Florida Friendly Yards and Landscaping: Welcome Jim Davis Our new FYN Agent

The goal of the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program is to educate the public on water conservation, reducing pollution and enhancing their landscape based on nine easily adoptable principles that the public can incorporate into their lives, as well as their landscape.

Let me introduce myself by giving you some brief personal information. I am Jim Davis, a University of Florida IFAS extension agent serving in Sumter County. I am a Florida native, born and raised in rural Zephyrhills. I have always been an outdoor person: fishing, raising cattle and landscaping. My parents were employed by the District School Board of Pasco County and raised me and I have two sisters. After graduating High School, I worked for the Kmart Corporation in the garden center for nine years. The last three years, I was manager. Working at Kmart, I gained an affinity for Horticulture. While working, I attended Pasco-Hernando Community College and graduated with an Associate of Arts degree. Being raised a true “gator” fan and “bleeding Orange and Blue” it was only fitting for me to attend the University of Florida. I graduated from the University of Florida with a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Horticulture specializing in Public Garden Management and a minor in Entomology and Nematology. While attending the University of Florida, I interned at Universal Studios in Orlando. After graduation, I worked as Lead Gardener at The Breakers in Palm Beach. My work experiences provided me with invaluable opportunities to work with different people and environments which further promoted my interest in our states natural resources and its many different ecological communities.

I believe strongly in the principles of Florida Friendly Landscaping and use these principles in my own landscape. It is my goal to help the public become aware of these principles so that they can utilize them in their home landscape projects. I hope to assist the public through media contacts, visiting garden clubs and providing monthly lectures and workshops. It is my belief most everyone wants to make a difference in protecting Florida’s environment and I hope to provide Sumter County with assistance in that effort.

I am honored to be a representative of the FYN Program and I am looking forward to working with Master Gardeners and the public to help promote Florida Friendly Landscaping.
FOUR NATIVE FAVORITES

Florida’s native plants are often the best choices for our hot climate. They require little care and are very versatile. Four hardy, attractive and useful NATIVE plants are profiled in this article. by Sylvia Starnes

AMERICAN BEAUTY-BERRY (Callicarpa americana)
A small to medium sized shrub (4-6 ft. high). It bears large numbers of highly ornamental purple berries. It grows in full sun to partial shade. To keep the bush compact and encourage new growth, in the spring cut back severely in late winter. The flowers attract butterflies and the berries are sought after by birds. Plants are propagated by seeds or cuttings.

ELDERBERRY (Sambucus canadensis)
A large shrub (6-10 ft. tall). The elderberry flowers and fruits from early spring to autumn. The white flower clusters attract hummingbirds and the purple berries are loved by a variety of other birds. The berries are desirable for jellies, pies and wine. These shrubs make a dense backdrop for smaller plants or may provide a privacy screen on larger properties. The plant suckers can simply be mowed off to keep them in check.

COMMON SPIDERWORT (Tradescantia ohiensis)
This erect grassy perennial grows up to 2 feet tall. Plants form large clumps of blue flowers. They are recommended for wild flower gardens. They tolerate full sun to light shade and can also tolerate drought.

ORANGE MILKPLANT (Asclepias tuberosa)
Erect sprawling perennial (up to 2 ft. tall). Bears bright orange flowers from spring through fall. It needs full sun and sandy soil. The plant propagates by seed or root divisions. This is a popular wild flower because of its long blooming season, its attractiveness to butterflies and its orange flowers. Annually remove dead stems.
The legend of the Spanish Moss
-authored unknown

A villain there were as named Gorez Goz. 
Who journeyed here from Spain. 
The natives feared him much because 
His heart was set on gain. 
Gorez espied an Indian maid 
Who filled his fondest hope. 
He brought her a yard of braid 
And a little bar of soap. 
The maid was sore afraid 
And fled this bearded brute. 
She sped o’re hill and field and glade 
With Gorez in pursuit. 
At last the maiden climbed a tree: 
The Spaniard did the same. 
The lass was bent on being free: 
Gorez desired his claim! 
Balanced on a slender limb 
Then dove into the brook, 
She much preferred a morning swim 
To this bearded Spanish crook. 
The troubles of Gorez begin 
His naughty plans are queered, 
He snags the whiskers of his chin, 
The branches hold his beard. 
The Indian maiden thus is free 
Gomez’s life is a loss, but his beard 
Lives on for you to see 
As dangling Spanish Moss!

submitted by MG: Ginger Ballenger

DID YOU KNOW?

LIFE IN THE 1500’s

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell, so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odor. Hence the custom of today of caring a bouquet when getting married.

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or upper crust.

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning death. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.

Houses had thatched roofs-thick straw-piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying “It’s raining cats and dogs.”

Poisonous Plants and Your Pets

Avocado (fruit and pit), Azaleas, Bird of Paradise, Caladiums, Clematis, Corn Plant, Croton, Elephant Ears, Florida Beauty, Geraniums, Mistletoe, Oleander, Mother-in-law’s Tongue, Onion, Pencil Cactus, Primrose, Rhododendron, Sago Palm, Schefflera, Tobacco, All types of Ivy, and All types of Philodendron.

For more information: www.APCC.aspca.org

Did you know that increasing herbicide use increases the plants’ tolerance to the chemicals and has created a ‘jungle’ of at least 48 “super-weeds” that are resistant to chemicals?
You have not seen everything until you have been to Disney’s Epcots Flower Show. A few of us were fortunate enough to attend an hour class on creating “Fairy Gardens” for our yard. The displays of creativity was amazing. Outside of the lecture room, different examples of fairy gardens is not really a good description for this project. This was a whole new little world and most of the materials used to create the elaborate ‘developments’ could be found in your backyard or on a walk through the woods.

You might ask, when did Master Gardeners start building fairy gardens? Granted we will not find a manual or a section in our three volume set of books, but I will say that it will bring out the child inside of you. If you have grandchildren, young kids, or want to try a different project to spruce up your garden this is a project for you! During the presentation, we were also taught how to make flower pots out of Portland concrete, perlite or vermiculite, and peat moss. The flower pots have to cure four to six weeks after they are dried. This will allow the alkalinity to be leeched from the pots before planting. So you will have to be patient. My suggestion is when you make some pots, make more than one at a time. I’m not patient. The four to six weeks will be a test for me.

To keep myself occupied in the meantime, I will be breaking out the hot glue gun and starting on my fairy garden’s houses, furniture, and other decorations. Directions for building a fairy garden and casting leaves will be available at the extension office. Take some time and add some enchantment into your garden.

By Holly Tuxbury
In the late 1800s, the U.S. was about to learn just how devastating an insect could be, and how quickly that tiny insect could cause such a widespread path of destruction. During this era, most insecticides were created by chemicals that were purchased from the local pharmacist. In October 1894 a small vial of tiny bugs was sent to the USDA headquarters in Washington D.C. Charles De Ryee, Pharmacist from Texas was baffled when he could not treat this new pest. Little did he know this insect would soon cripple the cotton industry. Along with the vial of insects, Mr. De Ryee sent along a message to the USDA stating:

“The Top crop of cotton of this section of has been very much damaged and in some cases almost entirely destroyed by a peculiar weevil or bug, which by some means destroys the ‘squares’ and small ‘bolls’. Our farmers can combat the cotton worm, but are at a loss to know what to do to overcome this pest.”  * 1

USDA taxonomist E. Schwarz uncovered the mystery and identified the pest, a weevil, Anthonomous grandis, a member of the Curculionidae—“snout beetle” family. Scwarz and an independent entomologist C. Townsend of New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts, took a trip to Texas to see for themselves the, nature of the boll weevil. Once there, they recorded the damage to the main cash crop of the South, cotton.

The boll weevil, which is no larger than 1/4” in size called for a worldwide alert for the cotton industry. They watched firsthand the devastating damage an adult weevil can inflict on a cotton plant. The boll weevil pierces the protective ‘skin’ of the flower buds and engorges itself with the hidden pollen. The weevil also ate the cotton fibers as they were still in development. The female pierces the buds and bolls of cotton and deeply inserts its’ eggs. Once they hatch, the larvae devour the inner-parts of the plant’s reproductive structure. The actions of the weevil would cause the plant to drop the damaged parts of the plant and most of the damaged bolls would never produce the hair like cotton fibers.

Though only the width of a typical BIC pen, it became obvious that the boll weevil and the path of destruction would reach so much further. As the weevils crawled, pierced, and devoured the cotton plant, the littered fields with dying bolls and non fruit forming cotton. From a distance, to the untrained eye or to an unsuspected farmer might find their field a lively, lush green, but their cotton crop had been destroyed. The South soon became a haven for the boll weevil and nearly brought the cotton industry to their knees.

In a thirty year period, the weevil advanced itself approximately 40 to 200 miles a year. By 1916, the boll weevil reached the Atlantic seaboard, and within five years it spread throughout the ‘Cotton Belt’, from Texas to North Carolina, Virginia, and as far north as Missouri. The weevil traveled to any place which had cultivated cotton farms. Within a few years of the invasion of the pest, the cotton industry crop losses ranged around eighty 80 percent. This caused many farmers in the south to replace their cotton fields with other crops to add crop diversity. This tactic may be the reason for the economic stability in the south.

See the next Newsletter for part 2 of this article.

1 NATURAL HISTORY, February 2006, page 30. by Robert W. Jones

“March of the Weevils—How a Mexican beetle landed a hundred-year attack on United States cotton”
University of Florida Publications
All University of Florida publications listed in this newsletter are available on the Internet at the web site: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu or http://dis.ifas.ufl.edu http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu.

Master Gardener Plant Clinic
Currently, we offer plant clinics every Thursday at the New Sumter County Extension Office, in Bushnell from 10:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. Also, we offer one plant clinic a month in The Villages at the Sumter County Annex at 8033 C R 466. The Villages’ plant clinic is usually held on the first Monday of each month from 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Master Gardener Meetings
The Sumter County Master Gardener’s monthly meetings are on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 9:00 a.m. at the County Extension Office in Bushnell, FL. Everyone is welcome.

Soil pH Tests
Master Gardeners will test your soil for pH for a $2 fee. For a fee of $7, a detailed soil analysis can be sent to the University of Florida. Call the Extension office (352) 793-2728 to get directions for submitting soil samples.

Sumter County Extension Web Site
Our dedicated support team of Jeanne Ethridge and Donna Lester have our county extension web site, http://sumter.ifas.ufl.edu, up and running.

What would YOU like to see more of in the Newsletter?
Do you have an article that you would like to submit for consideration?
Please e-mail any comments or articles to: Holly Tuxbury at: HTuxbury@CFL.RR.COM. Thank you!

Edited by Wendel Martinkovic
Produced by Nancy King and Holly Tuxbury and various articles were submitted by other Master Gardeners.

This issue was approved on June  , 2006 by Wendel Martinkovic
Extension Agent - Horticulture
The Sumter County Master Gardener Class of 2006

Congratulations to all graduates. Thanks Master Gardeners: for your support.
**Master Gardener Contacts**

President...............................................Don Lama  
Vice-President................................Ann Carraway  
Secretary....................................Roslyn Davidson  
Treasurer...........................................Hal Moores

**Extension Staff**

Director & Horticulture Agent...........Susan Kelly  
4-H/Family & Consumer Sciences Agent........Martha Maddox  
Multi-County Dairy Agent.................Russ Giesy  
Horticulture Agent......................Wendel Martinkovic  
Regional Specialized Extension Agent /Commercial Horticulture........Gary England  
4-H Program Assistant.....................Linda Burt  
Senior Secretary......................Jeanne Ethridge-Horticulture Program Assistant......Donna Lester
The first “Irrigation Workshop” was held at the Oxford Community Center on June, 8, 2006, which is the first of several upcoming Florida friendly landscaping series throughout the year. The event was organized by Master Gardener Norm Isbell with the help of 15 other Master Gardeners. The event was attended by 35 interested gardeners from around the area.

Norm welcomed those attending and introduced the speakers for the day. Wendel Martinkovic talked about “Water Efficiently.” Other topics which were discussed were “Purpose of Home Sprinkler Irrigation” and Martin Grum gave a great presentation on the “Components of a Home Sprinkler System” complete with all the elements of the system on a hand made board. (Ace Hardware gave Marty a 15% discount on the items, which was greatly appreciated). Jim Davis, the new Sumter Co. agent for Florida Yards & Neighborhoods, showed the audience, “How Water Moves in the Soil” and Norm talked about how to do a “Water Audit”.

The second half of the workshop consisted of Break Out Sessions. These were four, hands on, presentations of “Catch Can Irrigation Test”- Wendel, “Sprinkler Heads & Valves”- Martin, “Controllers”- Don Lama and “Drip & micro-irrigation” Joe Steed & Jim Davis. These breakout sessions were a great hit with everyone. Norm and his committee are planning more workshops on irrigation. Look for times and dates in the coming months in the Newsletter and the Daily Sun.
He’s More Than Just a Green Thumb: An Interview with Wendel Martinkovic

Q: How did you first become involved with the Master Gardener (MG) program? When? What attracted you most to the Master Gardener program?

A: Having always admired the MG volunteer program from afar, I had the opportunity to attend the MG training class in 1998 in the green metal building at the fairgrounds where we host our MG Horticulture Show with 20 fellow MG trainees. We had just moved to Sumter County after working for three years as U.S. Peace Corps volunteers in the Philippines so volunteerism was, and still is, very important to us.

The MG program blends two of my passions: environmentally-sensitive horticulture and volunteerism. I have worked almost my entire career for the Cooperative Extension Service, a part of the land grant university system, where the mission is, “help people help themselves.” So I always feel an affinity for Master Gardeners volunteers.

Q: When did you become employed by the Sumter County Extension Office? How long did you serve in this position? What responsibilities go along with the job?

A: I was hired as a half-time residential horticulture extension agent in March 2000; in November 2003 I went full-time in the same position. My job responsibilities are to lead, manage and coordinate the Sumter County MG program; to develop, monitor, and evaluate MG programs with youth and the local community; to plan, implement and evaluate horticulture public education programs for residential clientele and; to develop and maintain effective working relationships with other government agencies, civic groups, media, and other educational institutions.

Q: What are your top 3 experiences you’ve had while an MG and an agent?

A: Most of my peak experiences have been at the children’s garden. To see the excitement in children as they pick their first carrot or bell pepper is a wonderful sight. And hearing the children’s parents tell us how excited their children are about coming to the garden makes us feel that we are having a positive impact on their lives. Another top experience is when a homeowner contacts us, after taking our Florida-friendly landscaping classes, to inform us that they have removed an invasive, exotic plant like a Chinese tallow tree and replaced it with a Florida native tree.

Q: What are your goals now? Where will we see you in the future?

A: I am finally pursuing my life-long dream of organic farming which will include a native grass & wildflower nursery. I will let all my garden friends know when the farm and nursery are ready for customers. I hope to remain active in the MG children’s garden at the Sumter County Youth Center so that is where you will see me. Also, if my schedule permits, would like to start a Sumter County chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society.

Q: What are some things that you would like the MG volunteers to continue or start?

A: I would like to see more MG involvement in our children’s garden; we have a waiting list of children wanting to learn how to garden. My hope is that the MG program meshes smoothly with the Florida Yards & Neighborhood (FYN) program because both programs have the same goal of teaching citizens about environmentally-friendly landscaping.

Q: Is there anything you would like to say in your final newsletter?

A: I am very fortunate to have worked in this job for the past 6 years. The relationships that have evolved over this time with Master Gardener volunteers, county extension staff, and our citizens are the best aspect of my job. Let me close with this thought. When in doubt about how to act towards other people, always lean towards kindness and peace.

Thanks for everything you have done Wendel. We’ll see you in the garden!
What Am I?
Can you Identify These Pictures?
Would you like to see Master Gardener related trivia? What types of material would you be interested in?

Do you have any pictures of your garden that you would like to share in the newsletter?

Are you working in the garden with your grandchildren this year? Would you like to tell us about it?

Got Bugs?

Bushnell Day Camp is having a ‘Bug’ day on June 21st. The presentation will be held at South Sumter high school on the 21st and we need bugs! If you have any live bugs i.e. caterpillars, butterflies, or any other living bugs they are needed greatly. Please contact Donna at the office at 793-2728. Please make sure that you bring the bugs in a closed but ventilated container prior to June 21. If you are interested in helping out with raising the kids’ awareness of Florida’s wonderful assortment of insects please let Donna know ahead of time. The day’s activity will be from 1pm to 3pm if you can make it. Thank you for your help!