Many different organizations such as the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), American Ground Water Trust, and the U.S. Geological Survey, all took part in sponsoring two and a half day Ground Water Conference. The training was geared towards teachers and those who speak about environmental issues which effect our waterways and water supplies. Course topics covered everything from the history of the American Ground Water Trust, hydrologic systems, geology, karst, sinkholes, water quality issues, and living on the water’s edge. Attendees were also taught methods to demonstrate the vulnerability of the aquifer.

On Saturday, April 28th, UF/IFAS’s Dr. Joan Bradshaw gave a great presentation on Waste Water Disposal gearing her topic towards septic systems. Ms. Bradshaw not only gave a presentation which discussed all of the potential problems with septic tanks, but she also used a great interactive tool called a “Septic System and Ground Water Model.”

“Maintaining septic systems in our area is so important, because a damaged system can leach into our soils and into our waterways,” stated Dr. Joan Bradshaw, Regional Specialized Programs: Natural Resources.

CONTINUES Page 2

Lake Panasoffkee Celebration a Big Hit!

On Saturday, May 5th, Marsh Bend Outlet River Park was packed with kids and adults alike. They were all participating in the annual Lake Panasoffkee, “Be a Lake Pan Pal.” The event was sponsored by UF/IFAS Extension, Sumter County Board of Commissioners, and graciously funded by the Southwest Florida Water Management District. Kids took part in several activities including a fishing derby and casting contest as their parents or relatives

CONTINUED pg. 3
Ground Water Institute Made a SPLASH! Septic Systems

“Since we have great bodies of water in our area, for example, Lake Panasoffkee, we should all maintain our systems so we do not contaminate these bodies of water. The Ground Water model is a great visual way to show the impact that our septic systems have on our environment,” reminded Dr. Bradshaw.

It is everyone’s responsibility to ensure that their septic systems are up to date, working properly, and are not being intruded by roots. Also, pay attention to what you flush. A healthy septic system needs bacteria to help break down waste. When you clean your toilet with strong household chemicals, you can affect the bacteria in you system. Ensure that your drain field is not going downhill towards any body of water. Lastly, please have your septic tank properly inspected, drained, and maintained to prevent any undetected problems.

For more information on karst for your septic system please call the Sumter County Extension Office at (352)793-2728.

What is Karst? What Role Does it Play?

First we must give a little ground work to better understand karst and its role in Florida. Millions of years ago, a plateau of limestone approximately 1,000 feet deep was formed, which lies beneath our entire state. Limestone is a carbonate rock. Scientists describe karst as the landscape over the limestone.

The entire state of Florida is a karst region. Karst regions are characterized by caves, large springs, sinkholes, and sinking streams. Groundwater is diverted through these sinkholes and caves to act as a pathway for water flow in the aquifer. In some areas limestone mining has exposed karst in North Florida. For more information on karst check out: The Florida Speleological Society.

Honors and Recognitions for Extension Staff

Recently two of our UF/IFAS Extension Staff were recognized and honored by UF/IFAS. Ms. Susan Kelly and Ms. Joan Bradshaw were both awarded the “UF/IFAS Image Award,” which is given for their continued support in the community. Both Ms. Bradshaw and Ms. Kelly spent countless hours preparing for the Lake Panasoffkee, “Be a Lake Pan Pal Celebration.” Each year the event has been more successful than the previous year. Many meetings were held to ensure the celebration would go off without a hitch. Please take some time to recognize Ms. Kelly and Ms. Bradshaw for their great achievements. Great job and congratulations!
The sky is starting to fill with the colorful flowers that float through the air. If you have host plants for the caterpillars, chances are you will start to see eggs on the leaves. Give it some time and you will have a beautiful butterfly. If you want them to stay around your yard make sure you have plenty of nectar plants for the adults.

Don’t Grab the Insecticide:
It’s not Just the Grasshoppers Chewing the Leaves.

If we are not dealing with drought issues than we seem to be battling leaf chomping insects. Yes it is that time of year again. Before running out to purchase an insecticide or before you start spraying, start looking at your leaves. We are seeing our fluttering friends flying around. The sky is starting to fill with the colorful flowers that float through the air. If you have host plants for the caterpillars, chances are you will start to see eggs on the leaves. Give it some time and you will have a beautiful butterfly. If you want them to stay around your yard make sure you have plenty of nectar plants for the adults.

Tips for Fun on the Water
- What you bring with you, take home with you.
- Always clean your boat and trailer in the designated areas. At the same time you can rinse of your rod and reel.
- Chemicals and waterways don’t mix! Add a buffer zone of plants where no chemicals will be used.

Host Plants and Larval Plants for Butterflies

Host plants and larval plants are a must in the garden for the butterfly lover. Here are some suggested host plants for our delicate friends: Asters, Coneflowers, Dill, Elm trees, Fennel, Milkweeds, Passion vines, Paw-Paws, Queen Anne’s Lace, Spicebush, Cleomes, Sweet Bay Magnolia, White Clover, Willows, and many more. Once your caterpillar has transformed it will need nectar much like a hummingbird needs nectar. Great larval plants are: Coneflower, Verbena, Lantana, Butterflybush, Milkweeds, Phlox, Sunflowers, Zinnias, Petunias, Cosmos, and Sweet William.
Wildflowers: Master Gardeners Work to Add Pizzazz

Master Gardeners rose early on Friday, June 22nd, with shovels, trowels, and gloves in hand. A Wildflower Grant was awarded to the Extension Office to bring wildflowers to the existing landscape at the Bushnell office.

Approximately six hundred plants were added to boost color and increase more native flowers into the demonstration garden. Laurel Schiller, from Florida Native Plant Nurseries, brought an array of Florida wildflowers from her nursery.

Volunteers from Circle C Landscape worked side by side with the Master Gardeners by digging holes and placing wildflowers in the garden. Ms. Schiller spoke about planting with natives to the group afterwards. The recent rains have certainly helped the plants take root and show off their true colors.

Thanks to all who helped!

Watch Out for Wildlife: Animal Crossing

In less than two (2) weeks, while driving in heavy traffic areas, I have seen two Florida gators that had met their match. It is a sad sight to see when a five foot gator lost the battle between a large, fast moving vehicle. The location of their bodies led me to believe that these were gators on a long and dangerous trek to find water. Often for the gators and other wildlife, they are forced to move from the usual habitat to seek out water or a food source. Quite frequently, this means the animal has to dodge traffic. This is an example of habitat fragmentation. Habitat fragmentation occurs when a natural habitat is changed due to human expansion. Areas left for wildlife may not have enough space for the animal. For example a Florida Panther needs an approximate 100 mile territory. Please watch the road for wildlife.

Upcoming FYN Classes at Oxford and Lake Pan.

The following classes will be offered at Oxford Community Center from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.
- September 13 “Fertilizing Your Landscape Appropriately”
- September 27 “Pruning Trees and Shrubs”
- October 11 “Attracting Wildlife”
- October 25 “Taking the OUCH Factor Out of Working in Your Yard”

Lake Pan Classes are held from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. at the Lake Panasoffkee Recreation Center.
- September 11 “Fertilizing Your Landscape Appropriately”
- October 9 “Attracting Wildlife”
- November 13 “Getting Plants Ready for Winter”

For more information:
352-753-0124 or 352-793-2728
BUG CAMP: A Nibble into the World of Insects

Bug Camp was held at the Extension Office June 20 - 22. Ten eager children came into the room, where everything had the theme of insects. J. Davis, FYN Agent, decided to cap the class at ten this year as a trial run. His goal was to have the kids leaving with much more insect knowledge than most kids their age. He stressed the Orders of the insects and the true names for the insects. It wasn’t all learning and no fun, kids watched Ants and A Bug’s Life during lunch. Brooke Burn, Urban Horticulture Agent, taught how each insect used its mouth to eat. A relay of spongers, piercing suckers, and eager fruit loop chewers, cheered their teammates on as it quickly became a competition.

The purpose of the exercise was to turn the kids into a relay of insects and watch them eat like various insects. Samantha Verdoni helped kids paint insects on t-shirts. When the weather was cooperating the kids searched the property for never before seen insects and used their butterfly nets on the unsuspecting butterfly. The kids put their catch in bug houses which they took home. Parents were amazed at the science that was retained.

Rain Barrels are a Must: Take Advantage Now

Deciding to collect rain water in a rain barrel is a fairly simple and very practical for watering your plants and taking advantage of the rain. Most rain barrels are made out of 50 gallon drums. When you decide to create a rain barrel keep in mind that one (1) gallon of water weighs approximately eight (8) pounds. A full rain barrel can weigh approximately 400 pounds. It is suggested to put your barrels on cinder blocks which will help to stabilize your barrel, but it will also help add some water pressure (gravity). You may want to consider an “overflow” barrel, so one down spout can be used to fill two barrels.

Materials You Will Need to Create a Rain Barrel

A 50 gallon “Food Grade” drum can be used as the rain barrel. These drums are made out of propylene, which is not porous, chemicals will never be used in a food grade drum. Drill Bit 15/16”, Teflon tape, ¾” Hose Bib, PVC Glue, ¾” mechanical washer, Overflow – 1 ½” PVC fitting, will need male and female ends, caulk if desired, flex gutter attachment or a metal downspout. A hole can be cut in the lid with a hack saw blade or a jig saw. It is recommended that you drill a hole in each corner of the area that you will remove with the jig or hack saw. A gutter strainer (insert) can be inserted into the down spout to keep debris from the barrel. Window or patio screen can be used under the top of the barrel. Cisterns can also be used to collect rain water.

Harvesting rain is not a new concept. Rain was collected in clay pots approximately 2,000 years ago in Thailand and later through out other areas of the world. Due to droughts and water restrictions many homeowners in the U.S. have started harvesting rainwater as a way to save money and protect our natural resources. Think of the following statement and remember that most people think that water is a resource that will never run out, “You don’t know the value of water until the well is running dry.” “As drought and aquifer mining begin to call attention to an increasing water crisis, people are seeking ways to minimize impact on our municipal water supplies. Rain barrels can be part of the solution. Just look outside your window the next time it rains and imagine all the water that’s running down your driveway being put to beneficial use in your home and garden!”

A Problem with Water

Average U.S. Household spending: $ 740 on soft drinks and soda—$474 on water and waste water——Tracy Mahen, Office of Water EPA.
Containers Serve as Eye Catchers

At one time, container gardening meant to me, transplanting one plant into a larger pot. With imagination and some helpful hints your container will catch the attention of those who pass by. First you should decide what scheme you would like to add to your container. Also, do you have the container that you want? Once you are finished your container garden should look like a miniature, manicured garden.

Pick out a nice pot even if you have to spend a few dollars more than you normally would. For areas by your front door, splurge and get that eye catching container. Make sure that it meets the requirements that you will need, such as size, drain holes, weight (with and without plants) mobility, and maybe even shape.

Just because most planters are round in shape does not mean that you have to follow the norm. Why not try one of the square pots that are new on the scene. They come in every color of the rainbow, but some of the most popular glazes are of turquoise and amber.

Remember to purchase potting soil and slow release fertilizer while you are shopping for those beautiful containers and plants. Do not use soil from your own yard. It may lead to poor nutrition, disease, and pests.

A beautiful container can make all the difference.

Designing the Right Plants for My Container

First and foremost, make sure you are selecting plants for your USDA hardiness zone. Sumter County is zone 9A. You can grow more tropicaels if you plan to move your container in the cold weather. Just like a garden, you must first pick the plants that you want to use in your scheme. Draw your design out on paper before you start planting or before you even buy a plant. You should include various forms of plants, for example, upright (taller) plants, rounded plants, and last but not least trailing plants. Think Right Plant, Right Place! It still applies here. Make sure that you purchase plants that will thrive in your environment.

Choosing Your Plants, Choose Wisely

Have your list of plants ready and head out to the greenhouse or local nursery. Some great plants for a summer look are listed below, but you are certainly not limited to the following plants. For upright plants you could choose from a variety of ornamental summer blooming grasses, Pennisetum setaceum (red fountain grass) or a dwarf variety. For the rounded look Pentas lanceolata or a geranium should work well. For your trailing plants you should pick a few complimentary plants. Some examples include: Helichrysum petiolare (Licorice plant), Stachys byzanativa (Lamb’s ear), Ajuga spp. (Bugelweed). Whichever you choose, please make sure that you do not pick invasive species.
Butterfly Kisses: A Brief Look Into Their World—Part One

I started collecting caterpillars in May of 2007 for Bug Camp. I created a crudely fashioned habitat for them out of an old plastic bin, screen, and clothes pins. I went through many of my books to refresh myself at what the caterpillar larvae or caterpillar would look like. I didn’t want to bring home anything unwanted.

The plan was to release butterflies during camp or give each child a caterpillar. Unfortunately, you cannot tell a caterpillar to develop into its pupa (chrysalis) nor, can you tell the butterfly that today is just not a good day to break free. The first butterfly to come into the world was a beautiful orange Gulf Fritillary. When a butterfly hatches, it takes time for the wings of the butterfly to fully dry. It is not unusual for it to rest, hanging upside down, from a close shrub or flowers.

The second butterfly to appear was very different, yet still beautiful, a Zebra Longwing. The black with yellow thin stripes made it easy to identify. Their chrysalis, when hanging down, look like a miniature bat. This one was ready to go almost immediately as it dried itself in the container. Once the screen was lifted off and a finger lay near its feet, it climbed up onto my finger and off it went.

I had a second zebra longwing chrysalis, however, the chrysalis fell, causing the butterfly to come into the world with bent wings. Its’ hind wings were folded a bit and would not unfold which basically made the zebra flightless, with the exception of one to two foot flights.

I decided that I would try to nourish it and take care of it. I had a kiwi which was a little too old for me to eat, but the zebra longwing drank from that kiwi like there was no tomorrow. It was fascinating watching it slurp up the juice with its proboscis. I fed the butterfly many times a day, until he seemed to be content and then I would place him on different nectar plants. He did get the hang of it.

To Be Continued.

GET TO KNOW YOUR SPIDERS

We have all heard of the Black Widow, but have you ever heard of or seen a brown widow? A brown widow’s egg sack looks very much like a miniature golf ball, a bit smaller than a moth ball. It is white and looks like it has spikes or bumps on the sack.

Each sack can hold approximately 250 baby widows. It takes about twenty (20) days for the spiders to hatch. The spiders can easily be identified when you see the bright orange hourglass shape on the underside of the abdomen. For more information on Brown Widows or other spiders. Please visit: http://solutionsforyourlife.com and search for spiders ENY-201 for further information.

Master Gardener Class to Start in the Fall

The Sumter County UF/IFAS Extension Office will be holding a new Master Gardener course from September 11 through December 11, 2007. During this course, participants will cover many topics. Some topics include growing fruits and vegetables, ornamental plants, the good bugs and the bad bugs, as well as turf management. Many other fundamentals of the Master Gardener program will be covered, for instance the principles of the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods and so much more. The course will be a 75 hour course and once completed, Master Gardeners will give back 75 hours of volunteer services through the Extension Office. We all look forward to fresh faces and love those who love to volunteer. Welcome to all new participants in the 2007 class! We look forward to working side by side in the future.
EXTENSION STAFF

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This issue was written by Master Gardener Holly Tuxbury and reviewed by Brooke Burn, Urban Horticulture Agent.

PLANT CLINICS:

Plant clinics are held each Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 3 p.m., and are held at The Villages Government Annex Center each first and third Monday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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.

http://sumter.ifas.ufl.edu

Master Gardeners: Please do not forget to add your volunteer time to the Volunteer Log.

If you would like to submit any articles or have suggestion about this publication please send and email to:

HTuxbury@cfl.rr.com  Thank you!

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