Lynne and Bob Heath attended a hands-on Rain barrel workshop taught by Jim Davis, FYN Agent and Holly Tuxbury, Master Gardener. They were attracted to the class because they would be walking out of the workshop with a working rain barrel. Prior to moving to Florida, the Heaths practiced xeriscaping to help conserve water. With Florida’s recent drought harvesting water made sense to the couple.

The rain barrel class provided information about harvesting water, protecting the aquifer, and water conservation. Each attendee also left with a working rain barrel. It seemed fitting that the day of the class it stormed and poured buckets or “barrels”.

“The harvesting of rain provides a back up supply of water in times of drought and water restrictions,” stated Lynne Heath. The Heaths would like to see some classes designed specifically for xeriscaping, which is grouping plants together by their water requirements.

When the Heaths moved to Florida they fell in love with Florida’s natural beauty. We wish that those who are new to Florida would visit Florida’s natural areas and gain an appreciation for what works and what does not work in Central Florida.

“I recommend that residents attend the garden club meetings in the Villages,” stated Lynne. “The Villages is interested in responsible landscaping.”

Sumter County residents are fortunate to have a local Florida Native Plant Society Chapter. Members and/or residents are taught to use native plants in their landscapes. Residents also learn which nurseries sell plants responsibly and do not sell invasive plants. To contact The Sumter County Native Plant Society Chapter please visit the website www.fnps.org

One issue that posed a potential snag in water harvesting was Lynne and Bob Heath’s home owner’s association regulations. This did not stop the couple from researching the proper channels to approach their home owner’s association about the addition of a rain barrel. To make the barrel blend in with their house they painted it a light green and plan to add shrubs around it to keep it from being overly obvious.

Continued page 4
The Green ‘Zine

The introduction of organic foods has grown in popularity over the past decade. The food service industry has conformed to meet the demands for organics in schools, restaurants, and even on the dinner table. Organic generally means that the ‘growing, raising, or processing of food without drugs, synthetic chemicals, or hormones, using methods that conserve natural resources and limit the effects on the environment.’

Other than taking the word of the grocer at the local farmers’ market, originally there were no regulations which governed or ensured that these organic growing was truly being practiced.

* In 1990, the Organic Foods Production Act created the National Organic Program (NOP), which runs in conjunction with the USDA. Standards were developed by the NOP. By 2002, organic certifiers had to be in compliance with the NOP standards.

The USDA has a seal for foods which meet organic standards. These foods must be 95% organic. Products which utilize only organics products and methods may add 100% organic to their label. Foods which are between 70 and 95% organic would have a label stating ‘made with organic ingredients.’

Farmers must certify their product through the state or another agency. They must document the following information: pest management, seed/seedling sources, storage and handling practices. Once these practices are inspected and approved the farmer may then use the label organic.

Farmers’ Markets or small grocers are a great place to look for the organic label. When you purchase your veggies in this fashion you are supporting your local farmer(s), in other words you will help your local economy. Your food will spend much less time in transit as well.

It is estimated that on average, food travels over 1,500 miles before it reaches your table. You could almost drive to our nation’s capital and back to give you an idea of just how far most food travels. The farther it goes, chances are the less fresh your produce will be.

By H. Tuxbury, Master Gardener


Five Tips for Living Greener: Give Them a Try

1. Bring canvas bags to the grocery store. You will be amazed at how much they can hold. Keep a bag in the car incase you have to swing by the store.
2. Use your electric golf carts to get you to the shops. Less emissions go into the atmosphere.
3. Grow your veggies at home. The USDA has certified organic seeds for sale.
4. Use good insects to control pest insects. Lady bugs can help control some weevils, chinch bugs, and aphids.
5. Share or swap your excess organic or homegrown veggies with friends.

By H. Tuxbury, Master Gardener
The Plant Match Maker: Do I Have the Perfect Plant for You?

We’ve all heard about online match makers. How great would it be to find your perfect plant match? A healthy thriving plant can sometimes provide us with a world of happy thoughts.

My Profile: Walter’s Viburnum (*Viburnum obtatum*)

**Description:** Please feel free to call me Walter. I can come in various sizes and shapes anywhere from a small shrub to a tree style that can get about 25 feet. I am considered to be an evergreen; regardless if my leaves are small or larger and waxy. I have adorable clusters of white flowers which last a few weeks at a time. My flowers will then give way to berries which start out red and go to a black when they are fully mature. I grow well in Central and Southern Florida and I am frequently found in local nurseries. Did I mention that I am a Florida native?

**Likes:** I like the sun, but also enjoy the shade. I do very well in drought conditions once I am well established. I like a wide variety of soils, from sand to loam, alkaline or acidic. I’m not very picky in that sense. I am used to spending time in wetland forests, so I can handle periods of wet feet. I can go the natural look or the sculptured look, either way I like to have nice full foliage. I love going birding. On second thought, birds really love me.

**Dislikes:** I prefer to stay away from salty areas; so I tend not to like the beach. I do not like it when people try to prune me too much, but I can be used as a topiary. I am a native, let me grow and I will look stunning for you. I’m not one to be overly flashy. I do not like to be overcrowded, but if spaced properly I will make a nice evergreen border for you.

**You:** One who appreciates a Florida native. You love plants, birds, and butterflies. Plant and habitat enthusiast. Please make sure you get me in the size you want; a nursery should help you with that.

By H. Tuxbury, Master Gardener

FPS-604  The newsletter will soon be available on line: [http://sumter.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture.shtml](http://sumter.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture.shtml)

---

Put on Your Boots and Check Out Colt Creek State Park

Colt Creek State Park is one of the state’s newer parks. It sits on over 5,000 acres which rest upon the Green Swamp and is located off of 471 near Polk County. The park offers many native habitats including: cypress domes, prairie land, stocked fishing holes, and it’s lined by pines. A kiosk provides vital information about the park and its habitat, restrooms, picnic tables and grills. The bald eagle, wild turkeys, and white tailed deer are just a few birds or animals which you may encounter. Make sure you bring binoculars, camera, and a field guide. Bring a nature journal with you. When looking for wildlife it is recommended to look for movement rather than an animal; a warbler is tiny but it can make lots of movement. See [http://www.floridastateparks.org](http://www.floridastateparks.org)

Various native plants and wildlife can be found at Colt Creek State Park. Photo and article by H. Tuxbury
Villagers’ Harvest Water

When asked how they went about approaching their homeowner’s association Lynne and Bob Heath had some great tips. “For any changes/additions to the outside of a house in the Villages, a resident must file paperwork with the Architectural Review Committee.”

A one page form is necessary and can be found at the front of the Villages phone book, online at http://www.districtgov.org, or at the Sumter Landing District Office, which is located at: 1894 Laurel Manor Drive (in the same area as the Laurel Manor Recreation Center.)

“It is an easy form to fill out,” reflected the Heaths, “It must also be accompanied with a copy of your lot map, and you must indicate the location of any change or addition.”

As I stated in the rain barrel workshop, it only takes one person to make change come about. The Heaths took that extra step and obtained permission for their rain barrel, and are giving the information on how to approach the local government. “The harvesting of rain water is also a response to the continuing covering of the ground with impervious ground surfaces like cement and asphalt which reduce the ability of the earth to absorb and retain rainfall,” added Lynne.

Thank you again to the Heaths for taking the extra steps for our habitat and to encourage others to add a rain barrel to their home.  By H. Tuxbury, Mater Gardener

A Tip from FYN

Even in Florida, we can count on falling leaves around the yard. If you don’t compost, now is a great time to start. After raking, take the leaves to your compost pile. Compost containers can be made from hog wire or field fencing. If you have a larger area in your yard, create several barrel sized cages to hold the leaves. You could also build your own compost box. The key to composting is turning the leaf matter, grass clippings and home vegetable waste, on a frequent basis. You must also keep your compost moist to aid in the breakdown process. The smaller particles that go into the compost ‘bin’ means the waste will breakdown quicker. Several styles of composting are available. As a homeowner, make sure that you meet any deed restrictions. CIR 1027

By H. Tuxbury, Master Gardener

Upcoming FYN Classes at Oxford Community Building

For a complete listing of classes please see “Solutions for Life” at http://sumter.ifas.ufl.edu/ or contact Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Agent, Jim Davis at 352-753-0124. All classes are held at the Oxford Community Building unless otherwise stated. The following classes are scheduled for the summer.

May 8: Landscaping for Butterflies
May 22: Creating a Hummingbird Haven
June 12: Irrigation 101
June 26: Summer Wildlife Encounters
July 10: What are those Critters in the Backyard?
July 24: Container Gardening
August 14: Florida Friendly Plants for Central Florida
August 28: Attracting Birds to Your Yard

We hope to see you there!
Bug “Bytes”

When most people think of lady bugs they think of a red beetle with black spots, but lady beetles come in different colors and sizes depending on their species. Most lady beetles are considered to be ‘good’ insects because they will feed on soft-bodied pest insects in the garden such as aphids. An aphid is a small, soft insect with piercing-sucking mouthparts. Aphids can stunt the growing tips and spread disease on your plants. One lady beetle can eat anywhere from 500 to 2,000 aphids in its lifetime! A lady beetle’s life span is dependent on temperature, the colder it is the longer they can live.

There are 75 different species of lady beetles in Florida that feed on scale and mealy bug insects and there are 13 species that feed on aphids. The Mexican bean beetle and the squash beetle are lady beetle species in Florida that are “bad,” meaning that they can feed on plants.

The multicolored Asian beetle is a spices of lady beetle that homeowners consider to be “bad.” They can become a nuisance inside the home. However, the multicolored Asian lady beetle can be quite the predator as they can feed on pest insects in your garden. The multicolored Asian lady beetle was brought to America to help control pests on crops, although some populations slipped in accidently. These lady beetles are the orange lady bugs that congregate on and in your house in the fall season. The multicolored Asian beetle is native to Japan. It goes to the large light colored rocks to overwinter. In the eastern United States it prefers rocky mountainsides or light colored houses.

The multicolored Asian lady beetle can creep into your home through cracks and crevices. When they are disturbed they can release a yellow liquid, which can stain and cause a foul odor. If you experience a lady beetle problem in your house, the best plan of action is to make sure your windows and doors are sealed. You would be surprised how many lady beetles can get into one small crack.

Please see below for other interesting lady beetle facts. The http://www.featuredcreatures.com website is an excellent source of insect information. This website was also the source for this article.

Did You Know That….
- The lady beetle was named after ‘the Virgin Mary.’
- Ladybugs do not sting, they pinch with their jaws.
- Their red color serves as a warning to predators that they taste bad.
- Ladybugs go through a complete metamorphosis, like a butterfly. They have an egg, larvæ, pupa, and adult stage.
- When a lady beetle’s food source is scarce they can feed on plant nectar and sugars secreted from pest insects.
- By Brooke Burn, Urban Horticulture Agent
Helping Those Who Help Others

Many of us have either heard of or have had some type of experience with Hospice in our life. Hospice was started to ensure that each patient involved with Hospice would get a team of practitioners to ensure the comfort and wellness of both the patients and their families. They are a team of doctors, nurses, aids, and social workers with one goal in mind, to ensure that the patient is comfortable and dignified. They also work closely with many facilities such as nursing homes and home health care.

New Master Gardener, Jim Dooley came to a decision to get a group of Master Gardeners together to put in a garden at the Villages Hospice. With the help of several Master Gardeners, some heavy equipment, and dedication in their hearts, they set out to install a garden for all of the residents to enjoy. On February 20th, the group met at 8:30 a.m. and got right to work. A sod remover helped them remove the existing grass in the new garden area. Mushroom compost was tilled into the ground to supplement the soil with added nutrients.

Just preparing the garden area was not enough to the volunteers. Most agreed that they would work until 5 p.m. or until they had to leave. Tools in hand and with their hearts all in the right place, a lawn turned into a beautiful garden in a matter of time. Approximately 30 Knock Out roses were added to the garden to bring warmth and color, as well as a large number of Florida Friendly shrubs.

`Knock Out` roses are known for their beautiful blooms and little care needed once they have been established. They come in a variety of colors and add that extra splash of color during their long blooming season. If you are not sure of what a `Knock Out` rose is, you can either check out the garden at the Villages Hospice or take a look at the roses in the demo garden at the UF/IFAS Sumter County Bushnell Extension Office.

Again, we would like to warmly thank those who helped add a wonderful gift to the community and Hospice.

*By H. Tuxbury, Master Gardener*
Knowing Your Garden: A Monthly Guide to Your Garden

Keep a folder especially for the plants in your landscape. Each time you purchase a plant, keep the tag that came on the container of your plant and add the tag to your folder. Another option is to go online and find the plant description and care for each plant or variety. The University of Florida has a great website for almost every plant or plant issue in Florida; you can find this search engine at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu; Florida Yards and Neighborhoods also has a website that has a wealth of information http://floridayards.org. Both websites are a great place to start filling those files.

Another good tool is to make a garden calendar to keep track of your garden. Mark when you bought your plants and keep track of the amount of rainfall each month. You can look back later and find out what happened in your garden each year. You can go to http://weather.com and get an accurate day by day record of rainfall and temperature with just your zip code.

SPRING

Fertilization should happen three (3) times a year. The recommended times to fertilize is March, July, and September. If you have not done this already, do it now before the hot rainy season. Slow release fertilizers have proven to be very reliable, however, excessive rain and extreme temperatures can effect the release rate. If plants show signs of stress, such as yellowing or reduced growth before the recommended feeding time you may need additional fertilizer. The Extension Office offers plant clinics frequently. Sometimes it is better to bring in a part of the sickly plant before adding fertilizer. Water soluble fertilizers wash out of our sandy soil, and must be applied more often.

New plantings should be watered in daily for up to two weeks. It is recommended that you hand water your plants as irrigation systems are not always reliable. As your plants start to take, wean them from water to an as needed basis.

April is known as the start of our rainy season as the temperature begins to rise. Do not be fooled by light sprinkles, the water will most likely evaporate before ever reaching the roots. Use a rain gauge in several parts of your yard to determine how much water has fallen and record the information on your calendar. The warmer the weather means the more garden pests multiply. Inspect your plants for pests such as, mites, scale, white fly, aphids, slugs, and snails. The Extension Office can assist in identifying these pests, as well as the above listed websites.

MAY

May is the time to think about plants such as marigolds, portulaca, verbena, salvia, gazania, purslane, periwinkle, and other annuals which tolerate heat. Shade plants such as coleus, impatiens, torenia, and wax begonias do well.

JUNE

June is a good time to check your plants for their performance. Do you have the ‘right plant for the right place?’ Which plants did well in your garden, and which plants did not. Are your plants getting too little or too much water? If we are getting a lot of rain, turn off the sprinkler system and watch to see if your plants are doing well without the sprinklers. Start a water as needed schedule with your plants.

Do you like daylilies? June is the time to shop for plants while they are still in bloom. You can transplant your daylilies into your garden at anytime, but buying them in June will assure you of what color daylily you are getting.

by Nancy King, Master Gardener
SUMTER COUNTY
7620 State Road 471, Suite #2
Bushnell, Fl 33513-8716

MASTER GARDENER BOARD

President      John Campbell
Vice President John Yarema
Secretary      Holly Tuxbury
Treasurer      Louise Shuey

EXTENSION STAFF

Urban Horticulture        Brooke Burn
Agent
FYN Agent                Jim Davis
Horticulture Assistant   Donna Lester

This issue was written by Master Gardeners Holly Tuxbury and Nancy King, and reviewed by Brooke Burn, Urban Horticulture Agent. This issue was approved for distribution on April 30, 2008.

SOIL TESTING

Soil pH Tests: Test the pH of your soil for a $2 fee. A detailed analysis from the University of Florida is available for a fee of $7.

For instructions on how to bring in your soil sample please call (352)793-2728 or (352)753-0124. Thank you.

Plant Clinics are held in Bushnell each Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and in the Villages the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month. For more information please call: (352)793-2728 or (352)753-0124.

This will be the last major printing of The Sumter Gardener. If you do not have email or internet access please call (352)793-2728 to have one mailed. All others please go to: http://sumter.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture.shtml
Thank you for your support.

All UF publications listed in this newsletter are available on the internet at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu.

If you would like to submit an article please email HTuxbury@efl.rr.com. Thank you.