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## Contents

Title	Page
A Note from Lisa .....	1
Florida Friendly Landscape™ ....	2
Celebrate Trees.....	3
What is 4-H?.....	4
What to Plant .....	4
Kindess .....	5
Two: Good Stewards.....	5
Upcoming Events.....	6
What's This? Answer.....	6

## A Note from Lisa

Ag & Natural Resource Agent



### Five Things You Can Do Now

The high humidity and warmer temps this week is really testing our thresholds to cut back all the dead, dried out leaves, and branches from the recent hard freeze, but don't do it if you can hold out just few more weeks, all the plants and the hibernating polinators will be healthier if you can. But here are ten things you can do now.

1. Start planning, drawing out your garden plot. Orient rows north and south if possible. Place vines or upright taller plants on the east side not to shade out rows close by in afternoon sun.
2. Plant spring seeds. A great way to save money by not having to purchase plastic or jiffy pots, is to recycle by reusing the spent toilet paper and paper towel cardboard rolls, and help amend the soil as the biodegradable cardboard replenishes carbon back into the soil. By directly planting the seedling with an established non disturbed root system, they have advantage to be stronger and healthier at the start.
3. Prepare your garden by turning the soil, add organic matter like compost, manure, and peat.
4. If you have not had a soil test in a year or longer in the designated garden spot, it's time to get that done. The \$10 is well worth the investment for the yield you will get from a properly managed garden.
5. Apply mulch to all plant beds, 2 – 3inch deep will discourage weeds and retain moisture in the soil.

Make sure to "Like" us on UFIFAS Taylor County Facebook  
<https://www.facebook.com/TaylorCountyExtension/>

### What's This???



Editorial Team: Leigh Ann Grubbs and Lisa Strange

# Not All Florida Friendly Landscapes Look Alike by Lisa Strange

Do you want to attract more butterflies, hummingbirds, pollinators, and create attractive landscape and protect our precious water resources and environment? Learn how to convert your yard to a Florida-Friendly Landscape™.



Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ is a program that promotes the use of environmentally responsible practices for landscaping in Florida. You may already be implementing some of the nine principals already and not realize it. The nine key concepts are:

1. **Right Plant, Right Place:** selecting plants that are suitable for the specific conditions of the site, such as light, soil type, moisture, and hardiness zone, and using natives.
2. **Water Efficiently:** using irrigation systems that apply water only where and when it is needed and not overwatering. Watering only when needed. Incorporate rain barrels where you can.
3. **Fertilize Appropriately:** using the right amount of fertilizer, at the right time and in the right place. Soil test first to know what you really need if any.
4. **Mulch:** covering the soil with organic material to conserve moisture, reduce weeds and improve soil health.
5. **Attract Wildlife:** creating habitats for birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. Encouraging pollinators.
6. **Manage Yard Pests Responsibly:** using integrated pest management techniques instead of relying solely on chemical pesticides.
7. **Recycle Yard Waste:** composting or recycling yard waste instead of sending it to landfills.
8. **Reduce Stormwater Runoff:** using rain gardens, permeable pavements, and other techniques to reduce runoff and protect water quality.
9. **Protect the Waterfront:** Create at least a 10' buffer zone, where no fertilizer, mowing or pesticides will be applied.

Contact Taylor County Extension office at (850) 838-3508 for more information and help on how to start a (FFL) yard. We have trained Master Gardeners that can perform site visits with recommendations of plants and other ways to make sustainable landscaping choices, and to qualify to become a Florida-Friendly Certified yard (signage to exhibit proudly)!



Taylor Brown, Vicki Shaver, Vivian Cason-Marks, Laurel Stiles, Phyllis Lewis, Amanda Beckett, Barbra Bratcher, Laura Rozell, Alice Smith, Karen Falicon, David McMullen, Judy McMullen

# Celebrate Trees by Lisa Strange

Trees are so important for not only human survival, but habitats for birds and wildlife, provide shade, increase property values, reduce energy cost, remove pollutants from the air we breathe and provide beauty for us to enjoy. Their role in combating environmental pollution by trapping and filtering dust, removing carbon dioxide and most importantly, releasing oxygen is vital. Trees reduce noise pollution, lower temperatures from their shading, reduce soil erosion, and block ugly sites. The beauty they provide in our gardens, streets and parks, please our senses with interesting shapes, patterns, textures, colors, and scents year after year.



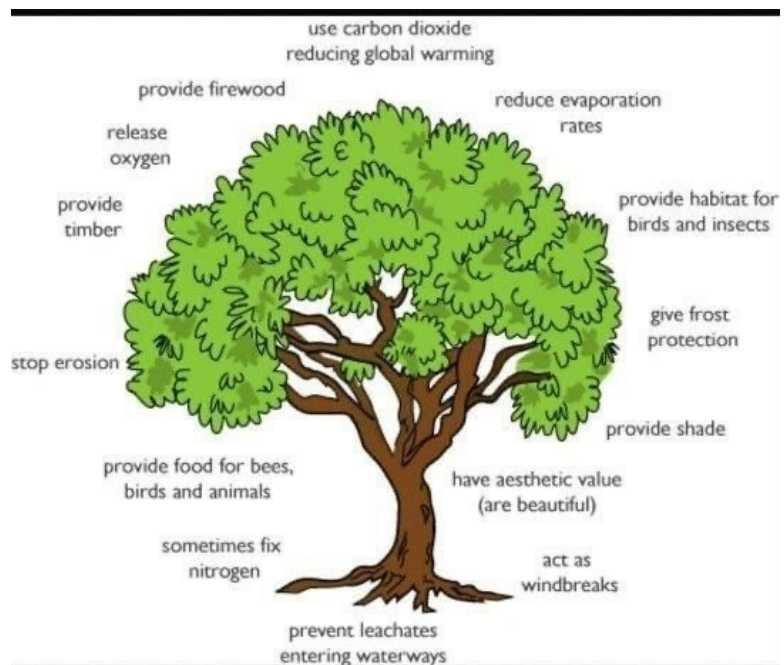
Standing: Meagan Gregory, Vanessa Dice, Laurel Stiles, Theresa Shaffer, Sandi Hathcock, David McMullen, Joyce Lawrence, Margaret Cooksey, and Chris Cooksey. Sitting: Judy McMullen, Vivian Cason-Marks, Karen Falicon, C.J. Beaty, Bettie Page, and Nancy Dowling.



Maegan Gregory & Vanessa Dice

National Arbor Day is celebrated in April. However, with varying climate differences throughout the U.S., each state celebrates its own date, based on their ideal growing conditions. In Florida, the ideal planting time is fall/winter when trees are dormant, to allow energies to focus on establishing healthy roots, so when warmer temps increase in spring, xylem and phloem begin moving actively, encouraging leaf, flowers, and fruits. Since Florida has such a short dormancy time, the 3rd Friday in January was chosen for our Arbor Day celebration. Celebrating January 20th, at the Rosehead Pavilion, 250 native tree seedlings were distributed free by the Taylor County Master Gardener volunteers. They provided science-based researched information on proper planting techniques to the specific growing characteristics of each tree species. You didn't leave without knowing the right tree for the right spot to plant!

Of the (8) varieties, *Aesculus pavia*, Red buckeye; *Carya illinoensis*, Pecan; *Castanea pumila*, Chinquapin; *Crataegus opaca*, Western mayhaw; *Ilex decidua*, Possum haw; *Nyssa aquatica*, Water tupelo; *Nyssa sylvatica v biflora*, Swamp tupelo; and *Prunus caroliniana*, Cherry laurel, my favorite is the Chinquapin. Earning community service hours, Maegan Gregory and Vanessa Dice, Future Farmers of America (FFA) students, at Taylor County High School helped the Master Gardeners at the annual event.



# What is 4-H and How Master Gardeners Can Help

by Abbey Tharpe, 4-H Agent



4-H is the largest youth development program in the world. It is a community of young people who are learning leadership, citizenship, and other life skills. We are a community-based educational program of the University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service. Using planned "learn by doing" experiences and positive, supportive relationships. 4-H welcomes all youth ages 5-18 of all beliefs and backgrounds. 4-H is more than clubs. We are involved in schools, fairs, community, as well as fun and interesting projects.

Taylor County 4-H currently has seven active community clubs that are all volunteered led. The community clubs include: Renegades Horse Club, Livestock Club, Poultry Club, Culinary and Nutrition Club, Sewing Club, Sharpshooters Club and Cloverbud Club.

Taylor County 4-H Agent along with a Program Assistant recently completed a program titled Botvin Lifeskill Curriculum that involved 14 weeks of lessons to all 6th grade youth at Taylor County Middle School. This curriculum taught youth smoking and vaping prevention, alcohol and drug use prevention, learning social skills and ways to combat anxiety through mental health lessons. This program is funded through a grant awarded from the University of Florida focusing on opioid prevention.

Taylor County 4-H will be implementing a Strengthening Families program for parents and youth ages 10-14 this spring. This program is the #1 program out of 6,000 programs analyzed for long term effects on substance use and misuse. This program will consist of seven two-hour sessions with graduation. This program builds communication and allows parents and youth to practice skills with learning games and family projects. If you know of anyone that has kids in the ages of 10-14, please have them contact the Extension office if they are interested in participating.

The 4-H program implements school enrichment that includes gardening, food and nutrition, public speaking, embryology, ag literacy day, ag day and much more.

We are always looking for volunteers to come along side of our programs to help fulfill the mission of positive youth development. If you are interested in helping, contact Abbey Tharpe at 850-838-3508 or by email at: [abbeytharpe@ufl.edu](mailto:abbeytharpe@ufl.edu).

## January/February/March

### What to plant:

**Annuals:** Pansy, viola, petunia, snapdragon, dianthus, and dusty miller.

**Bulbs:** Crinum, agapanthus, gloriosa lily, dahlia, and canna (in March)

**Camellias** can be planted in January

**Vegetables:** Irish potatoes, broccoli, kale, carrots, lettuce. In March start beans, tomatoes, squash, and corn.

### Things to do:

**January:** Plant deciduous fruit trees; prune and fertilize existing trees; prune non-spring flowering shrubs & trees. Crepe Myrtles: remove crossing branches and small twiggy growth - NO hard pruning!

**February:** Prune roses then fertilize & lay a fresh layer of mulch

**March:** Prune azaleas after they have bloomed; prune other shrubs & trees; fertilize

# Kindness, Paying it Forward, is Contagious

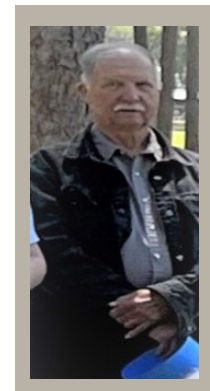
by Jaya Milam, Master Gardener Volunteer, edited by Lisa Strange



Literacy Week Florida, January 23-27, 2023 was celebrated at Steinhatchee Boys and Girls Club with Master Gardener volunteer, Jaya Milam reading to them. In conjunction, celebrating Florida's Arbor Day, Jaya provided the participants a Slash pine, *Pinus elliottii* and Loblolly pine, *Pinus taeda* tree seedlings. This was the epitome of paying it forward 3 times. The pine tree seedlings were a donation to Taylor County Extension from Master Gardener Bettie Page, and business owner Coleen Agner. We posted signage in front of the building, on Facebook, and made many phone calls announcing free seedlings. Jaya was one of the responses who came and picked up her trees. In the meantime UF/IFAS State Master Gardener Coordinator, Wendy Wilber asked Master Gardener Volunteers to sign up for the annual reading event in local schools. Jaya signed up, received her volunteer hours, gave away the trees to the students, and read the book, Rupert's Great Adventures. A full circle of kindness.

## Two: Good Stewards of the Earth by Lisa Strange

The Taylor County Master Gardeners received a donation of beautifully cut cedar and yellow pine boards from Master Gardener volunteer, Bobby Johnson. He is cleaning up deteriorating and dead trees off his Perry property. From Bobby's donations, Roland White of Madison county, not once but twice, volunteered his time and equipment to cut, sand, drill and assemble 37 Blue bird houses for the Taylor county's Blue bird project. Roland is a Jack of ALL TRADES and then some. We are blessed to have Bobby and Roland and thank you for supporting and keeping our Blue Bird house project going strong.



Rapid development continues to destroy wildlife habitats and the loss of native birds. You can create a safe haven for these displaced critters that we need by providing food, water, and shelter in your yard. Food is easily provided by planting natives, plants with berries, fleshy fruits, nuts and acorns. Water can be as simple as a plant saucer with a rock or two so butterflies and birds have a spot to land while slurping. Snags, bird houses and even piles of debris left will provide nesting resources for birds, and native bees. Last but not least, probably most important, reduce pesticides and chemicals. Pesticides kill beneficial insects that feed the birds, larger animals eat the birds, and so goes the chain.



The Blue bird house are available for pick up at the UF/IFAS Taylor County Extension office Monday – Friday 8:00AM – 5:00PM for a \$20 donation.

# Upcoming Events

2/24 - 12-1pm Lunch & Learn Series - Container Gardening - Filler, Thriller and Spiller Workshop

March is Literacy Month - Volunteer to read a book at a school

3/12 - Plant a flower day! Go out and plant your favorite flower



3/24 - 12-1pm Lunch & Learn Series - Now You Can Prune!

3/28 - 9am - 4pm Green Industries Best Management Practices (GI-BMP) Workshop

4/15 - 9:30-10:30am Rain Barrel Workshop

4/21 - 12-1pm Lunch & Learn Series - Nature Walk/Plant ID

4/29 - 9:30-11am Compost Happens

Ongoing - Every Friday is Landscape Workday  
All are welcome to volunteer!

All events are located at:  
UF/IFAS Taylor County Extension Office  
203 Forest Park Dr, Perry  
850-838-3508

UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA FLORIDA MASTER GARDENER

**Master Gardeners'**  
**ANNUAL PLANT SALE**  
**May 6, 2023**  
**9:00am - 1:00pm**  
**203 Forest Park Dr, Perry**

Master Gardener Volunteers will be on site to help with selection and care **Prize Drawings!**

Perennials - Annuals - Veggies - Shrubs - Trees

An Equal Opportunity Institution  
The University of Florida is committed to providing universal access to all of our events. For disability accommodations such as sign language interpreters and listening devices, please contact JaneSmith@ufl.edu at least 2 weeks in advance. Advance notice is necessary to arrange for some accessibility needs.

## What's This? Answer! by Lisa Strange



If you see one of these half-moon shelf-like structures attached to a tree, more than likely it's **Ganoderma**. A common fungus found on many trees and palms, located on lower portion of trunks close to ground level. Usually, an indication where decay is active, that could be on living or dead trees. Detrimental to health of trees, the fungus infects the trunk causing rot in the wood that weakens from the inside out. Also called conchs, they range in colorful shiny or dull, white to dark charcoal stripes, in rings and or margins of the structure. A gazillion spores (fruiting bodies) like dust, spreads easily. Usually by the time the conch is visible the infection has

already entered the tree and deterioration is well advanced. On the bright side Ganoderma is a type of fungus known as Reishi mushrooms that are believed to have antioxidants, polysaccharides with health-promoting effects, used in Chinese medicine according to articles in the National Library of Medicine, at [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6353236/](https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6353236/). NEVER eat any mushroom or Ganoderma unless it has been properly identified that is safe to use. If questionable about the health and safety of the tree falling on a house or structure you should always have a professional arborist examine the tree. For more information on Ganoderma go to <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/PP333> and publication <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/HS269>.