

Center Pivot

Helping Suwannee County Grow

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Volume 2 Issue 1

Jan.-March. 2009

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EXTENSION DIRECTOR NOTES

Katherine Allen

Happy New Year Friends!

It is hard to believe that 2009 is what to write on our checks! Usually people are looking for ways to save money and lose weight in their New Year's resolution. With the economy, everyone I know is looking at ways to cut corners and be more conservative, whether it is with energy, spending, or eating. On page four, you'll find information on how to start saving. You can bet I'll be following some of the tips as well!

Got some extra time to spend with our young people? 4-H is always looking for people in our community who are willing to guide and lead our youth in various ways. In addition to a lot of other wonderful benefits, did you know that volunteering is one way to prevent depression?

You heard about the Salmonella concerns with tomatoes in 2008? Our Extension Agents visited local farms with a team of food safety inspectors from US Food and Drug Administration and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Check out page eight to see how Suwannee County farmers fared during the inspections.

We are starting a new feature highlighting native plants. We hope that you will enjoy reading about plants that will grow in our neck of the woods!

There are so many exciting things each of the Agents is involved with...please keep an eye out in the newspaper for those items we add. Looking forward to a healthy, prosperous and happy 2009!

Extension Calendar



January 2009

- 1 **Office Closed-Holiday**
- 5 **HCE Board Meeting**, 9:30am-1pm at Extension office
- 6 **Budget Fat & Finances** at Advent Christian Village 10-11am, FREE!
- 7 **HCE Council meeting** 9:30-1pm Workshop meeting at Extension office, bring your lunch!
- 8 **Master Gardener Alumni meeting**, 1:30pm at the Extension Office
- 8 **NEW! Horticulture Series**—2nd Thurs. evening of the month. January topic: Seed Starting—Tips and Techniques, 6:30—7:45pm at the Extension Office
- 8-11 **4-H Judging Team** competes in Denver, CO (GOOD LUCK TEAM!!)
- 9-10 **Florida Grape Growers Association Annual Conference and Trade Show**, Hilton UF Conference Center, Gainesville. Contact: Kelli Thropp, (386) 467-2177.
\$75 pre-registration before December 1, 2008. Web site: www.fgga.org or www.uflhotel.com
- 10 **Hog Ownership Deadline**, for the Suwannee County Fair
- 12 **Pleasant Hill HCE** club meeting in McAlpin, contact Donna Wade for more info at: (386) 963-3516
- 12 **4-H County Council**, 6pm, Suwannee County Extension Office
- 13 **Organic Vegetable Gardening Workshop**—2 part series, 8:30am—12:00pm at the Extension Office, Cost \$5
- 14 **Invasive Plant** training through distance education polycom. Call Carolyn Saft at (386) 362-2771 for more information
- 14 **Happy Homemakers HCE** club meeting and officer installation at the Extension office. Meeting starts at 9:30am. Contact Joan Stanton at (386) 658-1107 for more info
- 15 **HCE District II meeting** at First Methodist Church in Live Oak. Starts at 9:30am For more information contact Claudia Smedley at (386) 364-6026.
- 15 **Organic Vegetable Gardening Workshop**—2 part series, 8:30am—12:00pm at the Extension Office, Cost \$5
- 16-17 **4-H Robotics Competition** at the Extension office. Contact Karen Swart at (386) 963-2109 for more information.
- 19 **Office Closed-Holiday**
- 19 **Hog and Ham Workshop**, University of Florida, Website: <http://www.animal.ufl.edu/youth/livestock/HogHam.shtml>
- 21&22 **Homebuyer Ed./State Housing Initiative Program (SHIP)**. Provides down-payment assistance for homebuyers meeting income requirements. Must attend both classes to become eligible. 5:30pm-8:30pm each night. Must pre-register 386-362-2771, FREE!
- 22 **Suwannee River Partnership Breakfast Meeting** 7:45 am—Dixie Grill.
- 26 **Peanut Meeting**, 11:30am-2:00pm at the Extension office, call Elena Toro 386-362-2771

Extension Calendar

→ DON'T FORGET!

January 2009 (cont.)

- 30 **Take Charge of Your Diabetes** begins January 30th 9:30-11:30am at Extension Office. \$75 pre-registration by January 23rd
- 30-31 **How to Raise Heritage Turkeys on Pasture** at the Extension Office, for more information call Elena Toro at (386) 362-2771

February 2009

- 1 **How to Raise Heritage Turkeys on Pasture** at the Extension Office, for more information call Elena Toro at (386) 362-2771
- 3 **Crop Management School**, Columbia County, 9:00am - 12:00 pm, call Carolyn Saft at (386) 362-2771
- 3 **Milk Safety** at Advent Christian Village 10-11am, FREE!
- 4 **Crop Management School**, Madison County, 9:00am—12:00 pm, call Carolyn Saft at (386) 362-2771
- 4 **HCE Council** meeting 9:30-1pm meeting at Extension office
- 5 **Crop Management School**, Gilchrist County, 9:00am—12:00 pm, call Carolyn Saft at (386) 362-2771
- 5 **Florida-Friendly Gardening series**—1st Thursday of the month, 10:00am at Whistle Stop Café in Wellborn, FREE, Topic—Pruning Roses and Spring Preparation
- 5 **Best Management Practices for the Landscape Industry**—Columbia County Extension Office, Lake City, 8:00am—4:00pm, Certification and CEUs available. Contact Nichelle Demorest at (386) 752-5384 for more info.
- 5-16 **Florida State Fair**, Tampa
- 9 **Pleasant Hill HCE** club meeting in McAlpin, contact Donna Wade for more info at: (386) 963-3516
- 9 **4-H County Council**, 6pm, Suwannee County Extension Office.
- 11 **Bus Trip to Maclay Gardens** in Tallahassee. Leaving Columbia County Extension at 8:00am-return 8:00pm. \$45—Contact Nichelle Demorest at (386) 752-5384 for more info
- 11 **Happy Homemakers HCE** club meeting at the Extension office. Meeting starts at 9:30am. Contact Joan Stanton at (386) 658-1107 for more info
- 12 **Master Gardener Alumni meeting**, 9:00am at the Extension Office
- 12 **NEW! Horticulture Series**—2nd Thurs. evening of the month. February topic: Native Plants, 6:30—7:45pm at the Extension Office, FREE

Save the date :

2009

SUWANNEE CO. FAIR and
SVYLSS

March 25—April 4

Extension Calendar



→ DON'T FORGET!

February 2009 (cont.)

- 16 **National Restaurant Association's SERVSAFE Food Manager Certification** course and exam. Class starts at 8:30am. Class, exam and book \$140. Must pre-register, call toll-free 1-888-232-8723. Certification is good for 5 years. Bring photo id and bag lunch. <http://foodsafety.ifas.ufl.edu>
- 18 **New Master Gardener Orientation** for upcoming class, 9:00—11:30am at the Extension Office, call Carolyn Saft at (386) 362-2771 for more information
- 26 **Suwannee River Partnership Breakfast Meeting** 7:45 am—Dixie Grill.

March 2009

- 3 **Agriculture and Its Importance** at Advent Christian Village 10-11am, FREE!
- 4 **HCE Council** meeting 9:30-1pm meeting at Extension office
- 4 **New Master Gardener class** starts and continues every Wednesday through June 10th, 8:30am-4:00pm at the Extension Office, FEE, must pre-register
- 5 **Florida-Friendly Gardening series**—1st Thursday of the month, 10:00am at Whistle Stop Café in Wellborn, Topic—Fertilizers and Fertilizing
- 9 **Pleasant Hill HCE** club meeting in McAlpin, contact Donna Wade (386) 963-3516
- 9 **4-H County Council**, Extension office, 6pm.
Master Gardener Alumni meeting 9-11:30am, Extension office.
- 7 **HCE Yard Sale** at Extension office. To buy a table call 386/362-2771
- 10 & 12 **Homebuyer Education/State Housing Initiative Program (SHIP)**. Provides down- payment assistance for homebuyers meeting income requirements. Must attend both classes to become eligible. 5:30pm-8:30pm each night. Must pre-register 386-362-2771, FREE!
- 11 **Happy Homemakers HCE** club meeting at the Extension office. Meeting starts at 9:30am. Contact Joan Stanton at (386) 658-1107 for more info
- 12 **Master Gardener Alumni meeting**, 9:00am at the Extension Office
- 12 **NEW! Horticulture Series**—2nd Thurs. evening of the month. February topic: Pruning, 6:30—7:45pm at the Extension Office, FREE!
- 16 & 17 **Hydroponic Short Course**, \$275 at Research and Education Center
- 19 **Strawberry Jam Canning Class**, \$25, 9am-2pm. Must pre-register, no refunds.
- 26 **Suwannee River Partnership Breakfast Meeting** 7:45 am—Dixie Grill.
- 27-April 4: **Suwannee County Fair**, www.suwanneecountyfair.org

America Saves – Suwannee Style/Did You Know?

Cathy Rogers, Family & Consumer Sciences/4-H & Youth Development Agent

America Saves is a national social campaign sponsored by various financial and community organizations to encourage people of all ages and walks of life to save money.

Setting savings goals will help you to start saving or add to the savings that you have and that is where the *America Saves* program comes in. Go online to www.americasaves.org to register. There is no charge. The site just encourages you to set goals online and helps you to track your progress toward your goals. There are tips and suggestions as well as success stories from real people.

Last year, the Suwannee County Commissioners signed a proclamation for *Suwannee County Saves* week. The proclamation called on all citizens to start or increase an emergency fund or take another positive wealth-building action during the following year. Notices were included in the paychecks for all Suwannee School District employees, Suwannee County employees, and Lowes employees. Local banks and credit unions were encouraged to participate and this year even more local involvement is expected. Start looking for *America Saves* and *Suwannee County Saves* and join in the action to Build Wealth, Not Debt. This year America Saves Week is officially set for February 22nd through March 1st.

Did You Know.....

...that diabetes affects your:

- Heart
- Feet and hands
- Kidneys
- Thinking
- Eyes
- Fertility
- Driving
- Mood
- Sleep
- Bathroom habits
- Performance in bed?

If you have diabetes, you should find out all that you can about how it may affect your body and especially about how to keep it under control.

Take Charge of Your Diabetes is a course offered through the Extension office to educate and motivate persons with type 2 diabetes. There is a \$75 fee per person with diabetes. Support persons are encouraged to accompany the diabetic at no cost. The course consists of 9-weekly classes, guest speakers, two follow-up sessions, and a 60-minute individual nutrition consultation with a registered dietitian.

Take Charge of Your Diabetes is scheduled to meet on Fridays from 9:30 – 11:30 am beginning January 30th, 2009. Participation is by pre-registration only. Please contact Cathy Rogers at Suwannee County Extension 386-362-2771. cjrogers@ufl.edu



Monitoring Body Condition Scores in Cattle

Elena Toro, Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent

Beef cattle nutrition experts recommend ranchers “score” the body condition of cattle on a regular basis. Body condition scoring (BCS) of beef cattle can be an effective management tool for evaluating the energy reserves of cows and the whole nutritional program. Females that are too thin or too fat can be an expensive investment. Thin cows can have difficulty rebreeding, while fat cows are prone to calving problems and excessive feed costs.

Body condition of beef cows is scored from 1 (thin) to 9 (fat). This is a visual scoring system, and so it is expected to vary, but among experienced evaluators condition scores are not likely to vary by more than one score. Keep in mind it is not difficult to evaluate body condition of cattle. BCS is evaluated by determining fat cover over the back, tail head, pins, hooks, ribs and brisket of cattle (See figure 1). A BCS of 5 should look average—neither thin nor fat: increased fat over ribs, 12 and 13th ribs are not visible to the eye unless the animal has been shrunk. Areas on each side of the tail are fairly well filled but not mounded.

Body condition is usually highest in mid to late summer and is lowest in late winter or early spring. The loss of 1 point of BCS represents usually a loss of 75 pounds. Cattle are usually going to lose weight in the winter but should be gradual and moderate. If a cow can lose 1 point of BCS slowly through a 120 day period instead of 45 days, then it will be easier for her to recover next summer. It is desirable to have cows in BCS 5 or higher at calving however that is not always the case. Separate thin cows and consider grazing thin cows on higher quality pasture first than the rest of the herd and if supplements are needed feed a lower quantity over a longer period of time to get the most response of the supplement.

In addition, variation in body condition of beef cows has several implications that can be used for

management decisions. The number of days to estrus and milk production is related to the conditions of cows at calving. The services per conception and calving interval of the cows is related to condition at breeding. The percentage of open cows, the calving interval of cows that breed, milk produced by the cow and subsequent weaning weight of the calf, is closely related to the condition of the cows at calving and during breeding.

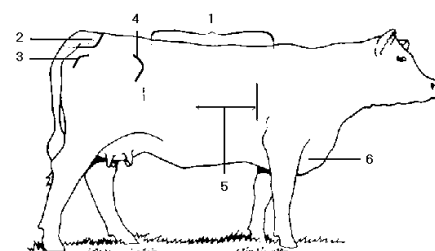
Body condition affects the amount and type of supplements needed during the winter. Fat cows can lose body reserves and feeding of 1 to 2 lb/head/day of a high-protein supplement plus minerals and vitamins is sufficient in many situations. In contrast, thin cows have little body reserves and often need 4 to 6 lb/head/d or more of a high-energy supplement with 12 to 16% protein plus minerals and vitamins to avoid flesh losses and reductions in pregnancy rates.

Conclusion

- It is desirable to have cows in BCS 5 or higher at calving and if there is a considerable range in BCS in a herd, it may be desirable to separate thin cows.
- Forage quality and quantity, time of calving, body condition, milk production level, breed type, pasture size, and weather all must be considered. If cattle have a higher BCS than normal, it may be possible to reduce the level of supplement provided.

Source: *Effects of Body Condition on Rebreeding* by Dr. Bill Kunkle and Dr. Robert Sand.

Figure 1. Areas of body evaluated for BCS.



1. BACK 3. PINS 5. RIBS
2. TAIL HEAD 4. HOOKS 6. BRISKET

Avoid the Invisible Hazard—Soil Shear Lines

Dr. Mary Sowerby, Regional Specialized Dairy Extension

The practice track was wet from freshly falling rain as I maneuvered a big Soviet combine slowly around the circle. I was in Byelorussia on a Young Agricultural Specialist Exchange Program negotiated by the National 4-H Council when Byelorussia was still a part of the USSR. After six weeks of lectures and language training at the Byelorussian Agricultural College, my group was about to finally visit and work on some “real” Russian farms. But first we were required to pass a large equipment training exercise to receive a license to drive equipment on the farms.

I had never driven a bulky combine before, but was enjoying the new experience until the relatively level track suddenly seemed to take a sideways slant. The track was built up on the left side about 10 feet and the combine was headed down the slope sideways as the bank collapsed under us. HELP!

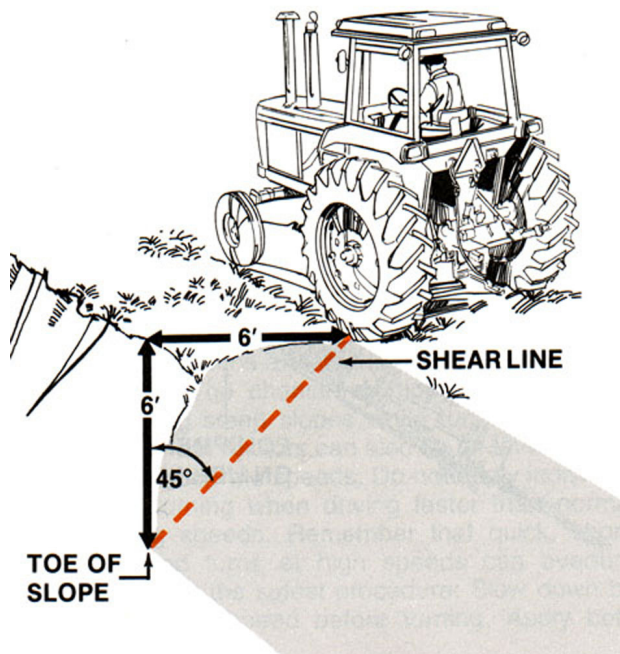


Figure 1. Stay on the safe side of the shear line and prevent bank collapse and tractor overturns.

This incident came to mind as I read the following article by Carol Lehtola and Charles Brown, UF Farm Safety Specialists. Fortunately for me, the combine slid to a stop part way down the bank before overturning. Thankfully, I was driving on clay soil, not sand, as we primarily have here in Suwannee County. I was lucky, but please be mindful of the hazard of soil shear lines whenever driving near an embankment or far worse things can and have happened.

If you've ever seen a dump truck pour a load of sand, you've watched the sand as it formed a conical pile behind the truck. Why conical? Because the sand can only support a fraction of its weight. As more is poured on, the pile collapses under its own weight.

Now imagine what would happen to the pile of sand if you walked on it. It would collapse even more. Right? What if you drove a tractor on it? It's easy to perceive a canal bank as solid, but actually it is just like the pile of sand. If you add too much additional weight, the bank will collapse. If you and your tractor are unlucky enough to be that extra weight, it could be the last ride you take.

Every year, farmers die when they drive a tractor too close to an embankment, and the collapse of the bank leads to an overturn. It happens quickly and with tremendous force, but it can be avoided.

Equipment needs to be kept behind the shear line of the soil and embankment. The minimum distance recommended for operating machinery near embankments is a 1:1 ratio to the depth of the embankment. In other words, the tractor should be no closer to the edge than the depth of the

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Suwannee County 4-H

Brian Estevez, 4-H and Youth Development Agent



4-H Needs You!

4-H relies on the use of trained volunteers to implement the youth development program. 4-H volunteers assist as club leaders, camp counselors, judges, chaperones to special events, and general program delivery. There are 36 volunteers assisting with 9 clubs consisting of 221 youth.

4-H agents need volunteers. We need you. We need you because volunteers help to provide direction for the 4-H program. You also help deliver experiences to youth and help support the program. Volunteers have needs as well. 4-H volunteers need a specific, manageable role or task. They need a good reason and a timeframe for doing their task. Volunteers also need freedom to complete their task, follow-up from the task, the ability to provide feedback, appreciation, and recognition for completing their task. 4-H and volunteers go together hand in hand, and we both have needs to be met.

Some of the benefits of volunteers for 4-H agents are cost savings. You help save the county, state, and nation money when you volunteer with 4-H. 4-H volunteers also give increased public support for 4-H programs and improved community relations. We as 4-H agents need your help to spread the word about the good things that 4-H is doing as well as helping us identify the needs of our community. Volunteers also increase the quality of the 4-H programs. 4-H benefits from the expertise and specialized skills that our volunteers possess.

Suwannee County 4-H has been blessed by great volunteers, but we are not satisfied. Do you like working with youth? Do you have special skills that our youth could benefit from? Do you want to possess leadership skills as you help mold our future? Come volunteer with Suwannee County 4-H and help us help our youth!!!



Suwannee County 4-H Clubs

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Branford | Pony Express |
| Farm Fresh | RoboDogs |
| Leona | Sharp Shooters |
| Live Oak Learners | Suwannee Explorers |
| McAlpin | County Council |

If your child is interested in any 4-H activity, please contact the 4-H office, located in the Suwannee County UF/IFAS Extension office at **386-362-2771** located next to the coliseum in Live Oak.

Suwannee Valley Farmers Leaders in Food Safety

Bob Hochmuth, Multi-County Agent/Vegetable & Small Farms, NFRC-Suwannee Valley

“Food Safety” is a common phrase today for both consumers and farmers. Food safety scares over the past several years have included food borne illnesses due to micro organisms such as Salmonella, E. coli, and others. Introduction of food borne disease organisms can occur anywhere in the food chain, including the farm, processing facilities, transport, distribution, and of course, in the home.

The first responsibility to food safety occurs on the farm and many vegetable farms in the Suwannee Valley area now have an approved food safety program. In fact, most large chain grocery stores now require some type of program from the farmer before they will purchase from the farm.

A recent Florida statute requires all Florida tomato growers selling more than 50 lbs. of tomatoes to a single customer to have an approved food safety program. This requirement is added to the list of the many regulatory aspects now common on the farm including: certified pesticide applicators, migrant labor laws, approved water withdrawal, approved waste disposal, notice of intent to implement best management practices (BMPs), soil fumigant set-back restrictions, and more. Farmers today have to be highly engaged with these types of business related aspects to remain competitive.

Three Suwannee County farms recently had the opportunity to show how well prepared they were in the area of food safety. A team of food safety inspectors from US Food and Drug Administration, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and food safety researchers from the University of

Florida came to the area for three days of informational visits. The visits were facilitated by UF/IFAS Extension agents, Bob Hochmuth and Elena Toro. The teams had specific interests in learning more about tomato farming practices from both field and greenhouse operations. The farms visited all had excellent, clean operations and all had food safety plans in place. The farmers were able to participate with teams to help identify ways to assure maintaining safe products to consumers. The communication between area growers and agency experts helps the vegetable industry to act in a positive and proactive manner to assure safe vegetables for consumers. This recent little known activity is yet another example of the first class, industry-leading types of farms here in Suwannee County.

Soil Shear Lines –cont.

(Continued from page 7)

embankment (Figure 1).

Following this recommendation prevents bank collapse that can cause tractors to overturn thus crushing operators or drowning them in canals. This distance increases with adverse soil conditions such as sandy or wet soil.

In some cases, it may be a good idea to move field roads farther from canals and ditches so that tractors are not forced to travel in the danger zone.

Remember: Be safe, not sorry!

Bouquets Are Not Just For Brides Anymore!

Linda Landrum, Regional Specialized Marketing Agent

The tradition of carrying a bouquet began with the bride clutching a handful of fragrant herbs as a means of warding off evil spirits and bad luck. Similarly, the Greeks and Romans used garlands of fresh herbs in the wedding couple's hair to signifying the beginning of a new life and a hope for fertility. During Victorian times, the blooms in a bouquet became messages to the receiver as each flower had its own special meaning. Today, bouquets are not just for weddings but to be enjoyed every day!

During the 20th century, the US was a major producer of roses, carnations and chrysanthemums but most flower production has now moved to other countries where it's cheaper to grow. Now we mostly grow specialty cuts such as sunflower, celosia, zinnia, snapdragon, dianthus and lilies for both wholesale and direct markets. With the explosion of new community farmers markets in NE Florida, the opportunity to satisfy the desire for locally grown flower bouquets is great.

So now that I've gotten your attention, you might ask "What types of flowers should I grow?" My answer would be anything that is hard to grow, difficult to ship and doesn't compete with imports which opens the door for many interesting and fun flowers! Other desirable characteristics include a long harvest time and vase life (7 to 14 days), good flower color, presentation and retention (fading can occur in Florida due to high light/temperatures), fragrance, unusual foliage, disease/insect resistance, heat and drought tolerance, used fresh or dried, low cost of production but a high return per square foot of bed space, large number of long stems (18 to 24") or high value per stem. Be sure that the types you select are adapted to this region particularly the heat!

What does it take to grow flowers? Select a sunny spot for most of the day, with well-drained soil, wind protection and cold air drainage, irrigation

water available and fencing for deer, close to your processing facility and equipment. Begin by deciding how large you want the plot to be. It's always wise to start small and expand as you become more comfortable with growing. Prepare the soil by tilling thoroughly and taking a soil sample to determine pH. Add organic debris and till in down to a depth of 12", amending soil for pH as needed. Position your rows in a north-south direction if possible. Beds should be about 4' wide (a person can only reach about 2 feet comfortably) and no longer than 50-60' long. When to plant depends on your target market. For direct sales at farmers markets and to restaurants you can produce almost year round. There are flowers for both warm and cool seasons here in Florida.



You can start out with either seed or transplants depending on availability, market timing, cost and ease of establishment. Crop density is important to profitability so planting as close as possible helps to stretch stems and increases the number of blooms/sq. ft. but may also increase diseases due to lack of air circulation. Most annuals are planted 4-6" within the row, 6-8" between the rows whereas perennials may need up to one foot in the row and between rows. Support flowers to keep stems straight and prevent wind damage using at least one horizontal support wire (can be plastic, nylon or wire with a 4-6" opening). If crop is greater than 2 ft., you'll need a second layer of wire.

Cut flowers must be fertilized, watered and kept pest free in order to thrive. With annual flowers, it's critical that they receive adequate nutrition throughout the growing season. Initially they require adequate nitrogen to produce good foliage, whereas the need shifts to more potash as the crop nears flowering. Use a low volume watering system if possible to reduce leaf and flower wetting. Flowers can be permanently damaged if inadequately watered

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Master Gardener Training Offered in Suwannee Co.

Carolyn Saft, Multi-County Horticulture & FYN Agent

Do you like plants and like to help people? The upcoming Suwannee County Master Gardener Volunteer training may be for you. Landscape and gardening classes will be provided to people who want to become Master Gardener Volunteers for University of Florida/IFAS Extension office in Suwannee County. These classes are for individuals who can donate 75 hours of their time the first year to help Extension Agents improve landscape practices. To continue certification, volunteers must donate 35 hours each year and attend 10 hours of additional educational training. No gardening experience is required, only a desire to learn and help others in our communities. People from neighboring counties may attend the training but hours will be reported to the Suwannee County Horticulture Agent.

There will be an orientation at the Suwannee County Extension office in Live Oak (next to the coliseum) on Wednesday, February 18, 2009, from 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. for anybody who is interested. The first class starts on Wednesday, March 4, 2009 and goes until June 10, 2009. Classes start at 8:30 a.m. and go until 4:00 p.m. There is \$100.00 fee to cover the cost of the handbooks, manuals and field trips. There will be some off-site training days with trips to a botanical garden, a local State Park, a nursery and a homeowner's yard.

This is a great opportunity to learn about successful Florida gardening while meeting and working with other folks who have green thumbs or at least want to have green thumbs. A variety of topics will be covered including fertilization and irrigation practices, lawn maintenance, weeds, pests, landscape design, plant identification, invasive plants, water resources, springs protection. Participants will follow the landscape best management practices provided by UF's Florida Yards and Neighborhoods program. (A statewide educational program to conserve water, reduce stormwater runoff and provide wildlife habitat.) We invite all interested people to come to our orientation and become a part of our exciting Master Gardener program. For additional information, contact Carolyn Saft, csaft318@ufl.edu or Pamela Burke, peburke@ufl.edu or at (386) 362-2771.

Native Plant Spotlight

by Carol Sullivan, Master Gardener Volunteer

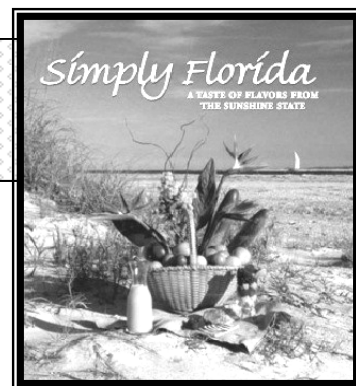
The winter months can be a little boring for gardeners without the lush growth and beautiful flowering plants we see from spring through fall. But look again! Very soon you will begin to see the early signs of spring in many of our best Florida native plants that are growing in the wooded areas and in landscaped yards. The **Eastern Redbud** (*Cercis canadensis*) trees pop their small lavender to red blossoms in early February and are followed closely by the beautiful white

bracts of the Dogwood (*Cornus florida*).

If you look a little lower, one of the first shrubs to produce clusters of white flowers against its dark green leaves is **Walter's Viburnum** (*Viburnum obovatum*). Not only is it a great shrub for attracting wildlife, it has proven to be one of our most successful landscape plants. Bothered by few pests or diseases, a water-wise native, late winter flowers and birds in our yards - what more could you ask for? To top it off, it's

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A sweet treat!



For Valentines Day this year, why not give a gift of your time and talent to show your love? The *Simply Florida Cookbook: A Taste of Flavors from the Sunshine State* is available at the Extension Office.

This cookbook has a variety of delicious, kitchen-tested recipes in the new cookbook. Why not surprise your sweetie with a treat!! They also make great thank you gifts, employee appreciation gifts, or are perfect for the collector in your family. Get yours while supplies last.

This colorful, hard cover, coffee-table style cookbook is divided into chapters on flavorful beef; tasty pork, poultry & more; a taste of the seas; delicious dairy dishes; a bountiful harvest of nuts, beans and grains; sun-ripened fruits; and farm-fresh vegetables.

If your sweetie is out of town, we can ship to anywhere in the US and can include a personalized note!

Stop by the Extension office next to the coliseum in Live Oak to pick up your beautiful, full-color sewn hardcover or check out the website <http://www.simplyflorida.org/> Available for only \$20.

Not For Brides –cont.

(Continued from page 10)

and fertilized. Weed control is essential as they compete for water and nutrients, harbor pests and increase harvest time resulting in higher labor costs. Few herbicides are labeled for cut flowers, so you may have to use mechanical controls such as mulch, hoeing, hand weeding, torching and fowl. To keep pest problems to a minimum, scout at least twice a week. Remember that flowers have to be cosmetically perfect so be vigilant. Unfortunately, bees may be a problem as they can cause premature flower drop so netting may be necessary to keep them away from blooms. As with any crop, diseases are possibility, particularly foliar types such as powdery mildew and rust so you may need a preventative spray program and adjust spacing in future plantings.

Harvest in early morning, placing flowers in a bucket of clean, room temperature un-softened water, as sodium can damage flowers. When storing flowers, do so in cooler as close to 32°F as

possible with 95% humidity. Do not store fruit or vegetables in the same cooler as ethylene from ripening produce can damage flowers. Five gallon plastic buckets work well for harvesting and delivery, being sure to scrub with soap and bleach (1:10 bleach solution) between uses. Always use a floral preservative in the water to increase shelf life by stopping the growth of stem plugging microorganisms, reducing pH and providing simple sugars for the stems. Use sharp, clean bypass pruning shears or knife to avoid crushing stem. Locally sold flowers can be harvested with more open buds than those sold to wholesalers. Price should be based on production costs but is often influenced by the market. Flowers can be sold in single variety bunches or as mixed bouquets according to buyer's preference. If sleeving is necessary, use plastic, newspaper, butcher's paper or floral paper.

Remember as with any crop, you **must** have your markets lined up before planting in order to be successful at growing cut flowers for bouquets!

Walter's Viburnum (cont.)

(Continued from page 11)

one of the natives that is available at some of our local garden centers and nurseries. Walter's Viburnum is a dense, semi-evergreen, large shrub/small tree that grows throughout Florida, up to South Carolina and over to Alabama. In the wild it is usually found in moist forests as an understory plant. In our landscapes, it is a moderately slow grower that adapts easily to the dry, sandy soils typical of much of our area. Growing in full sun, it tends to be denser, more rounded and to produce more flowers than when grown in shade. Excellent as a specimen plant visible from your entrance, as a seasonal accent in your landscape, as a hedge plant or as shelter for birds when a birdbath or feeder are located nearby. There are also several dwarf cultivars available, although some may not be as drought or as cold tolerant as the standard viburnum.



Common name: Walter's Viburnum
Scientific name (genus and species): *Viburnum obovatum*

Description: Slow growing, semi-evergreen shrub to small tree with dense leaves and branches

Hardiness zone: 6-9

Height: Typically 12'-15', can reach 25' in the right conditions

Spread: 6'-10'

Leaves: Small, dark green, glossy, arranged opposite on the branches

Flowers: Showy clusters of small white flowers in spring which produce berries that mature to a dark red/black in summer.

Growing conditions: Prefers moist, sandy, fertile soil in full sun to shade, but adapts to most garden conditions

Drought tolerance: High, once established

Propagation: Seeds, cuttings, suckers

Wildlife attractor: Birds and small wildlife are attracted to the berries for food and to the dense foliage for shelter.

Other features: Can be pruned to shape, though it will naturally form a more rounded appearance in full sun. Tends to produce suckers that can be easily removed, potted and planted in other parts of your landscape.

Dwarf varieties:

"Mrs. Schiller's Delight" - 2-3' high and wide, blooms nearly year round, heaviest in spring.

"Densa" or "Select": - 6-8' high, blooms spring and fall.

"Whorled Class" - 6-8' high, very dense, whorled leaf arrangement, blooms throughout summer

Tip: One of the most important factors in creating a successful garden is knowing the scientific names of your plants. Each plant has only one scientific name, and in many cases that name is similar to the common name. On the other hand, many plants have more than one common name, the same common name can be applied to several different plants, and common names often vary in different areas.

The genus "*Viburnum*" consists of several species, each of which will be different from the *Viburnum obovatum* described above. Carry a note when shopping if you have trouble remembering or pronouncing the scientific name to insure you are getting a plant with the characteristics you want for your garden. A good garden center will have plants properly labeled and identified. Although learning the spelling and pronunciation of the scientific names may be intimidating at first, you will soon begin to appreciate the difference it will make in your entire landscape.

Home and Community Education Corner

New Officers



Congratulations to the new officers for both the Home and Community Education (HCE) volunteers' Council and Clubs. Volunteers give so much of their time and talent and we are especially grateful to those who have offered their leadership skills. Please provide a warm welcome and let them know your interests and suggestions!

The 2009 slate of **HCE Council officers** are:

President-**Claudia Smedley**

VP-**Joan Stanton**

Secretary-**Donna Wade**

Treasurer-**Irene Sapp**

Council Delegate-**Bill Smedley**



Happy Homemakers 2009 Slate of officers:

President-**Joan Stanton**

VP-**Evelyn Wallace**

Secretary/Treasurer-**Irene Sapp**



Pleasant Hill 2009 Slate of officers:

President-**Donna Wade**

VP-**Barbara Parks**

Secretary-**Claudia Smedley**

Treasurer-**Bill Smedley**

Hospitality-**Maggie Stills**

Public Relations-**Flora Chapin**



Trash to Treasures!

Please save your "treasures" for March 7, 2009 and October 3, 2009. The HCE yard sale will be held outside on the grassy area in front of the Extension office. The Home and Community Educator volunteers will sell tables for \$10 apiece to outside organizations. We will also have food available (hotdogs, chips and soda) for sale.

Wanda has made up fliers to help advertise the event, so pick some up next time you are at the Extension office!

District II Meeting

The District II HCE meeting will be held here in Live Oak. at the First Methodist Church across from the Courthouse. Lunch will cost \$11.50 and will be sliced pork, baked potato, green beans, drink and cake. We have awesome speakers (including our very own Cathy Rogers) and some fabulous entertainment. Don't be left out! The theme is *Healthy and Happy with HCE*.



University of Florida/IFAS
Suwannee County Extension Staff

Katherine Allen, County Extension Director (CED) and Family & Consumer Science (FCS) Agent/HCE Advisor
Cathy Rogers, FCS & 4-H Agent/FNP
Bonnie Box, Family Nutrition Program (FNP) Program Assistant
Diane McMillan, Staff Assistant
Wanda Walters, FCS/Dairy, Admin. Secretary
Carolyn Saft, Suwannee River Partnership Educational Coordinator/ Horticulture/FYN Agent
Elena Toro, Agriculture/Natural Resources Agent
Pam Burke, FYN/AG Administrative Aide
Brian Estevez, 4-H & Youth Development Agent
Carolyn Williams, 4-H & FNP Administrative Aide
Mary Sowerby, Dairy, Regional Specialized Agent
Linda Landrum, Marketing, Regional Specialized Agent
Bob Hochmuth, Vegetables and Small Farms, Regional Specialized Agent

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Suwannee County Extension
1302 11th St. SW
Live Oak, FL 32064-3611

Dated Material

Congrats!

Cathy Rogers, our Family and Consumer Sciences Agent and **Carolyn Saft**, our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods/Horticulture Agent have been accepted to the University of Florida to begin work on their Masters Degree!

WELCOME to our new County Commissioner **Wesley Wainwright!** He represents District Five.

Also WELCOME to our new District Extension Director, **Dr. Eric Simonne**, who starts January 5, 2009.

Congrats!

Welcome!

"An Equal Opportunity Institution

"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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