

# CENTER PIVOT

UF/IFAS EXTENSION SUWANNEE COUNTY  
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## Extension Award Winners

Suwannee County UF/IFAS Extension Office is home to award-winning staff and agents! Two very special members of our team recently received recognition for their exemplary commitment to the work we do at the extension office.

In February, Katherine Allen was recognized by the University of Florida for thirty years with IFAS. Katherine started her career with Extension in April of 1994. In 2007, Katherine joined the Suwannee County community where she has been involved with classes ranging from ServSafe certifications to cheesemaking to Integrated Pest Management. Katherine has tireless energy for her community and is always ready to help in any way she can. Last year, she was recognized by the Suwannee Chamber as Trailblazer of the Year. And Chance, who coordinates the Suwannee Festivals with Katherine, said, "Katherine has the gift of making the person she is talking to feel like the most important person in her world and what you have to say is very important." We do not know what we would do without Katherine, and we are so proud of her accomplishments!



*Michelle Drummond and Katherine Allen*

Michelle Drummond received the Connect, Grow, Shine Award in February, at the Florida Extension Business Professionals Conference. Michelle was nominated for her leadership, cooperation, and dedication to Suwannee County. Her work with the Master Gardener Volunteers was highlighted as was her integral part in the the purchasing and direction of the green house pole barn and shed. Michelle’s networking skills were also praised, her knack for connecting people makes for exciting programs and community opportunities. Her dedication shows in the office and in the community, Michelle is always the first to make suggestions and share ideas. County Administrator Greg Scott said it best, “Michelle’s cheerful outlook and her ability to anticipate the needs of others and proactively fill them have been instrumental in her being adept at building strong relationships with her colleagues and volunteers.” We could not be happier to have her as part of the team!

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# BOUNTIFUL YIELDS NEED POLLINATORS

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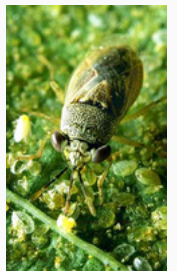


Do you enjoy blueberries, apples, strawberries and chocolate? If you do, we need to help protect pollinators and other beneficial insects. Pollinators help to produce high yielding food crops including bananas, melons, peaches, plums, potatoes, vanilla, almonds and coffee. Research scientists estimate that about 75% of the world's flowering plants, and about 35% of the world's food crops, depend on animal pollinators to produce fruit and/or seed. That's one out of every three bites of food you eat.

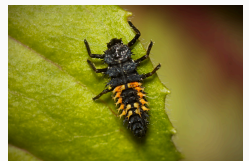
Worldwide there are more than 3,500 native species of bees to pollinate our flowering plants and food crops. In Florida, we have approximately 330 native species of bees, but bees aren't the only pollinators we rely on. Other animals such as wasps, moths, flies, butterflies, beetles, birds and bats pollinate flowers to produce fruit or seeds.

Currently, bees and other animal pollinators struggle due to habitat loss, disease, parasites, and environmental contaminants. Pollinators that can't find the right quantity or quality of food (nectar and pollen from flowering plants within their territory) don't survive. The good news is there are activities we can do to provide habitat for pollinators. Try to implement as many of the following practices as you can this spring.

- Leave a few dead stumps, branches and twigs for nesting and feeding sites.
- Plant a continuous food supply--strive to have at least three species of flowering plants year-round to provide food supplies.
- Plant in groupings to make it easier for the pollinators to visit many flowers.
- Add native plants to your yard--we have many beautiful wildflowers including Coreopsis, Blue-eyed grass, Purple Lovegrass, Red Salvia, Purple Coneflower and Black or Brown-eyed Susans that grow well in our area.
- Strive for a variety of flower sizes, shapes and colors--bees and some moths tend to favor white, yellow, blue and lavender flowers, while butterflies and hummingbirds are drawn to red, orange and pink flowers.
- Add herbs to your yard--many herbs act as host plants for the larvae of beneficial insects. Common herbs such as rosemary, oregano, cilantro, basil, marjoram, and borage are excellent pollinator plants.
- Add bluebird houses to your yard. Many songbirds feed insects to their young.
- Provide bare ground for ground nesting bees—they make up about 70% of our bee populations.
- Eliminate or limit the use of pesticides--there are many predatory insects that will consume harmful insects on plants.
- Learn to identify beneficial insects such as Big-eyed bugs, Lady beetle larvae, Lacewings, ground beetles, minute pirate bugs and parasitic wasps.



*Big-eyed Bug*



*Lady Beetle larvae*



*Green Lacewing*



*Minute Pirate Bug*

# SUMMER FUN 2025

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This summer, Suwannee County will host eight different camps and fun shops for youth ages 5 to 18. Get your animal fix with our Alpaca Adventures and Dogs 101 Day Camps. Explore freshwater ecosystems during our Junior Naturalist Day Camp or learn more about bees and woodworking during our Bug Builders Camp. Feeling Crafty, check out our Quilt in a Week or our Trash to Treasures Day Camps. For our Cloverbud Members (age 5 to 7), explore 4-H during our Discover 4-H Cloverbud Camp. Cloverbuds and Juniors are also eligible for our Crafty Clovers Junior Fun Shop.

Florida 4-H also offers a wide variety of Residential Camp options at both Camp Timpoochee in Niceville and Camp Cloverleaf in Lake Placid. Intermediate age 4-H members (11 to 13 years old) are eligible to attend iLead, a state level leadership conference for middle school age members held on the UF campus. Florida 4-H Legislature allows teens to spend a week in Tallahassee learning more about our state government as they participate in a mock legislative session. The 4-H summer finale is 4-H University where senior 4-H members (ages 14 to 18) compete at the state level, elect state officers for the coming 4-H year and experience life on the University of Florida campus. Scholarship funds are available for all of these opportunities.

Registration for local 4-H day camps opens in April and will take place through 4-H Online. For more information about any of the camps or scholarships or for assistance with registration, please contact our 4-H staff!

<b>Date</b>	<b>Camp Name</b>	<b>Ages</b>	<b>Location</b>
June 2-5	Alpaca Adventures	10-13	Suwannee
June 8-10	Florida 4-H iLead Conference	11-13	Gainesville
June 16-19	Junior Naturalist Camp	9-13	Suwannee
June 23-27	Quilt in a Week Camp	10-18	Suwannee
	Florida 4-H Legislature	14-18	Tallahassee
June 23-25	Civics Camp	10-13	Suwannee
June 30-July 1	Discover 4-H Cloverbud Camp	10-18	Suwannee
July 7-10	Bug Builders	10-18	Suwannee
July 7-9	Trash to Treasures	5-9	Suwannee
July 14	Crafty Clovers Junior Fun Shop	9-18	Suwannee
July 21-24	Dogs 101	5-9	Suwannee
July 28-31	4-H University	14-18	Gainesville

# DON'T BRING BACK BEDBUGS AS A SOUVENIR

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Smaller than an apple seed, bedbugs hitchhike on items such as luggage, purses, and other personal belongings. You can also get these insects from garage sale items or discarded items on the side of the road.

Only ¼" long, the adult bedbugs typically hide during the day in places like the seams of mattresses, box springs, and bed frames. They can also be found on headboards, dresser tables, behind wallpaper, and in the grooves of screw heads, or objects around a bed.

According to the Center for Disease Control, bedbugs usually live within eight feet of where you sleep. They feed on human blood and blood from birds, bats, and rodents. They are not known to spread disease, but their bites are itchy and can result in infections from scratching. Bite marks may be random or appear in a straight line. People who experience bedbugs may also experience anxiety and sleep loss due to worry.

Detection is difficult since they have so many places to hide. Some people do not experience a reaction to bites and do not realize they have a problem until there are large numbers of bedbugs. Identification is critical because early treatment is cheaper and more successful. Treatment for bedbugs is different from treatment for fleas and ticks. Call the Extension office 386-362-2771 for more information.

## What to look for:

- Blood stains or spotting on mattress or nearby furniture
- Bedbugs in the fold of mattresses and sheets
- Bedbugs' exoskeletons after molting
- A sweet musty odor

## Seven tips to avoid or control bedbugs

1. Stay cool! Do not immediately throw all your belongings away as this is a great way to spread the problem. You may have to destroy furnishings to prevent others from getting them.
2. Research your treatment options. Foggers are not effective. Consider hiring a professional to increase your chance of success. According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, it costs an average of \$1,000 to control bedbugs. Unlike cockroaches, bedbugs do not have sticky pads on their feet and therefore pesticides applied to surfaces don't adhere to their bodies.
3. Vacuum to remove the insects and eggs. Put debris in a sealed plastic bag in an outside garbage bin.
4. Clean up. Reduce the number of hiding places. Encase your mattress and box spring. Seal holes and crevices in the wall or ceiling.
5. Regularly wash and heat-dry your sheets, blankets, bedspreads, and any clothes that touch the floor.
6. Although heating and freezing can kill bedbugs, home freezers may not be cold enough and it takes special equipment to reach very high temperatures over 113 degrees. Check with a professional.
7. Use traps under bed legs. Check out UF/IFAS Extension's publication to make your own: [ENY-2029/IN1022: How to Make a Bed Bug Interceptor Trap out of Common Household Items](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IN1022)

<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/bed-bugs/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/bed-bugs/about/>

<https://www.epa.gov/bedbugs>



# AMERICA SAVES: SMALL STEPS TO BIG GAINS

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## **America Saves: Small Steps to Big Gains**

Each year in April, we celebrate America Saves Week, which will take place from April 7-11, 2025. This annual campaign encourages individuals to take charge of their finances by building better saving habits. America Saves Week also serves as a reminder that saving is not only possible but necessary for long-term financial security. Each day of America Saves Week highlights a different aspect of saving, offering practical steps to improve financial security and help you work toward long-term financial stability.

### **Monday, April 7: Saving Automatically**

One of the simplest and most effective ways to save is by making it automatic. Setting up automatic transfers to a savings account ensures that saving becomes a consistent habit. This can be done through payroll deductions, recurring bank transfers, or rounding up purchases into savings. Automating your savings helps you to build a financial cushion without the extra effort.

### **Tuesday, April 8: Saving for the Unexpected**

In life, there will be unexpected surprises and having an emergency fund can help prevent financial stress. Whether it's a medical bill, car repair, home repair, job loss, or a family emergency having a dedicated savings fund can provide peace of mind. The current recommendation is to set aside at least three to six months' worth of living expenses for unexpected emergencies.

### **Wednesday, April 9: Saving for Major Milestones**

Saving for major life events such as buying a home, purchasing a car, or planning for retirement, requires both strategy and discipline. Setting SMART savings goals and creating a realistic plan to achieve them can make difficult financial milestones specific, achievable, and realistic.

### **Thursday, April 10: Paying Down Debt is Saving**

Debt reduction is one of the most important components of financial health. High-interest rates on credit card balances can limit your ability to save. Start tackling your debt by making debt repayment a priority. You can use the snowball method (paying off smaller debts first) or the avalanche method (paying off high-interest debt first). By doing this, you will have available funds that can be saved.

### **Friday, April 11: Saving at Any Age**

It's never too late or early to start saving. Financial goals and strategies change over time, but the fundamental principles stay the same. Remember, regular and consistent saving leads to long-term financial stability. Regardless of your age, saving money will be beneficial in the future.

For more resources, visit [AmericaSaves.org](https://AmericaSaves.org) and take the pledge to save!

# WEED CONTROL IN LIVESTOCK PASTURES

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Maintaining productive and high-quality pastures is essential for livestock operations. However, weeds can reduce forage quality, compete with desirable grasses and legumes for nutrients, and in some cases, pose toxicity risks to grazing animals. Effective weed management involves proper identification, prevention, and control strategies to ensure optimal pasture health and productivity.

## Weed Identification in Pastures

Weeds in pastures can be classified into three main categories broadleaf weeds, grassy weeds, or toxic weeds. Proper identification of weeds is crucial for implementing targeted management practices. Extension services, weed guides, and mobile applications can assist in weed identification.

## Weed Management Strategies

Effective weed management in pastures requires an integrated approach that includes cultural, mechanical, biological, and chemical control methods. Cultural control starts by maintaining healthy pasture stands. This helps to ensure proper fertilization, soil health, and grazing management to help desirable forage species outcompete weeds. Using rotational grazing prevents overgrazing and allows forage species to recover, reducing weed encroachment. Mechanical control can be methods such as mowing, hand pulling, or tillage. Having a regular mowing schedule can prevent weeds from going to seed and reduce their spread. Hand pulling can be effective for small infestations, especially for toxic weeds. Tillage can be used strategically in pasture renovation to disrupt weed growth cycles. Biological control methods such as grazing management can also be helpful. Certain livestock, such as goats, can effectively graze on some problematic weed species. Chemical control includes using herbicides to control the weed populations. Selective herbicides target specific weed types while minimizing damage to desirable forage species. Non-selective herbicides are used for spot treatments or pasture renovation but require careful application. Timing of the application is very important for herbicide effectiveness, depending on the weed growth stage, best results typically occurring when weeds are young and actively growing.

## Best Practices for Integrated Weed Management

- **Regular Pasture Monitoring** – Frequent scouting helps detect weeds early before they become established.
- **Proper Grazing Management** – Avoid overgrazing to reduce bare soil exposure, which encourages weed invasion.
- **Soil Testing and Fertility Management** – Balanced soil nutrients promote robust forage growth, reducing weed competition.
- **Record-Keeping** – Documenting weed occurrences and control efforts helps refine management strategies over time.

If you need help controlling weeds in your livestock pasture to please reach out to your local extension office.

# SUNN HEMP AS A WINTER COVER CROP IN NORTH FLORIDA

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Many farmers in North Florida are aware of the benefits of planting a winter cover crop between fall harvest and spring planting. Given the relatively low temperatures and inconsistent rain, however, this time gap between crop cycles does not always provide the conditions for optimum biomass production after cover crop establishment. Sunn hemp (*Crotalaria juncea* L.) is a cover crop species that is known for its fast growth, and it can be used as an alternative to other common winter cover crops.



Figure 1. *Crotalaria juncea*. Photo credit: Jonael Bosques, UF/IFAS Hardee County

Sunn hemp has the ability to fix nitrogen, adding essential nutrients back into the soil and reducing the need for synthetic fertilizers. Its deep root system improves soil structure, enhances water infiltration, and prevents erosion, making it a beneficial addition to crop rotations. When incorporated into farming systems, Sunn hemp contributes to organic matter buildup, fostering a healthier and more resilient soil ecosystem.

Beyond soil enrichment, sunn hemp is particularly effective in suppressing root-knot nematodes (*Meloidogyne* spp.), a major pest in North Florida's sandy soils. The plant is not a host to many root-knot nematode species, and when included in a crop rotation, it can disrupt their life cycle or starve them and reduce their populations in infested fields. Studies have shown that incorporating sunn hemp as a cover crop before planting susceptible cash crops—such as tomatoes, peppers, and peanuts—can significantly decrease root-knot nematode pressure, leading to healthier root systems and improved yields in these crops. This makes sunn hemp an excellent biological control tool for farmers seeking sustainable pest management strategies.

The use of sunn hemp aligns with conservation-minded farming practices by reducing reliance on chemical nematicides while enhancing soil fertility. Being of tropical origin, it also shows tolerance to the Florida summer. Farmers in North Florida can integrate sunn hemp into their rotations by planting it during warm season fallow periods and terminating it before seeds set to maximize its crop cycling and soil health benefits. When used strategically, sunn hemp not only reduces harmful nematode populations, but also contributes to long-term soil health, supporting more productive and sustainable cropping systems. By leveraging its multiple benefits, North Florida growers can improve soil resilience and enhance overall farm sustainability.

# JOIN US FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit [www.suwanneecountyextension.org](http://www.suwanneecountyextension.org) for details and registration links.

## April 2025

4/2: MGV Plant Sale 9am-11:30am  
4/4-5: American National Cattlewomen Regional Meeting  
4/10: MGV Alumni workday & meeting  
4/12: Community Day at NFREC  
4/14: Overall Advisory Committee Meeting  
4/15: Pasture Walk NFREC 9:30am-12pm  
4/17: Lunch & Learn: Native Plants that Benefit Wildlife  
4/18: Extension Office closed for Good Friday  
4/20: Happy Easter  
4/24: CORE Pesticide Training  
4:24: Lunch & Learn: The Benefits of Volunteering  
4/26: Live Oak Garden Club's Spring Bazaar/MGV Plant Sale

### Happy birthday to IFAS!

Florida's governing body for higher education created the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences in April 1964, by reorganizing UF's College of Agriculture, School of Forestry, Agricultural Experiment Station, and the Cooperative Extension Service into a single unit.

## May 2025

5/1: CARES Dinner  
5/2: Small Ruminant FAMACHA  
5/3: Community Health Expo  
5/7: Hurricane Prep with EOC  
5/7-9: UF Beef Cattle Short Course  
5/8: Private Applicator Pesticide Training  
5/8: CARES evening at NFREC  
5/8: MGV Alumni workday & meeting  
5/10: Wildflower Festival at HP&G  
5/15: Lunch & Learn: Eating Outside the Box—Wild Edibles  
5/22: Lunch & Learn: Taking Care of Small Ruminants  
5/26: Closed for Memorial Day



*The Wildflower Festival & Plant Sale will take place on May 10th at Heritage Park and Gardens*

## June 2025

See Page 3 for 4-H Summer Camps

6/5: Orchid workshop PM  
6/6: Orchid workshop AM  
6/12: MGV Alumni workday & meeting  
6/23-27: Florida Cattlemen's Convention  
6/26: Lunch & Learn: Vermicomposting



*Melody Christian participating in the Peanut Butter Challenge 2024*





## Osprey Web Cam

The Osprey Web Cam is live!

<https://wec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/ospreycam/>

Stella has found another mate! If you recall, Talon disappeared during the middle of raising chicks last year and one chick named Talon Jr (after the missing father) was successfully raised by Stella. This new male has been bringing fish to her and courtship is underway.

Keep watching to see what happens . . . Send Professor Mark Hostetler, from the Department of Wildlife Ecology & Conservation, an email at [hostetm@ufl.edu](mailto:hostetm@ufl.edu) if you have questions or want to share what you saw on camera. You can also send photos! It is estimated that we probably will see the first egg sometime in the first part of April. But who knows? This is Nature after all!



**UF/IFAS, An Equal Opportunity Institution.** Extension programs are open to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, age, disability, religion or national origin. For persons with disabilities requiring special accommodations, please contact our office at least five working days prior to the program so that proper consideration may be given to the request. For the hearing impaired, please contact the Florida Relay Center Service at 1-800-955-8771.

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### **OUR MISSION OF EDUCATION.**

UF/IFAS Extension provides practical education you can trust to help people, businesses and communities solve problems, develop skills and build a better future. When you use UF/IFAS Extension, you can be confident that experts have reviewed and developed educational programs to ensure that you receive the best information for your needs. UF/IFAS Extension employees and volunteers work hard at improving the quality of life for our neighbors and communities. We provide solutions to everyday problems. We offer a variety of educational programs and information:

**Agriculture and Natural Resources:** Local farmers and ranchers are provided technical assistance and education to enhance their profitability and sustainability.

**Horticulture:** Programs are designed to meet the needs of residents by utilizing Florida-Friendly Landscaping principles.

**Master Gardener Volunteer Program:** Master Gardener Volunteers receive training in exchange for service to the community. The Master Gardener Volunteers assist with the Seed Library and hold plant clinics every Wednesday from 1:00-3:00PM both at the Live Oak Library. Volunteers also staff a Seed Library and plant clinic at the Branford Library on Tuesdays from 2:00-5:00pm.

**Family and Consumer Sciences:** Family and Consumer Sciences programs offer you information about health and nutrition, food safety, food preservation, money management, home concerns, relationships, community development and many other topics.

**4-H and Youth Development:** The UF/IFAS Extension 4-H Youth Development program uses a learn-by-doing approach to help youth gain the knowledge and skills they need to be responsible, productive citizens. This mission is accomplished by creating safe and inclusive learning environments, involving caring adults, and utilizing the expertise and resources of the University of Florida and the nationwide land grant university system.

**Carolyn Saft-** County Extension Director, Environmental Horticulture Agent and Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator

**Katherine Allen-** Family and Consumer Sciences Agent (FCS)

**Bonnie Box-** Nutrition Educator, Family Nutrition Program (FNP)

**Kim Griffin-** Family and Consumer Sciences Agent (FCS)

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**Katie Jones-** 4-H Youth Development Agent

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**Sandra Wainwright-** Staff Assistant, 4-H & Bookkeeper

