

Extension Connection

In this Issue

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page</u>
Welcome Dr. Beckford	2
Bees in Florida	3-4
Mosquitoes	5-6
Closing Your Seasonal Home	7-9
4-H: Service to Community	10
Nature Naturally	11-13
Gardening Seminar Schedule	14
Classes/Seminars	15-17
Gardening Tips	18-19

“UF IFAS Extension Citrus County”



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Extension Notes

Happy New Year!

We are very excited about 2023. Our new Extension Director/Horticulture Agent Marguerite Beckford has joined the Citrus Extension Team. See page 2 for more information and how to contact Marguerite with horticulture questions.

Steven, FFL program coordinator has a great article (pages 3 & 4) about bees in Florida.

Do you have questions about mosquitoes? See Ky's (Agriculture Agent) article on pages 5 & 6 about methods to control these pests, and how to identify the ones most dangerous to people and pets.

Stephanie (FCS Agent) offers some good tips and a check list for closing your seasonal home (pages 7-9).

Marnie (4-H Agent) highlights how 4-H clubs are giving back to their community through local charities (page 10).

Nature Naturally (pages 11-13) features Florida's unique ecosystems. Find great places to hike and view Florida's unique wildlife.

As the New Year starts, thank you for continuing to rely on UF/IFAS Extension. When you or someone you know needs solid information, be sure to ASK IFAS. We are here to help.

Your Citrus County Extension Team!



UF/IFAS Extension

Solutions for Your Life

HORTICULTURE

Welcome Dr. Beckford!

Marguerite Beckford, Director and Horticulture Agent



UF/IFAS Extension Citrus County welcomes Dr. Marguerite Beckford as the new Extension Director and Horticulture Extension Agent. Marguerite's Extension program focus areas are Environmental Horticulture/Landscape Management (ELM) and Urban Forestry Extension education. Marguerite's ELM Extension programs have provided technical assistance for green-industry professionals and property owners throughout Florida, through landscape best management practices training sessions.

Marguerite launched Florida's first trademarked urban forestry Extension program (Treejuvenation Florida) in 2017 and has coordinated urban forestry Extension community engagement events to support several tree re-planting projects. Serving on the inaugural tree committee, Marguerite provided technical assistance for New College of Florida's certification process to be recognized as Florida's 21st Tree Campus USA location.

Marguerite has also published work in EDIS and ASHS journals, has presented at national and international conferences, and has earned national and state Extension awards, as well as a UF/IFAS Faculty and Staff Superior Accomplishment award.

Contact info: mbeckford@ufl.edu

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™

Florida-Friendly Roadmap



Bees in Florida

Steven Davis, FFL Program Coordinator



Each Spring in central Florida, the Citrus County UF/IFAS Extension office receives several inquiries about swarming bees. Are they bees? What kind of bees are they? What should I do to control the swarm? Are the bees native to Florida? All great questions. Like all inquiries received let's begin with the facts.

Many species of native bees can be observed in the state of Florida. Unlike the non-native (EHB) European honey bee, most native species are solitary and nest mostly in the ground. Short tongued bees harvest nectar and pollen, essential for survival, from "flat" often daisy-like flowers. Long tongued bees harvest nectar and pollen from tubular flowers. Collecting pollen is essential for all bees, with different species collecting pollen in different ways. Pollen baskets is the most obvious way for some bees to collect pollen. Sweat bees collect pollen on sticky hairs on their back legs, Mason bees collect pollen under their abdomens, while others manage pollen internally.

Nesting activities vary as well. EHB (European Honey bee) are nesting social creatures living in hives constructed in tree cavities or managed in artificial hives. 70% of native bees nest in underground cavities similar to an apartment complex with one entrance branching out to individual voids where young bees are nursed and resources are stored. Other bee species utilize harvested vegetation, pithy stems and rotting wood to construct nesting stations.



Leaf cutter bees harvest "semi-circle" carve outs of leaves or flower petals. Have you noticed these precise cuts on leaves in your garden? This species is quite diverse, with some species nesting in the ground with others creating nesting sites above ground with both utilizing rolled up vegetation as a cavity nest. Bumble bees are a social creature often nesting with over 200 members nesting in underground cavities. Mason bees utilize mud to line their solitary nests.

The European Honey bee has a long history of collecting nectar and pollen and in nature can be considered thieves. It's not their fault only their nature. If honey exists, honey bees will find it and collect it. Robbing honey bees are common. Additionally, native bees can be "kleptoparasitic". The cuckoo is a bee which has lost its natural ability to collect and store pollen. This bee has developed an ability to fool other bees, sneaking into an established nest and utilizing the nest resources to sustain its introduced young. Really, no harm no foul, causing little threat to the colony.

(Continued on page 4)

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™

Florida-Friendly Roadmap



(continued from page 3) BEES

Honey bees have established a sweet spot in agriculture. EHB were introduced to the colonies from Europe during colonial migrations. Eusocial behaviors allow this bee to establish productive colonies, generating food resources, providing heat to endure and grow its population into a productive “organism”. Swarming occurs when a colony needs to grow. The colony splits itself into a separate colony forming a new organism. Half of the existing colony, along with the existing queen will leave the rest of the colony behind. Often the fertilized queen, who is not a good flier will rest nearby with her followers. Scout bees begin to evaluate the area looking for a new and agreeable home. Once a new site is determined to be acceptable, the swarm moves in.

This is the process we often witness as bee populations grow. The old hive remains in the original nest and the process of raising a new queen begins.

Bee Swarm



As alerting calls begin to arrive in spring, panic is discouraged. Locating a registered beekeeper or communicating with beekeeping clubs is often the first option to notify interested collectors to quickly capture the creatures and navigate them to managed bee farm colonies. This practice is always encouraged prior to accepting a more toxic control solution from a licensed pest control operator. If encountering this type of pest management, contacting your local extension agent or a conversation with a Pest Control Operator may provide the resources needed to safely control the docile swarm you encounter.

Mosquitoes - A Treacherous Buzzing Pest

Caetano (Ky) Sales, Agriculture/Natural Resources Agent



Mosquitoes have long been a problem in the state of Florida, with their presence posing a significant nuisance and public health concern. Mosquitoes are a historical matter for the state, in such a way that in 1824 Mosquito County was formed, composed of the present-day counties Volusia, Brevard, Indian River, St. Lucile, Martin, Seminole, Osceola, Orange, Lake, Polk, and Palm Beach. After the yellow fever epidemic in Jacksonville in 1888, mosquitoes became a public health concern, as many of the species currently in Florida are vectors of diseases.

There are 3,500 different species of mosquitoes worldwide; 80 of those have Florida as their home. The life cycle of a mosquito has four stages, eggs, larvae, pupa, and adult. There are two different types of eggs. Floodwater eggs are not laid directly in water but in damp soil and surfaces close to the water. Permanent water eggs are laid directly into the water. Larvae and pupa are aquatic, and adults are airborne after their wings dry.

In response to mosquitoes' effect on public health, various mosquito control methods have been employed over the years to reduce their populations and mitigate their impact.

One of the earliest mosquito control methods in Florida was the use of insecticides, which were applied either directly to the water where mosquitoes laid their eggs or to the surrounding areas to kill adult mosquitoes.

This method proved effective in reducing mosquito populations. Still, it also had drawbacks, such as potential negative impacts on non-target species and potential resistance to insecticides by mosquitoes. However, research on insecticides and regulations of their

use have drastically reduced their environmental impact if used properly. Before using any mosquito control product that can be found at the local hardware store, it is the responsibility of whoever will apply the product to read the label and apply the product only as directed. **The label is the law.** Not following its instructions is **illegal.**

Another method of mosquito control that has been used in Florida is the introduction of natural predators of mosquitoes. An example is several species of minnow fish that feed on mosquito larvae. This method is considered to be more environmentally friendly, as it relies on natural processes rather than the use of chemicals. Contact our local mosquito control agency, which provides mosquito-eating fish to pond owners when requested.

In recent years, genetically modified mosquitoes have also been explored as a method of mosquito control in Florida. This involves the release of male mosquitoes that have been genetically modified to produce offspring that do not survive to adulthood, effectively reducing the overall mosquito population.

The best method of controlling mosquitoes is prevention. Removing the source of mosquitoes is the first step in preventing the increase in the mosquito population. Any container that can collect water can be a source.

In conclusion, several methods have been employed to reduce the impact of mosquitoes. Nevertheless, mosquitoes are still an issue in Florida. Research and new environmentally friendly methods are constantly being developed to control this nuisance pest effectively.

(Continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5) MOSQUITOES

These five mosquito species should be on your radar:



Photo: James Newman, UF/IFAS/FMEL

Yellow fever mosquito

Scientific name:
Aedes aegypti

Vector of dengue and chikungunya viruses

Scientific name:
Aedes taeniorhynchus

Vector of dog heartworm



Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory
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Photo: James Newman, UF/IFAS/FMEL

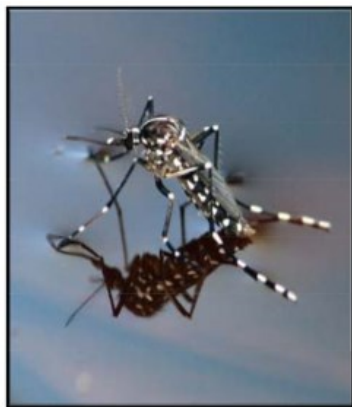


Photo: Sean McCann, UF/IFAS/FMEL

Asian Tiger mosquito

Scientific name:
Aedes albopictus

Vector of dengue and chikungunya viruses

Scientific name:
Culex nigripalpus

Vector of dog heartworm, St. Louis encephalitis virus, West Nile Virus



Photo: James Newman, UF/IFAS/FMEL

Scientific name:
Psorophora ciliata



Photo: Sean McCann, UF/IFAS/FMEL

Resources:

Mosquito Information Website

<http://mosquito.ifas.ufl.edu>

Citrus County Mosquito Control District Website

<https://citrusmosquito.org/>

Source:

Connelly CR, Bolles E, Culbert D, Devalerio J, Do-Nahoe M, Gabel K, Jordi R, McLaughlin J, Neal A, Scal-Era S, Toro E, Walter J (n.d.) Florida Resident's Guide to Mosquito Control Integrated Pest Management for Mosquito Reduction Around Homes and Neighborhoods 2014

Daniel P (2005) The Mosquito Wars: A History of Mosquito Control in Florida (review). Bull Hist Med 79:829–830



Closing Your Seasonal Home

Stephanie McMinds, Family & Consumer Sciences Agent



Before you lock your doors and leave your house for an extended period, get organized and plan. Proper preparation will help ensure your return to a clean, undamaged home. The environment in Florida encourages mildew growth and storm damage. Homes that are unoccupied are more vulnerable to this type of damage. This article outlines the steps you must take to prepare your home before leaving for an extended period. A checklist is also included at the end of this publication to help you remember these important tasks in the weeks leading up to your departure.

Indoors:

- Clean cabinet interiors and exteriors.
- Clean each appliance thoroughly.
- Clean the exterior with sudsy water, then rinse and dry. Unplug appliances while you are away to avoid electrical-current surges during storms.
- Clean the refrigerator interior. One tablespoon of baking soda in one quart of water is sufficient. Thoroughly dry. Remove and clean the defrost pan located at the base of your refrigerator. The doors to the refrigerator and freezer should be left ajar.
- If you leave the refrigerator plugged in, remove all perishable foods. Place an ice cube-filled plastic bag in the freezer. If the bag contains a solid block of ice when you return, you will know that your power was out long enough for the ice to melt and refreeze.
- Unopened cans and jars of food can be left on shelves. Store flour, sugar, and salt in tightly sealed containers. To avoid household pests, discard cereals, crackers, and pastas.
- Fresh and perishable foods should be eaten or discarded. Opened bottles and jars of perishable items should be given away or discarded.
- Clean any food particles from the dishwasher's filter. Run a short cycle in the dishwasher. Turn off the dishwasher and open the door a few minutes into the cycle. Remove any residual soil that may have accumulated around the door gasket and under the bottom of the door. Then, let the dishwasher finish its cycle. Close the door but unlatch it to relieve pressure on the door seal.
- Clean the garbage disposal by grinding some ice cubes through it. Then run a baking soda and water solution through the disposal. Leave the drain stopper in place to prevent water in the P-trap beneath the disposal from evaporating during your absence from home.
- Clean oven, broiler, and the drip trays under the burners.
- To remove spatters from the microwave, heat a cup of water on high for two minutes. Condensation on the walls will then loosen the spatters. Rinse and dry the inside of the microwave after washing it with sudsy water.

(Continued on page 8)



(continued from page 7) *CLOSING HOME*

- Clean portable appliances thoroughly. Be sure to open the trap door under the toaster to clean it and remove the crumbs.
- Clean the dryer's lint filter. Use a leaf blower to blow out the dryer's vent exhaust tubing clearing any debris.
- Turn off the water heater.
- Clean all surfaces and fixtures.
- Cover toilet and tank top with a plastic wrap.
- Put stoppers in drains.
- Remove bedding and bath linens; clean, dry, and store. Vacuum mattress thoroughly and cover it lightly with a sheet.
- Put only clean clothes in closets. Allow space between garments to permit air circulation. Leave no clothing on the floor. Allow air circulation by leaving interior doors open.
- Turn off ceiling fans.
- Unplug any appliances or electronics that are not in use.
- Replace backup batteries in fire alarms, automatic watering systems, thermostats, and security systems.

Set your air conditioner no higher than 84 degrees (F) so it recycles off and on whenever the home reaches that temperature. The indoor humidity relative to temperatures greater than 84 degrees (F) will be greater than 55-60%, which is unsafe for indoor conditions and can lead to growth of spores and bacteria.

Outdoors:

- Neglect and damage to roof and gutters can result in leaks and decay. Remove leaves and debris from roof, gutters, and downspouts. Check gutters and downspouts for damage. Observe after heavy rain to see if water is flowing freely through them.
- Check for damaged, curled, loose, or missing shingles.
- Use caulk to fill in gaps between windows, doors, and walls. Replace broken or cracked putty, as well as loose or damaged weatherstripping.
- Before you leave, thoroughly clean your pool. Do not drain the pool because the sun can cause it to dry out and crack.
- Schedule regular trimming and mowing to prevent plant and lawn overgrowth. If outdoor furniture or other items could be blown away or damaged in severe weather, bring them inside.
- Mail, newspapers, and other deliveries should be stopped or promptly picked up by a friend or neighbor. A car parked in the drive or carport discourages burglars. A friend or neighbor may agree to leave their car in your drive.

(Continued on page 9)



(continued from page 8) *CLOSING HOME*

- Several lights within a home should be placed on timers to simulate movement within the house, suggesting normal activities.
- Outside lighting and trimmed shrubbery should provide nighttime visibility of windows and doors from the street and other houses in the neighborhood.
- Outside lights left on during the day may signal that you are gone for an extended period.
- Window treatments should not make the house look closed-up but should prevent easy viewing of valuables within the home, such as electronic equipment and cameras.
- Hazardous materials should not be stored in or around your home for an extended period. If you will not be using the items, household hazardous waste can be dropped off at the Citrus County Central Landfill located at 230 W. Gulf to Lake Hwy. Lecanto for safe and proper disposal. For more information, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/2vdu535a>

Three Weeks Before Leaving

- Schedule an appointment to have your air conditioning serviced
- Have the humidistat calibrated
- Call service and utility companies to temporarily suspend service
- Review homeowner's insurance policy and update if necessary.
- Update home inventory. Make copies and keep in a secure place.
- Determine what methods you will use to control relative humidity inside your home and fungal growth.
- Find a trusted friend or relative to routinely check on your home.
- Arrange for landscaping maintenance.
- Arrange to close shutters and to prepare home in the event of a hurricane threat.
- Arrange for pool maintenance if needed.
- Inform proper authorities of your planned absence.

One Week Before Leaving

- Clean refrigerator and freezer.
- Test the dehumidifier if you choose to use one.
- Vacuum upholstered furnishings to eliminate mold spores.
- Remove interior and exterior plants in pots and containers.
- Remove all food from the cabinets.
- Move patio or lanai furniture into the garage or house.
- Test the timers for your lights.
- Leave your contact information with neighbors and homeowners association.

Two Weeks Before Leaving

- Purchase timers for lights and radios.
- Arrange to forward mail.
- Arrange for cancellation of newspapers and magazines.
- Purchase desiccants if desired.
- Begin cleaning with fungicidal products to remove existing fungal spores.
- Purchase plastic hangers if needed.

The Day you Leave

- Empty food from refrigerator and freezer; wipe condensation dry from freezer; disconnect refrigerator/freezer; and leave door slightly ajar.
- Put a dozen ice cubes and 2–3 tablespoons baking soda into the garbage disposal, and then turn the disposal on to clean blades.
- Empty dishwasher.
- Set timers on lights.
- Turn off or disconnect water heater.
- Strip bedding clean of all linens.
- Cover drains with stopper and duct tape.
- Cover and seal toilets.
- Unplug appliances and electronics.
- Check air conditioning for accurate settings.
- Set security alarm.
- Lock doors and windows.
- Leave interior doors open for air circulation.



Developing Community Resources

Dr. Marnie Ward, 4-H Agent



HANDS – the 3rd “H” in the 4-H Pledge. I pledge my hands to larger service. Through service to 4-H clubs, and community, youth members learn to make their world a better place. These service projects change as youth grow in confidence and knowledge of community needs. The youngest 4-H members, Clover Buds, learn by example. Following the lead of youth leaders within the 4-H clubs, they watch, share, and begin to see themselves as contributors to their community.

Recognizing needs in their community, 4-H clubs are on the front lines of community resource development. Since September, Citrus County 4-H has collectively participated in over 20 projects focused on community. These include the Citrus County Animal Shelter, Ziggy’s Bird Haven, Citrus County Blessings, Be a Santa for a Senior, Citrus County Historical Society, and youth and families in need. Watch for these youth leaders the next time you are out at a community event, a customer appreciation day, or a benefit for a local non-profit organization.

Recently, 4-H members participated in a leadership experience at the University of Florida. They took part in classes and workshops focused on teaching skills to share locally in 4-H clubs or afterschool programs. At one workshop, they learned to design and create items to support youth and adults. The sensation of touch is a powerful influencer; it can be used to stimulate and to calm individuals. A sensory blanket is a therapeutic tool to focus attention on touch, with texture and contrast. These blankets help to reduce anxiety, increase comfort, and focus attention.

Interested in learning more about a Sensory Blanket Workshop, including supply list and step by step instructions? Contact Marnie Ward, Citrus County 4-H Agent at mlward@ufl.edu or 352-527-5712.

Supplies



Finished blankets



Blanket



Nature Naturally

Unique Ecosystems of Florida

Very wet, very dry, and everything in between – that sums up the range of ecosystem types that can be found in Florida. Nature enthusiasts, young and old, can find over eighty ecosystem types to explore in Florida. An ecosystem is a group of organisms and the physical environment they interact with. Here are a few of the unique ecosystems in Florida.

The freshwater springs and spring runs are some of the most widely visited areas. At the turn of the century, many were visited for their health benefits. Doctors often prescribed a “trip to the springs” for medicinal purposes or “to cure what ails you.” Now, visitors throng to these crystal-clear windows into the heart of Florida to enjoy their beauty and uniqueness. Manatee Springs State Park is northwest of Citrus County. The cooler winter temperatures will soon draw a beloved winter resident, the manatee. These gentle giants depend on the warmer temperatures (72°F) in the springs when the Gulf temperatures drop in the winter months. This ecosystem is also home to a variety of fish species including Florida Gar (*Lepisosteus platyrhincus*), Striped Mullet (*Mugil cephalus*), and Mosquitofish (*Gambusia holbrooki*).

Manatee Springs State Park. Photograph by Florida State Parks



(Continued on page 12)

Nature Naturally

(continued from page 11) ECOSYSTEMS

Historically, the Pine Flatwoods covered generous portions of Florida. While many of these areas have been converted by development, it remains the most extensive natural ecosystem in Florida. These areas are easily identifiable with stately pine trees (usually slash pine), sabal palm, and saw palmetto. The role of fire in these ecosystems is critical for maintaining the openness. Consequently, the restoration/maintenance of these ecosystems is promoted with the use of prescribed burns. This promotes the development of habitat for Black Bears (*Ursus americanus*), White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), and rabbits (*Sylvilagus floridanus*). In this ecosystem, you can also find Diamond-back rattlesnakes (*Crotalus adamanteus*) and Gopher Tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*). Dade Battlefield Historic State Park is in Bushnell, FL. Take the trail to experience a pine flatwoods ecosystem.

Pine flatwoods. Photo by Allyson L. Webb



A xeric hammock in Pasco County.
Photograph by Shirley Denton



Xeric means dry, very dry. In a xeric ecosystem, plants and animals have adapted to low moisture conditions. The term hammock refers to dominance of trees providing shade. Hence, a xeric hammock can be thought of as a shady, dry area. These hammocks develop overtime with the exclusion of fire from the ecosystem. This allows trees, often sand live oak (*Quercus germinate*), to dominate the ecosystem. Frequently, turkey oak (*Quercus laevis*) and sand pine (*Pinus clausa*) are also present. Many of the same species found in the pine flatwoods also make their homes in the xeric hammock,

including the Diamond-back rattlesnakes (*Crotalus adamanteus*) and Gopher Tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*). The Florida Scrub Jay may be found in some portions of this ecosystem.

Learn about a plant native to the Pine Flatwoods ecosystem using the coloring sheet. The Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*) blooms in late summer and fall.

Nature Naturally



www.FloridaStateParks.org

#FLStateParks





Gardening Seminars: hosted online and in-person - you choose

Register here for these free seminars: <https://ccufflprogram.eventbrite.com>



“Right Plant,
Right Place”

Tuesday Jan 10
2:00 - 4:00 pm

“Create a Florida-
Friendly Landscape”

Tuesday Jan 24
2:00 - 4:00 pm

“Optimizing Irrigation
Systems”

Tuesday Feb 7
2:00 - 4:00 pm

“Palms in Central
Florida”

Tuesday Feb 21
2:00 - 4:00 pm

“Lawns in Central
Florida”

Tuesday Mar 7
2:00 - 4:00 pm

“Florida Friendly
Fertilizing”

Tuesday Mar 21
2:00 - 4:00 pm

Thursday seminars:

“Irrigation & Turf Management 101”

Feb 9 Noon - 3:00 pm

“9 Florida-Friendly Principles”

Mar 16 6:00 - 8:00 pm

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday April 29, 2023
10am - 1pm

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



Trained service animals only please



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JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH



Monthly Extension Master Gardener Seminars

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.

January: Weeds

February: Flip your Landscape with Florida Friendly Principles

March: Vegetable Gardening

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

Honey beekeeping basics

✦ **So you want to keep bees?**
March 8, 2023 6-8pm

✦ **What's in your apiary?**
March 22, 2023 6-8pm

✦ **Know your bees**
April 5, 2023 6-8pm



✦ **Starting your first colony**
April 19, 2023 6-8pm

✦ **Reading your frames & stressors**
May 3, 2023 6-8pm

✦ **Honey bee Cottage Industries**
May 17, 2023 6-8pm

Go here to register: <https://tinyurl.com/beeCCExt>

Citrus County Extension Office
3650 W Sovereign Path, Lecanto FL 34461
352-527-5700



Citrus County Family & Consumer Sciences Upcoming Programs

- **January 9th -Water Conservation Program at Central Ridge Library (1:00-2:30 PM)**
Learn ways to reduce excessive water use both indoors and outdoors.
- **January 18th -Cooking Under Pressure Program at Extension Office (5:00-7:00 PM)**
Program includes hands on cooking safely with an electric pressure cooker.
- **January 27th -Cooking for 1 or 2 Program at Lakes Region Library (10:30 AM-12:00 PM)**
Find out how to easily plan, shop for, and prepare meals for one or two. Presentation will include a cooking demo.
- **February 2nd -First Time Homebuyer Series (6:00-8:00 PM)**
HUD approved 4-week homebuyer education class is designed to help you better understand the entire home buying process.
- **February 6th -Pickling Class at Citrus County Canning Center (11:00 AM-1:00 PM)**
Learn the process of pickling safely with hands on participation pickling green beans.
- **February 25th -Pickling Class at Citrus County Canning Center (10:00 AM-12:00 PM)**
Learn the process of pickling safely with hands on participation pickling green beans.
- **March 1st -Growing & Cooking with Herbs at Floral City Public Library (1:30-3:00 PM)**
Discover flavorful culinary herbs well-suited for Citrus County gardens and how to incorporate them to create tasty meals.
- **March 17th -Fall Prevention Program at Coastal Region Library (1:00-2:30 PM)**
Attendees will learn the risk factors of falling and ways to reduce those risks.
- **March 23rd -Cooking Under Pressure Program at Extension Office (5:00-7:00 PM)**
Program includes hands on cooking safely with both an air fryer and electric pressure cooker.
- **March 27th -Cottage Food Workshop at Extension Office (9:00 AM-2:00 PM)**
Learn the ins and outs of selling homemade food to the public.
- **March 28th -Electric Pressure Cooking Program at Homosassa Public Library (1:00-2:30 PM)**
Program will go over the basics of safely using an electric pressure cooker.

For more information or to register for one of the programs above visit:

[UF/IFAS Extension Citrus County Events | Eventbrite](#)



An Equal Opportunity Institution

Winter Gardening Calendar

While your northern friend's plants are mostly bare this time of year, there is a startling array of color in the Citrus County landscape. Think beyond the ubiquitous azalea, with an expanded plant palette of winter bloomers.

Trees and shrubs: Camellia, star magnolia, maple in bloom, firespike, and the vibrant Chickasaw plum and fringe-tree.

Star Magnolia



Annuals/perennials: Yellow jasmine vine, petunia, Angelonia, pansy, sweet alyssum, and diamond frost Euphorbia.

Winter vegetable gardens are at peak during the winter with tons of herbs, lots of leafy greens, many root vegetables (carrot, turnip, and beet), and all the 'cole' crops of broccoli, cabbage, and Brussel sprouts.

Protect plants on coldest nights. When especially cold nights are predicted, be ready to cover tender plants to minimize damage. Frost and freezes are likely this quarter.

Coverings can include blankets, boxes, upturned garbage cans, just not plastic. Protection is only offered if the covers go all the way to the ground to trap evaporating ground heat. Also, it is important to note that potted plants and newly planted garden gems are more susceptible to damage in their first year in the ground.



Make sure that the cover extends all the way to the ground to trap radiant heat.

Don't follow the strawberry growers all-night vigil with a sprinkler system running as seen on TV news. This is not for the faint of heart; home irrigation systems are not designed to run during a hard freeze. A little water is worse for plant survival than no water.

(Continued on page 19)

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What To Do in The Garden

UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA
IFAS Extension

(continued from page 18) WINTER GARDENING

Turf: You may have noticed that the grass is growing more slowly (Yay, to less frequent mowing!). Turf also has reduced ability to utilize irrigation and fertilizers. Irrigation should occur no more frequently than once every 10-14 days in winter. If it has rained $\frac{1}{2}$ " or more, then no irrigation is needed for another 10 days or so. Turn the irrigation system to 'Manual' and turn it on only when it has been dry for prolonged periods.



Roses: Prune roses late in Feb or early March and apply mulch to maintain a 2-3" layer. Blooms begin in about 8 weeks, just in time for spring-break visitors.

Weeds, weeds, weeds. Apply a pre-emergent herbicide around the middle of Feb to help prevent warm season weeds from sprouting. Once you do, don't disturb the soil or it can inactivate the weed fighter.

For specific gardening information, be sure to contact us - 352-527-5700