

EXTENSION

Comings & Goings

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN FOR EXTENSION

**Meet Your Specialist -
Mercy Olmstead**

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Mercy Olmstead came to the University of Florida from Washington State University where she was the Viticulture Extension Specialist. Her specialties are stone fruit and grape production and she also takes a special interest in general plant physiology and nutrition research. In 2004, she received her Ph.D. degree in horticulture from Michigan State University.



"Although my experience in the last five years has been with wine and juice grape production in

Washington State, my Ph.D. was in sweet cherry production and looking at interactions between rootstock and scion. It's so exciting to get back to the stone fruit sector of agriculture and I can't believe the enthusiasm from potential growers in the state. I feel like I can really make a difference here! I do miss getting a discount on wine; however, the pull of fresh peaches and blueberries (my husband, Jim, is the new blueberry breeder) was too hard to resist. Let's just say my Sunday morning breakfasts are very enjoyable.

Gainesville has been a delight to live and work in - we have a wonderful neighborhood with many children, who my 3 year old daughter, Lillian, loves to play. We are looking forward to many more years in Florida, and have embraced the Gator Nation!"

MAY 2010

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Oil Spill Training

In May, Pasco 4-H partnered with the Pasco Hernando Veterinary Association (PHVMA) to certify more than 240 individuals to respond to the ever-increasing threat from the Gulf Oil Spill. Two different types of trainings were held certifying participants to respond to this disaster. The first one held on May 8th was a 6-hour class covering OSHA / HAZMAT approved training designed specially for this spill and was taught by BP approved trainers from Louisiana. 115 volunteers were certified in personal safety and to handle oil contamination. This class is mandatory for any one that will be working directly with oil. The second class was a 6-hour training held on May 16th that included a seminar and wetlab for Oiled Wildlife Response particular to the Deepwater Horizon Incident. Training included care of affected wildlife, medical problems animals may develop, treatment and nursing care advice, as well as cleaning techniques once patients are stabilized. The classes also focused on safety with animal handling and personal and animal protection from hazardous materials. More than 125 attendees traveled from throughout the state and a few from out of state, to participate in the lectures and hands-on wetlabs. This class was taught by BP-approved certified trainers from Wildlife Rehab and Education located in Texas and assisted by veterinarians from the PHVMA. Successful completion of this class provided continue education credits (CEU) for Veterinarians and vet assistances. Both classes were approved through BP and will allow individuals to respond to this disaster if needed.

[Contact: Jean Hink]

Pinellas Makes a Splash on Earth Day

Pinellas County Extension staff presented a 4-H SET Edible Aquifer program to 223 students on Earth Day 2010. While assembling aquifers made of pudding, Cheerios, raisins, and chocolate chips, the students learned about the aquifer. After adding water to their aquifer in the form of milk, the students were asked leading questions about pollution and the aquifer. The students hypothesized about how the pollution would

travel through their aquifers. To test their hypothesis green food coloring pollution was added to their aquifers. Each of their aquifers was a little different so each system reacted differently to the pollution. During the eating of the aquifers, the presenters asked questions about ways to stop pollution and if there will be water in the aquifer forever. The students then pledged to protect the aquifer. Following Community Based Social Marketing techniques, each student pledged to: tell someone else about the aquifer, take 5 minute showers for two weeks, or visit <http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/4-H/SETkids.shtml> and do two activities. Each student received a necklace with a card to track their pledge activities for two weeks. At the end of the two weeks the youth were given a follow up questionnaire. 90% of the responding 75 students said the act of pledging made them follow through on the pledge, 78% told someone else about the aquifer, 68% convinced someone else to conserve water, and 65% are going to continue their water conservation activities. [Contact: Mary Campbell]

“Ask Extension”, Lawn and Garden Edition

“Ask Extension” was formed to increase website interactivity by creating an email question format and an FAQ (frequently asked questions) section. Since it’s inception in late October of 2009, it has been a great success. Distance Education staff created the website and maintains the data, while horticulture staff supplies the answers to homeowner questions. During the first month it received 28 questions, 17 of which became FAQs. By the end of April 2010 the total count was 91 questions, 45 of which became FAQs. Lawn and garden topics have been the most popular in “Ask Extension”; several have positive user ratings and this category has had the highest ranking topic each month. Lawn and garden website views have increased steadily (except during December 2009) from 3155 in the month of November 2009 to 8032 in April of 2010. “Ask Extension” has reached thousands of people in Pinellas County and helped them to find the solutions they need for their lives. [Contact: Theresa Badurek]

Back to the Basics

Basic parenting classes for at-risk parents continue to be conducted by the Extension Service in Hillsborough County. Parents are referred by various agencies including Hillsborough Kids Inc., probation officers, Head Start, private attorneys, and Child Protective Investigations. Each month, up to twelve parents participate in six hours of parenting education to earn a certificate required by the court to be reunited with or to maintain custody of children. Some of the participants are grandparents who find themselves suddenly raising another generation of children due to a family crisis or tragedy. Such is the case of one grandmother raising her toddler granddaughter after the child's mother was murdered. Fathers wanting to be more involved with their children also attend so they can gain or improve their parenting skills or receive shared parental custody. The classes are also open to the public, which encourages at-risk parents to learn from other parents. Lessons include Effective Discipline, Family Communication, Stress Management, Balanced Parenting Styles, Enhancing Your Child's Self-esteem and What Kids Need to Succeed. Nearly 70% of the 100+ parents who enroll earn their certificate. The impact of keeping 70 children out of foster care at approximately \$570 per child per month translates to more than \$478,000 saved yearly. For any business or community leader concerned about the quality of the future workforce and citizens - or the quality of the community, promoting good parenting is good business. (Contact: Diana Converse)

What Does the Inside of Shark Look Like?

For the second year, the Collier County Sea Grant Agent has partnered with Collier's Migrant Student Program and Manatee Middle School to run an afterschool marine science program. The goal of the program is to engage underserved migrant students in marine science through experiential learning opportunities, specifically dissections, and field trips to local coastal environments. Ten students participated in the eight week-long program. The first five weeks students learned about

different taxonomic groups by dissecting various specimens including a sea anemone, squid, sea star, blue crab, and finally a spiny dogfish shark. Students also had the opportunity to sample various types of seafood to highlight the importance of marine life as a food source for humans. Students then participated in two separate field trips; a tidal lagoon and beach exploration, and an estuary boat trip where they had the opportunity to collect and identify live specimens in their natural habitats. The program culminated with a review game and graduation ceremony to recognize students for their efforts. Based on evaluations, observations, and personal conversations, several of the students were exposed to new subjects and experiences, and had a greater interest in science and their local environment. Based on the positive impacts of the program on the students, school faculty have indicated their desire for the agent to continue to program. To view images of the program visit: <http://collierseagrant.blogspot.com/>. [Contact: Bryan Fluech]

Extension Serves as First Alert to Protect Ficus Hedges

Extension serves as a link in the First Alert System to assist the public with frequent arrivals of new, damaging landscape pests. A new invader, originating from China or India, was confirmed on Florida's west coast, in Naples, for the first time in January 2009. If no pesticides are applied, this whitefly will kill ficus hedges and trees. These hedges provide a sense of beauty and serenity because they serve as both visual and noise protection for many residents and communities. Frequent newspaper columns provided information and a youtube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4Ze-Sc9Baw>, was posted in collaboration with Lee County Extension to show the public how to diagnose this serious threat and treatments needed to save their hedges. Three (3) Ficus Whitefly Public Alert Forums were held. Participants reported: 100% (n=42) knowledge gain both in identifying this new pest and knowing what their management options were. Ninety-five percent also rated this type of class as "a much needed, necessary community service". A follow-up survey, using Survey Monkey, was sent to 27

individuals. There were 13 replies. If the whiteflies were to kill their hedges, participants estimated shrub removal and replacement costs at \$5000 (n= 3) and \$10,000 (n=3) and more than \$20,000 for one respondent. Collier County residents will be seeing more damage from this whitefly as infestations spread, but the Extension office has been proactive and initiated public awareness programs in the early stages of the battle. [Contact: Doug Caldwell]

New Faculty

Please welcome the following new faculty:

Emma Willcox (ewillcox@ufl.edu), Wildlife/Natural Resources Regional Specialized Agent II, Levy County, 5/10/10
