



Vol. 56 SEPT/OCT 2025

Inside This Issue

Home Garden Remedies. .1
 Eggshells, vinegar, Epsom salts 2
 Banana peels, milk, baking soda 3
 Orlando Wetlands. 4
 Events



The Lake County Mission Statement

The Mission of the UF/IFAS Mater Gardener Volunteers is to assist extension agents by providing horticultural education programs and current research-based information to the public through plant clinics, community outreach, and through Discovery Gardens.

Garden Scoop

HOME GARDEN REMEDIES—Good or Bad?

BY K.S.Kennen, MGV

In the past, home remedies were a part of everyday life and part of a gardener’s survival in an attempt to grow an abundant crop. Over time, there have been scientifically developed and researched remedies that exist today that are used by home and commercial gardeners. In this century, with the influence of the internet, home remedies seem to have been resurrected and are used by home gardeners. An examination of some of the more popular home remedies and the science behind them bear some examination. Some may have worked for you but looking at the associated research can round out your knowledge.

COFFE GROUNDS—They can be used as a soil amendment to your garden and add nitrogen, potassium and phosphorous. They take time to break down and can supply only 1% nitrogen, 0.6 % potassium, and .06 % phosphorous. It is best to place them in a compost pile and allow the grounds to decompose but have no more than 25% of coffee grounds in your compost pile. Some gardeners say you should place a layer of grounds under mulch but be aware that more than 1/2 inch of grounds will interfere with water absorption. And be careful to avoid compaction of the grounds since this can hinder seed germination.

SOAPY WATER—The internet has many recipes about how to make your own soapy water solution to use as an insecticide on plants. It does kill the insect by creating a covering on its outer chitin shell. The problem occurs when the recipe uses dish soap because dish soap most often has a detergent with sodium hydroxide which is phototoxic to plants. This can clog plant pores and interfere with

For more information contact: UF/IFAS Extension, Lake County Office lakemg.ifas@ufl.edu ▪

(352) 343-4101 ▪ FAX (352) 343-2767

The Foundation for The Gator Nation

An Equal Opportunity Institution

REMEDIES CONTINUED

BY K.S. Kennen

respiration of the plant. It is safer and more effective to use commercial insecticide soap that uses fatty acids like those found in vegetables in the manufacture of the product..

EGG SHELLS - BOILED EGG WATER— Egg shells do contain calcium but they must be ground into a very fine powder in order to be available for absorption over time by the plant. It is best to add crushed shells to a compost pile and allow them to break down. It will be gradual and each shell provides 2.2 grams of calcium. Calcium is a micronutrient and to determine if 2.2 grams of calcium is sufficient, you need to consider the size of the plant or area being treated and the calcium concentration in the soil or nutrient solution.

Using water from boiling eggs has do nutritional benefits to plants.

Using a balanced fertilizer that has micro– and macronutrients would be better and in a more responsible ratio to make it appropriately helpful to plant growth.

VINEGAR MIX HERBICIDES—Vinegar contains acetic acid and when purchased from the store has a concentration of 5% acetic acid. There are different combination used in home remedies used to kill weeds. There are combinations of vinegar with salt and dish soaps that when sprayed directly on weeds can kill small annual weeds. This mixture will cause the foliage to dry out and is effective on weeds with limited root systems. Unfortunately, it is important to note that glyphosate, a chemical of concern in commercial herbicides, is as harmful as vinegar and salt herbicide mixtures to mammals. Commercially developed herbicides are effective on more weeds than a vinegar mix. Just always be sure to follow directions and remember more is not best.

EPSOM SALTS—Magnesium, sulfur, and oxygen are all parts of Epsom salts. Some gardeners would add Epsom salts when they believe plants have a lack of magnesium sulfate. Remember two important things before adding Epsom salts. First be sure your soil is deficient in magnesium and that the plant is lacking phosphorous which prevents a plant from absorbing magnesium from the soil. Second, Epsom salt is not a substitute for a fertilizer because it does not contain any of the macronutrients, nitrogen, phosphorous, or potassium, that all plants require to be healthy.

Discovery Gardens

Please plan a visit to over twenty different gardens located at 1951 Woodlea Road in Tavares. The hours are Monday through Friday. Just like your yard, Discovery Garden changes with the seasons and will reveal something new with each visit. Come see the changes in the garden.

Remedies Continued

K.S.Kennen, MGV

BANANA PEELS—Some home gardeners use banana peels buried in the ground to add potassium to the soil. It may take up to 5 weeks or more before the decomposing is at a stage that nutrients are being added to your plants. It would be best to add the peel to a compost pile where optimal decomposition time is at its best. Some gardeners recommend boiling the peels and use the banana water as a way to improve your plants but remember only potassium is being added. Plants still need nitrogen, phosphorous, and other micronutrients. Another interesting reaction that may occur when you bury a banana peel, is something called nitrogen drawdown which is when microbes take nitrogen from the soil to facilitate the decomposition of the peel. The plant may then suffer from low nitrogen levels. Also, don't forget that some animals may dig in your garden to uncover and eat the peel.

MILK—milk as a diluted spray (1 part skim milk to 9 parts of water) as a prevention of powdery mildew and a supplement to help prevent blossom end rot in certain plants such as tomatoes or squash. When used in moderation with other established gardening practices like fertilizers, compost, and balanced watering, milk can be helpful. But be aware of drawbacks. Milk does have an unpleasant odor as it decomposes; the sugar content can attract pests such as flies and ants. If not diluted properly, harmful bacteria and fungi can grow in the milk laden ground. Some studies show that skim milk will promote such diseases as black rot, soft rot, and Alternaria leaf spot.

BAKING SODA—Some gardeners find a mix of 1 tablespoon of baking soda to 1 gallon of water can be used as a spray to prevent powdery mildew. It is said that the pH on the leaf is raised when sprayed with a baking soda mix but caution must be taken because an incorrect mixture can cause leaf damage and soil toxicity. Use of a commercial fungicide would be more reliable.

WARNING—Use of home garden remedies must be done with caution and knowledge. Most harm is done with incorrect mixtures. Even commercial remedies must be followed directions whenever you use them.

Resources— <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/orangeeco/2019/12/31/garden-home-remedies-fact-or-fiction/>

<https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/highlandsco/2020/07/24/home-garden-remedies-helpful-or-harmful/>

An Equal Opportunity Institution. UF/IFAS Extension, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Andra Johnson, Dean. Single copies of UF/IFAS Extension publications (excluding 4-H and youth publications) are available free to Florida residents from county UF/IFAS Extension offices.

Orlando Wetlands

Tamre Parsons, MGV

Lake County Master Gardeners took a trip to the Orlando Wetlands at Christmas, Florida. This is a great place for photographers to observe birds, butterflies, plants, and nature in action, but the purpose of this wetlands is so much more. This 1,650-acre water treatment facility uses nature to filter out the contaminants from reclaimed water before it reaches the St. John's River.

There are covered carts for tours of the facility by knowledgeable staff members (on weekends or by appointment). As of this year, there is a new visitors' pavilion with displays and items for purchase. While the property is a part of the City of Orlando's water treatment department, the tours and much of the visitor attractions are funded by donations and merchandise sales.

This giant filtration system starts by taking in around 14 million gallons of reclaimed water each day. The water comes into the higher end of the property. It comes into the first sections via man-made boils in the ground where life is already teeming around them. Then, it travels naturally through a series of cut out ponds in the flat land. With a 15-foot grade from the beginning until it empties into the St. Johns.

The wetlands first area contains mainly cattails and bulrush. As the water continues its flow downhill, some of the next areas contain willows, wax myrtles, and cypress. You will also see yellow, native canna, iris, spatterdock, and a beautiful array of aquatic and terrestrial flowers.

The property is maintained with biodiversity and invasive species control considered. Sometimes mud and muck accumulate and becomes so thick that they must take months, using heavy equipment, clearing it out to allow the water to continue to flow.

There are as many as 1,700 alligators in residence that are managed and kept under control. A recent addition is a boardwalk where you can more closely observe a natural cypress dome rookery. In early spring a countless number of bird species come to roost here within the thick cypress that creates a barrier against a myriad of baby bird hunters and egg poachers.

WEBSITE: <https://www.orlando.gov/Our-Government/Departments-Offices/Public-Works/Water-Reclamation-Division/Orlando-Wetlands>



LIBRARY CLASSES

September's presentation focuses on plants in your landscape, your house, and around town that may be harmful to your pets.

September 7, 2025, 2-3 pm

Pets and Harmful Plants

Mount Dora Public Library

September 15, 2025, 2-3 pm

Pets and Harmful Plants

Umatilla Public Library

September 16, 2025, 12-1 pm

Pets and Harmful Plants

Eustis Public Library

September 16, 2025, 2-3 pm

Pets and Harmful Plants

Howie Public Library

September 16, 2025, 4-5 pm

Pets and Harmful Plants

Leesburg Public Library

September 17, 2025, 2-3 pm

Pets and Harmful Plants

Tavares Public Library

September 17, 2025, 6-7 pm

Pets and Harmful Plants

Groveland Public Library

October's presentation explains ways to propagate plants. You will be able to save money cultivating your plants and even sharing them with others.

October 5, 2025, 2-3 pm

Plant Propagation

Mount Dora Public Library

October 15, 2025, 2-3 pm

Plant Propagation

Tavares Public Library

October 15, 2025, 6-7pm

Plant Propagation

Groveland Public Library

October 20, 2025, 2-3 pm

Plant Propagation

Umatilla Public Library

October 21, 2025, 12-1 pm

Plant Propagation

Eustis Public Library

October 21, 2025, 2-3 pm

Plant Propagation

Howie Public Library

October 21, 2025, 4-5 pm

Plant Propagation

Leesburg Public Library