

EXTENSION

Comings & Goings

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN FOR EXTENSION

Answering the Call of Small-Land Owners

Columbia county has seen a 43% increase in its number of farms since 2002. Today there are more than 700 farms that are less than 50 acres in size. One of the most common questions asked by these landowners is “What can I do with my land”?

To answer this question, Derek Barber, Livestock and Natural Resources Agent II developed a program called “Living on a Few Acres” to provide an introduction to basic production techniques for Columbia county landowners interested in beginning or improving a small scale agricultural operation. The program is held monthly on the



Living on a Few Acres—32 participants attended the Optimize Pasture and Grazing Management class on May 17, 2011

August 2011

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third Tuesday at 7:00 PM, covering the following: small farm management, alternative enterprises, vegetable crops, backyard poultry, pasture management, beef and small ruminants, pond management, equine management, organic production, fruit and nut crops, wildlife habitat, and marketing. Participants receive a notebook with materials covering each topic. The program started with 28 participants in January and has grown to 63 as of May. Pre and post evaluations showed that participants increased their knowledge by 36% on the topics currently covered. Participants have also provided feedback on topics that they would be interested in attending as future programs, such as a hobby beekeeper short course. Extension agents and staff from the Suwannee Valley REC–Live Oak along with industry leaders have also contributed to the success of this program.

Contact: Derek Barber(dlbarber@ufl.edu),
Livestock and Natural Resources Agent, Columbia county

Professional Development Mini-Grant Experience: Sherri Kraeft

With the funds that I received from the Dean, I traveled to the National Association of 4-H Extension Agents' meeting in Phoenix, Arizona in October of 2010. As a result of being able to participate in this professional development growth opportunity, I accomplished the following:

1. Networked with agents from 11 other states, and I am currently sharing ideas with four of them on my natural resource programming and partnership development.
2. Attended the Southern Region Breakfast and supported our Florida representative for the Directorship; had the opportunity to discuss and learn the responsibilities of this office.
3. Attended every workshop and poster session and was able to enhance my grant-writing,

programming and volunteer recruitment diversity skills by obtaining materials from these workshops.

4. Presented a seminar at the national level and had the opportunity to learn how to address a national audience of colleagues and adapt what I am doing to other programs in other states.
5. Joined the Camping and Environmental Education Committee and intend to serve on the committee as well as plan, attend and present at the National Camping Conference in 2012 in West Virginia.

Bed Bugs Are Back and Stronger than Ever!

With the increase in bed bug identifications, phone calls, and treatment information in the past few years it was evident that public awareness about bed bugs needed to be addressed in Duval



County. In response to this need, the Jacksonville Bed Bug Task Force was formed in early 2011. This local initiative developed partnerships between local leaders of various groups across the county from health care, senior care, Extension, the city, the public school system, and pest management professionals. The focus of the group is to create awareness of bed bugs and how to reduce populations by providing research-based educational materials. While bed bugs are not a major problem in Jacksonville, the hope of the task force is to create public awareness before there is a problem. To date, the group has developed *Bed Bugs and Book Bags*, a curriculum for 3rd through 5th graders. It has been approved to be taught in Duval county public schools during the 2011-12 school year by health care educators.

The curriculum has the potential to educate 1,700 classrooms and approximately 33,000 students about bed bugs. A poster titled *What is Biting You?* has also been created for school and community health clinics that distinguishes between common urban pests. The task force has also indicated they want to host a bed bug summit in the fall as an official kick-off event in the community. Media kits, educational brochures, workshops, and surveys will be developed as a part of that summit.

Contact: Erin Harlow (eeeck@ufl.edu),
Commercial Horticulture Agent, Duval County

Photo Credit: University of Florida-IFAS.

Looking for Plants that Can Alter the Heat Index

In Florida, we use air conditioning units 5 to 7 months of the year, and 50% of our home energy cost originates from cooling or heating. Trees are



natural “air conditioners” that can reduce the temperature around our homes from 9 to 26 degrees F, thereby reducing the work needed from air conditioning units.

At the UF-IFAS Nassau County Demonstration Garden, Master Gardener volunteers have added more than 25 trees and many more shrubs and

perennials to the site, totally altering the heat index. One example of reduced energy cost comes from our Supervisor of Elections, Ms. Vicki Cannon: “The garden is not only aesthetically beneficial to the building, it is also beneficial ecologically and economically as well. Although our windows are tinted, we have found the Natchez Crape Myrtle and Loropetalum planted outside have greatly reduced the harsh sun and heat coming through – which translates into an economic benefit by keeping our offices cooler and reducing the load on the air conditioning unit. This added benefit reduces fatigue and stress during busy days! Thank you all for your hard work and dedication to bring this wonderful asset to our community!”

The UF-IFAS Nassau County Demonstration Garden houses other governmental departments and is seen by thousands of government employees and visitors each year, providing an example of how easily we can lower our electric bill and provide a haven for native wildlife on commercial and residential sites simply by adding appropriate trees and shrubs.

Contact: Rebecca Jordi (eeeck@ufl.edu), Nassau County Extension Director and Environmental Horticulture Agent

Taking the Fear Out of Using Micro-irrigation in the Landscape

Studies show that the use of micro-irrigation in vegetable gardens and plant beds is more efficient than traditional irrigation systems.

In January 2010, the Suwannee River Water Management District instituted new landscape water rules to reduce water use in residential landscapes. Micro-irrigation systems are exempt from the water new rules.

Many people are unfamiliar with micro-irrigation and don’t know how to install it. Agent Carolyn Saft teaches micro-irrigation installation in the

Master Gardener course using irrigation kits and a large tarp with trees, shrubs, groundcovers and turf area drawn on it. The trainees “install” the irrigation system as part of the course.



Tools used by Agent for teaching micro-irrigation.

Master Gardeners installed and maintain micro-irrigation systems at a church, a vegetable garden, and the Coliseum landscape, and taught others the process.

For garden club members, several volunteers are assigned part of the system, and then each person connects their part until the system is completed. Thirty-two percent of garden club members have purchased a kit and installed micro-irrigation since the training. One member bought six kits to expand the micro-irrigation area. She stated “It was so easy to install and it didn’t hurt my back like hoses did when I used to drag them around.”

Two female Master Gardeners demonstrate irrigation installation at the Lowes Store monthly plant clinic. Their last demonstration resulted in a sell-out of all 30 kits in stock. The Master Gardeners stated they were confident about micro-irrigation from what they learned in class and from installing it themselves, and that it was easy to share tips on micro irrigation.

Contact: Carolyn Saft (csaft318@ufl.edu), Suwannee County

Using Master Gardeners to Provide Horticultural Experience at State-of-the-Science Magnet School

In the fall of 2010, Clay county opened a new magnet high school (Oakleaf High School) to attract the best of the best students to prepare them for life after high school, e.g., higher education or a career. One of their programs was Agriculture Science with emphasis on plant production and maintenance. A state-of-the-science lab was created with tissue culture facilities and a climate-controlled greenhouse. A “newly minted” Ag Education Instructor from the University of Florida was hired and the school year began with an invitation to include Master Gardener Volunteers in the horticultural training of these students.

Starting in August of 2010, Ray Zerba, Extension Horticulture Agent with UF-IFAS Clay County Extension began meetings with the new teacher (Keri Milligan) to see how the Clay County Master Gardener Volunteer Program might tie-in with her classroom objectives. Early on, it was determined that for a new program the teacher most needed help with getting the greenhouse operational along with starting up a vegetable garden, school landscaping program and setting the stage for the beginning of a school-based operational nursery.

At our November gathering, Ms. Milligan addressed our Master Gardeners and outlined the



kind of help she needed. Veteran Master Gardeners were asked to sign up for this project with the beginning new activity year (which started December 1). In addition, because this fell in the same time frame as our new annual MG training class, five individuals I recruited through our “position placement” approach to volunteer assignments agreed to do their payback time at Oakleaf High School by acting as the core project group for this effort.

By the beginning of December, we were up and running. There were a total of 12 volunteers helping this teacher. Within the next 5 months, Master Gardener Volunteers had the greenhouse operational, successfully planted a raised-bed vegetable garden, and produced a much used pollination (butterfly) garden that was greatly appreciated by the local butterfly population. During that time, Master Gardeners volunteered 227 hours, totaling 1471 single-hour one-on-one contacts with 28 different students. More than 800 plants were raised by the students and volunteers in the greenhouse. These plants were sold at a fund raiser that netted \$500+ to be used for this year’s Ag Sciences Program. Additional plants were started from seed in the grow-light



lab, which were then planted in the vegetable and pollination garden.

Aside from the student contacts, all volunteers have reported that they felt the project was very

worthwhile. They will continue in Stage II, creating a functional nursery operation and a project to begin landscaping the school grounds with plants produced by the students. By then the transfer hoods and dissecting scopes should also be in place to allow for some tissue culture work and a project in DNA studies.

Fifteen students entered approximately 30 plants (they had grown at the school) in the Clay County fair this year. These students were very successful competing in the youth division. In addition, they landscaped a 10 by 20 ft area within the Horticulture Exhibit building during the fair that gained countywide recognition for some of their achievements. During an end-of-school recognition banquet, five of our volunteers were publicly recognized for all the work they had put in and one (Master Gardener Lee Henry) was awarded the school’s first Ag Science Volunteer of the Year. This project represents the best of the best when it comes to using Master Gardner Volunteers to provide a meaningful youth horticultural experience through a county public school system.

New Faculty

Please welcome the following new faculty:

Kristi Popa (kelliecanderson@ufl.edu) , 4-H EA I, Desoto County, 08/01/11

Kenneth Johnson (kenjohnson@ufl.edu), County Extension Director and Community Development & Sustainability, Desoto County, 08/29/11

Please also welcome Stephen Brown (brownsh@ufl.edu) into his new position as County Extension Director in Lee County (6/24/11) and Larry Williams (llw5479@ufl.edu) into his new position as County Extension Director in Okaloosa County (08/05/11).

Resignations

We would like to wish the following faculty the best of luck in their future endeavors:

Clyde Smith, Pest Management Regionalized Specialist EA II, Jackson County, 06/18/11

Martha Webster, 4-H Youth Development EA II, Palm Beach County, 06/24/11

Retirement

Best wishes for an enjoyable retirement to:

Deborah Humphries, FCS/4-H EA IV, Taylor County, 08/01/11
