

CENTER PIVOT

SUWANNEE COUNTY
UF | IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

2023 Trailblazer of the Year:

Katherine Allen



Congratulations to our 2023 Trailblazer of the Year, Katherine Allen. Katherine loves this community and strives to be a positive force. She has been involved in numerous community projects and events. Katherine has outstanding character, good leadership qualities, and is civically involved and displays good moral standards. Katherine has contributed to lasting impacts on the growth and development of Suwannee County and improving the quality of life for its citizens. We are honored to present her with this award.

Suwannee County Chamber of Commerce

Katherine is a Family and Consumer Science Agent and has been a vital part of our Suwannee County Extension since 2008. We are so very proud of her!

APR/MAY/JUNE 2024

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Optimizing Livestock Pastures



Erin Jones
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Livestock pasture management is a critical aspect of successful and sustainable production practices. To ensure optimal forage production and overall pasture health, farmers must focus on soil health, nutrient management, and weed control. Some of the key components include soil sampling, fertilizer schedules, and weed management to help livestock producers maximize productivity of their pastures.

Proper soil sampling is the foundation of effective pasture management. It provides valuable insights into the nutrient levels, pH, and texture of the soil, helping farmers make informed decisions regarding fertilization and weed control. Farmers should use a grid-like or zigzag pattern to collect soil samples throughout the pasture. Samples should be collected with the use of a soil probe at various depths, ensuring a representative analysis of the entire field. Take samples from areas where livestock graze, considering different forage types and landscape variations.



Soil sampling kits can be picked up at our office, Monday-Friday, 8 am-5 pm. You'll send them to the UF Soils Lab for testing and get results back in about two weeks. The report will indicate nutrient levels, soil pH, and any deficiencies that need attention. This information serves as the basis for developing a customized fertilization plan and nutrient requirements of the pasture. Key nutrients include nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K), and micronutrients. Each plays a crucial role in forage growth and overall pasture performance. Farmers should develop a comprehensive fertilization plan that considers the specific needs of the pasture. For livestock pastures it is recommended that a divided

application of annual nutrient be applied. For instance, applying nitrogen in the spring promotes early-season growth, while phosphorus and potassium may be applied in the fall for winter resilience.

While soil is extremely important, farmers must also consider weed management. Regularly inspect your pastures for weed species, identifying plants that may compromise forage quality. Early detection allows for timely intervention, preventing the establishment and spread of weeds. Utilizing rotational grazing, mowing, and controlled burns to disrupt weed growth cycles may be beneficial. In some instances the application of herbicides may be needed based on the identified weed species and the pasture's tolerance. For herbicide recommendations or weed identification help you can always reach out to me.

Achieving optimal livestock pasture management requires a multifaceted approach that addresses soil health, nutrient balance, and weed control. By implementing effective soil sampling techniques, developing customized fertilizer schedules, and employing integrated weed management strategies, farmers can enhance forage productivity, support livestock health, and promote the overall sustainability of their livestock operations. For help with your pastures, call me at (386) 362-2771.

Pledging hands to larger service



Katie Jones
4-H Youth
Development Agent
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Volunteers are the heart and hands of the 4-H program. These caring adults are a vital part of how 4-H puts youth on a trajectory to thrive through investing their time and resources while sharing their passions with youth. Our capacity for positive youth development is dependent on the depth and quality of our volunteer pool.

Florida 4-H has put in place an interview and level two background screening process that helps us ensure the safety of youth. In addition to completing the interview and background check, volunteers are also trained on youth protection and risk management. Programs with greater risk levels have additional training requirements. Volunteers are also able to attend different trainings at the state level and higher to help them develop their leadership skills and 4-H knowledge.



Suwannee County has around 30 level two screened volunteers who lead a variety of 4-H clubs and projects. We also have about 50 episodic volunteers who assist us with meeting short-term program needs. Whether it's volunteering to help with a workshop, judging one of 4-H's many contests or planning a whole year's worth of 4-H club activities, our volunteers go above and beyond to provide Suwannee County 4-H members with the best opportunities. We are always looking for new volunteers to help us expand the reach of our 4-H programs.

Currently, we are in urgent need of additional volunteers to work with our Shooting Sports club.

If you have a passion for archery and/or competitive shooting, you could be a great fit for our program, and we would love to schedule a time to talk! In addition to the requirements for all volunteers, shooting sports volunteers also receive training on positive youth development through the different shooting sports disciplines.



But this isn't the only group that could use additional volunteers. We have kids interested in a variety of projects that we currently do not have volunteers available to help them develop. If you have a passion or hobby that you would be interested in sharing with youth, contact me to schedule a time to sit and chat about how you can contribute to our 4-H program!

(386) 362-2771 | kmjones@ufl.edu

Be safe this canning season!



Katherine Allen
Family & Consumer
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Canning season is upon us! For those new to canning, read the National Center for Home Food Preservation's general canning principles https://nchfp.uga.edu/papers/guide/GUIDE01_HomeCan_rev0715.pdf. Or contact me, I can also test your dial gauge, call (386) 362-2771 to make an appointment.

Some of the most asked questions:

Question: My neighbor wants me to come over and can using the oven method. Is this a safe process?

Answer: No. Using the oven method is NOT a recommended method of canning because dry heat is slow to penetrate into the jars, oven temperatures vary, and no reliable, research-based process has been developed for oven canning.



Question: I know that canning on glass top ranges is not recommended. Can I can on portable gas or electric burners?

Answer: The alternative is to install a set of electric coil or gas burner range top or to purchase a portable electric coil or gas burner. Portable burners are not alike. Nor are all appropriate for canning. Contact the customer service department of the manufacturer you are considering and be specific about whether you are water bath or pressure canning. Make sure there is enough height under the burner to allow air to flow under it (~4") while maintaining stability. The canner should not extend more than 2 inches from the burner on any side. This means, the burner diameter should be no more than 4 inches smaller than the diameter of your canner.

For electric burners, look for one 1750 watts/120V or higher for water bath canning. When using gas, at least one pressure canner manufacturer advises not to can on any outdoor heat source. If the gas burner puts out too much heat, your pressure canner can be damaged. Higher BTU burners (over 12,000 BTUs) could also produce so much heat that the recommended heat up time for canning could be modified, possibly making an unsafe final product.

Question: When using new jars, do I need to sterilize them before filling?

Answer: Jars out of the box are not sterile. Being covered in plastic wrap is not the same as a sterile environment. Plus, during transport from factory to store to home the jars may collect dust or even chips of glass. You should always CLEAN jars, either in a dishwasher or by hand, with detergent. If you are using a processing time of 10 minutes or more, the jars will be sterilized during processing.

TIP: If you see scales or film from hard water left on your jars, remove by soaking jars in a solution of one cup of vinegar (5% acidity) per gallon of water.

The bottom line is that you should not experiment with canning your own recipes. Check with a trusted source like UGA's *So Easy To Preserve*, the USDA's *Complete Guide to Home Canning*, the most current *Ball Blue Book* or with our office. If you do it incorrectly, there is a risk of botulism, so play it safe!

Beyond The Table



Kim Griffin
Family & Consumer
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As we celebrate National Nutrition Month we can explore this year's theme, "Beyond the Table," as a reminder of the journey our food takes from farm to fork, field to plate and seed to table. This theme helps us understand that our nutritional well-being is not only determined by what's on our plates, but also includes every step of the food production and consumption process. This year's theme includes the complex nature of nutrition and encourages us to consider not only the origin of our meals but also the intricate processes involved in their distribution, from the fields where crops are grown to the aisles of grocery stores and the bins of farmers markets.

In today's world where convenience reigns supreme, navigating the endless choices in the grocery stores and farmers markets can be overwhelming. "Beyond the Table" encourages us to become informed consumers, empowering us to make conscientious decisions about the food we purchase and consume. By understanding the consequences of our choices, we can actively contribute to sustainable agricultural practices and support local farmers and producers.

We should also consider the environments in which we eat, going beyond the traditional norms of meals at a dinner table. Whether we are grabbing a quick bite on the run, enjoying a meal at school or in a restaurant, this approach reminds us of the interconnectedness of our food system. It also challenges us to broaden our perspective, recognizing that the choices we make as individuals have long lasting implications for our health, the environment, and the community.

As we embark on this journey let us seize the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the food that nourishes our bodies and supports our health including the many factors that shape our nutritional environment. By embracing this comprehensive approach, we can make a path towards a healthier, more sustainable future for everyone.



Click the button for more resources about National Nutrition Month



Healthy Families Community Health Expo

Saturday, April 13, 10 am to 3 pm at Heritage Park

Please join us at this exciting new community event designed to help families stay healthy. I will be there with information on nutrition and health topics, and we'll have a demonstration on healthy cooking as well as food distribution from Second Harvest Food Bank.

Florida's Fabulous Native Azaleas



Carolyn Saft
Environmental
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Left: bush honeysuckle; **Above:** Florida flame azalea; **Right:** Piedmont azalea

Spring brings great anticipation of beautiful spring blooms! I look forward to the sweet fragrance of the native azaleas blooming in my yard. Native azaleas, also known as bush honeysuckle, have smaller flowers and are more delicate-looking than the non-native azaleas (that do not have a fragrance). Native azaleas bloom in the spring around the same time as other azaleas. Their colors are stunning and range from pink to peach, yellow, orange and red. These native plants are wonderful pollinators too.

Most native azaleas will slowly grow up to 10 feet tall and will lose their leaves in the winter. Like all azaleas, they prefer well-drained, acidic soil and filtered sunlight. They are drought tolerant and need little maintenance other than occasional pruning to maintain a healthy shape.

Natives like the Florida flame azalea (*R. austrinum*) are popular. This drought-tolerant azalea produces flowers that range in color from white or pale yellow to orange-red flowers. It will grow up to 8 or 10 feet tall and has a looser growth habit than many of the commonly grown non-native cultivars. You can see these plants in bloom at Heritage Park's Wildlife Garden or at Stephen Foster State Park.

Another deciduous azalea that is native to Florida (*R. canescens*) is the Piedmont azalea, also known as [pink pinxter azalea](#). This shrub can grow between 6 and 15 feet tall, and produces fragrant, showy pink flowers in early spring, typically when the leaves first appear. There are others such as *R. calendulaceum* or *R. viscosum* (swamp azalea).

Florida has just one native evergreen azalea — the Chapman's azalea, or Chapman's rhododendron (*Rhododendron chapmanii*). This wetlands plant is listed as a rare and endangered plant and is found only in Clay County and the central panhandle. If you would like to purchase native azaleas for your yard, go to the **Wildflower Festival on Saturday, April 27** at Heritage Park. In addition, keep your eye out for the Wild Azalea festival in Hamilton County or visit a local native plant nursery.

Pine Straw Production: Key Differences between Slash Pine and Longleaf Pine



Raymond Balaguer
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Resources Agent
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Production of pine straw for residential and commercial landscaping is a popular income-generating activity in North Florida. It requires fewer inputs of fertilizer and chemicals after planting than many other crops, but is a longer-term investment that needs careful planning to maximize profit. Pine straw raking and baling is a relatively new industry in Florida, yet it has grown to a comparable value to the state’s pulpwood industry. The most common strategy of landowners is to contract services to plant and care for the pines and then sell the pine straw through companies that pick and pack it for distribution.



Slash pine (left) and Longleaf pine (right) lots. Both are 10-15 years old. Notice the longer pine needles and the thicker tips of the branches of the longleaf pine in comparison to the slash pines. These two traits can help discern between the two species.

Longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) and slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) are the pine species most often planted for pine straw production in North Florida due to their needle length, which facilitates the step of making the pine straw bales.

Slash pines and longleaf pines both self-prune their lower branches, giving them a very similar appearance and making it sometimes difficult to tell them apart. Table 1 describes the growth conditions and some key identifying features to help differentiate the two species. Their biological differences can affect their nursery selling price, establishment needs, years to maturity, and pine straw yields. For example, while longleaf pines might take longer to start yielding enough pine straw for baling, their higher straw quality lets farmers charge more per bale, and their higher productivity might yield them more pine straw through the highest production years of the pine stand. Table 2 describes approximate price of each species in nurseries in North Florida and compares some of the economic factors that pine straw producers need to consider before planting a pine stand.

Table 1: Main characteristics of longleaf and slash pine

Pine species	Growth Conditions	Branch ends	Needles (pine leaves)
Longleaf pine	Grows across a broad range of sites from wet to dry but it does better than slash pine on drier soils.	Thicker, like diameter of adult human thumb.	Needles (10" to 18" or 25 to 45 cm) are in bundles (called fascicles) of 3s (occasionally 4s).
Slash pine	Grows on moist, sandy flatwoods (spodosols) and savannah sites.	Thinner, like the diameter of an adult human pinky finger.	Needles (7" to 12" or 17 to 30 cm) are in fascicles of 2s and 3s.

PLAN AHEAD:
Pine demand can be high at specific times of the year, particularly in winter. Coordinate well in advance with your nursery about which species and amount you want to purchase.

Table 2: Economic considerations of longleaf and slash pine for pine straw production

Species	Price per 1,000 seedlings*	Price per bale*	Approximate bales/year/acre*	Years to start baling**
Longleaf pine	\$105	\$0.40	450	10-12 years
Slash pine	\$65	\$0.35	300	6-10 years

*Figures are approximate & can change depending on demand, weather conditions, pine stand management, % soil quality.

**Approximate time periods. Actual years to baling will depend on fertilization, weed management, and weather conditions.

Healthy Families



COMMUNITY HEALTH

EXP  2024

SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2024

Heritage Park & Gardens, Live Oak

10 am - 3 pm | Free Admission!

Games, Activities, Food & Fun!

www.healthyfamiliesexpo.org

Learn about keeping your family healthy with information from medical professionals, wellness programs, fitness centers and more. We'll have a healthy cooking demonstration and free food distribution. Check out more details on our website and plan to bring the family!

Free Workshops

- Kids Health • Senior Health
- Healthy Pregnancy • Quit Smoking
- Ask a Pharmacist • Weight Loss
- Brain Health • Yoga • Tai Chi
- Mindfulness



Free Health Screenings

SUWANNEE FESTIVALS PRESENTS

WILDFLOWER FESTIVAL

APRIL 27, 2024

9:00 - 5:00

AT HERITAGE PARK AND GARDENS

1004 HELVENSTON ST. SE, LIVE OAK, FL 32064

QUESTIONS? CONTACT THE LIBRARY: 386-364-3479

SRRLIB.ORG

Sponsored in part by a grant by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and the National Endowment for the Arts.



JOIN US FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit www.suwanneecountyextension.org for details and registration links.

APRIL 2024

- 1: Chick Chain Ownership Deadline
- 1: 4-H State Horse Judging Contest
- 3: Spring Edible Plant Sale
- 3: ServSafe
- 6: 4-H Archery Match (Newberry)
- 8: Pesticide Training Class
- 8: 4-H County Council Meeting
- 11: MGV Alumni Meeting & Lunch
- 11-13: Florida Farm Bureau Women's Conference
- 13: 4-H State Livestock Judging
- 13: Healthy Families Community Expo
- 18: Lunch & Learn Garden Series: Wonderful World of Wildflowers
- 18: Homebuyer Workshop Part 1
- 20: Community Day at NFREC
- 22: 4-H State Meats Contest
- 25: Homebuyer Workshop Part 2
- 25: Library Series: Backyard Chickens
- 27: Wildflower Festival, Heritage Park
- 28-30: 4-H Third Executive Board

MAY 2024

- 2: CARES Banquet
- 3: Small Ruminant North Florida Livestock FAMACHA Training
- 4: 4-H District 4 Events
- 8-10: UF Beef Cattle Short Course
- 9: MGV Alumni Meeting & Lunch
- 13: 4-H County Council Meeting & Elections
- 16: Lunch & Learn Garden Series: Selecting Trees for Wind Strength
- 23: Library Series: Preparing Youth for Adulthood
- 27: Office Closed for Memorial Day

JUNE 2024

- 3: 4-H Record Books, Scholarships & Award Applications due
- 4: Cheesemaking Workshop
- 6: First Time Homebuyers Class, Part 1
- 7: 4-H Recordbook Grading
- 7-9: iLead Intermediate Leadership Conference
- 13: MGV Alumni Meeting & Lunch
- 13: First Time Homebuyers Class, Part 2
- 17-21: Florida Cattlemen's Convention
- 24: Pool Safety, Branford Library
- 24-28: 4-H Legislature, Tallahassee
- 27: Library Series: Fall Prevention: Building Strength & Balance




Servsafe Food Manager Certificate Class & Exam

Become a certified **Servsafe Food Manager** with this class and expand your career options in the food service industry. The one-day program includes training and a 90-question multiple choice exam. The textbook is an optional cost but we highly recommend buying it and studying it before the class as a score of 70% is required to pass the exam.

April 3, 2024
8:30 am to 5:00 pm
Suwannee County Extension Office
1302 11th St. SW, Live Oak

For more information and to register online please visit our website.
www.SuwanneeCountyExtension.org



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HOMEBUYERS EDUCATION
ONLINE CLASS

June 6 & 13, 2024
5:00-9:00 pm

Classes are held over two nights and you must attend both to earn your certificate. There is a \$10 charge and pre-registration is required. Daytime and Spanish classes are available by request. call (386) 962-2773
www.SuwanneeCountyExtension.org



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LUNCH & LEARN
GARDENING

WONDERFUL WILDFLOWERS

Wildflowers fill our landscape with beauty this time of year and look so easy to grow since they are, well, wild! Master Gardener Volunteers from the Suwannee County Extension Office will tell you how you can have your own wildflower garden, what types grow best, and how to care for them.

April 18, 2024
12:00 to 1:00 pm

This free class is open to the public and will be held at the Suwannee River Regional Library in Live Oak. Bring your lunch while you learn!

Live Oak Library
1848 Ohio Ave S.
Live Oak, FL 32064

www.SuwanneeCountyExtension.org
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LUNCH & LEARN
GARDENING

SELECTING TREES FOR WIND STRENGTH

We learned from Idalia that not all trees are designed to withstand strong winds and can damage our property if not planted in the correct place. Suwannee County Master Gardener Volunteers will teach you how to choose wind-resistant trees, where to plant them, and how to protect them. Bring your lunch while you learn at this free class!

May 16, 2024
12:00 to 1:00 pm

Live Oak Library
1848 Ohio Ave S.
Live Oak, FL 32064

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LUNCH & LEARN
GARDENING

Building Strength & Balance

Building strength and balance are important skills for preventing falls, especially as we age. This free class in the Lunch 'N Learn series teaches you how to get you started.

June 27, 2024
12 to 1 pm

Live Oak Library
1848 Ohio Ave S.

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LUNCH & LEARN
GARDENING

Backyard Chickens

There's nothing like walking into your yard and collecting your own freshly laid eggs. You control your flock's diet and environment and can be sure your eggs are the highest quality. And chickens are fun to raise! This free class in the Lunch 'N Learn series teaches you how to get you started.

April 25, 2024
12 to 1 pm

Live Oak Library
1848 Ohio Ave S.

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LUNCH & LEARN
GARDENING

Adulting 101

Succeeding in life takes more than just good grades. Join us as we discuss how to develop non-academic skills that today's youth need to thrive as adults. This free class in the Lunch 'N Learn series teaches you how to get you started.

May 23, 2024
12 to 1 pm

Live Oak Library
1848 Ohio Ave S.

www.SuwanneeCountyExtension.org
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Wednesdays, 1-3 pm

Suwannee River Regional Library in Live Oak

Plant & Garden Q&A

Bring your questions and samples for Master Gardener Volunteers

MONTHLY MAINTENANCE PLANNER

APRIL

- Check yard for low spots
- Repair any damaged fences
- Clean or change A/C filters
- Check sprinkler/irrigation system
- Check foundation and make sure vents are clear
- Check siding and exterior paint for chips
- Clean gutters and downspouts
- Get A/C maintenance done

MAY

- Mulch flower and vegetable beds
- Check outdoor lighting
- Clean grill and check propane
- Check batteries
- Spruce up your porches
- Prep yard for summer parties
- Clean walls and baseboards
- Check smoke alarm batteries
- Clean or change A/C filters

JUNE

- Clean condenser coils on the refrigerator
- Check your pest control method
- Clean swimming pool regularly
- Prepare for hurricane season and update your storm kit
- Make sure to drain any standing water outdoors
- Clean or change A/C filters
- Check outdoor toys and equipment for safety

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 with 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 (MGV) Program:** MGVs receive training in exchange for service to the community. They assist with the Seed Library and hold plant clinics every Wednesday from 1-3 pm both at the Live Oak Library. Volunteers also staff a Seed Library and plant clinic at the Branford Library on Tuesdays from 2-5 pm.
- **Family and Consumer Sciences:** These programs offer 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:** 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.

UF/IFAS Extension Suwannee County

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Carolyn Saft

County Extension Director

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- **Raymond Balaguer**, Commercial Horticulture, Small Farms and Natural Resources
- **Kim Griffin**, Family & Consumer Sciences
- **Erin Jones**, Livestock & Forages
- **Katie Jones**, 4-H/Youth Development
- **Carolyn Saft**, Environmental Horticulture

Administrative Support

- Michelle Drummond
- Linda Thomason
- Sandra Wainwright

Family Nutrition Program

- Bonnie Box

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