

CENTER PIVOT

SUWANNEE COUNTY
UF | IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

4-H Club Spreads Christmas Cheer



Members of the Small Town Clovers 4-H Club visited the Rising Oaks Assisted Living Center to spread Christmas cheer. Members sang Christmas carols, played games with residents, and delivered Christmas cards they made during their 4H meeting. The residents loved it!

JAN / FEB / MAR 2024

Artificial insemination for your cattle
page 2

Growing the next generation of leaders
page 3

Don't be a messy roommate
page 4

Mobile Apps to achieve wellness goals
page 5

Suwannee County has a new hardiness zone
page 6

AST for vegetable crops
page 7

Meet our new staff; Thank a Farmer Lunch
page 8

Upcoming events
page 5

Maintenance schedule
page 10



Artificial insemination for your cattle operation



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Are you looking for ways to advance your cattle operation? Artificial insemination can add value to your herds.

Artificial insemination (AI) is an advanced technology utilized in the beef cattle industry to advance cattle management and genetic selection. It is an assisted method of breeding cattle by using frozen semen straws collected from proven herd sires and placing it directly into the female's uterus.

Artificial Insemination offers benefits to livestock producers and can be performed for a low cost on farm. The application method is typically conducted by farm managers, farm employees, or a hired certified technician. Individuals performing the technique of artificial insemination must be proficient and properly trained. The method can be successful but must be done at the proper time within a female's heat cycle. Utilizing artificial insemination in beef cattle operations can offer many benefits to the operation including reduction in bull maintenance, overall genetic improvement in the cattle herd, and an increase in profitability in the offspring.

Bull maintenance drives cattle breeding performance. With the increase in overall production prices, the cost of purchasing and maintaining herd bulls have steadily increased. To purchase a bull with high growth genetics can cost \$7,000-\$9,000. Utilizing timed AI a producer can reduce the number of bulls needed by 50 percent, which saves the purchase cost of a replacement bull, along with added feed and vaccinations for the maintenance of that animal.* Some bulls will still be needed to clean up or cover cows missed in the AI process, as conception rates will not be 100 percent.

Using artificial insemination, you can select from thousands of proven herd sires listed in catalogs or websites where you can see the results expressed as Expected Progeny Difference (EPDs). This data helps you select bulls that will lower your calving difficulty, improve weaning weight, increase carcass merit, and add value to heifers kept within the herd. Utilizing AI also allows you to purchase advanced genetics to improve your herd at an affordable cost, which can correlate into an increase in profitability. When using artificial insemination, you will increase the number of calves born within the first 30 days of the calving season, which increases the age at weaning and has the potential to increase weaning weights by 20 to 40 pounds for the entire calf crop.



Artificial insemination is a beneficial advanced technology that, if implemented correctly, can give you the ability to improve genetics while capitalizing on profitability of higher performing calves. To have a successful breeding program there are many variables that must be considered. If you are interested in implementing AI in your herd please contact your veterinarian or contact me to discuss implementation options.

*Wells, R. 2015, *Artificial Insemination Increases Profits*, Noble Research Institute

Growing the next generation of leaders



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Arguably the most valuable life skills that 4-H members can develop are Responsible Citizenship and Leadership. For many, serving as an officer in their local 4-H club is their first experience with leadership within their community. Clubs that complete community service projects as part of their annual learning program help members



develop a positive community development mindset. As members grow and mature, their leadership opportunities develop further as they participate in other citizenship and leadership activities. Beyond the county level, there are several events that members and their families can participate in to expand their citizenship knowledge.

Each spring, the Florida 4-H Day at the Capitol provides 4-H members and their families with the opportunity to tour the Florida Capitol in Tallahassee, meet with state legislators that represent our Districts and advocate for 4-H as they share their message about the benefits of the 4-H program locally. This one-day activity is a great introduction to state government. In addition to advocating for 4-H, members also can advocate for local issues that are important to Suwannee County. This year, 4-H Day at the Capitol will be held February 6, 2024. The cost is \$25 and includes lunch. Registration is open now. If you're interested in attending, please contact the Suwannee County Extension Office for more details or assistance with registration.

For teenagers, the summer provides an opportunity to really dig into state government through the 4-H Legislature program. For one week, 4-H members take over the Florida Capitol and conduct a mock legislature. During the week, participants take on the role of lobbyist, representative, or senator. Their

goal is to pass legislation by working together! This program has been the starting point for many members who went on to become representatives and senators at the state and national level. While in Tallahassee, participants stay in the dorms at Florida State University. This year, 4-H Legislature will be held June 10 - 14, 2024 in Tallahassee. Registration opens in April for this event.

These are just a couple of the citizenship and leadership development opportunities that are available to members of the 4-H program. 4-H is open to youth of all ages and committed to helping them develop the life skills needed to make the best better! If your child ages five to eighteen are not currently 4-H members, we would love to have them join us for a meeting. Contact me for dates and times.



Don't be a messy roommate!



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Not only is a clean living-space more enjoyable, a clean bedroom, bathroom or living area shows respect for those around you as well as yourself. In addition to hygiene and appearance, cleanliness helps you feel good too!

Why clean? Organization and tidiness help in a variety of ways, from keeping rotten food smells out of the home to preventing important paperwork from getting thrown away. When renting, inadequate cleaning can lead to a fee or fine. Dust can trigger asthma and allergies.

Tidiness is a turn on: College women polled said they would be very or somewhat likely to walk out on a date if they came back to an unclean room (58%), while 49% of students (both men and women) say they would be very or somewhat likely to walk out on a date if they saw that their significant other's room was a mess.

Reducing Clutter Reduces Arguments: When you live in close quarters with others, lack of tidiness and cleaning can be a trigger for disagreements.



Barriers: According to the American Cleaning Institute, 1 in 5 young people say it is a lack of cleaning supplies or knowledge that prevents them from keeping tidy. Consider this, where do you go to get a curriculum on cleaning? We have come a long way from when the Babylonians first made soap as early as 2800 BC. Knowing the difference between cleaning (removing dirt) and disinfecting (killing germs) is important when choosing cleaning products. Also remember, as you clean, do not mix cleaning products. Keep cleaning products in their original containers with labels intact and follow directions for using and disposal.

Laundry: Dirty laundry does more than just hold body odors and food stains; it also carries germs that can cause illness. Sort laundry by color. Determine the level of dirty (dirtier items like sports clothing and workout gear need to be on a heavier setting). Select load size (most clothing can be washed in cold water, but for stains or heavily soiled items choose warm water). Add detergent and, if desired, fabric softener. Air drying reduces wear on clothes, use a drying rack or hanger. If using a dryer, consider a dryer sheet to avoid static cling.

When to Wash:

- **After each use:** Underwear, socks, t-shirts, tank top, camis, leggings, tights, swimsuits, whites, silks, clothes with stains
- **After 2-3 wears:** Jeans and bras
- **After 3-5 wears:** Bath towels and pajamas
- **Every 2 weeks:** Bed sheets



For a stain guide, scan the QR code to the right or click [here](#):

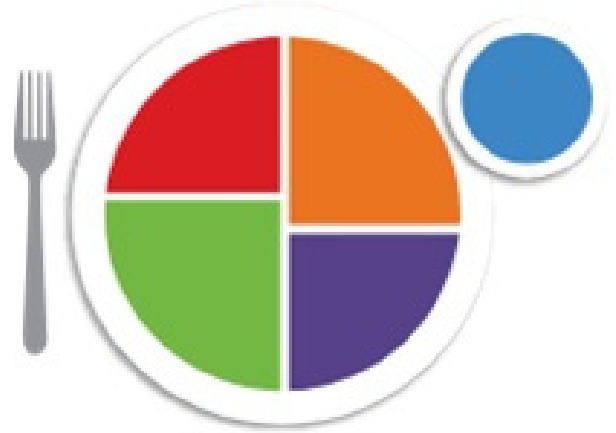
Regular cleaning and disinfecting removes allergens and germs, prevents illness, promotes wellness, and keeps the peace!

Using apps to help achieve wellness goals



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Do you find it hard to achieve your health and wellness goals? Could you use a little extra support to help you stay motivated and on track? Well, look no further, the help that you need may be in the palm of your hand. Using mobile apps can help you accomplish your goals in 2024 by providing many benefits.



Apps are convenient, accessible and provide immediate access to a wealth of information, customized plans, and tracking tools. This helps you remain accountable and committed to your goals. Apps offer personalized guidance that can lead to more effective and sustainable lifestyle changes, and most will track your goals and monitor your progress. Seeing your progress over time can encourage you to stay committed and make informed choices about your health. Finally, apps typically offer motivational elements such as the opportunity to earn badges and rewards for accomplishing certain goals. This can make the process of achieving your goals more engaging and enjoyable.

Start Simple with MyPlate is a free app that can help you choose simple daily food goals, see real-time progress, and earn badges along the way. This easy-to-use app can help you make positive changes, eat healthy and achieve a healthier life. Here are a few of the best features:

Choose your goals

- Set goals within each food group (Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein Foods, Dairy)
- Choose from a variety of goals or tap "Pick for me!" to have the goals selected for you

See real-time progress

- See daily progress in each food group as you meet your goals
- View simple tips to help meet your goals

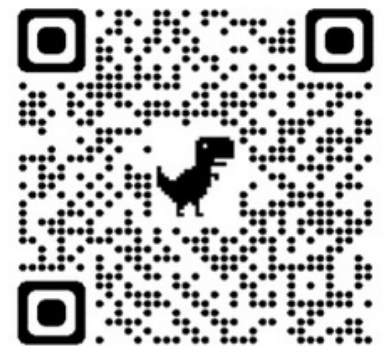
Earn badges that celebrate your success

- Earn and collect badges as food group goals are completed
- Participate in challenges to stay motivated and earn new badges

MyPlate Plan

- Use this plan to determine your food group targets including what and how much you should eat within your calorie allowance. This plan is personalized and is based on your age, gender, height, weight, and physical activity level. To try this feature use the QR code below.

Download *Start Simple with MyPlate!*



Suwannee County has a new Hardiness Zone



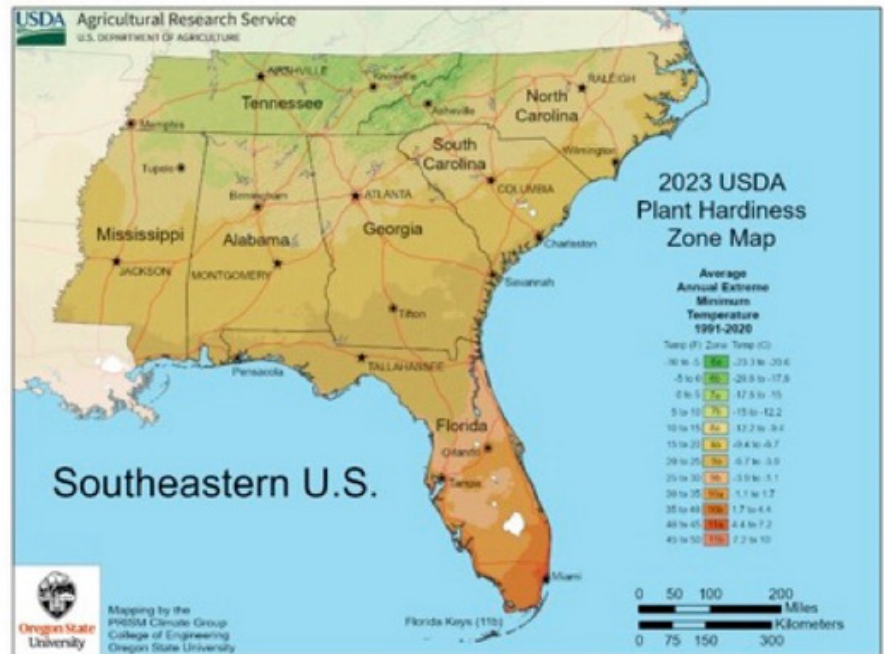
Carolyn Saft
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Suwannee County's new USDA Plant Hardiness Zone is 9a.

The plant hardiness zone map was updated this year by the U.S. government for the first time in eleven years. The map sets out the average annual extreme minimum winter temperature across the country, and that helps gardeners and growers figure out which plants are most likely to survive the coldest winter temperatures in their location. The 2023 map is about 2.5 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than the 2012 map across the contiguous U.S., says Chris Daly, director of the PRISM Climate Group at Oregon State University that jointly developed the map with the USDA. The new map means about half the country has shifted into a new half zone. In Suwannee County we went from 8b to 9a.

“So what?” you may ask. For avid gardeners, we can expand our plant choices to hardy subtropical plants such as Plumbago, Thryallis and Lion's ear which bloom for several months compared to Azaleas or Bridal's Wreath which bloom for about a month. I have been growing these plants in my yard for about six years and thought something had to be changing with the weather.

People who want to grow food for themselves may have better success with some citrus like Satsuma oranges, Meyer lemons, and Kumquats with a little less freeze protection effort. Selecting fruit crops that have chill hour requirements will be different too. Historically Suwannee County had a range of 480-640 chill hours; for the past three years, chill hours have been closer to the 300 range. How about trying some cold hardy bananas or pineapples? Vegetable growers may start a little earlier in the Spring and grow a little longer in the Fall.



Although we may be excited about new planting options, one must wonder how much more change is coming. Will our native plant species change? How will planting different species or plants affect the local wildlife? Will we eventually end up with those invasive pythons or iguanas that are in South Florida? Geez, I hope not. I can live with black racers or oak snakes, but I really do not want to run across a snake that is longer than my kayak or car! Well, only time will tell.

In the meantime, I will seize the opportunity to try new plants like Panama Rose, Brunfelsia and some natives from South Florida like Carissa and a Geiger tree.

Happy gardening!

Anaerobic soil disinfestation

Can it benefit small scale farms in Suwannee County?



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Suwannee County is one of the most important vegetable producers in Florida, ranking 11th in sales and making up 4% of the total agricultural sales of the state in 2017. During that year, most of the farms were less than 49 acres. Intense agricultural production usually entails tilling the soil, incorporating amendments and fertilizer, and planting crops one after the other. These conditions, added to Florida's higher temperatures and humidity, can lead to increased incidence of soilborne pest and pathogens and substantial yield losses.

Soilborne pests and pathogens are biological enemies of our crops, damaging root tissues and causing wilting, stunting, chlorosis, and plant death. These include fungi (e.g., *Fusarium* spp.), oomycetes (e.g., *Phytophthora* spp.), plant parasitic nematodes (e.g., *Meloidogyne* spp.), bacteria (e.g., *Ralstonia solanacearum*), and plant species considered weeds (e.g., nutsedge). These organisms need the soil for one or more life stages, so whatever conditions the soil is in will affect their survival.

Small vegetable farms in Suwannee County could protect their crops from soilborne disease issues by applying anaerobic soil disinfestation (ASD) 3 to 4 weeks before planting. ASD is a non-synthetic chemical technique for the control of soilborne pests and pathogens. All the pests and pathogens mentioned above have been controlled in agricultural experiments using ASD, and the effects have been observed to last for more than one cropping cycle. ASD is an alternative to chemical soil fumigation, which was the standard method of controlling soilborne disease issues during the 20th century but has been heavily regulated due to its effects on the environment and on human health.

The application of ASD can be done by carrying out the following steps:

1. Amend the soil with a source of carbon (C)
2. Covering the soil with Totally Impermeable Film (TIF)
3. Irrigating the soil until the point of saturation



In this process, the decomposition of the C source will result in anaerobic conditions in the soil. After three weeks, the microbial population in the soil will have changed and the anaerobic decomposition of the C source will have generated organic compounds harmful to soilborne pests and pathogens.

Additional equipment needed to prepare the soil as part of the ASD treatment includes:

- Rototiller to soften the soil and to help incorporate the C source to approximately 1 foot depth.
- 1.1 mil black/white VaporSafe totally impermeable film (TIF), which is different from regular polyethylene plastic mulch because it has more layers of plastic, preventing gas exchange with the atmosphere.
- Raised bed plastic mulch layer implement to lay the TIF and form the garden beds.

Contact me if you'd like more information about ASD and for support in on-farm applications.

Introducing our new staff members

Raymond Balaguer



Raymond Balaguer is the Commercial Horticulture, Small Farms, and Natural Resources extension agent for Suwannee County. He earned his M.S. degree in Horticulture at Penn State working mostly with tomatoes, high tunnels, organic soil amendments, and hydroponics. Raymond's other interests include vegetable production, timber production, rainwater harvesting, and beekeeping. He served as an Urban Extension Educator for the city of Philadelphia before joining the Suwannee County Extension team in November 2023. He is happy to be part of the team and aims to integrate with the Suwannee County community as quickly as possible to assist growers in their different areas of production for years to come.

Addison O'Steen

Addison O'Steen is the new staff assistant for Erin Jones and Katherine Allen. A Suwannee County native, she attended Westwood Christian School. Some of her favorite things to do are reading, listening to music and playing games with her family. Her favorite foods are mac and cheese and steak. A fun fact about Addison is that she was Salutatorian of her graduating class! We are delighted to have Addison on board, be sure to welcome her when you see her.



Thank A Farmer Luncheon, November 17

Our local farmers do so much for our community, especially after enduring the hardships of Hurricane Idalia, and we wanted to do something to show our appreciation. We partnered with local businesses (see list in poster) to host a "Thank A Farmer" Luncheon during Farm City Week in November. Farmers and their families could enjoy lunch at our office or take it home. The Sheriff's Department smoked chicken provided by Pilgrims, each farmer received a complimentary T-shirt from the Extension Office, and was entered into drawings for prizes donated by Crystal Tractor. Our 4-H Clubs all made Thank You posters.



JOIN US FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit www.suwanneecountyextension.org for details and registration links.

JANUARY 2024

- 3: Greenhouse Workday...seed starting!
- 4: Staff Meeting
- 8: 4-H County Council
- 10: Greenhouse Workday
- 11: MGV Alumni Workday & Meeting
- 12: Veggie Gardening Series begins
- 13: NE District Food Challenge
- 15: Extension Office Closed, MLK Day
- 16: Walk Off The Holidays, FFB SportsPlex
- 17: Greenhouse Workday
- 19: Veggie Gardening Series #2
- 20: SVEC Tree Giveaway; 3-D Archery Match
- 23: Tax Workshop
- 25: Lunch & Learn: Water Bath Canning
- 26-27: Livestock & Meats Workshop
- 26-28: 2nd Executive Board, Camp Cloverleaf



FREE ONLINE INCOME TAX WORKSHOPS

Learn an easier way to do your taxes and be sure you get all the deductions and credits you're eligible for.

January 23: Free tax software & filing	February 1: Federal income tax updates	February 8: Deductions & credits	February 15: What's your tax rate?
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Water Bath Canning

Canning is a great way to preserve produce you've grown or bought at a farmer's market to extend the bounty of the season. This free class in the Lunch 'N Learn series teaches you how to do it safely and successfully.

January 25, 2024
12 to 1 pm

Live Oak Library
1848 Ohio Ave N.



Spring Veggie Gardening

Hands-on workshop on Fridays, 9:00 to 11:00 am, presented by the UF/IFAS Extension & Master Gardener Volunteers of Suwannee County

- **January 12:** Seed Starting
- **January 19:** Transplants, Garden Layout, Common Soil Problems and Soil Testing
- **February 9:** Basic Hydroponic Systems
- **February 16:** Low-Volume Irrigation, Composting, Fertilizing

FEBRUARY 2024

- 1: Tax Workshop
- 2: Suwannee Co. FPL 4-H Public Speaking Contest
- 3: All Aboard Festival at the Historical Museum
- 3: Insectathon - UF/Gainesville; Small Town Clovers Showmanship & Grooming Clinic
- 7: Greenhouse Workday
- 8: Homebuyer Workshop Virtual Class Part 1
- 19: Florida State Fair, Tampa
- 9: Florida State Fair Livestock Judging Contest
- 9: Veggie Gardening #3
- 10: State Fair Horse Judging Contest
- 12: County Council, Extension Office
- 14: Greenhouse Workday
- 15: Homebuyer Workshop Virtual Class Part 2
- 16: Veggie Gardening #4
- 16: Florida State Fair Poultry Contest
- 17: Florida State Fair Dairy Judging Contest
- 17: State Food Challenge, Florida State Fair
- 20: ServSafe Manager Class
- 20-23: N. Fla. Livestock Show & Sale
- 21: 4-H Booth Entries for Suwannee C. Fair due
- 22: Lunch & Learn: Growing Blueberries
- 24: Archery Match, Newberry
- 24-25: Strawberry Festival
- 28: Plant Sale at the Greenhouse



HOMEBUYERS EDUCATION
ONLINE CLASS

UF/IFAS Extension Suwannee County's online Homebuyers Education Class is HUD certified and enables you to qualify for SHIP down payment assistance, HUD rental assistance and USDA low interest mortgages.

February 8 & 15, 2024
5:00-9:00 pm

Classes are held over two nights and you must attend both to earn your certification. There is a \$10 charge and pre-registration is required. Daytime and Spanish classes are available by request, call (386) 362-2771.

www.SuwanneeCountyExtension.org



Servsafe Food Manager Certificate Class & Exam

Become a certified Servsafe Food Manager with this class and expand your career options in the food service industry. The one-day program includes training and a 90-question multiple choice exam. The textbook is an optional cost but we highly recommend buying it and studying it before the class as a score of 70% is required to pass the exam.

February 20, 2024
8:30 am to 5:00 pm
Suwannee County Extension Office
1302 11th St. SW, Live Oak

For more information and to register online please visit our website.

www.SuwanneeCountyExtension.org

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MARCH 2024

- 4: Chick Chain Orientation
- 6: Plant Sale at the Greenhouse
- 11: County Council, Extension Office
- 11: SVYLSS Record Books Due
- 13: Plant Sale at the Greenhouse
- 14: MGV Workday & Meeting
- 15-23: Suwannee County Fair
- 15: Suwannee County Fair Heifer Show
- 18-22: Suwannee County School Spring Break
- 18: SVYLSS Hog Entry & Showmanship
- 19: SVYLSS Steer Entry; Hog Show
- 20: SVYLSS Steer Show
- 20: Greenhouse Workday
- 21: SVYLSS Sheep Show
- 22: SVYLSS Awards & Sale
- 22-23: Area North Horse Show, Clay County
- 23: Suwannee County Fair Dairy Show
- 23: Suwannee County Fair Goat Show
- 26: ServSafe Manager Class
- 27: Greenhouse Workday
- 28: Lunch & Learn: Hay Bale Gardening
- 30: 4-H Forest Ecology Contest, Austin Carey Learning Center



Haybale Gardening

If you're short on space or have poor soil, hay bale gardening is a great raised bed option. There's less strain on your back from bending over, and fewer pests to worry about. This free class in the Lunch 'N Learn series teaches you how to get you started.

March 28, 2024
12 to 1 pm

Live Oak Library
1848 Ohio Ave N.

UF IFAS Extension www.SuwanneeCountyExtension.org
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



Wednesdays, 1-3 pm

Suwannee River Regional Library in Live Oak

Plant & Garden Q&A

Bring your questions and samples for Master Gardener Volunteers

MONTHLY MAINTENANCE PLANNER

JANUARY

- Pack away decorations
- Re-use the Christmas tree – mulch, garden, crafts
- Clean range hood filter with boiling water and baking soda
- Clean refrigerator cooling coils
- Update your home inventory
- Declutter closets
- Clean filters and vents
- Clean fireplace, clear ash
- Condition leather furniture

FEBRUARY

- Plan your garden, prep the soil
- Get your tax papers together
- Clean your cleaning tools (mops, vacuum, brushes)
- Check the washer hose for wear
- Clean dryer vent
- Clean/repair window screens
- Clean/sharpen garden tools
- Flip your mattress
- Check batteries
- Clean A/C filters

MARCH

- Clean carpets
- Put away winter clothes
- Clean/repair patio furniture
- Begin garden – plant starters
- Pressure wash exterior of home
- Repair/repaint decks and porches
- Sharpen lawn mower blades
- Wash windows
- Level the yard
- Clean A/C filters

OUR MISSION OF EDUCATION. UF/IFAS Extension provides practical education you can trust to help people, businesses and communities solve problems, develop skills and build a better future. When you use UF/IFAS Extension, you can be confident that experts have reviewed and developed educational programs to ensure that you receive the best information for your needs. UF/IFAS Extension employees and volunteers work hard at improving the quality of life for our neighbors and communities. We provide solutions to everyday problems with a variety of educational programs and information:

- **Agriculture and Natural Resources:** Local farmers and ranchers are provided technical assistance and education to enhance their profitability and sustainability.
- **Horticulture:** Programs are designed to meet the needs of residents by utilizing Florida-Friendly Landscaping principles.
- **Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) Program:** MGVS receive training in exchange for service to the community. They assist with the Seed Library and hold plant clinics every Wednesday from 1-3 pm both at the Live Oak Library. Volunteers also staff a Seed Library and plant clinic at the Branford Library on Tuesdays from 2-5 pm.
- **Family and Consumer Sciences:** These programs offer information about health and nutrition, food safety, food preservation, money management, home concerns, relationships, community development and many other topics.
- **4-H and Youth Development:** 4-H Youth Development program uses a learn-by-doing approach to help youth gain the knowledge and skills they need to be responsible, productive citizens. This mission is accomplished by creating safe and inclusive learning environments, involving caring adults, and utilizing the expertise and resources of the University of Florida and the nationwide land grant university system.

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Carolyn Saft

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- **Kim Griffin**, Family & Consumer Sciences
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- Addison O'Steen
- Linda Thomason
- Sandra Wainwright

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