2014, ahhh...the time for new resolutions, fresh starts and another year older. Speaking of older, the Extension Service is celebrating its 100th year anniversary in Florida this year! Extension has helped millions of Floridians by accessing research and converting it into practical knowledge we use everyday. How well do you know your local Extension office? Take the quiz! (Answers found on page 5)

1. How many Extension offices do we have in the state of Florida?
2. Name one Land Grant University in Florida.
3. What do the four “H’s” of 4-H represent?
4. Which of these is NOT a Florida 4-H camp?
   a. Camp Cherry Lake
   b. Camp Timpoochee
   c. Camp Oklawaha
   d. Camp Ocala
   e. Camp Cloverleaf
5. In 1979, Extension started training volunteers to teach people how to set up attractive and sustainable gardens, lawns and landscapes. These volunteers are known as:
   a. Green Thumbodies
   b. Plant Professors
   c. Master Gardeners
   d. Botany Buddies
6. True or False: One early task of the Farm Demonstration Agents in Florida was to vaccinate hogs against cholera.
7. True or False: The 4-H Club symbol started out as a three leaf clover.
8. True or False: The 1st US Farm Demo was to control the boll weevil.
9. Name one of the nine Florida Friendly Landscaping principles.
10. What are Home Economics Agents now called?

If you have learned how to choose healthier foods, conserve water, save money or start a butterfly garden, chances are you learned it from Extension. If you have ever been to a 4-H camp or gotten help from a Master Money Mentor, you know Extension. On behalf of the faculty, staff and volunteers of the UF/IFAS Extension office in Suwannee County, we look continuously toward the future, finding solutions to the challenges we Floridians will face over the next 100 years and sharing them to make life healthier, happier and more prosperous for you!
### Extension Calendar

**January 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Happy Homemakers’ HCE Club meeting</strong>, 10am at Extension Office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Master Gardener Workday</strong>, 8:30am-12pm, at Heritage Park.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Master Gardener Alumni</strong>, 1-3pm, at Heritage Park.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Workshop</strong> with Rick Hall, 6-8pm at City Hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><strong>Suwannee Valley Youth Livestock Show and Sale Hog Tagging</strong>, 8am, Suwannee County Fairgrounds, must be in line by 10am to have hog tagged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><strong>PQA &amp; Animal Ethics training</strong>, 9am-12pm, Ex II.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>Pleasant Hill HCE Club Meeting</strong>, 10am at McAlpin Community Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>4-H County Council</strong>, 6:30pm at Extension Office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td><strong>Florida Native Plant Society, Sparkleberry Chapter</strong>, 6:30pm at Hatch Park, Branford.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>HCE Council Meeting</strong>, notice date change for this meeting only, 10am at Extension Office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>HCE District Meeting</strong> in Duval, call Katherine if you want to ride in the van.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td><strong>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</strong>, office closed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td><strong>4-H Hog and Ham Workshop</strong>, Gainesville, anyone interested in participating in the Hog and Ham program, contact Brian Estevez at 386-362-2771 for more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td><strong>Mushroom Workshop</strong>, 8am-4:30pm, at Suwannee Valley Agricultural Extension Center, contact Sarah White 386-362-1725, for more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td><strong>4-H STEM Fair</strong>, Coliseum, 10am-4pm, contact Brian Estevez at 386-362-2771 for more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Club Audits due to Katherine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td><strong>National Restaurant Association’s ServSafe</strong> course for national food manager certification. Certification is good for 5 yrs. Class, exam &amp; book $165. Must register 3 business days prior to class, no walk-ins. Bring lunch and photo ID. Call toll-free 1-888-232-8723 or via web <a href="http://foodsafety.ifas.ufl.edu">http://foodsafety.ifas.ufl.edu</a></td>
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</tbody>
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### Take Charge of Your Diabetes

*Take Charge of Your Diabetes* (TCYD) is an educational program for persons with type 2 diabetes. There is a $75.00 fee per person with diabetes, which includes three health screenings, nine 2-hour educational sessions, two follow-up sessions, and a 60-minute individual nutrition consultation with a registered dietitian. Spouses encouraged to attend all sessions at no extra cost.

...because you can live a quality life with fewer complications when you know and live the facts.

**Classes to begin January 31, 2014**

**Pre-registration required by January 24, 2014.** Call Cathy Rogers at 386-362-2771
<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>HCE Council Meeting</strong>, 10 am at Extension Office.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>4-H Early Release Workshop</strong>, On My Own Simulation 2pm, Extension Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Trees and Landscape Design</strong>, 9-11:30am, at Heritage Park ($10.00).</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Pleasant Hill HCE Club Meeting</strong>, 10am at McAlpin Community Center.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><strong>4-H County Council</strong>, Extension Office, 6:30pm.</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Master Gardener Alumni</strong>, 1-3pm at Heritage Park.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Heritage Park Workshop</strong> 9-11:30 at Heritage Park.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td><strong>Madison County 4-H Livestock Judging Contest</strong>, Madison, 10am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td><strong>4-H County Event Registration Due</strong>, by 5pm.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### March 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event details</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>HCE Council Meeting</strong>, 10am at Extension Office.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>4-H Early Release Workshop</strong>, County Events Help, 2pm, Extension Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>4-H County Event Photo Entries Due</strong>, by 5pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Pleasant Hill HCE Club Meeting</strong>, 10am at McAlpin Community Center.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td><strong>Heritage Park Workshop</strong>, 9-11:30am at Heritage Park.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td><strong>Family and Consumer Sciences Advisory Committee meeting</strong>, 12-2pm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>4-H County Events</strong>, 9am, Coliseum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17-18</td>
<td><strong>Hydroponic Short Course.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>21-22</td>
<td><strong>Hydroponic Short Course.</strong></td>
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### April 2014

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-12</td>
<td><strong>Suwannee County Fair</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How much do you know about Extension?

Katherine Allen
Family and Consumer Sciences Agent/CED

Some of the earliest efforts at Extension work involved teaching farm women to stuff their own mattresses; “Farmers Institutes”, where researchers traveled by trains to rural towns; Boys Corn Clubs, where young boys were challenged to out-produce their father’s crop yields; Short Courses, where farmers came to campus when regular students were not there; and Better Farming Specials, where college professors used trains across the state to teach farmers and homemakers better ways based on science.

The Cooperative Extension Service, a state-by-state national network of educators who extend university-based knowledge to the people, celebrates its 100-year anniversary in Florida. In 1914, there were seventeen Extension offices in Florida. Today there are 67; one in each county! The first Agricultural Research Station was established in Lake Alfred in 1917. Today they’re called Research and Education Centers. Extension is supported through the Land Grant University system nationwide. We have two Land Grant Universities in Florida. The University of Florida and Florida A&M are our Land Grant Universities.

In Suwannee County, besides an Ag Agent, the Extension office has a Horticulture Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent (FCS was formerly known as the Home Economics or Home Demonstration Agent), and a 4-H Agent. The 4-H Agent organizes the efforts to provide life skills and workforce preparation for our youth. Something I didn’t know….the 4-H Club symbol did indeed start out as a three leaf clover! Today, in the 4-H logo, what do the four “H’s” of 4-H represent? Heart, Head, Hands, Health. If you are in Suwannee County and camped with 4-H, you camped at Camp Cherry Lake in Madison. Camp Oklawaha is NOT a Florida 4-H camp.

We have been doing farm visits and on-site demonstrations for a long time. One of the early tasks of the Farm Demonstration Agents in Florida was to vaccinate hogs against cholera. The first US Farm Demo was in 1903 in Terrell, Texas to control the boll weevil.

In 1979, Extension started training Master Gardener volunteers to teach people how to set up attractive and sustainable gardens, lawns and landscapes. One of the programs is called Florida-Friendly Landscaping® which is designed to be low-impact and environmentally friendly. The nine Florida-Friendly Landscaping® principles are: Right Plant, Right Place; Reduce Storm Water Runoff; Attract Wildlife; Water Effectively; Fertilize Appropriately; Mulch; Manage Yard Pests Responsibly; Recycle; and Protect the Waterfront.

We continue to bring new research to our communities, whether it be the weight management in rural counties, the sesame trials, or the Tasti-Lee tomato (yes, that was developed at UF!), Extension is your door to the University of Florida and its resources.

Thanks for letting us be a part of your lives for the last 100 years, and here’s looking forward to the next 100!
Mushrooms - Nature's Hidden Treasures

Cathy Rogers
Family and Consumer Sciences & 4-H and Youth Development Agent

STOP! Even if you don't like them, do yourself a favor and read about mushrooms for a few minutes. They are that good for you! There are nine different varieties including the most commonly eaten variety in America, the white button mushroom, plus portabellla, shiitake, crimini, enoki, maitake, oyster, beech, and wild types such as truffles, morels, and chanterelles. With that much variety there may be some types you could enjoy. Add to that the many ways mushrooms can be prepared including roasting, baking, sautéing, slicing, broiling, puréeing, or stuffing. Mushrooms are included in a wide range of global cuisines. The characteristics of some mushrooms offer meaty taste and texture, without the cholesterol. They can be added to combinations of other foods so that they are barely detected yet their benefits enjoyed.

Mushrooms are fat-free, cholesterol-free, gluten-free, low in calories and very low in sodium. Depending on the type of mushroom, a single serving has between 18 and 37 calories. Most types of mushrooms contain generous amounts of antioxidants, like selenium which helps protect body cells from damage that could lead to chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease. Mushrooms are the leading non-meat source of selenium and can help ensure vegetarians meet their dietary requirements for it. Mushrooms are also rich in potassium, important in regulating blood pressure and proper functioning of nerves and muscles. It also plays a role in making sure nerves and muscles, including the heart, function properly and contain a variety of B vitamins like niacin, riboflavin and pantothenic acid, which help to provide energy by breaking down proteins, fats and carbohydrates. B vitamins also play an important role in the nervous system and pantothenic acid, which help to provide energy by breaking down proteins, fats and carbohydrates. Beta-glucans, a type of soluble fiber found in shiitake and oyster mushrooms, is known to boost the immune system. Mushrooms are the only source of vitamin D in the produce aisle and one of only a few non-fortified sources in the world.

If you are trying to lose weight, mushrooms are one of those foods that will leave you feeling full and satisfied with very few calories. They are considered to be at the same nutrient level as fruits and vegetables so you can fill half of your plate with them and know that you are consuming something really good for your health!

This is just a sampling of the benefits of these treasures from nature, but it may be enough to convince you to eat some tonight or try them again.

Source: www.mushroominfo.com


If you are interested in growing your own mushrooms, we will be offering a mushroom workshop for small farmers on January 24, 2014 at the Suwannee Valley Agricultural Extension Center ($120.00) contact Sarah White at 386-362-1725 for more information.

There will also be a class for homeowners and gardeners on February 26, 2014 at the Extension office ($30.00) prepaid registration as there will be take home materials. Call Carolyn Saft at 386-362-2771 for more information.
Feed labels for pet foods and livestock and poultry feeds can contain an amazing amount of information, depending on how much you understand the terms used. This article focuses on terms used to describe carbohydrates.

As the name carb-o-hydrates sounds, they are composed primarily of carbon, oxygen and hydrogen atoms which form sugars and starches. The most common carbohydrate in the world is cellulose. (The suffix “ose” generally indicates the word is a sugar.) Cellulose is simply a long chain of glucose molecules linked together which form fibers.

Bacteria found in the rumen (largest of four stomach compartments found in ruminants like cattle, goats and camels) add cellulase to rumen fluid to break down cellulose into individual glucose units. (The suffix “ase” generally indicates the word is an enzyme or chemical which speeds up the break down or build up of compounds in a living organism.) Monogastric animals like humans and pigs do not have cellulase available in their stomach and therefore are not known to graze grass.

Cellulose forms the “backbone” of plants. It is found in the cell wall which surrounds each plant cell. Along with hemicellulose and lignin, which are harder (lignin nearly impossible) to digest because they are more complex compounds, cellulose gives plants strength in their stalks and trunks to stand as tall as redwood trees.

**Back to Feed Labels**

**Crude Fiber (CF)** was historically the first method of fiber analysis used to divide carbohydrates into digestible (cellulose and hemicellulose) and indigestible (lignin) fractions. Crude Fiber accounts for most of the cellulose, but only a portion of the lignin. Therefore it is not the most accurate method of quantifying fiber, especially in forages (such as grasses; legumes like alfalfa, clovers and perennial peanuts; grains fed for their stalks and leaves, not seeds, like wheat, oats, rye, triticale; corn and sorghum).

Grain seeds (shelled corn, wheat, rye, oats, etc.) are very low in lignin however. Therefore CF is a reasonable estimate of fiber in grains. Today it is still used as the legal measurement of fiber in grains and finished feeds.

**Neutral Detergent Fiber (NDF)** measures the percentage of cellulose, hemicellulose and lignin (the three main components of plant cell walls) found in a feed sample. It is negatively related to the amount of feed an animal can consume. Forages with lower NDF values (like legumes) will be eaten in higher quantities by ruminants than forages with higher NDF values (like grasses).

**Acid Detergent Fiber (ADF)** measures only cellulose, lignin and silica (not hemicellulose). It represents the percentage of highly indigestible plant material found in feeds. Cellulose varies in digestibility depending on how much lignin is intertwined with it. As the lignin content increases, the feed digestibility decreases. A low ADF value therefore means more cellulose can be digested (producing a higher energy value and digestibility since lignin and silica are not digestible in ruminants). Low ADF values are desirable. All energy estimates for feeds are presently calculated from ADF alone.

Inside the cell wall of plant cells are non-cell wall carbohydrates called **Non-fiber Carbohydrates (NFC).** They consist of starch, sugar, pectin and fermentation acids which serve as energy sources for the animal consuming them. In ruminant animals the NFC are broken down by the rumen microbes and used for their energy needs.

**Starch** is a polysaccharide (combination of several sugars) found primarily in the grain or seed and/or root portions of plants. It is a high digestible form of energy.

**Pectin** is a cell wall polysaccharide which functions like cellular glue (it is used to make jellies and jams thick). It is also called “soluble fiber” because it has the ability to breakdown easily like starches, but without the tendency to lower rumen pH or cause lactic acidosis (digestive upsets due to too much acid).

Carbohydrates and fats or oils form the primary energy sources for any animal. The next article in this series will discuss measures of energy. Much of the information for this article came from a Dairy One Cooperative publication called Understanding and Significance of Forage Analysis Results.
4-H members are exploring science, technology, and career fields from aerospace to zoology, and everything in between. Help a youth begin his or her journey. Whether in the arts or technology, medicine or sports, business or government, Suwannee County 4-H needs your help to provide opportunities for youth to learn and grow. No matter what your experience, your age, or the amount of time you have to give, there is a place for you in Suwannee County 4-H.

Volunteers are needed in all parts of Suwannee County for all types of activities and events. We welcome adults over the age of 18 who are committed to being a positive role model for youth.

Your Life, Your Time

Your calendar is full. Your to-do list is jammed. You want to help, but it seems impossible to find the time. Don’t panic. You don’t have to give up your life to make a difference in the life of a young person.

We understand you have to balance many growing and important interests, commitments, and responsibilities. You can choose programs or activities that fit your schedule. You’ll be surprised how flexible Suwannee County 4-H is.

After deciding your interest and availability, you’ll meet with a 4-H/youth development team member to ensure a good fit. Training and support are provided. We’ll find a place for you.

Work with Youth

- Work as a mentor through our 4-H club program, leading and advising youth as they grow strong.
- Be a mentor and guide youth as they explore their interests and learn about possible careers.
- Teach a workshop and help youth learn a skill you’re passionate about.
- Lead a group of teens through a series of fun, hands-on science experiments.

Reach Out to the Community

- Help plan and execute local community service projects.
- Be an advisor to youth working on public speaking projects, preparing college scholarship applications, starting a business, starting a garden, or just caring for pets.
- Be a translator and work with youth in non-English speaking communities.
- Act as a media coordinator in your area and work with social media, local newspapers, radio, and TV to gain publicity for 4-H.

Develop your Leadership Skills

- Organize and direct events for 4-H’ers and potential members.
- Plan activities, coordinate training and fund raising, or serve as a liaison with community organizations.
- Manage “special events” such as a summer day camp or Holiday Bakeoff.
- Plan and implement programs for youth throughout your community.

Share your Skills and Interests

- Lead a group of youth on an outdoor adventure or tour a local farm, government office, or business.
- Facilitate special-interest workshops.
- Provide leadership or skills-based workshops for youth.
- Sponsor a 4-H club through your business or civic organization.

Need more reasons to join?

- Work with young people
- Challenge yourself
- Reach out to the community
- Enhance your skills
- Share your passions
- Have fun
Agricultural field days have been a very important way to teach farmers. At a typical field day, farmers or other interested people have a chance to visit a farm and learn hands-on from extension agents what the latest scientific research has to say about a particular topic, such as how to design a drip irrigation system, how to grow veggies using hydroponics, how to start a pastured poultry farm, or how to grow organic vegetables.

A live field day capitalizes on the notion that what we see and touch and do in real life is a lot more likely to stick with us than reading about it or hearing somebody lecture about it. But along with benefits, there are drawbacks. A field day might not be particularly convenient to a farmer who needed it, geographically or because it took time away from actual farm duties of the day. So University of Florida extension agents and specialists recently bolstered and added to their virtual field days web site www.vfd.ifas.ufl.edu.

University of Florida Extension agents and specialists have boiled down what had been 30- to 40-minute field day presentations into easier to watch 5- to 8-minute summary versions. The web site is organized by topic, including as many as ten popular areas of current interest. UF’s extension agents with expertise in a particular subject are often swamped with questions from people from all over the state — and beyond. A lot of the times these are very basic, repetitive questions. So, now if someone calls from anywhere, agents can send them to the virtual field day site and they can take a look at it and get the basics. The time efficiency for agents has been great and local expertise can now be shared with a much larger audience.

The topics currently on the virtual field day web site include:

- Alternative Enterprises
- Greenhouse Pest Exclusion
- Hydroponic Greenhouse
- Organic Vegetable Production
- Pasture Weeds
- Pastured Poultry
- Poinsettias
- Stone fruit (Peaches, Nectarines and Plums)
- Turfgrass
- Water & Nutrient Management (Drip Irrigation Design and Management)

The amazing part of this new way of delivering information is how far reaching and popular it can become. For instance, Suwannee County Extension agents Bob Hochmuth and Elena Toro have been involved with the development of several topics in the web site. Bob with hydroponics, integrated pest management, stone fruit and drip irrigation, for instance and Elena with pastured poultry. Each topic area is typically viewed thousands of times a year. A new set of eight Integrated Pest Management modules were videotaped at the Suwannee Valley Agricultural Extension Center and will be released in early 2014. So, if any of these topics are of interest to you, relax and go to a field day…. in the comfort of your own home by visiting http://vfd.ifas.ufl.edu
Small Farms Website has its roots in Suwannee County

Sean McCoy
RSA-Rural and Agribusiness Development

The Suwannee Valley Agricultural Extension Center in Live Oak is home to a large amount of programming dedicated to the small and beginning farmer, including the Small Farms Academy. Since 2005, the Center has been a major contributor to the UF/IFAS Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Website as well. This website is targeted towards small and beginning farmers throughout the state, but being online means it can be accessed by anyone, anytime at Smallfarms.ifas.ufl.edu.

The Small Farms website is managed by 17 “Topic Teams”, covering topics from traditional agriculture to alternatives such as earthworms and everything in between. Each team had a small group of university faculty with expertise in that area. The team members review current content and submit changes to the website’s webmaster, right here in Live Oak. Dilcia Toro has been a team member at SVAEC for some time but for the past year she has been responsible for managing the Small Farms website. She reviews content, checks for dead links, searches for new content and keeps pages and calendars up to date.

In 2013 the website received over 1 million page views, 22% of which were qualified as sessions. Meaning that, the content managed by these faculty members and hosted at SVAEC was utilized 235,452 times within the past year. This is the highest rate of retention the website has ever seen. However, 2010 saw the record number of page views with 2.1 million.

So where are all these visitors coming from? Well, in 2013 alone the website was viewed from 137 different countries around the world and every state. The reach of the content provided in this website is truly global.

An estimated 2,900 unique computer addresses were used to connect to the website meaning that each user came to and used the website on average 81 times this year. This means the website hosted here in Live Oak at SVAEC has earned a reputation as an international source of information by a group of dedicated small and beginning farmers who return to learn more again and again.

Photo Credit: Sally Lanigan, UF/IFAS ICS
Winter is a wonderful time to clean and sharpen your bypass pruners and pruning saws so they are ready to use when it is time to prune your deciduous fruit trees and rose bushes. Keep in mind that sharp tools make clean cuts that heal over quickly whereas dull pruners leave ragged edges where pathogens can grow. Remember that we should only use bypass pruners on live, green plants and save your anvil type pruners for cutting wire, plastic or dead wood.

Proper pruning and training of fruit trees is necessary to obtain maximum yields of high quality fruit throughout the life of the home orchard. Pruning is a general term which refers to selective removal of plant parts to obtain a desired growth or developmental response. However, for fruit trees, pruning usually refers to mature, bearing trees and is done primarily to increase production of high quality fruit and limit tree height and spread. Pruning is necessary to maintain tree health, vigor and productivity throughout the life of the home orchard. The many benefits of pruning and training stone-fruit trees include:

- Aid in the establishment of newly planted trees.
- Promote development of a strong framework.
- Enhances early productivity.
- Aid in the development and maintenance of desirable tree size and shape.
- Increase fruit size and enhance fruit quality.
- Promote flower bud development throughout the tree canopy.
- Increase tree vigor and promote development of new fruiting wood needed to maintain productivity.
- Reduce the tendency for biennial bearing.
- Reduce incidence and spread of certain diseases.
- Facilitate other horticultural practices, such as spraying, thinning and harvesting.

Almost all pruning of deciduous fruit trees may be classified as dormant pruning and should be done during the late winter or very early spring (before bloom). In North Florida, we usually prune in late January or early February. Since pruning may reduce cold hardiness, it is important to delay pruning until the likelihood of extreme cold passes. Some summer pruning or training may be necessary, especially for young trees. However, summer training should be limited to snipping, pinching, or rubbing away young, succulent growth. Extensive pruning should not be done during the growing season except to remove diseased or damaged wood.

For in depth information on pruning deciduous fruit trees, read Jeff Williamson’s publication in its entirety at [http://union.ifas.ufl.edu/documents/PRUNING%20FRUIT%20TREES.pdf](http://union.ifas.ufl.edu/documents/PRUNING%20FRUIT%20TREES.pdf), Pruning and Training Deciduous Fruit Trees for the Dooryard by J. G. Williamson.

Mark your calendar for Feb. 14th as a time to prune your hybrid tea, grandiflora and floribunda rose bushes back. Pruning your rose bushes will stimulate new growth that will bear the beautiful flowers you are striving for. For more information on how to prune your rose bushes go to [http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/flowers/hgie1173.html](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/flowers/hgie1173.html)
If you’re looking for an evergreen shrub to fill a spot in your landscape that looks empty in the winter, Wax Myrtle is a great choice. Not only does it stay green through the winter months, it is a versatile and tough native plant for your yard. It’s ability to easily adapt to sun or shade, dry sandy soil or poorly drained wet areas makes it suitable for even the most difficult garden sites.

The dense, aromatic foliage of Wax Myrtle can be pruned to shape making it an excellent choice for a thick hedge or for screening an unsightly area from view. Combine it in a mixed shrub border or plant it as the background in your garden to show off your blooming plants, such as Blazing Star (Liatris spp.), Standing Cypress (Ipomopsis rubra), or Muhly Grass (Muhlenbergia capillaris). For a featured plant, remove the lower branches to make an interesting multi-trunked small tree.

Wax Myrtle is native to Florida where it can be found happily growing in natural areas all over our state. Waxy berries occur on female plants when a male plant is within it’s range. This plant slowly spreads by root suckers unless they are removed. Typically, plants in moist sites produce less suckers. Few pests or diseases effect this tough evergreen shrub. Not only is Wax Myrtle pleasing to us, it also provides food, shelter and nesting sites for our songbirds and some of the smaller critters when so many of our other plants have lost all their leaves and fruit. They are available in most garden centers and should be planted in every yard.

Common & Scientific name: Wax Myrtle (Myrica cerifera)
Family: Myricaceae - Bayberry Family
Description: Evergreen shrub/small tree, multi-stemmed, erect branches, fast growing, dense foliage, dioecious (male and female flowers on separate plants)
Height/Spread: 15’x8’
Leaves: Small alternate leaves, narrow, serrate at the apex (tip), lightly scented, dark green above, yellow/green underneath
Flowers/Fruit: Inconspicuous green flowers in early spring, waxy blue/green cone-shaped fruit in fall on female plants
Growing conditions: Prefers moist, acid soil in full sun to part shade. Adapts to a variety of conditions. Drought tolerant: Yes
Propagation: Cuttings, seeds or suckers
Wildlife: Berries are food source for many songbirds. Dense foliage provides nesting and cover for birds and small wildlife. Flowers attract a variety of pollinators. Host plant for Red Banded Hairstreak butterfly.
Other features: Tolerates pruning. Early Americans used leaves, fruits and roots for medicines and insect repellents. Candles can be made from waxy coating of fruits.

Note: A smaller, more spreading native species occurs in the upper peninsula (Myrica caroliniensis) and an unscented species occurs in the panhandle (Myrica inodora) - both are typically found in wetter areas.

*check out our newsletter http://suwannee.ifas.ufl.edu/ for color photos.
Wanda Walters has seen a lot of changes throughout the years and after 28 years with the Extension office in Suwannee County is retiring. She will be missed. Cards, photos and memories can be sent to the Extension office marked attention Wanda at:
1302 11th St. SW; Live Oak, FL 32064