

# UF/IFAS EXTENSION & ST. JOHNS COUNTY WORKING TOGETHER

## July, August, September 2025

The St. Johns County Board of Commissioners and UF/IFAS Extension work cooperatively to provide relevant programming to citizens throughout the County. During the third quarter of 2025, Extension Agents and Staff recorded approximately **5,957 contacts** with clientele, including emails, phone calls, office visits, and field calls. Agents conducted **50 site visits** to assist residents one-on-one and taught **83 group teaching events**. Compared to the same quarter in 2024, our office has increased contacts by 2,031, site visits by more than 41, and group teaching events by 18. Below are a few examples of impacts reported by our Agents during this quarter.



Make and Sip Workshop - Kokedama



Datil Pepper Plant



St. Johns County Commercial Datil Grower

- **Based on expert guidance from our Commercial Agriculture Agent**, a St. Johns County farmer was able to control fungal and bacterial diseases and improve irrigation efficiency on his **2,000 commercially grown datil peppers, resulting in increased yields** through UF/IFAS-recommended disease and water management.
- Our Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator developed a new educational program, **“MGV Make & Sip,”** to improve volunteer retention and build community among volunteers. This quarter, MGVs had the opportunity to make their own terrariums and kokedama while savoring tea and coffee. This series of programs fosters camaraderie among volunteers while enhancing their knowledge of horticulture.
- Our Florida-Friendly Landscaping (FFL) and Commercial Horticulture Extension Agent taught programs to **47 HOA board members and community residents** on topics including Florida-Friendly Lawn Alternatives, Proper Pruning Practices, Right Plant Right Place, and Growing Muscadine Grapes. These programs helped residents make **informed choices that conserve water, reduce pesticide use, and enhance neighborhood aesthetics**.
- Sixty (60) participants successfully completed their **FWC Hunter Safety Certification** by attending a class that was co-taught by our Production Agriculture Agent and 4-H Youth Development Agent. Participants gained knowledge that prepares them to safely participate in hunting activities.
- **Intro to Archery Summer Day Camp** was so in demand that another camp session was added, doubling the number of youths served by 4-H. This allowed the archery club to have its largest enrollment since 2016; 27 youth and four volunteers use the archery range at the back of the property four times per month. The program has been in existence since 2009.
- **Through volunteer relationship development**, we have added 3 new 4-H clubs. One focuses on animal science, the natural world, and mental health; a second focuses on small animals, and the third focuses on equine. These new clubs offer youth the opportunity to gain knowledge in livestock programming tailored to their specific interests.
- The St. Johns County Commercial Agriculture program **proctored 61 pesticide exams** in the third quarter of 2025. This is a 51% and 28% increase compared to the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2025, respectively.



*Traveling through SJC*



*Beef Cattle Class*



*Hands-on Learning*

- At the **2025 St. Johns County Ag Row and Ornamental and Turf Pesticide Review and Exam**, 9 participants completed 15 pesticide exams. Six Ag Row, 1 Ornamental and Turf, 1 Private Applicator, 2 Soil and Greenhouse Fumigation, and 5 Core exams were completed with a pass rate of 87% (13/15).
- During an on-farm site visit, **our Commercial Agriculture Agent identified fungal disease and nutrient deficiencies on a farmer's muscadine grapes**. The farmer adopted disease and soil management recommendations, and enhanced their irrigation knowledge, **resulting in improving vine growth and reduced disease pressure**.
- The St. Johns County Master Gardener Volunteers have expanded their nursery to almost **280 varieties of plants** for residents to grow at home. Priority has been focused on growing Florida-friendly and native plants, with a **total plant count of approximately 1,300**. Plans are underway for the upcoming MGV Fall Plant sale in October.
- Thirty-five participants attended the **2025 CFLAG Beef Cattle Reproduction Management School with Artificial Insemination**, co-taught by our Production Ag Agent. Participants received hands-on training in beef cattle palpation, pregnancy evaluation, cattle handling techniques, and artificial insemination practices. By completing the requirements, 22% (8) of participants received their UF/IFAS CFLAG AI certificate.
- Our Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator **published and distributed the Fall edition of the St Johns Lawn & Garden Gazette to more than 2,000 St. Johns County community members**. This newsletter featured seven articles submitted by Master Gardener Volunteers (MGVs) on various garden topics, including growing olive trees in Florida, the history of basil, the benefits of therapeutic horticulture, and more.
- Approximately **327 youth, 69 volunteers, 22 clubs**, including four school-based clubs, **have registered for the 2025 – 2026 St. Johns County 4-H Program**. Participants continue to sign up and volunteers are still being approved so these numbers are expected to increase.
- Twenty-five (25) participants attended a **Green Industries Best Management Practices (GI-BMP) training**, one (1) attended an **Ornamental and Turf pesticide workshop**, and one (1) attended the **Florida-Friendly Landscaping Certified Professional training** courses conducted by our Florida-Friendly Landscaping and Commercial Horticulture Extension Agent. Seventy-four percent (20/27) of participants passed their exams, enabling them to apply for their respective fertilizer and pesticide licenses with FDACS and strengthening the local green industry's capacity for environmentally sound landscape management.
- As a result of the **St. Johns County 4-H Embryology Program**, 20 elementary school classes with more than 540 students have gained first-hand knowledge related to the chicken life cycle and life skills related to responsibility and compassion.
- **Our Commercial Agriculture Agent assisted a potato farmer on nematode, soil health management, and guidance on fumigation and cover crops**. His guidance provides an enhanced understanding, leading to the adoption of improved practices and further collaborations for reduced pest pressure and more sustainable production.
- This year marks the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row, a St. Johns County 4-H'er has been elected to be a **Florida 4-H State Council Officer**. Ricky Fernandez was elected to serve as the 2025 – 2026 Parliamentarian at Florida 4-H University, held this summer at the University of Florida.

For more information, visit the UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County website at [stjohns.ifas.ufl.edu](http://stjohns.ifas.ufl.edu) or contact us at **904-209-0430**.