Local Youth wins Swine Reserve Champion at SVYLSS

Youth from Lafayette and surrounding counties recently participated in the Suwannee Valley Youth Livestock Show and Sale. Local youth Molly Hamlin showed the reserve champion pig and the grand champion pig was shown by Suwannee County’s Aubrey Reppert.

Lafayette Sr. FFA Chapter showed the Grand champion Feeder Steer and the Reserve Feeder Steer and home grown champion was shown by Suwannee 4-H Levi Starling.


The Lafayette County Extension Service thanks all businesses, parents and individuals who supported this show and the youth of Lafayette County.

Above: Molly Hamlin, Lafayette FFA Swine exhibitor receiving accolades from Judge Briana Lawyer for her Reserve Grand Champion Pig at SVYLSS. Also pictured above with Molly are her parents John and Christina Vann as well as Chad and Tori Lyons, Lafayette FFA Advisors.

March Rainfall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooks Hammock</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>3.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midway Tower</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mowery Swamp</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>5.24</td>
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Tips on Using Pine Straw In Garden Mulching

Mulching flower beds with pine straw in north Florida is a common practice, and why not? After all, nearly 2/3 of Lafayette County alone is in planted pines or forested making it one of the nation’s leaders in pine straw harvesting for horticulture and landscape purposes. Although spreading pine straw is not rocket science, there are a few tips and things to know to ensure you or a customer is satisfied with the results.

There are different types of pine straw common to landscapers and homeowners. Some of these include long leaf, slash and short needle. These three come from different varieties of pines and differ in appearance. The most sought after of these three is the long leaf, which has a brighter color with longer needles. However, due to its demand, it can be difficult to find and more costly. There are also ways to make the strawed beds more appealing. The pine straw is usually hand-baled and will be packed in compressed layers. Separate these layers and spread them one at a time over an area. If you want a nice, smooth appearance, and want to avoid the clumped look, make sure to really shake the straw out good.

The depth you'll spread the straw depends on whether there is an existing coat of mulch still on the ground, or whether you're covering newly landscaped ground. If you've already got a good base of mulch on the ground, spread a thin layer just to freshen things up. If covering bare dirt, spread the straw a lot heavier.

Finally, there is a final process that will make a world of difference in the appearance of the beds. After spreading the pine straw, you'll want to tuck it around the borders. The tucking process ensures that the pine straw will stay within the borders, and it just looks nice, giving your landscape beds a "raised" look. This can be done by standing inside the bed, use a leaf rake to pull the pine straw that you spread outside of the bed towards the bed line. This will give you that fluffed up, raised bed look.

Using pine straw in landscaping is an effective way to control weeds in beds and other areas not planted in yard grass. It will result in a natural look and using these suggestions will result in a yard with a polished result in a well finish look.

4-H Anglers Learn the Skill of Cleaning Fish

The Lafayette County 4-H Anglers held its monthly 4-H meeting on Tuesday, March 16. The focus of the meeting was how to safely clean and prepare fish for cooking. Each member present was given fish to clean. Fish cleaned were fresh water bream and catfish. Those in attendance learned that some fish must be skinned while other have to be scaled. Part of the activities also included learning how to filet large fish making it easier to cook and have boneless pieces of fish.
Community Club Makes Self-Watering Containers with Recycled Bottles

The Lafayette County Community Club held its regular meeting on Tuesday March 9. After the pledge of allegiance to the American and 4-H flags, members were given a demonstration on how to make a self-watering planter out of a two-liter bottle. After the demonstration, each member was able to make their own self-watering container. Once finished making the planter, members placed cuttings of coleus in the planters. Before adjourning the meeting, everyone enjoyed snacks and fun playing games of red light, green light and hide-and-go seek.

Lafayette 4-H Gardeners recently were visited by Judith Dampier, Food Systems Specialist with the UF/IFAS Extension Family Nutrition Program where they learned about Tower Gardening. Dampier provided and helped the local 4-H members assemble five tower gardens. The tower gardens use Coconut husk and perlite for the growing medium which is kept moist by a drip system on a timer. Fertilizer is added to the water supplying the drip system ensuring plants and seedlings are provided all necessary nutrients. 4-H members planted tomatoes, peppers, and beans in the tower gardens. Tower gardens are an aeroponic system that lets you grow veggies, fruits, & more, with no soil with faster plant growth and can help in extending the growing season.

Pictures right: Five garden towers placed on the south end of the Lafayette Extension office filled with seasonal vegetables.

Public Gardening Workshops Continue

The Lafayette County monthly garden workshop sponsored by UF IFAS Lafayette 4-H, Taylor County Master Gardeners and Three Rivers Library System spent its March meeting learning how to properly compost. Attendees learned the proper ratios of manures, yard clippings, and other organic matter to quickly produce quality compost while monitoring the moisture and smell of the composts for signs of problems. The April garden workshop will focus on container gardening.
Local On-farm Demonstrations of Controlled Release Fertilizers in Corn and Watermelon

By Robert Hochmuth and De Broughton, Regional Extension Agents

The Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) encompasses portions of 15 counties in North Florida, including Lafayette County. Over 9,000 row crop and vegetable growers farm about 1.4 million acres in this region, of which 142,000 acres are irrigated. Most of the agronomic and vegetable crop acreage of this region is found within the Suwannee River Basin, encompassing nine counties of the Water Management District. What distinguishes the area are its deep and rapidly draining sandy soils with large areas of unconfined Florida aquifer, providing recharge for ground water and springs. North Florida’s deep sandy soils are excellent for vegetable and row crops production, but also need to be managed to preserve nutrients in the root zones, especially nitrogen.

Research over the past few years has been conducted on the use of Controlled Release Fertilizer (CRF) in corn, carrots, and watermelon at the NFREC-Suwannee Valley near Live Oak, FL. This research has provided insight regarding the potential role of CRF in future BMPs for these crops and has provided a foundation for on-farm demonstrations being conducted in 2021. On-farm controlled release fertilizer demonstrations in corn in several counties are being led by De Broughton, and in watermelon by Bob Hochmuth, both Regional Extension Agents serving the Suwannee Valley area. Current research in carrots and snap beans with CRFs is being conducted at the Center with plans to initiate on-farm demonstrations in the fall of 2021. These projects are important to demonstrate the potential role of CRFs as an advanced BMP for these large acreage key target crops grown in the deep, sandy soils in the Suwannee Valley. The projects in watermelon will demonstrate the use of CRF (mainly nitrogen) using one season-long application under the plastic mulch on three farms in the Suwannee Valley region, one each in Lafayette, Gilchrist and Levy Counties. These demonstrations will compare a CRF program to the grower standard conventional fertilizer practices in the same field. Controlled release fertilizers are coated with a polymer that protects the fertilizer from being as vulnerable to leaching rain events and is especially useful early in the season when plant root systems are small and unable to uptake large amounts of nutrients. Efficient fertilizer use coupled with precise irrigation management technology like soil moisture sensors help provide information to farmers as to when and how long to irrigate. These demonstrations are part of ongoing efforts by UF/IFAS Extension to help farmers learn about new best nutrient management practices that can be adopted on their farms.

IFAS Extension is an equal opportunity Institution. We encourage all races, religions and ethnicities to attend our summer programs. There are scholarships available for minority and underprivileged children. Please contact our office for more information.

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