

NAPLES FLORIDA WEEKLY™

YOUR NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT SOURCE

WEEK OF DECEMBER 25-31, 2008

www.FloridaWeekly.com

Vol. I, No. 13 • FREE

A very fairy Christmas

BY NANCY STETSON

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“Christmas decorations are about magic,” says Mark Vanagas.

Those who step into the Neapolitan home he shares with wife Dot Auchmoody can't help but agree.

Every December the couple transforms their home into a Christmas fairyland.

Visitors, children and adults alike, tend to respond the same: Jaws drop. Eyes widen in wonder, trying to take it all in.

The main Christmas tree in the living room — there are two more trees in the family room — is chock full of fanciful ornaments, feathers, beads, garland, tree branches, grape vines, birds' nests and white lights. You can look at it for more than an hour and still discover something new, much like a three-dimensional version of those children's books that cram diverse items into one picture and then

SEE FAIRY, A8 ►

Plant researchers turned on by LED technology

SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

While holiday lights have taken a shine to light-emitting diodes as replacements for incandescent bulbs, University of Florida researchers are celebrating LED technology for another application: better-growing crops.

In addition to staying cool to the touch, lasting longer and using up to 90 percent

less energy, LEDs can also be designed to emit specific frequencies of light that promote plant growth.

“Everyone knows about greenhouses or home growers that use these special fluorescent white lights or filtered light to help plants grow,” says Kevin Folta, a horticulture researcher at the UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. “Light

is the language plants listen to when deciding how to grow... and we're learning how to speak these various ways to make plants do what we want them to do, when we want them to do it.”

In a paper published in a special December issue of the journal HortScience, Mr.

SEE LED, A8 ►

INSIDE



Happy New Year!

Our guide has tips for stepping out and for staying at home. **C12-19** ►



Young Professionals at Saks Fifth Avenue

And other festivities all around town. **C20 & 21** ►



Big fans of Big Cypress

New entrepreneurs are sold on this new market place. **B1** ►



Avian eating manners

Birds' beaks serve an important purpose at mealtime. **A12** ►

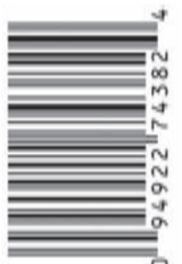
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