

The Dirt

Weed All About It



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What's This???



Editorial Team: Leigh Ann Grubbs, Lori Wiggins, Amanda Beckett, and Lisa Strange

*** Hurricane Idalia Edition ***



American Red Cross

Respect the American Red Cross and the Unexpected

By Lisa Strange

Since the destruction of Taylor County, as result of hurricane Idalia, I have gained a new perspective of the American Red Cross organization. I have been in their presence for 4 weeks at the Forest Capital Hall building. The conversations where they come from, how long they stay, and the processes of the humanitarian mission, I have come to respect and highly admire these folks. Their professional and compassionate responses meet the immediate disaster needs of individuals regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or citizenship status guide the core of their fundamental principles.

In addition to providing a safe and secure shelter for anyone in need after a disaster, I learned they coordinate blood drives, provide certification training in First aid, CPR, AED, babysitting and childcare, lifeguarding, swimming and water safety, CNA, and nurse assistants. American Red Cross assists military families during deployments and emergencies and work with veterans and military hospitals globally. I must in all respect provide you with the official website to learn more about this wonderful group of volunteers and organization;
<https://www.redcross.org/>

Respect the American Red Cross - continued

I was particularly surprised to learn emergency response teams from independent companies are hired to stay with Red Cross at shelters such as ours, armed, and work 24/7 for as long as the shelter is officially running. The security agents sleep, eat, and live in the same space provided for the displaced citizens.

On several evenings I watched one agent cook hot dogs and hamburgers on his tiny grill from the tailgate of his truck. They come fully prepared at a moment's notice for travel. This just demonstrates how we humans come together in time of need and how resilient we are. Not to say the worst, as well as the best have come out of some of us. Paraphrasing Madison's Columnist Halie Wetherington, "We don't know what lies ahead in our lifetime. For that reason and our own sanity, we respect the unexpected." As these trials come about, see what we can learn from them instead of being consumed with the surprise, outrage, and emotions that we humans are so apt to display.



Remember Wildlife after a Storm

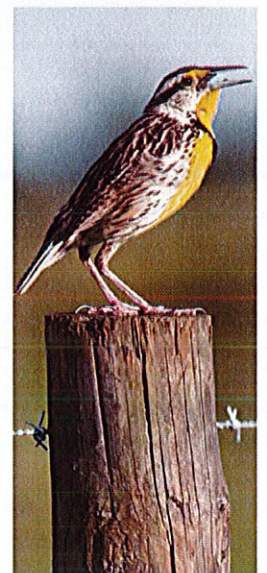
by Lisa Strange

If you haven't seen photos or the news about the pink flamingos that blew in to Taylor County's coast, then let me tell you. It happened, and they are still here. Hopefully the wildlife experts and conservation experts will monitor the situation closely and take actions to ensure the well-being of the birds. If you see something unusual about the birds, like gator attacks, or their numbers decrease, contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Scenarios like this are not a common occurrence, but in high winds bird populations have been known to decrease.

The stress of being displaced to an environment that is unsuitable can have adverse effects like breeding patterns, social interactions, who knows, but bright side it might lead to residents, bird waters to begin efforts to ensure the well-being of the displaced birds. Similar effects of existing wildlife that perhaps loss their nest, or surely there were birds that were blown to who knows where.



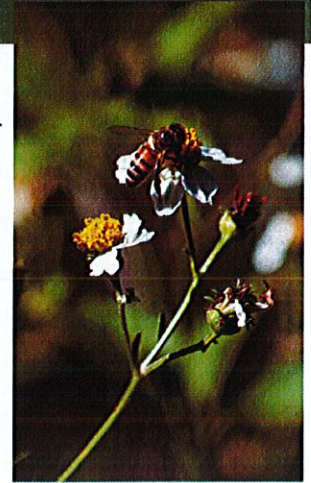
Many baby squirrel s fell out of nest or the tree fell over during the high gust of winds. The best advise if you find baby that is not injured, leave it be, for the mother to find. Squirrels are good moms. Several options are on internet for care of baby squirrel and other wildlife .



Remember Wildlife - continued

Call (888) 404-3922 the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission for distressed animals or the 'Helping Florida Wildlife for north Florida is (353) 371-4400 or go to floridawildlifecare.org MANY SPECIES habitats are hollow logs, rockpiles, woodpiles, barns, abandoned buildings, burrows, sites with leaves and debris, tall grass beds, bushes, openings in fence post or trees and made nests. Let's remember these critters lost their homes too, so protecting wildlife after hurricane disaster is crucial to keep biodiversity and the ecosystems intact. Each species has a specific ecological niche, and their presence contributes to the overall health and stability of the ecosystem.

By providing habitats and protecting them ensures the ecosystems can recover and thrive. ATTRACT WILDLIFE is of the nine Florida-friendly principles. Most species provide valuable ecosystem services such as pollination, seed dispersal, and pest control. Protecting wildlife helps to support these services that are essential for agriculture, food security and overall functions of our natural world. As you are cleaning up your property from hurricane Idalia, keep in mind wildlife and leave a snag tree or two, restore damaged habitats, replant native vegetation and recreate suitable nesting sites to provide wildlife a chance to recover. Add Blue bird houses, they can serve other species of birds as well. See UF/IFAS Wildlife of Florida Factsheet: Virginia Opposum



October/ November/ December

WHAT TO PLANT:

Annuals/Bedding Plants: Foxglove, petunia, shasta daisies. In September, plant ageratum, celosia, zinnia, and wax begonia

Bulbs: North Florida varieties: Carlton, Fortune, Silver chimes, Thalia and Sweetness

Herbs: Dill, fennel, oregano, sage, and rosemary

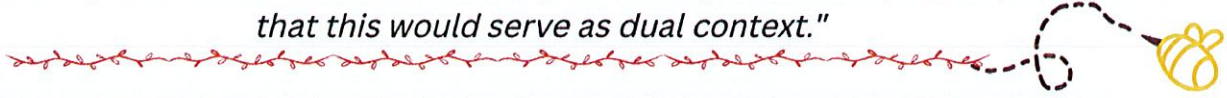
Vegetables: Oct.-Bulbing onion, salad crops. NOV. - broccoli, cabbage, kale, and lettuces. DEC -Cabbages, collards, beets, broccoli, spinach, turnips and cauliflower

For more information go to: edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP451

Appreciate the Longleaf Pine Tree

By Lisa Strange

"Ironically several months before hurricane Idalia was even a breeze in the sea, I started this article admiring the landscape of Long leaf pines one afternoon while watering the rose and vegetable garden beds located on the Taylor County Extension property" unbeknown that this would serve as dual context."



Before European settlement longleaf pine forest dominated much of the southern landscape. After hundreds of years of clearing for agriculture and logging without reforestation, hog grazing, wildfire control, and human population growth, the pine forest has been reduced from its original size.

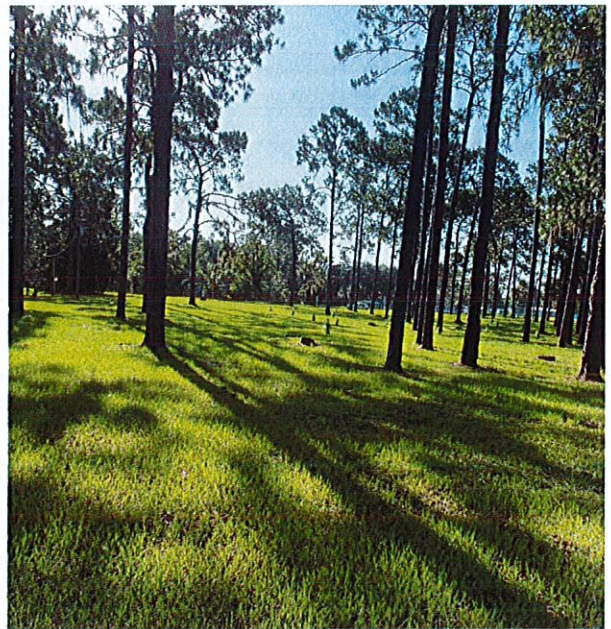
Two striking features of young longleaf pine are the resemblance to a clump of grass, and the silvery white clusters of new buds that are eye catchy in winter. By (7) years old the tree starts to grow quickly in height out of the grass clump appearance. Longleaf pine is appropriately named for its long, drooping lustrous bright green needles, predominantly in groups of three, but sometimes two to the group. The pinecone is one of the largest, 6-12 inches long. Cone scales are tipped with spikes that can puncture hands without gloves. They mature during their second season, and drop shortly after releasing their seed in September to November. The thick bark of mature trees is orange-brown or reddish-brown and separated into large plates with scales. They can reach 60 – 125 ft tall, with trunk diameter of 2-2 ½ ft.

Longleaf was once used for commercial production of naval stores, pitch, tar, resin, and turpentine. Today it is primarily used for poles, piling, lumber and plywood. The seeds are the main diet for the fox squirrels and a favorite for wild turkey, gray fox, squirrels, and other wildlife. For more information on the pine beetle and longleaf pines check out publications *The Southern Pine Beetle* at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN333> and more about Longleaf pines on Dr. Gilman's publication *Pinus Palustris :Longleaf Pine* at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/ST469>.

According to our Senior Forrester, Jared Beacham of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Forest Division, the long corridor of tall Long leaf pine trees from the north end of Perry near Jackson Road, and about the width of Airport Road to Byron Butler Parkway, surrounding the State museum, the Forest Capital Hall building all the way south to the KOA campground, is a natural native growth of *Pinus palustris*, Long leaf pines. Jared is responsible for this area and regularly monitors for various pine beetle larvae signs which an epidemic could wipe out most, if not managed.



Appreciate Longleaf - continue



I've heard many comments since hurricane Idalia from local folks about the picnics, school outings, weddings, and annual Forest Festival events held at Forest Capital Hall grounds and the familiar landscape of the tall Longleaf pine trees that once lined the grounds of Forest Capital Hall and how the majestic view was always a part of their lives. Now, it is so sad to see the destruction of tree trunks snapped like matchsticks. I did not grow up here but when I saw the hurricane aftermath on Saturday morning, I cried. To see a tree down in that way, I was lost for words and am still. I'm sorry for you that have grown up with these trees that are now gone. I hope we can advocate for replacing the 60 plus trees that were taken.

Based on data from the UF/IFAS, USDA, Florida Census of Agriculture, and Florida Forest Services' preliminary assessment from hurricane Idalia, over \$64 million are estimated in timber damages alone. For more estimates on other commodities

<https://fred.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/economic-impact-analysis-program/disaster-impact-analysis/hurricane-idalia-damage-assessments/>



AFTER

Florida-Friendly Gardens

By Amanda L. Beckett, Master Gardener



The University of Florida's Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program is now in its 30th year. Governed by nine principles, it can help individuals to sustain an ecologically sound landscape. Such landscapes save you money, while protecting our natural resources: water, natural habitats, and pollinators. As we 're-build' our property in the wake of hurricane Idalia, let's start the clean slate by implementing some or all of the nine principles. Call the Extension office to set up a free evaluation by Master Gardener volunteers, who can help guide you to a more Florida-Friendly Landscape™. They can help with advice on plant selection and much more. Contact 850-838-3508 for more information.

#1 Right Plant, Right Place - Select plants suited to the specific location. Plants in the right place will thrive with minimum amounts of water, fertilizer, pesticides and maintenance. Don't plant big trees next to your house. Taylor County is in Zone 8B.

#2 Water Efficiently - Watering at the right time of day is beneficial to you, your plants and (if you are on city water) your water bill. Use automatic rain gauges if you have an irrigation system. Helping to conserve this natural resource just makes sense.

#3 Fertilize Appropriately - Always have a soil test done before using fertilizer. Pick up a soil test kit from your Extension office. The report will tell you exactly what your soil needs.

#4 Mulch - Using mulch has so many benefits. Keeps soil moist, reduces weeds, and looks great. Never pile it up next to tree trunks. We have a natural free resource of pine needles.

#5 Attract Wildlife - Birds, Bees, Butterflies. Your garden comes alive when you attract wildlife to your patch. Plant brightly flowered perennials and annuals for butterflies and hummingbirds. A patch of zinnias, a splash of red salvia and a sunny row of sunflowers will get your gardens buzzing. Install a water feature to attract dragonflies that love to eat those pesky mosquitos, and toads that suck up slugs and snails.

#6 Manage Yard Pests Responsibly - Before you spray make sure you have identified the pest correctly; more likely it is a 'good bug'. If it survived the hurricane it does not need a squirt in the face from you. If you must spray use the least toxic approach first, you can use soapy water or a high pressure hose to knock down Aphids.

#7 Recycle - Recycling yard waste includes composting, a great free-soil additive that will give you a massive return on time spent. Idalia has left us with lots of downed trees, limbs, and yard debris. Be creative with making raised beds, arches or plant supports. Leave some piles for wildlife habitats!

#8 Reduce Stormwater Runoff - Where does your rainwater go? Is it running through fertilizer and pesticides before it hits the storm drain? Are you making the most of rainwater by collecting it in a rain barrel? Make sure all collected water is covered by a fine mesh or lid to keep mosquitos, critters and debris out.

#9 Protect the Waterfront - Work to ensure garden fertilizers and pesticides are not leaching into any waterfront, this includes flood plains. Maintaining at least 10-foot buffer from the water's edge out is recommended.

Information on the Florida Friendly Landscaping™ program, and to take the Florida-Friendly pledge, visit the website at <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>



Upcoming Events

- Oct 2** Seed Workshop - Free Seeds, Nutrition & Recipes - Perry Library - 10:00AM
Oct 3 Master Gardener meeting -**POT LUCK** - Perry Garden Club at 11:30AM
Oct 17 Discover Master Gardener Volunteer program - Open House 5:30 - 6:30PM
Nov 1 Discover Master Gardener Volunteer program - Open House 10:00 - 11:00AM
Nov 2 - 12 North Florida Fair - Tallahassee, Fair Grounds
Nov 29 AG Advisory Committee meeting 12:00 - 1:00PM
Dec 5 Master Gardener Christmas luncheon/meeting **POT LUCK 11:30AM - 1:30PM**
Dec 8 Discover Master Gardener Volunteer program - Open House 12:30 - 1:30PM
Oct 13 - Master Gardener Regional Conference - Alachua County Extension Office
https://mgv_ne_littleshop/ 9:30 AM - 2:45PM
Oct 26 - Cold Hardy Citrus Field Day - NFREC, Quincy
8:30AM - 2:15PM <https://citrusfieldday.eventbrite.com>
Oct 20 Persimmon Field Day at the NFREC Quincy, 8:45AM - 11:00AM
<https://persimmonfieldday.eventbrite.com>
Ongoing: Take the Florida Friendly Pledge
<https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/about-ffl/ffl-30th-anniversary/>

What's That ? ANSWER...

By Lisa Strange

Nope not the Lubber, this beauty is the Obscure Bird Grasshopper, Schistocerca obscura. Body is a bright chartreuse color



Photo Credit: Lisa Strange

with brown wood-like color forewings to help it fly short and quick distances. Commonly seen in fields and open woodlands, summer to early fall. One of the larger grasshopper species in the US., ranging from 1 to 3 inches long, with the males noticeably smaller than the females. They do not cause major plant damage. Strong fliers, when they are startled. They resemble tiny birds when in flight thus their name.



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