fast grower, it may also be brittle and short-lived. All trees have advantages and disadvantages, thus your selection must be carefully considered. Our nursery will have a great stock of trees during fall and winter and we can give you more time and attention during this season than during the spring rush.

Continued

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“Planting Trees and Shrubs” continued

Trees or woody shrubs that are dug up and transplanted during this season should be cut back severely and watered everyday until they become established. Remember, the more leaf surface you have, the more water is evaporated, thereby reducing the chance for survival if too many roots of the plant are lost during transplanting.

Points for consideration in choosing the proper tree should include the following:

- Be sure the tree you choose will fit your landscape need. For example, fast growing for quick shade, broad and spreading for shade, dense for a wind-break or for screening or attractive blooms for an accent.
- Know all about the tree you select and its growth requirements. Know the tree's ultimate size and plant accordingly. Does the tree require special soil? Does the tree have serious insects and diseases and will require routine maintenance?
- Be sure the tree is tolerant of your local weather conditions. Will it tolerate Florida's summer heat, or is it too tender for Northern and Central Florida's winters?
- Do you want an evergreen or a deciduous tree? Deciduous shade trees are recommended as they allow the desirable sun when void of leaves in the winter whereas the evergreen tree may be desirable for screening.
- Consider overhead lines, underground water lines, septic tanks, etc., as well as walks, drives, and paved surfaces which may be damaged by tree roots.
- Know the tolerance of the tree to salt spray if living on the coast.
- Lastly obtain a quality tree from a reliable nurseryman (Biosphere is a great choice!) and plant it in a carefully prepared spot, following good horticultural practices as to proper soil, location, exposure, watering, and spraying so that your investment in the tree is not lost through carelessness and lack of planning.

See the Tree Chart on page 4.

How to get to Biosphere

From Orlando, go west on Colonial Drive (HWY. 50) to Winter Garden. Turn south on Hwy. 535 and go 3 miles. Look for Tilden Rd. on the right (west side). Turn right heading west on Tilden Rd., go about 1 mile. Look for the nursery is on the left.

Spring Shows Beginning Soon - Mark Your Calendars

Saturday, March 22 and Sunday, March 23

Harry P. Leu Gardens' Annual Plant Sale will be held both days from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the Harry P. Leu Gardens in Orlando. This is a perfect opportunity to visit the Gardens' (no admission fee). You can see all the beautiful foliage in bloom and have an opportunity to buy the plants you like to create your own garden at home. Information call (407) 246-2849.

Saturday, March 29

"Spring Fever in the Garden" sponsored by Bloom 'N Grow Garden Society. The timing is perfect -- this will give you a chance to pick up every thing you wished you would have gotten at Leu Gardens' to complete your own garden. The festival will be held from 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM in historic downtown Winter Garden. Information call (407) 656-6974.

Saturday, March 29 and Sunday March 30

"Wild About Florida" sponsored by the Central Florida Zoo in partnership with St. Johns River Water Management District to celebrate the beauty and biodiversity of the state. Something a little different that children of all ages will enjoy. The show hours are 9:00 AM until 2:00PM both days. Biosphere plans to be there on Saturday the 29. Information call (407) 323-4450 ext. 136.

Saturday April 26 and Sunday, April 27

The 42nd Annual Apopka Art and Foliage Festival sponsored by the Apopka Woman's Club will be open from 9:00AM until 5:00 PM on both days. These ladies are dedicated to community improvement and the proceeds go toward several worthy causes. Information call (407) 886-6970.

Aquatic Maintenance

For homeowners who are maintaining weeds form lakes or ponds, be sure to use an aquatic- approved herbicide to prevent fish kills and damage to the system. We now have in stock quarts of RODEO®, the last being produced by the manufacturer because of the small demand. Ours is concentrated and used at a rate of 3 oz. per gallon. After these are gone, the smallest size available is 2.5 gallons. The quarts sell for \$59.95.

Featured Plants of the Month - - Trees! Trees! Trees!

Tree Chart					
Species	Height	Deciduous	Flowering	DT/TW	Bird/Butterfly
Blackgum (<i>Nyssa sylvatica biflora</i>)	100'	Yes	Inconspicuous	TW	Bird
Blue Beech (<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>)	20'-30'	Yes	Inconspicuous	TW	Bird
Cypress, Bald (<i>Taxodium distichum</i>)	100'-150'	Yes	No	TW	Bird
Cypress, Pond (<i>Taxodium ascendens</i>)	100'-150'	Yes	No	TW	Bird
Dahoon Holly (<i>Ilex cassine</i>)	20'-30'	No	Inconspicuous	TW	Bird
Fringe Tree (<i>Chionanthus virginica</i>)	30'	Yes	Yes/Showy	Neither	Bird
Green Ash (<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanicus</i>)	40'	Yes	Inconspicuous	TW	Bird
Hackberry (<i>Celtis laevigata</i>)	60'-80'	Yes	Inconspicuous	-	Butterfly
Live Oak (<i>Quercus virginiana</i>)	40'-50'	Yes	No	-	-
Red Bottlebush (<i>Callistemon sp.</i>)	20'	No	Yes/Showy	DT	Butterfly
Red Maple (<i>Acer rubrum</i>)	80'-90'	Yes	Inconspicuous	Neither	-
Redbud (<i>Cercis canadensis</i>)	40'	Yes	Yes/Showy	Neither	-
River Birch (<i>Betula nigra</i>)	80'	Yes	Inconspicuous	TW	-
Slash Pine (<i>Pinus elliotii</i>)	100'-120'	No	No	DT	Bird
Southern Magnolia (<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>)	60'-90'	No	Yes/Showy	Neither	Bird
Swamp Bay (<i>Persea palustris</i>)	30'-40'	No	Inconspicuous	TW	Bird
Swamp Dogwood (<i>Cornus foemina</i>)	15'-20'	Yes	Yes	TW	Butterfly
Sweetbay (<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>)	20'-30'	No	Yes/Showy	TW	Butterfly
Sweetgum (<i>Liquidamber styraciflua</i>)	80'-150'	Yes	Inconspicuous	TW	Bird
Sycamore (<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>)	100'-170'	Yes	Inconspicuous	Neither	-
Tulip Poplar (<i>Leriodendren tulipifera</i>)	100'	Yes	Yes/showy	Neither	Butterfly
Yellow Haw (<i>Crateagus flava</i>)	20'	Yes	Yes/Showy	DT	Bird

* DT = Drought Tolerant TW = Transitional Wetland

Butterflies Need Our Help

Recent reports from California note that the number of Monarch butterflies have dwindled this year and are "dramatically fewer". The counts are done by the Ventana Wilderness Society each year as the butterflies cluster for the winter along the coast.

Here in West Orange County we are rapidly losing the Zebra Swallowtail. When the area around our nursery was pastures these beautiful butterflies were common. Now we have subdivisions, no pawpaw plants, and last year we saw only two Zebra Swallowtail's.

One Bright Note: Last week we saw two pairs of bluebirds, the first we have seen in 20 years here. They were probably just passing through.....

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