

Comings & Goings

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN FOR EXTENSION

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A Message from Dr. Andra Johnson



On September 29-30, Hurricane Ian struck the southwest coast of Florida as a strong Category 4 hurricane. One hundred and thirty-six people lost their lives to the storm; 2.5 million were left without power--in some cases, for weeks; damage to Florida's agriculture was extreme, with losses estimated to be as high as \$1.56 billion.

We mourn the loss of life caused by Hurricane Ian, and struggle to deal with the destruction left in its wake. After visiting the Ft. Myers area a few weeks ago, I can say that I have never seen such a level of destruction.

But I've also witnessed the tremendous responsiveness and resolve of our Extension community. Before and during the storm, faculty and staff throughout the state kept the public informed about preparations, conditions and evacuation routes. Many were called in to staff emergency operations centers and shelters in their counties.

After the storm cleared, many of you were immediately out aiding those who were in need, conducting damage assessments, and acting as information first-responders on the ground. Help has poured in from all over the state to aid people in Lee and Charlotte counties, who saw the worst of the damage.

It has been heartening to see how our Extension faculty and staff are rallying around one another and helping each other.

Hurricane Ian has dealt a devastating blow to Florida, but in our response, we've discovered once again the qualities that make our organization so strong internally, and so vital to the communities we serve.

Much work is left to do and recovery from Hurricane Ian is going to take a long time. I want to thank everyone in the Extension community for their professionalism and their outpouring of concern and assistance throughout this difficult time. It truly shows that regardless of where we live, Extension is strongest when we're working together.



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UF/IFAS Extension Comings and Goings is a monthly newsletter distributed by the Office of the Dean for Extension via e-mail and on the UF/IFAS Extension web site at <http://extadmin.ifas.ufl.edu>.

If you have any suggestions or would like to submit your own recognition or short article of interest, please send them to Valkyrie Aldrnari.

Please feel free to also forward any questions or comments about this periodical to Darryl Palmer at golem@ufl.edu.

Extension in the News

September

9/2: [Summit to help ag-related businesses learn to market themselves through new media](#)

9/9: [Webinar series explores the Nature Coast](#)

9/13: [New UF/IFAS science communicator to enhance outreach to Spanish-speaking audiences statewide](#)

9/13: [UF alum Dean Pringle to lead North Florida REC](#)

9/15: [Sorrel shows promise as a Florida specialty crop \(Norma Samuel\)](#)

9/20: [FAWN expansion underway](#)

October

10/4: [Hurricane Ian devastates SW Florida agriculture](#)

10/11: [Gators assist with Hurricane Ian recovery](#)

10/13: [Crunchy or smooth? Peanut Butter Challenge accepts them all](#)

10/20: [Food is Our Middle Name: New podcast airs first episode](#)

10/24: [FFVA honors weed researcher Nathan Boyd](#)

10/25: [AI center coming to GCREC](#)

Water Wednesday Workshop goes live and in-person

Yilin Zhuang, Water Resources RSA II, Central District



Florida-Friendly Landscaping agent Tia Silvasy demonstrates how to select the right plants to protect waterfront.



Participants taking post-program evaluation surveys.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a team of UF/IFAS Extension agents in the Central Extension District started a webinar series called Water Wednesday in May 2020. This water awareness program educates urban residents on water conservation and water quality protection practices. In the 2021 annual program evaluation, 86% (n=35) of respondents indicated that they would be interested in attending an in-person Water Wednesday event. Therefore, eight agents in five Central Florida counties partnered with the Lake County Water Authority and developed the first annual Water Wednesday Workshop. This in-person workshop aimed to further engage urban residents who are interested in learning sustainable landscape practices in water conservation and protection.

The Water Wednesday Team

Yilin Zhuang, Water Resources RSA II, Central District

Jamie Daugherty, Residential Hort EA II, Lake County

Tia Silvasy, Residential Hort EA II, Orange County

Amanda Marek, Florida Friendly Landscaping EA I, Marion County

Tina McIntyre, Florida Friendly Landscaping EA I, Seminole County

Gabriel Vicari, Water Resources EA I, Marion County

Krista Stump, Natural Resources EA I, Osceola County

Brook Moffis, Commercial Horticulture EA III, Lake County

This half-day hands-on workshop was funded by the UF/IFAS Extension Central District Extension Director. After a plenary session about the current and future water supply in Florida, attendees rotated between eight stations in the Lake County Discovery Gardens. Stations included interactive watershed and groundwater models, construction and application of rain barrels, design and functions of rain gardens, plants that protect the waterfront, irrigation systems and calibration, different uses of mulch in landscapes, backyard water features for wildlife, and at-home composting. Seventeen Master Gardener Volunteers from Lake and Marion counties were actively engaged in program planning and execution.

Forty people attended the Water Wednesday Workshop on March 30. In a post-program evaluation, 98 percent of the respondents (n=38) rated the workshop "very helpful." Over 95 percent reported that they improved their knowledge about sustainable landscaping practices in water conservation and protection. Eighty-nine percent indicated that they would adopt at least one of the sustainable landscape practices that were demonstrated at the workshop. A six-month follow-up survey will be sent out in September to gather information about practice adoptions.

The team worked with the UF/IFAS Communications video team to develop 11 hands-on water conservation videos, which are posted on the UF IFAS Extension – Water Resources YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/c/UFIFASExtensionWaterResources>). Topics include understanding mulch options, how to mulch around trees, plants for wet areas and shorelines, setting up a rain gauge, how to make a rain barrel, rain garden design, plants for rain gardens, composting for homeowners, backyard water for wildlife, micro irrigation in the landscape, and installing microirrigation.

While virtual programs may reach a broader audience, they cannot fully replace the relationships built by in-person interactions. The combination of annual in-person events with regular webinars can help fill the gap and enhance programmatic success.

Solving a fishy mystery through pond management

Tim Wilson, Production Ag CED IV, St. Johns County

Pond owners use their ponds for a variety of reasons, such as fishing, swimming, irrigation and watering livestock. Understanding recreational pond management and water quality basics can enhance the productivity and beauty of these ponds. Water testing field kits are a useful tool for county Extension agents when helping pond owners. Extension agents can use these kits to evaluate basic tests such as pH, alkalinity, toxic ammonia, dissolved oxygen (DO) and many more.

A St. Johns County resident noticed that her catfish were acting abnormal,

so she contacted our office for help. She explained that the fish were along the bank of the pond trying to suck air from the surface of the water. As is typical in August and September, weather conditions were hot, overcast and muggy. My first thought was that the fish may be having an oxygen issue. I recommended that she turn her aerator on and leave it on overnight. Fish need less oxygen than humans to survive, and they use it in the form of dissolved oxygen or DO. When fish push water through their gills, they absorb DO into their bloodstream. Ideally,

DO concentrations should be above 5 mg/L; issues can occur if they fall below this level. If DO concentrations continue to drop below 2 mg/L, catastrophic fish kills can occur. One behavioral indicator in fish is a piping behavior which mimics a kissing action towards the surface of the pond (click here to learn more about

dissolved oxygen: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FA002>).

The client's aerator was not working, but she did have a pump she uses to add water to her pond. Even though the flow out of this pipe did little to add DO, I asked her to turn it on so we could add as much DO as possible. She contacted me the next morning to let me know that she did not find any dead fish. When I arrived the next day, the fish were no longer at the banks of the pond and only a couple were noticeable at the surface. Since DO concentrations increase during daylight hours, I collected a water sample and evaluated DO with my field kit. Her pond had 4 mg/L at 5:30 PM, and we knew this concentration would decrease during the night. Since her pump/aerator was only supplying minimal effects, I recommended that she adjust it so that it supplied larger splashing actions. She left her pump on through the night and throughout the next several days. She only reported a total of five fish during this time.

Although we cannot always prevent worst case scenarios from occurring, by understanding basic pond management principles, county agents can supply important suggestions to our pond managers that may save them from having a disaster.



Catfish at surface of the pond.



Using a water pump to agitate the surface and help add dissolved oxygen.

Restoring native orchids throughout Broward County

Lorna Bravo, Urban Horticulture CED II, Broward County

Did you know that Florida is home to at least 106 native orchid species?

Unfortunately, 58 are listed as endangered by the Atlas of Florida Plants, and another 18 species are threatened. The good news is that in South Florida, you can be part of the solution by learning about Broward County's Native Orchid Project.

Native orchids were once plentiful throughout Broward County, but poaching and habitat loss have wiped out most populations. The long-term goal of the project is to restore native orchids throughout our county in environments where they can successfully be established, bloom, get pollinated, set seed pods, disperse seeds and develop recruits.



Master Gardener volunteers prepare educational materials and orchid kits.



Native orchid seedlings.

As part of annual Broward County Master Gardener Volunteer training, 43 MGVs have installed 129 native orchids in 43 Broward County landscapes as of 2022. They are helping re-pot native orchid seedlings at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden and install native orchids in parks and residential projects throughout the county.

The MGVs enjoyed the project and learned about native species of orchids, their environment and their care. They, in turn, have been able to extend this education to other cities, neighborhoods and communities in Broward County. This has

significantly impacted the Broward MGV program and helped to grow and establish our native orchid team focusing on this conservation project in Broward County.

The UF/IFAS Extension Broward County MGV program has created a brochure and a series of videos to help expand our native orchid educational efforts.

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/c/UFIFASExtensionBrowardUrbanHorticulture/videos>

Brochure: <https://bit.ly/3svPsMH>

Bad Cat Classic gets youth involved in conservation through recreation

Kalyn Waters, Agriculture CED III, Holmes County



Grandson and Grandfather team who won the tournament with their catches.



Kalyn Waters and Jacob Cole, winner of one of the lifetime fishing licenses given through Conservation for Generations.

The second annual Bad Cat Classic was hosted on August 27 along the Choctawhatchee River at Caryville, FL. The Bad Cat Classic is a catfishing and bream fishing tournament with the goal to get youth involved in outdoor recreation, using that involvement as a platform to teach natural resource conservation and management.

Sherriff John Tate. Processing fees for the second license were raised by participants of the tournament. Congratulations to River Barnhill and Jacob Cole for winning lifetime fishing licenses!

The Bad Cat Classic is part of the Conservation for Generations program, which offers a series of outdoor recreation events with the dual

purpose of getting youth involved in natural resource management and encouraging adults to spend time with youth in the outdoors. Revenue enhancement that is generated from these events is used to purchase lifetime hunting and fishing licenses for youth in the county as a scholarship program that promotes natural resources conservation and involvement.

Adults who participate in the program report that spending time in the outdoors with youth improves their quality of life and that they feel that natural resource education for youth is critical; they also reported knowledge gained from the events. Youth participants reported that spending time in the outdoors improved their quality of life, that the adults they participate in outdoor recreation with are positive influences on their lives and they are learning about natural resource conservation through these events.

Healthy Nudge Program helps food pantries showcase healthy choices

Nelly Nelson, Family and Consumer Sciences EA II, Manatee County



Healthy Nudge program signage.



Clients selecting their food items at the St. George's Episcopal Church's food pantry.

On August 4, UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County worked with Deacon Mike Sircy to implement the Healthy Nudge program at the St. George's Episcopal Church food pantry. The pantry currently serves 150 families and acts as a hub for mobile home parks to pick up food to distribute. UF/IFAS Extension's Healthy Nudge program focuses on using product placement and shelf presentation to entice clients to select healthier food options. By placing healthy items at eye level, at the beginning of aisles, and on special displays, it makes them more visible and convenient, thus more likely to be selected. The Healthy Nudge program also puts high importance on the display of

fruits and vegetables, making sure they are displayed in fruit stands, matching bins, and wicker baskets to make them look more appetizing. Bundling food items together that would make an easy and nutritious meal is also a key component to the Healthy Nudge program's success. Signage is designed to share recipes and the nutritional value of ingredients with clients. This signage makes it easier for families to

prepare meals using the items they bring home. UF/IFAS Extension made white board signs to display at the St. George's food pantry that feature a QR code linking to recipes, as well as instructions and suggestions for using each produce item. This was a huge hit with clients!

Back in April 2022, UF/IFAS Extension implemented the Healthy Nudge program at the United Methodist

Church of Palmetto's food pantry. On August 16, we followed up with pantry coordinator Marvin Chenault to provide additional booklets and messaging. These additional resources make it easier for their volunteers to use their white boards and continue the Healthy Nudge program signage. Both food pantries are seeing great success with the program as the need in the community has been increasing.

Training young scientists at Manatee Marine Explorers Day Camp

Michelle Atkinson, Environmental Hort EA II; Angela Collins, Marine Fisheries EA III Multi-county, Manatee County



Volunteer Madison Atkinson (right) helps collect marine critters captured by Manatee Marine Explorers campers.



Sarah Denison with Manatee County Parks & Rec (right) helps campers identify marine specimens before returning them to the water.

Manatees, oysters, mangroves and a fish necropsy were all fin-tastic topics at UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County's 2022 Manatee Marine Explorers Camp. Manatee County borders three national estuaries and is home to some of the best beaches on the west coast of Florida. Commercial fisheries landings in this region rank among the highest in the state, and local fishermen harvest millions of pounds of seafood annually. Clean water and healthy oceans are critical to the area, which is what kids discover at our annual Manatee Marine Explorers Camp.

Registration for this full-day event filled up quickly, and on August 5, almost two dozen 8-12-year-olds descended upon Emerson Preserve to spend the day learning about water quality, local marine life, and our county mascot, the manatee.

Youth were able to get up close and personal with our local environment, dip-netting off the beach to collect live marine critters, which were promptly returned after identification. While observing a fish necropsy, campers were introduced to some of the things that make fish unique (like gills and scales), as well as the things that make fish not so different from us

(heart, stomach, brain). They also learned about oysters, which create habitat and help clean our waterways through filter feeding. People can increase the numbers of oysters in our water by putting out vertical oyster gardens, which create a hard substrate to which juvenile oysters can attach and develop. Campers assembled 30 vertical oyster gardens to be placed along the Manatee River.

The Bishop Museum of Science and Nature joined us to provide some great manatee facts and to demonstrate how manatees are transported when they need to be rescued. A nature hike spotlighted three types of mangroves and their importance as habitat and shoreline stabilizers. Campers left with a greater understanding of the importance of a healthy watershed and a motivation to protect our valuable water resources. Parents emailed to tell us that campers came home excited to inform their families about the experiences and marine life facts that they had consumed throughout the day and wanted to be sure that they would get the announcement for next year's camp.

Cooking up success with the Florida 4-H Food Challenge

Geralyn Sachs, 4-H Youth Development RSA III, Central District



4-H Food Challenge workshop for youth at 4-H University.

Each year more than 6,500 Florida youth statewide participate in food preparation and nutrition related 4-H projects. In addition to learning how to cook, youth develop a wide variety of life skills and abilities that include making healthy lifestyle choices, using resources wisely, problem solving and planning/organizing. Research shows that children who have cooking experience have healthier dietary habits and that their attitudes toward cooking predicted diet quality (Prescott, 2019).

In 2022, a new food-focused program called the Florida 4-H Food Challenge was introduced to Extension professionals, 4-H volunteers, and 4-H youth. The 4-H Food Challenge project provides a positive, hands-on educational experience that prepares youth not only for the Food Challenge contest, but it also gives them skills and knowledge they will use throughout their lives. Youth ages 8-18 taking part in the 4-H Food Challenge contest will work in teams of 3-4 within the same age division to create a dish using a predetermined set of ingredients and cooking utensils/equipment. First, each team plans and prepares one of the randomly assigned dishes while being judged on their food safety skills, teamwork and ability to manage time and resources. Then youth present their finished dish, deliver a five-minute presentation and answer questions about their dish to a panel of judges.

Over the past eight months, the Florida 4-H Food Challenge training team has conducted four trainings for 59 Extension professionals and volunteers, as well as five mock food



4-H Food Challenge training for volunteers.

challenges for 47 youth. The four-hour hybrid Food Challenge training held in March provided the opportunity for participants to learn through lecture, hands-on activities and a mock food challenge. Fifteen of 18 participants completed a post-training survey and results showed that 87 percent or higher agreed/strongly agreed that they increased their confidence/knowledge in their ability to effectively prepare youth; to train volunteers/Extension professionals to prepare youth; to intentionally incorporate life skill development into the 4-H Food Challenge experience; to implement the 4-H Food Challenge into the county program; and to understand contest rules and expectations of adult captains. All participants (n=15) indicated they plan to act within six months to implement the 4-H Food Challenge experience at the county level.

As a result of these efforts, interest in this project has blossomed. This fall and winter, 4-H Food Challenge events will be held at the county, administrative district, and state level. To learn more about the Florida 4-H Food Challenge go to: <https://florida4h.ifas.ufl.edu/projects/healthy-living/4-h-food-challenge>

If you have questions about the Florida 4-H Food Challenge, please feel free to reach out to any member of our Florida 4-H Food Challenge training team: Geralyn Sachs fish12@ufl.edu Marie Arick jmarick@ufl.edu Wendy Lynch wendyw74@ufl.edu Shayna Johnson shaynanc@ufl.edu Paula Davis pmdavis@ufl.edu Amarat (Amy) Simonne asim@ufl.edu

Comings & Goings

We would like to welcome the following newly hired and transferring faculty. These individuals were hired following a highly competitive search, screening and selection process. In some cases, candidates interviewed both on the UF campus in Gainesville and in a county Extension office. Selection was often difficult because we typically have two or three suitable candidates. These faculty are truly the best of the best!

New Hires

George Richardson, Commercial Hort EA I, Duval County
Christian Kammerer, Agriculture EA I, Multi County (Glades, Charlotte, Collier, Lee and Hendry)
Alexandra Goetz, 4-H YD EA I, Broward County
Carly Barnes, 4-H YD EA II, Jackson County

We would like to wish the following agents the best of luck in their future endeavors.

Departures

Vanessa Vassilaros, Commercial Hort EA III, Miami-Dade County
Nicole Duffy, EFNEP Program EA II, Statewide
Joanna Courtemanche, Family & Consumer Sciences EA I, Hillsborough County