

EXTENSION

Comings & Goings

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN FOR EXTENSION

Extension Service Horticulture Helpline – Evaluation Survey via Survey Monkey

Personal email records identify that between January 1 and November 15, 2010, this agent received 242 requests for horticulture or pest management information via email. These individuals were contacted in early November via email and asked to respond to 10 evaluations questions via a web-based survey (Survey Monkey). Eight surveys were returned as undeliverable and 56 responses were received by November 19 for an overall response rate of $[(242-56-8)/100]\% = 22.8\%$

Collective responses were as follows:

1. 86% said the information you received solve the problem.
2. 89% said they used the information provided.
3. 75% said they shared this others.
4. A conservative estimate of an additional 168 persons learned about this information.
5. 52% had never used Extension service before,
6. and 30% followed up with their local Extension office afterwards.
7. 96% found the information provided to be understandable.
8. Respondents were asked to estimate of the dollar value of the information they received from the Extension Service. While 20% did not assign it a dollar value, the other respondents gave the information a value of between \$972 and \$1781 (or more).
9. 85% felt the response was provided quickly.
10. 20% of the emails came from the home county; 74% came from another Florida location,

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Table of Contents

Extension Service Horticulture Helpline – Evaluation Survey via Survey Monkey	1
Climate Initiative Achieves Immediate Savings and Recognition	2
Pepper Yields Increased by Controlling Western Flower Thrip Damage	2
Pesticide Training Helps to Increase Hispanic Income	3
Restoring Mangrove Habitat	3
Non-profit development program leads to different types of success.	3
Tropical Soda Apple Control	4
Palm Beach County Receives General Mills Grant	5
New Faculty	5
Resignation	5

and 7% came from other states.

(Contact: Dan Culbert)

Climate Initiative Achieves Immediate Savings and Recognition

Due to the local implications of climate change and potential sea level rise, Monroe County Extension has been providing county administration with guidance and support on climate issues. Extension agent A.

Betancourt undertook the development of a greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) audit and climate action plan for county operations. This audit provides baseline emissions data and strategies to reduce municipal emissions. The overarching goal is to incorporate “triple-bottom-line” benefits into all county operations and the delivery of all county services.



The GHG audit immediately brought to light some billing discrepancies that saved more than \$37,000 per year and several hundred thousand more being back billed to the proper agency. The audit was successful in educating the administration on energy and fuel cost. The agent provided education on emission reductions and efficiency of particular buildings that led to improved tracking of usage in the EPA's e Portfolio Manager Program. Additionally, The Board of County Commissioners approved a resolution in 2010 establishing goals to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from county operations by 20% by the year 2020 (relative to 2005 baseline). This reduction will constitute a savings of nearly \$600,000 per year for the

taxpayers.

Through this initiative, the county is providing more cost-effective services for its constituents while reducing its environmental impacts and building a stronger community. The leadership of the county's elected officials and department heads has been critical to the successes the county has achieved to date. Equally important has been the willingness of staff at all levels to support energy-efficiency initiatives, waste-reduction efforts, and the use of green products. (Contact: Alicia Betancourt)

Pepper Yields Increased by Controlling Western Flower Thrip Damage

Palm Beach County growers produce peppers on 13,839 that which results in \$103 million in sales (USDA Census 2007). WFT (Western Flower Thrip) caused 30-60% annual pepper loss (\$40 million) in culls and TSWV (Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus) during the 2006-08 seasons.

The objective of this research-extension program was to reduce WFT damage to less than 5%. The approach was to educate pepper growers by comparing pepper yield through on-farm trials under two different practices – Conventional insecticide sprays versus IPM/IRM (integrated pest management/integrated resistance management) in the 2008-10 seasons. We demonstrated to pepper growers at field days and pepper workshops the effectiveness of IPM/IRM – Monitoring WFT population by differentiating WFT from native thrip species that are competitors to WFT, using TSWV-free plants, planting refugia plants, crop rotation, and using UV-reflective mulch. Another important IPM component is adopting the UF/IFAS economic threshold of no spraying if WFT is below the economic threshold. In case insecticide spray is needed, we recommend choosing “soft” chemicals that conserve beneficial insects over harsh chemicals, and rotate chemicals in different IRAC groups.

The on-farm trials resulted in 40% yield gain from IPM/IRM practices over the non-IPM/IRM practices.

More than 90% of the twelve pepper farms (13,000 acres) have adopted the UF/IFAS recommended IPM/IRM practices and achieved annual economic gains of more than \$38 million from lowered cull rates, higher yield, saved pesticide costs, and improved agricultural environment. The extension program's next goal is to have 100% pepper acreage adopting the UF/IFAS recommended IPM/IRM practices in Palm Beach County, and to expand the impact to all Florida pepper production through hosting IPM/IRM in-service training for extension agents, pepper growers, and industry representatives. (Contact: David Sui)

Pesticide Training Helps to Increase Hispanic Income

Every year a telephone survey is conducted on the Hispanic applicators that completed their pesticide certification after participating in a pesticide training class in Spanish. This year the survey revealed that an average of two other household members resided with each Hispanic applicator. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines, the annual income for a three-member household less than \$18,310 is considered below the poverty level. The average annual salary of nine Hispanic applicators increased after trainings from a close to poverty level of \$19,104 to \$24,672 (29% increase). (Contact: Cesar Asuaje)

Restoring Mangrove Habitat

The mangrove ecosystem provides essential habitat for coastal species as well as protection from erosion and storms. Restoration of these habitats is critical for a healthy coastal ecosystem. The Miami-Dade Sea Grant Extension Program has partnered with The Reclamation Project to help teach K-12 students about the importance of mangrove ecosystems. Trained volunteers have collected, grown, and replanted thousands of red mangrove seedlings in restoration sites within Miami-Dade County. Economic assessments of mangrove habitats estimate their value at approximately \$18,000 per acre due to their roles in coastal storm protection and critical habitat for commercial fisheries species. This

project is estimated in bringing in approximately \$75,000 worth of coastal improvements and 5 acres of mangrove reforestation. (Contact: Lisa Krinsky)



Non-profit development program leads to different types of success.

In recent years, nonprofit organizations have suffered the effects of an uncertain economy. Government funding for nonprofits continues to decline. Nonprofits help Florida communities through economic contributions and by developing volunteers and leaders. Yet, many of them lack the skills and resources needed for efficient operation. Obtaining non-profit status is often the first hurdle for a community group. In recent years, the time and expense of becoming a non-profit 501c(3) had drastically increased, and more than 30% of applicants get denied.

This extension agent worked with local agencies, community leaders, and individuals to establish training for new and established non-profit groups. The training included both group and individual consultations focused on three major content areas: locating and writing grants, forming and maintaining effective boards, and obtaining non-profit status. During the period of Jan '07 through Oct '10, the CD agent conducted 67 programs and activities to train non-profit groups, with 544 individuals participating. These groups total 103 members serving an average of 4,650 clients each year. They provide services such as financial assistance to low-income seniors, support services for home-bound elderly, school supply support for children, and wellness services through congregations.

The training to obtain non-profit status was designed to

educate groups on the many options of formation. Surprisingly, more than half of the groups who received this training decided not to pursue a 501c(3) and chose to either forgo the designation or found a comparable organization to work under. Follow-up contacts revealed that these groups remained effective in their mission without the non-profit status. Program surveys found that 95% reported gained knowledge, 79% specifically expressed plans to adopt the practices, and 48% follow-up contacts showed 48 adopted the practices.

Although some groups chose not to obtain non-profit status, they were still functional groups 6 months later, utilizing volunteers and making impacts in the community. The impacts generated by community groups contribute crime reduction and improved quality of life. The economic value of their volunteers' hours are a positive contribution to a sustainable community. The annual value of volunteer hours in Monroe County, according to the Nonprofit Almanac 2008, is more than \$22 million.

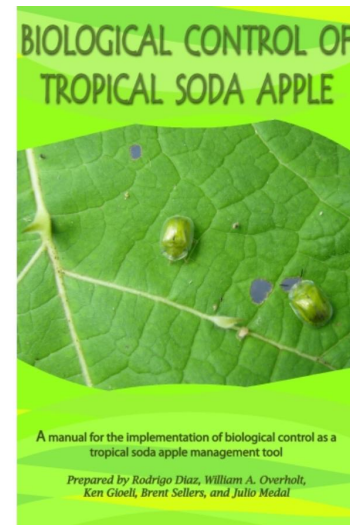
Tropical Soda Apple Control

Tropical Soda Apple (TSA) is an invasive plant originally introduced into Florida in the 1980 and is now found in pasture and conservation areas throughout the state. Cattle and wild mammals feed on TSA fruit, facilitating the spread of seeds in shady hammocks as well as open pasture. Habitat invaded by TSA is less productive, wildlife corridors are blocked, and species diversity is reduced. Members of the Florida Cattleman's Association report an estimated loss of \$6.5 - \$16 million annually due to the cost of chemical and mechanical control of TSA.

According to the St Lucie County Property Appraiser's Office, there are a total of 119,534 acres of land coded as "Grazing Land." Citrus and other agricultural uses are not included within this codification. TSA is ubiquitous on these St Lucie County grazing lands.

A new weapon against TSA is *Gratiana boliviana*, the Tropical Soda Apple Beetle. This biological control agent was found in South America, put through host specificity testing, and approved by USDA for introduction to Florida. A new University of Florida

study found that there was a 91% decrease in TSA density when TSA beetles were utilized as a biological control agent.



St Lucie County Natural Resources Extension Agent Ken Gioeli, in conjunction with entomologist Bill Overholt with the University of Florida Indian River Research and Education Center and Florida Division of Plant Industries scientists, released TSA beetles on cattle ranches in St Lucie County. Site visits and educational presentations were conducted to teach ranchers how to utilize TSA beetles. In addition, a manual entitled "Biological Control of Tropical Soda Apple," Youtube videos, online courses, and a TAME Tropical Soda Apple internet portal were developed. Because of these efforts, 100% of the TSA found on St Lucie County's grazing lands have been impacted by TSA beetles.

A 2006 survey conducted by Mike Thomas with FAMU showed that Florida ranchers spent an average of \$25/acre on chemical control and \$19/acre on mechanical control for a total of \$44/acre to control TSA on grazing lands. Since the TSA beetle is now resulting in a 91% decrease in TSA density, it can be assumed that costs to control TSA have been reduced to \$3.96/acre in St Lucie County. Funding is being sought by Drs. Overholt and Thomas to conduct a second survey of ranchers to verify this cost reduction. (Contact: Ken Gioeli)

Palm Beach County Receives General Mills Grant

Peggy Dessaint, Env Hort Courtesy EA III, Manatee County, 11/12/2010

Palm Beach County was one of fifty national recipients of the 2010 General Mills Champions for Healthy Kids grant. More than 1,100 organizations applied for a Champions grant, which is a comprehensive initiative to help youth improve their nutrition and fitness behaviors. The funded project is titled "Power Up Guys" (PUG). The \$10,000 dollar grant, which lasts for one year, was used to purchase materials and the OrganWise Guys Comprehensive School Program (OWG CSP). This program is being implemented by two Family Nutrition Program (FNP) program assistants reaching more than 600 6- to 8-year-olds in two Title I elementary schools, and impacting over 1,363 family members. One of our Master Gardeners volunteers with the program in one school. Through classroom activities and gardening, the program seeks to (1) improve children's consumption of healthy foods, (2) increase their knowledge of the importance of good nutrition and physical activity, (3) increase the number minutes children are engaged in moderate to vigorous physical activity, and (4) increase children's awareness of fruits/vegetables/herbs they can grow in their yard. Additional funding will be sought to continue the program beyond the current funding year. (Contact: Maisie Ross)

Extension Comings and Goings is a monthly newsletter of the Office of the Dean for Extension via e-mail and on the 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 Liz Rossen at lizann@ufl.edu.

New Faculty

Please welcome the following new faculty:

Shannon McGee, Natural Resources EA I, Polk County, 11/26/10

Resignation

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

Leland Parker, Com Hort EA I, Orange County, 10/2/2010

Heather Hammers, Sea Grant/Marine Science EA II, Pinellas County, 10/14/2010