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“UF IFAS Extension Citrus County”



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Extension Notes

Spring has Sprung!

With the warmer weather and recent rainfall, many lawns and gardens are springing back to life. Check out Steven’s article about including wildflowers in your landscape starting on page 2.

Our new Agriculture/Natural Resources agent Ky, has some great information (pages 4-5) on why soil testing for pastures is essential for proper pasture management, and how to collect and submit a soil sample.

If physical activity is your thing, Stephanie offers some good tips for inexpensive ways to be active (page 6).

Do you want some help reconnecting with your family? Marnie (4-H Agent) has some thoughts on how to include more family time through mealtimes on pages 7 and 8.

Keeping with the getting outside theme, the Nature Naturally section features Florida’s natural areas, including several springs state parks. Great places to hike and view Florida’s unique wildlife.

Please plan to attend our Earth Day celebration on April 23 10am until 2pm at the Citrus County Extension office. See page 14 for more details. We hope to see you there!

Your Citrus County Extension Team!



Florida-Friendly Landscaping™

Florida-Friendly Roadmap

Water and Wildflowers

Steven Davis, FFL Program Coordinator



Do you have a lawn or part of your lawn that struggles from year to year? Planning to renovate these areas once again with sod or grass seed? Grass has its place in the landscape, but less lawn, reduced water consumption and less anxiety may be a better solution. One drought tolerant, low maintenance Florida-friendly solution can easily be seen traveling local roads in Spring and early Summer. Wildflowers are blooming everywhere. Wildflowers can cover large areas with no supplemental water required, little care and garden space seasonally flushed with color.

Wildflower blends can be purchased for coastal regions of Florida. Make sure you purchase viable seeds from a responsible vendor and select varieties appropriate for the region and existing site conditions. Many Florida native non-aquatic wildflowers will tolerate the sandy, sunny conditions we all encounter in our gardens. Annual wildflowers bloom early in the season and bloom for one season only, but reseed to continue the plant community. Perennial wildflowers germinate the first year offering some blossoms with several following years of flower production. A mixed annual and perennial garden will establish the first year putting roots in the ground and yielding leaf surface producing energy to continue its cycle from year to year. Being patient will have its rewards with the perennial wildflowers producing more flowers each year from an established meadow. Perennial flowers like Blanket Flower, Black-eyed Susan, Creeping Phlox, dune sunflower and Coreopsis, to name a few, are very durable and drought tolerant once established in our sandy soils.



Diversity in the garden is important. Wildflowers provide sustained color in the landscape requiring little maintenance, no supplemental water through irrigation and opportunities for pollinating insects to secure pollen and nectar. Pollinating garden insects include native bees, European honey bees, certain wasps and flies, even bats and birds. Development in Florida disturbs habitat and eliminates many opportunities for native wildflowers and yes, flowering weeds to flourish reducing habitat essential for pollinators. Utilizing wildflowers in the residential landscape may provide a nectar resource that is weakened through urbanization.

(Continued on page 3)

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™

Florida-Friendly Roadmap



(continued from page 2) WILDFLOWERS

I recommend starting seeds, as we do with vegetables in small peat pot containers, germinating them early in the season and transplanting seedlings into the garden location after the threat of frost has passed. Year after year the wildflower plant community will expand. Seed germination can also be accomplished by exposing the soil surface prior to and during our rainy season, scattering the seed uniformly and applying a light cover of straw mulch or lightly raking the seed into the soil surface. Low moist areas, where grass does not successfully establish, is a great place to plant wildflower seed. As seen in local roadway medians, a wildflower community planted in sunny depressed areas where moisture naturally collects is a simple solution for reducing maintenance, while providing abundant seasonal color beneficial to wildlife and pollinators.

The flowering season for wildflowers lasts well into summer. Care must be taken after flowering ends. Removing the seed stalks and any unsightly vegetative growth is advised to maintain a groomed appearance after flower production has passed. Mowing the area may be accomplished during the dormant season and once warm temperatures return, let the wildflowers beautify the landscape utilizing only natural rainfall and requiring little cultural care.



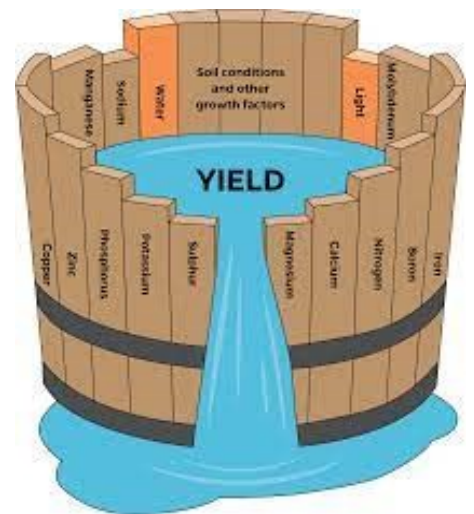
Why Soil Test?

Caetano (Ky) Sales, Agriculture/Natural Resources Agent



Along comes spring, with hopes for a productive year for pastures, crop fields and gardens. However, as with any type of production, preparation is essential. Providing the proper conditions for optimum plant growth is the main goal. All plants grow from the ground up. Taking a closer look at what is in your soil can help you determine the amount of fertilizer required and possibly save money by not spending on unnecessary fertilizer.

The general idea is that you will be providing nutrients for plants to grow by fertilizing. But how much fertilizer? All plant species have different requirements for nutrients. Fertilization management is essential. The nutrient with the lowest concentration in the soil is what is hindering production and yield or plant growth. This can be compared to the capacity of a barrel with unequal staves being limited by the shortest stave, as illustrated by Liebig's Law of the Minimum. A management tool that is often neglected, which provides essential information on what and how much fertilizer required by the crop, and the acidity level of the soil, is soil testing.



Liebig's Law of the Minimum.
Credit: UF/IFAS



Credit: UF/IFAS

Why soil test?

Soil testing allows you to learn more about your soil by indicating the pH level and recommending, if necessary, the required amount of lime to correct that level, the main nutrients concentrations in your soil, and the amount of fertilizer to supply your crop and soil. UF/IFAS recommends soil testing every 2-3 years.

(Continued on page 5)

(continued from page 4) SOIL TESTING

How do I collect a soil sample?

The crucial step in soil sampling is collecting a representative sample of the area. Do not sample from sites such as animal feeding areas or wet spots as they can affect the results.

Walk in a zig-zag pattern throughout the area you want to sample. Make 15-20 stops and collect a small amount of soil with a soil sampler probe; you can also use a shovel or a trowel, approximately 6 inches deep. Mix all samples collected for the specific area together to obtain one sample that represents that area. Allow sample to dry for a couple of hours and label the sample. Remove any roots or other plant parts before adding the sample to the soil sample bag. Soil sample bags are provided at the UF/IFAS Citrus County Extension Office.



Credit: UF/IFAS

How do I send a sample to UF/IFAS Extension Soil Testing Laboratory?

After the sample is collected, dry, and labeled, complete the soil testing form provided at the UF/IFAS Citrus County Extension Office or at the UF/IFAS Extension Soil Testing Laboratory website (<https://soilslab.ifas.ufl.edu/ESTL%20Home.asp>). The form has instructions on how to fill it out as well as payment and mailing instructions; don't forget to include your name, address, and email.

Place samples in a box, along with the soil testing form and payment, and mail them to the UF/IFAS Extension Soil Testing Laboratory in Gainesville. Results will be mailed back within 7-10 days.

If you have any questions on collecting, sending samples, and interpreting results, contact the UF/IFAS Citrus County Extension Office to set an appointment with the Agriculture Extension Agent.

References

Silveira, Maria L. "Soil and Plant Tissue Testing1." *Nutrient Management of Vegetable and Row Crops Handbook* (2015): 34. <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/SS625>



How to Be Active Without Spending a Dime

Stephanie McMinds, Family & Consumer Sciences Program Assistant

In order to be physically active, you don't need to spend a fortune. In fact, you don't need to spend any money at all. When creating your shopping list, special exercise equipment is not needed, other than a pair of comfortable walking shoes and the appropriate activewear.

Here are a few ideas to help get you moving:

Close to home

- Get not only your garden or yard in shape but also yourself by mowing, raking, pulling weeds, or digging. To see the many different plants that can be grown in which season and also steps to create your perfect garden, check out the Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide at edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/VH/VH02100.pdf For gardening questions, contact the Master Gardeners at 352-527-5700.
- Make weights from everyday household items by using soup cans, a bag of rice, or even bottles of water instead of purchasing weights.
- When you are running your errands, don't park at the first up-close parking spot that you find. Try parking a little further out and walk.



In your community

- Attend demonstration exercise classes at your local senior centers or even local gyms offer Silver Sneaker programs. Senior centers in Citrus County have a wide array of exercise activities for seniors to participate in. For instance, chair exercises, line dancing, and even Zumba. For information on where community centers are located, contact Citrus County Senior Programs at 352-527-5975.
- Participate in fun runs or walks, or even local recreational sports leagues that the community provides throughout the year.
- Contact your local mall to see if they currently have a mall walking program or find a group of friends in your neighborhood.

Fort Island Trail Beach Boardwalk



In the great outdoors

- Go for a hike in a park. Citrus County is filled with many state and county parks. For a complete list of our county parks, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/8b53bae9>



Florida 4-H Youth Development

Head • Heart • Hands • Health



Family Time

Dr. Marnie Ward, 4-H Agent



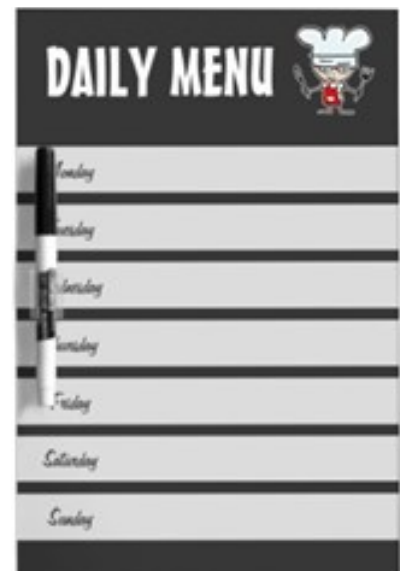
Growing demands on free time and an increasing list of extracurricular activities combine to challenge families when it comes to dinner time. While a sit-down meal with knife and fork were the hallmarks of family dinners just a generation ago, the 21st century dinner has evolved. Today’s family defies the traditional cookie cutter mold and meets the challenges of meal planning with flexibility. Investing in meal planning, timing and preparation means they “find” the time to eat together on a regular basis. With increasing numbers of parents and care-givers working outside of the home (with maybe 2 or more jobs) and an expanding offering of extracurricular activities for kids (football, track, science club, drama, FFA, 4-H, etc.), time is at a premium.

Need some help reconnecting? Here are some ideas for your family to try. Maybe your family members are early risers; then maybe the time when all of your family members are together is breakfast. Assign different family members the tasks of preparing for the first meal of the day. Of course, this list will look different in every family, but it may include who gets out the utensils, who pours the coffee, who butters the toast and who puts away the milk. Not all that excited first thing in the morning? Then consider family meals in the evening. Dinner together doesn’t have to be synonymous with dinner at home. Turn family meals into an adventure, with themes: hot dogs and beans at softball practice, hoagie sandwiches at the soccer game, lettuce wraps in the garden before County Council meetings or soup and crackers under the bleachers before the Swine Show. Planning and preparation should be a family affair – here are some ideas:

Attach a menu board to the fridge and have family members vote on dinner options.



Have a rotating schedule for “Who’s Cooking Tonight” and let those individuals or groups make the decisions and preparations.



(Continued on page 8)



Florida 4-H Youth Development

Head • Heart • Hands • Health



(continued from page 7) FAMILY TIME



Make Friday night (or whatever night you choose) an International Festival. Kids can choose a country and explore their culture, food and traditions.

Or try my all time favorite - breakfast for dinner or lunch or just about anytime of day.



Organize a “Pot-Luck” for friends and family. Invite everyone to share their “signature” dish.

The UF/IFAS Extension 4-H program provides families, young people and adult volunteers with the tools to build youth into contributing citizens, who empower their communities and make healthy lifestyle choices.

4-H is...



Nature Naturally

Explore Florida's Natural Areas

Did you know there are 175 state parks, trails, and historic sites in Florida? That means over 800,000 acres of natural Florida to explore. Tourists flock to Florida to enjoy abundant sunshine, beautiful beaches, crystal clear springs, and unique wildlife. As Floridians, these adventures are just a matter of stepping outside.

The early months of the year offer many advantages. Springtime means cooler temperatures and lower humidity. These are ideal conditions for getting out on a trail or diving into nature. The Withlacoochee State Trail can be accessed in Floral City, Inverness, Citrus Springs, and Dunnellon. This 46-mile paved trail winds through upland pine forests, wetland hammocks, and dry prairies. It then skirts along the Tsala Apopka chain of lakes, where you can see an abundance of wildlife and birds. To learn more about the trail and upcoming events visit: <https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/withlacoochee-state-trail>

Historically, some of Florida's natural environments became attractions for tourists interested in exotic, tropical get-aways. Locally, these included Silver Springs, Rainbow Springs, and Homosassa Springs. The Florida Park system now manages these natural ecosystems and provides educational experiences to engage visitors in their preservation. Plan a trip to one of these parks and check out some upcoming events:

1. The Silver Springs State Park and the Florida Safari Ecosystem Tour:

<https://www.floridastateparks.org/events/florida-safari-ecosystem-tour-2>

2. The Rainbow Springs State Park and Geocaching:

<https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/rainbow-springs-state-park/experiences-amenities-0>

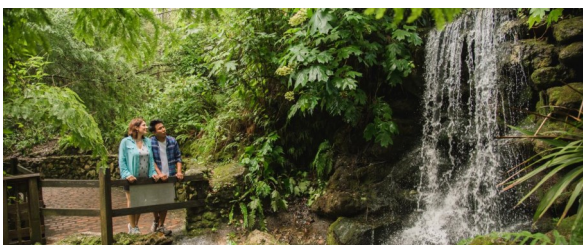
3. The Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park:

<https://www.floridastateparks.org/events/guided-bird-walk-17>

1.



2.



3.

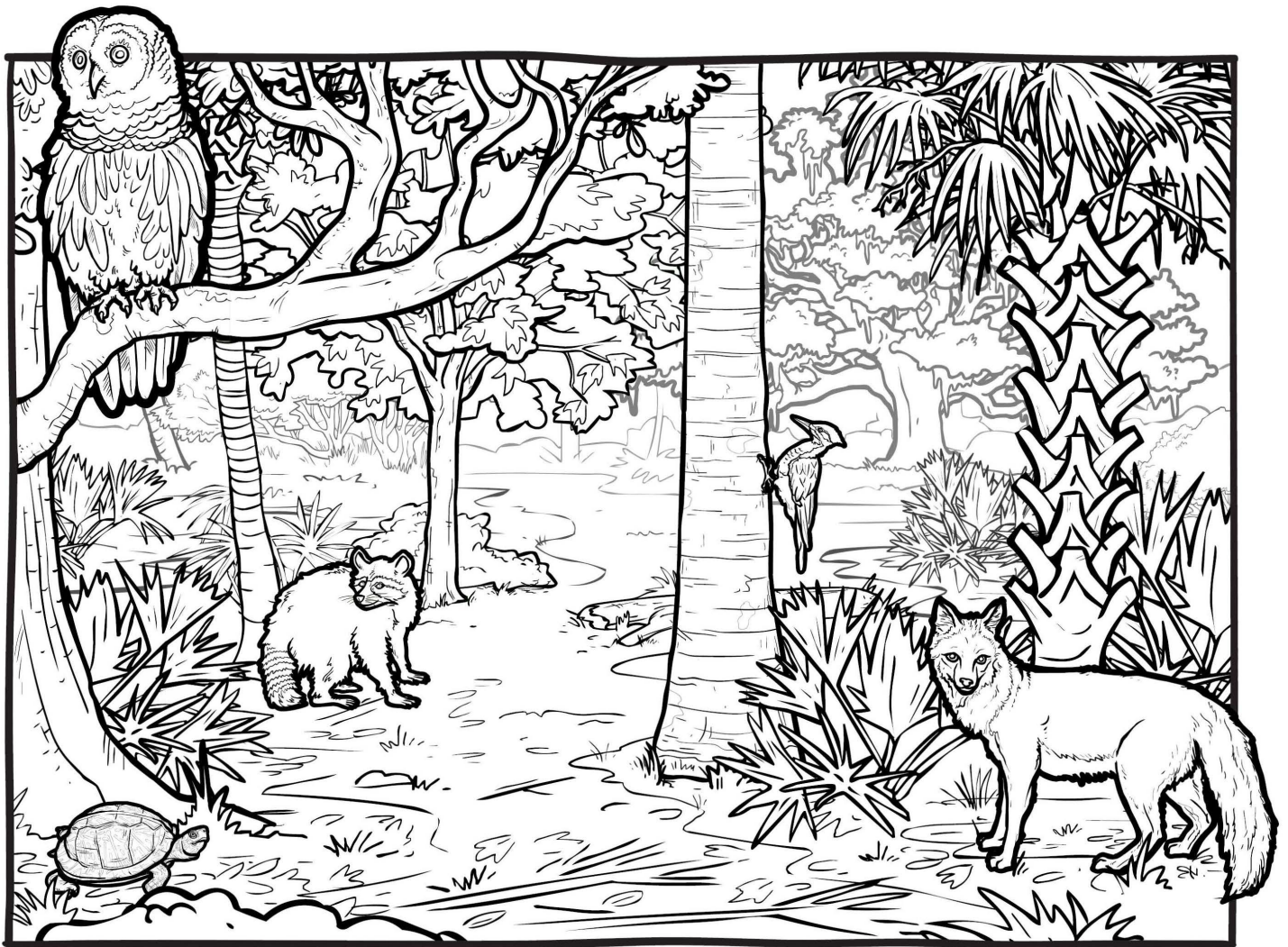


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Nature Naturally

(continued from page 9) PLAY OUTSIDE

Explore Florida's Wildlife



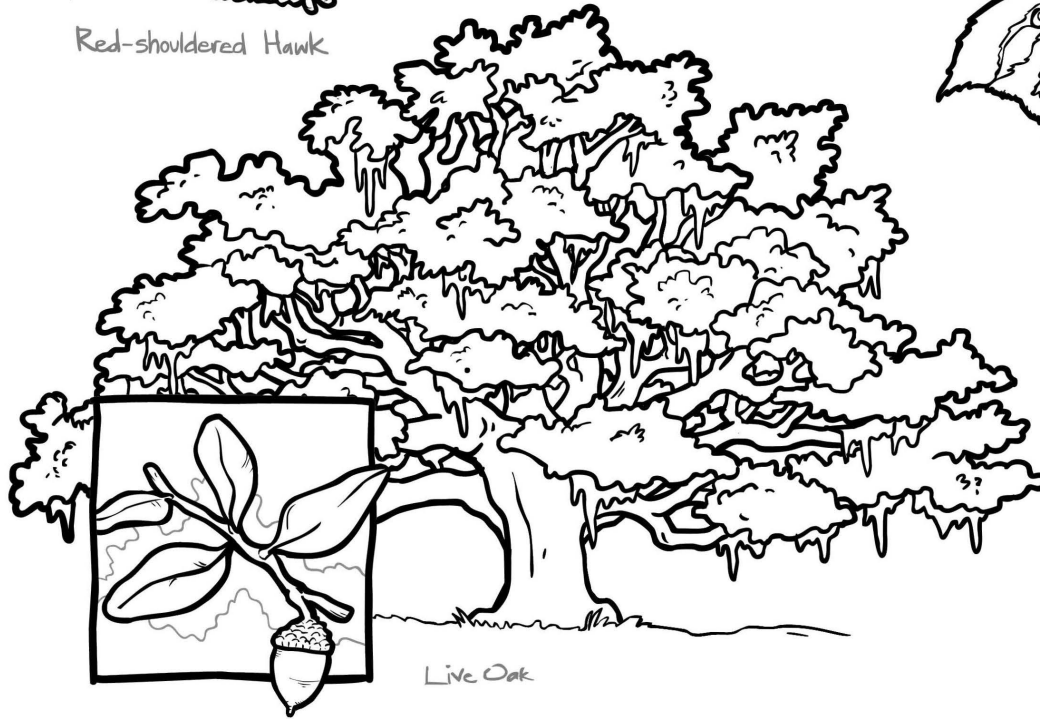
HYDRIC HAMMOCK
#FLStateParks

Nature Naturally

Explore Florida's Wildlife



Red-shouldered Hawk



Live Oak

Pileated Woodpecker



HYDRIC HAMMOCK
#FLStateParks

★ Until further notice, these will be virtual seminars.
Gardening Seminars

Contact Steven Davis at 527-5708 to pre-register for these free classes or go to:
<https://ccufflprogram.eventbrite.com>



“Managing Pests Wisely”

Tuesday Apr 5
2:00 - 4:00 pm

“Right Plant, Right Place”

Tuesday Apr 19
2:00 - 3:30 pm

“Create a Florida-Friendly Landscape”

Tuesday May 10
2:00 - 4:00 pm

“9 Florida-Friendly Principles”

Tuesday May 24
2:00 - 4:00 pm

“Lawns in Central Florida”

Tuesday Jun 7
2:00 - 3:30 pm

“Florida-Friendly Fertilizing”

Tuesday Jun 21
2:00 - 3:30 pm

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday April 23, 2022
10am - 2pm

Citrus County Extension Office
3650 W. Sovereign Path, Lecanto
352-527-5700



Trained service animals only please



APRIL, MAY, JUNE



Monthly Extension Master Gardener Seminars return to in person this fall.

We are also keeping the Virtual seminar. Programs offer an opportunity to explore timely garden topics at these seminars offered at each Citrus County Library. No registration required for in person seminars. All programs start at 1 pm, last approximately 1 hour, and are **free**.

Virtual seminar: pre-register on our Facebook page for the secure link.

April: Porch Plants

May: Bizarre Plants

June: Ponds - what you need to know

2nd Tuesday	Lakes Region Library	Inverness
2nd Wednesday	Central Ridge Library	Beverly Hills
3rd Wednesday	Floral City Library	Floral City
4th Monday	Coastal Region Library	Crystal River
4th Monday	Virtual - pre-register on our Facebook page!	
4th Tuesday	Homosassa Library	Homosassa

Bring plant problems and questions for expert advice to the Extension office.

Trained Master Gardeners are available most days between 8am - 5pm.

Schedules can vary, so please call ahead (352-527-5700).

Additionally, challenges (pictures are helpful) can be emailed to:

IF-SVC-citrusmg@ad.ufl.edu

Earth Day 2022

Conserve, Recycle, Sustain

Saturday April 23 10am - 2pm

FREE
EVENT

Citrus County Extension Office
3650 W. Sovereign Path, Lecanto
352-527-5700

RAIN
or
SHINE!



-  Wildlife: Bees, Butterflies, Birds Insects, AND MORE
-  Florida-friendly Landscaping™
-  “Trash to Treasure” recycled art contest display - Come vote for your favorite
-  Kid-friendly games
-  “Ask a Master Gardener”
-  Storywalk through the Garden
-  Water Conservation Demos
-  Butterfly Release at 12:30pm



Trained service animals only please

Sponsored by: **UF** | IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA
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CITRUS COUNTY
CHRONICLE
www.chronicleonline.com

Cooking Under Pressure



Do you have an electric pressure cooker or plan to get one and are not sure how to use it?

This HANDS-ON class will cover:

- Different pressure cooker models
- Appliance features
- Safety tips
- Additional equipment you can purchase
- Tricks to make cooking a breeze

Participants will complete a recipe in an electric pressure cooker and enjoy a meal together.

May 5, 2022

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Location:

UF/IFAS Extension Citrus County
3650 W Sovereign Path,
Lecanto

Cost:

\$15.00 per participant

Registration ends April 29th

For more information, or to register, contact:

Stephanie Clamer McMinds
352-527-5700
sclamer@ufl.edu



Register at: www.citruscookingmay2022.eventbrite.com

Pre-registration is required.

UF/IFAS Extension

SolutionsForYourLife.com

SUMMER YOUTH CAMPS 2022



Looking for something fun (and interesting!) to do when school gets out?
Join Citrus County Extension for summer day camps. Come to one or come to all!
Pre-registration and pre-payment required. Space is limited, first come, first served.
For more information, call 352-527-5700

Homemade Holidays Sewing Camp Monday - Wednesday June 6-8 9:00am - 4:00pm

Design, plan, and create items to keep or share. Choose from aprons, pillows, stockings, flags, totes, and more. All experience levels welcome. Learn the basics or try some new techniques.

Cost: \$40 Checks payable: **Citrus County 4-H Association** Camp is for youth ages 8-14.

Location: Citrus County Canning Center (3405 W Southern Street, Lecanto)

Campers will need: Lunch Mon & Tue, comfortable clothes (school appropriate), and closed toe shoes. Cost includes all materials, take-aways, afternoon snack daily, and lunch on Wed.

Camp Fit and Fun Tuesday-Friday July 5-8 8:30am - 4:30pm

Before care beginning at 7:30am and After care ending at 6:00pm at no extra charge.

Youth learn the FUNdamentals of sports, explore healthy snacking, and learn the importance of exercise and staying hydrated.

Cost: \$40 www.2022campfitandfun.eventbrite.com Camp is for youth ages 8-12.

Location: Citrus County Extension office (3650 W Sovereign Path, Lecanto)

Campers will need: Lunch Tue, Wed & Thur, sunscreen & bug spray, comfortable clothes (school appropriate), and closed toe shoes. Cost includes all materials, take-aways, afternoon snack daily, and lunch on Fri. **This camp is in partnership with Citrus County Parks & Rec.**

Future Hero's Summer Camp Monday-Friday July 18-22 8:30am - 4:30pm

Before care beginning at 7:30am and After care ending at 6:00pm at no extra charge.

Campers will explore a variety of career choices through interactive hands on activities along with field trips to various locations and will also learn about the knowledge and skills needed to make their dream a reality.

Cost: \$50 **Contact Parks & Rec at 352-527-7540 for payment options** Camp is for youth ages 11-14.

Location: Citrus County Canning Center (3405 W Southern Street, Lecanto)

Campers will need: Lunch Mon, Tue, Wed & Thur, sunscreen & bug spray, comfortable clothes (school appropriate), and closed toe shoes. Cost includes all materials, take-aways, afternoon snack daily, and lunch on Fri. **This camp is in partnership with Citrus County Parks & Rec.**

Spring Gardening Calendar

As temperatures warm plants begin to actively grow, flushing new growth and flower production. Early bloomers include: Redbud, Walter's Viburnum and azaleas with roadside wildflowers adding a low maintenance option to the color display. Creeping phlox, blanket flower and coreopsis all participate in the emergence of spring color.

Creeping Phlox



Blanket Flower



Coreopsis



Nitrogen containing fertilizer restriction

April is a time to fertilize your plants if they are showing any signs of deficiency. Citrus County maintains a nitrogen fertilizer restriction during the cooler season, which ends April 1. The threat of late frost is over so application of nitrogen containing fertilizer poses little threat to emerging plants unless over applied.

Seasonal irrigation evaluation

It is best to evaluate and repair automated irrigation systems prior to the arrival of hot summer weather. Efficient application of supplemental water is a priority for Central Florida landscapes.

- Check your irrigation controller so the correct time is indicated as daylight savings time has recently changed.
- Irrigation systems often run at night making evaluation difficult. Check your system monthly so that water when applied hits the garden space intended.
- Check your rain or moisture sensing device to make sure it functions to prevent application of supplemental water during a rain event.
- When renovating gardens consider drought tolerant plant materials for use in the landscape.
- Perform a "catch can test" to evaluate the amount of water applied by rotor and popup irrigation heads.

Seasonal scouting

- **BOLO** (Be on the Lookout) It is best to regularly scout your landscape to identify and minimize damage from insect pests and weeds that invade our gardens. Early detection makes pest management less of a barrier to a successful landscape.
- Use caution with bug and weed control. Many insecticides and herbicides damage our plants when applied when temperatures become hot. Thoroughly read and understand labels for proper application.
- Avoid insecticide use when plants are flowering. Valuable pollinators, like honey bees, visit flowering plants to collect pollen and nectar potentially injuring the visiting colony.