

EXTENSION

*Comings & Goings*

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN FOR EXTENSION

**Update: Shaping Solutions for Florida's Future**

Exciting things are happening with the long range planning effort. Many counties have indicated they have set up advisory committee meetings this spring to begin listening sessions. Departments and Centers are also planning meetings. Check the webpage (<http://pdec.ifas.ufl.edu/lrp>) in the next couple of weeks to find a new web-based survey (Community Input Survey) that anyone can use to submit their opinions regarding programmatic thrust. This survey will be made available to the public through the Solutions for Your Life page. If you have not looked at the secondary data section of the webpage, the steering committee encourages you to take time to review the Florida Scorecard from the Florida Chamber of Commerce. The Florida Scorecard contains many interesting statistics about Florida and outlines the Chamber's six

pillars for the future of Florida.

**Meet Your Specialist**

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Hugh Smith came to the University of Florida from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station where he worked on integrated pest management in diverse crops, including ornamentals, strawberries and cigar wrapper tobacco. His specialty is management of insects and mites in vegetable crops. He also takes special interest in biological control, habitat manipulation to enhance biological control, grower outreach and pest management training in Spanish.

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Dr. Smith received his Ph.D. in entomology from the University of Florida in 1999. He has worked as an entomologist in California, Central America, and the Pacific.

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## Leon County Breaks Ground on New Water Recycling Unit

The Leon County Board of County Commissioners broke ground on a new rainwater recycling system Wednesday at the Leon County Extension Office, located at 615 Paul Russell Road, which will soon house a 40,000 gallon rainwater capture cistern that will allow diverted rainwater to irrigate the County’s demonstration gardens.

This will be the largest known system of its kind in the region and will also serve as a unique learning opportunity for both the community in the area of stormwater reuse and water conservation. By safely using rainwater, nearly all of the facility’s irrigation needs can be offset, resulting in approximately 400,000 gallons of conserved water annually collected in four massive 10,000-gallon cisterns.

“Combined with the existing efforts to convert our Cooperative Extension facility to a green-demonstration building with on-site educational services, this represents a significant opportunity to advance the energy conservation in Leon County and make further strides toward our alternative energy goals,” said Chairman John E. Dailey.

Leon County was also recently awarded a Florida Clean Energy Grant that will provide the County with more than \$480,000 toward alternative energy enhancements. The grant, part of the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), will fund energy efficiencies

at the Cooperative Extension facility, making it one of only a handful of net-zero buildings throughout the entire Southeast.



“Today we took part in both a literal and figurative groundbreaking,” said County Administrator Parwez Alam. “Through the leadership of the Board of County Commissioners, Leon County has established itself as a front-runner in the pursuit of a more sustainable future.”

In addition to the water cistern, the Cooperative Extension facility will receive energy efficiencies that include the addition of the largest solar photovoltaic (solar panel) system in Leon County – 60kW – surpassing the current largest known system, 50kW.

The grant will also fund 17 tons of geothermal closed-loop ground units, a system that uses the ground’s relatively constant temperature to more efficiently provide heating, cooling and hot water for the building. The geothermal technology will allow for the replacement of a conventional water heater with a heat recovery system.

“Additionally, there will be a live, interactive energy monitoring station for visitors to observe the building’s energy consumption and production,” said Sustainability Manager Maggie Theriot. “For example, as a cloud passes overhead, visitors will be able to watch the actual effects of energy production in real time.”

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## Extension's Green Industry BMP Training Protects Florida's Water Resources

In June of 2009, the State of Florida enacted legislation requiring landscape maintenance workers who apply fertilizer for hire be certified to do so. This action was taken to reduce the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus that may impair Florida waters from nearby fertilized landscapes. Working in conjunction with Florida Department of Environmental Protection, University of Florida IFAS developed five best management practices (BMPs) instructional modules for use in training green industry workers in both English and Spanish. Broward County Extension Agents use the modules to teach research-based recommendations for handling fertilizers and pesticides in ways that also protect the environment, and how to design and manage irrigation systems that conserve water.

During the first phase of this new initiative, Extension Agents conducted eight classes. Two hundred and sixty-seven individuals attended these programs and 77% (205 individuals) received their Green Industry Best Management Practices (GI-BMP) certification demonstrating that they possess the necessary knowledge and skills to maintain quality landscaping while protecting Florida water resources. Ninety-eight percent (216) of the 223 individuals who completed a post-class survey said that the classes increased their understanding of lawn and landscape BMPs and how they help protect Florida's environment. Further, 80% of program participants (173 individuals) told us that they will abide by the recommended fertilization rates and application methods and will inform their clients of these recommendations.

A 3 to 6 month post-class follow-up survey returned by nearly 23% of program participants from the first three classes (23 individuals), revealed some degree of adoption of all 12 BMPs. Most notable was a 52% increase in the number of individuals using a deflector shield on fertilizer spreaders to prevent application of the chemicals into water bodies. In addition, the number of individuals calibrating their fertilizer applicators and incorporating fertilizers into the soil shortly after application increased by 44%. And finally, the number

using turf fertilizers with 50% or more slow release nitrogen increased by 39%.

The Green Industry Best Management Practices certification program is an example of how Broward County Extension is working for win-win solutions. Through its educational programs, the county's large and diverse green industry receives training and certifications enabling it to provide quality landscape services at competitive prices while protecting our environment.

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## Faculty Transfers

We would like to welcome the following faculty into their new positions:

Natasha Parks (nparks@ufl.edu), EFNEP Program EA II, Duval County, 2/14/11

Xiomara Diaz (xdiaz@ufl.edu), 4-H EA I, Marion County, 2/18/11

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