EXTENSION STRIKES

Quarterly Newsletter
Summer Edition

July– September 2025

4-H Youth Development | Agricultural & Natural Resources | Community Resource Development | Youth, Family & Community

Message from the Director

The role of taking the University to the People is the foundation of FAMU Cooperative Extension as the outreach arm of the University's land-grant mission. A thriving Florida economy will require empowered and well-informed citizens and workers. FAMU Cooperative Extension puts knowledge to work in pursuit of economic profitability and sustainability as well as social well-being. We bring experience and research-based solutions to help individuals, families and communities thrive in Florida's ever-changing economy.

An expanded knowledge base, innovations for families, farmers, and business leaders, positive leadership and development for youth, and community and economic development opportunities are just part of FAMU Cooperative Extension's approach to meet challenges and make contributions to the state of Florida and the world that are bold and exceed all expectations. As a unit of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service, FAMU is also a cooperative partner with USDA National Institute of Agriculture, University of Florida Institute of Food &Agriculture (1862), and state and local entities.

-Vonda Richardson, Extension Director/Administrator

Stay Connected with FAMU Cooperative Extension. Catch up on the latest highlights in our quarterly report, featuring new programs, success stories, and impactful outreach efforts. FAMU Cooperative Extension remains dedicated to empowering farmers, ranchers, producers, seniors, youth, entrepreneurs, small business owners, and rural and urban communities across Florida.

Together, we're growing stronger communities—one initiative at a time.

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Extension Strikes
Quarterly Newsletter

July-September 2025
Summer Edition

Extension Strikes Quarterly Newsletter
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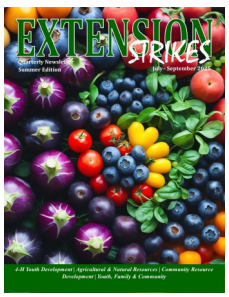
TABLE OF CONTENTS



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Ready When It Matters: Empowering Communities for Hurricane Preparedness

Contributor: Teron Speer

As the 2025 hurricane season approaches with rising intensity forecasts, the need for proactive disaster preparedness has never been more urgent. Across the Florida Panhandle, Extension agents are stepping up to ensure that families are not just informed—but equipped to respond with confidence and resilience.

This summer, a dedicated team comprised of Ms. Kimberly Davis, Mr. Teron Speer, and Ms. Aniya Williams has led the charge in educating communities across Franklin, Gulf, Gadsden, and Leon Counties on critical aspects of hurricane and natural disaster preparedness. Working in partnership with local emergency management agencies, faith-based organizations, and neighborhood coalitions, the team has delivered a series of interactive workshops and outreach events designed to prepare residents for the unexpected.

“At the heart of our programming is one simple but powerful goal: to save lives through education,” said Teron Speer, an Extension Agent focused on community health and wellness. “By bringing these resources directly into the communities—especially those that are historically underserved—we’re helping individuals take action before disaster strikes.”

The workshops focused on two essential themes: food safety and disaster kit readiness. Participants learned how to properly store and handle food before, during, and after a power outage to prevent illness. They also received hands-on guidance in assembling customized disaster kits—equipped not only with nonperishable food and water but also with first aid materials, essential documents, hygiene items, and medication storage tips.

For many attendees, these sessions offered a wake-up call and a clear path toward readiness. As hurricane season looms, the efforts of this committed team underscore the vital role of Extension programming in public safety. By building knowledge, strengthening networks, and empowering individuals, they are helping to create communities that are not only prepared—but resilient.

Stay Ready. Stay Safe

Photos: (Top to bottom) FAMU Extension’s Kimberly Davis and Teron Speer with Emergency Management Director and Asst. VP, Ashley Davis; Teron Speer at the community event, Ms. Aniya Williams, Mr. Speer sharing info on the upcoming hurricane season.

Summer Camp Highlights

Contributor: Terrance Cole

From Struggle to Strength: How 4-H Camps Are Rewriting the Story for Underserved Youth

DAY 1

A four-day intensive FAMU 4-H Summer Experience was organized for high school students led by 4-H Extension Educator, Terrence Cole. The camp was designed to provide hands-on learning and leadership development. Set on the historic grounds of FAMU Brooksville Agricultural and Environmental Research Station (BAERS) and Chinsegut Hill, students were introduced to agriculture, self-awareness, and career readiness in an immersive and inspiring setting.

Terrence, who grew up in a community without all the resources or roadmaps to success, carries a deep passion to reach young people before they fall through the cracks. His work with youth focuses on three key areas:

1. Prevention: Combating crime and drug use through early intervention, CBT workshops, and identity shifting motivational messages.
2. Diversion: Offering meaningful alternatives for youth facing out-of-school suspensions or court referrals.
3. Reentry: Walking with those returning from juvenile incarceration or battling addiction, showing them how to rebuild with purpose and power.

Terrence's approach blends motivational coaching, cognitive behavioral tools, and trade-based training to help youth build discipline, confidence, and purpose. Whether exploring agriculture, forestry, culinary arts, or carpentry, students left with skills that open real-world doors. Terrence says "Because let's be real, not every teen is going to college, and that's okay. What they need is a pathway to purpose."

Day One: began with a powerful guided BAERS campus tour where students felt the heart and history, then witnessed how it is now a place of hope and healing.

Day Two turned up the heat with our BBQ University Competition. Students seasoned, grilled, and collaborated like champions, gaining real-life culinary skills and confidence.

Day Three took us into the wild at Chinsegut Conservation Center. From archery to wetland exploration, our youth became scientists, trackers, and protectors of the land.

Day Four closed out with workshops, a scavenger hunt, and deep reflections. Students shared their growth, their breakthroughs, and their belief that they matter, they belong, and they can lead through journaling, and youth-led workshops on resilience and vision.

This wasn't just summer fun—it was future prep, mindset shift, and purpose activation. Terrence's approach blends motivational coaching, cognitive behavioral tools, and trade-based training to help youth build discipline, confidence, and purpose. Whether exploring agriculture, forestry, culinary arts, or carpentry, students left with skills that open real-world doors.

FAMU 4-H program at BAERS is a movement to educate, empower, and elevate the next generation of leaders… BEYOND READY.

DAY 2

DAY 3

DAY 4

Summer Snapshot: Exploring the Sweet Science of Food at Next Gen DREAM

Contributor: Conchita Newman

This summer, on June 9-13, 2025, the Next Gen DREAM: Food Science Summer Enrichment Program welcomed a cohort of curious and driven young scientists for a week of immersive learning, hands-on experimentation, and engaging field experiences—all centered around one delicious theme: honey.

From the ground up—literally—students began their journey on Monday with a visit to Orchard Pond Farm, where they explored sustainable agriculture and connected over icebreakers in a scenic outdoor setting. Back on campus, Dr. Afef Janen led a Flavor Lab, diving into the sensory science of taste and flavor perception.

On Tuesday, students became savvy food investigators. A grocery store scavenger hunt challenged them to decode marketing tactics and nutrition labels, guided by insights from Dr. Jane Mumma. The day ended on a sweet note with Dr. Anthony Ananga's "The Sweet Science" lab, where students discovered how bees make honey, experimented with molecular gastronomy, and explored the chemistry behind their favorite sweetener.

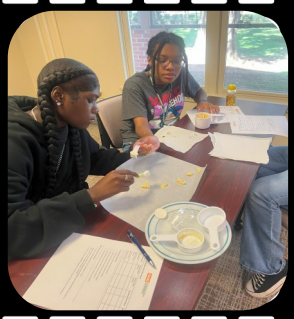
Authenticity took center stage on Wednesday, starting with a field trip to the Goodwood Museum and a live apiary demonstration, where students saw honeybees in action. Back in the lab, Dr. Janen returned to guide them through testing for fake honey, introducing real-world applications of scientific analysis and quality control.

Thursday shifted focus to food safety and microbiology. With Dr. Vijay Chhetri, students examined the microbial safety of honey and honey-based products, asking critical questions like: *Is honey always safe?* Their lab work emphasized the importance of scientific rigor in ensuring food quality and public health.

On Friday, the week culminated in the Honey Showcase, where students presented their findings and celebrated their discoveries. The showcase reflected not only their scientific skills but also their creativity and, collaboration. The program concluded with certificates, a reflection session, and a joyful group photo to commemorate their journey.

Through the lens of food science—and the sweet complexity of honey—this summer's Next Gen DREAM participants didn't just learn about science; they lived it.

Snapshots!



Community Garden Days

Thursday, July 10, 2025*
2-4 PM
Pleasant City Community Garden
2147 Spruce Avenue
West Palm Beach, FL 33407

Tuesday, July 15, 2025*
9-11 AM
Coleman Park Community Garden
1116 21st Street
West Palm Beach, FL 33407

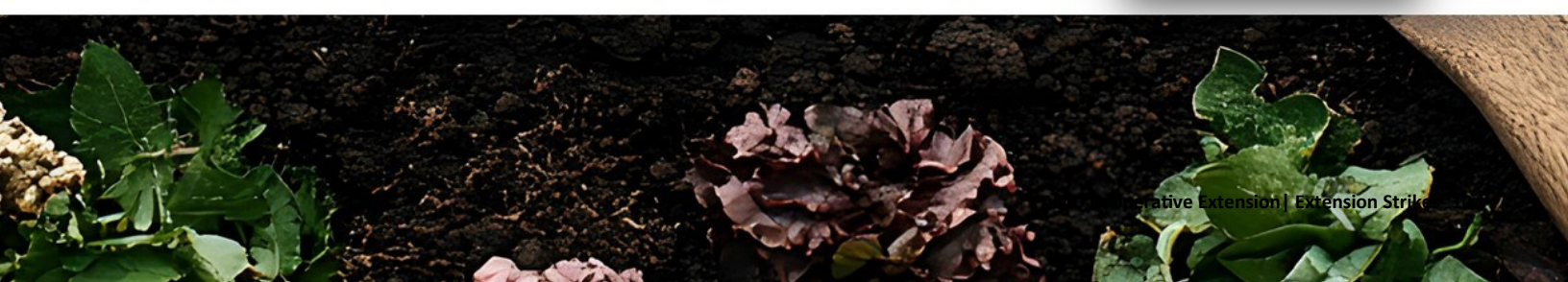
**Dates are subject to weather conditions*

Gardens are CLOSED during the month of August!

For more information, contact event organizer, Ms. Tavia Gordon at tavia.gordon@famu.edu or (561) 804-4979.

FAMU | FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCES

WPB WEST PALM BEACH



Herbal Teas: A Soothing Sip of Wellness

Contributor: Amelia Davis

Herbal teas offer more than just comfort in a cup—they're packed with natural benefits that support overall wellness. Made from a variety of herbs, flowers, and spices, these caffeine-free blends have been used for centuries to calm the mind, aid digestion, and support the immune system. Popular herbs like chamomile help promote relaxation and restful sleep, while peppermint and ginger can soothe the stomach and ease tension.

From fresh garden mint to dried lemon balm or hibiscus, there's a herbal tea for nearly every need. Incorporating herbal teas into your daily routine is an easy and flavorful way to enjoy the healing power of plants. Whether you're winding down after a long day or looking for a gentle health boost, a warm cup of herbal tea can be a natural, nurturing choice.

References
National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) – www.nccih.nih.gov
Mayo Clinic – Herbal supplements and teas: www.mayoclinic.org
Penn State Extension – Herbal Teas: Healthy and Homemade: extension.psu.edu

Community Spotlight:

Compost Community & Frenchtown Urban Farm

Founded by Sundiata Hardy-El

Sundiata Hardy-El with a compost pile at the community garden in the Frenchtown District. (Photo courtesy of Linda Sapp)

Compost Community, led by Sundiata Hardy-El, is a pioneering compost pickup service based in Tallahassee, Florida. Focused on both residential and commercial clients, the service collects organic materials and transforms them into nutrient-rich compost, which supports fruit and vegetable production at the nearby Frenchtown Urban Farm.

Located in the historic Frenchtown neighborhood, Compost Community serves some of Tallahassee's most underserved areas, including Griffin Heights and South City. The initiative is rooted in principles of environmental sustainability, regenerative agriculture, and community empowerment.

In addition to composting services, Compost Community provides a range of educational offerings, including workshops, webinars, and on-site farm tours, all designed to raise awareness about healthy soils and sustainable food systems. The organization also offers consultation services for homeowners, businesses, academic institutions, and local government entities seeking to adopt climate-friendly practices.

While already well-established, Sundiata has collaborated on various initiatives with experts such as Dr. Gilbert Queeley, Dr. Jennifer Taylor and Linda Sapp, further expanding the farm's educational reach and impact. Compost Community continues to promote local job creation and economic development through value-added agricultural products—all while championing soil health, food justice, and environmental resilience.

For more information on the Compost Community, contact Sundiata at Compostcommunity9@gmail.com or 850-778-1531 / 850-497-4306.

Compost 101: Turning Waste into Garden Gold

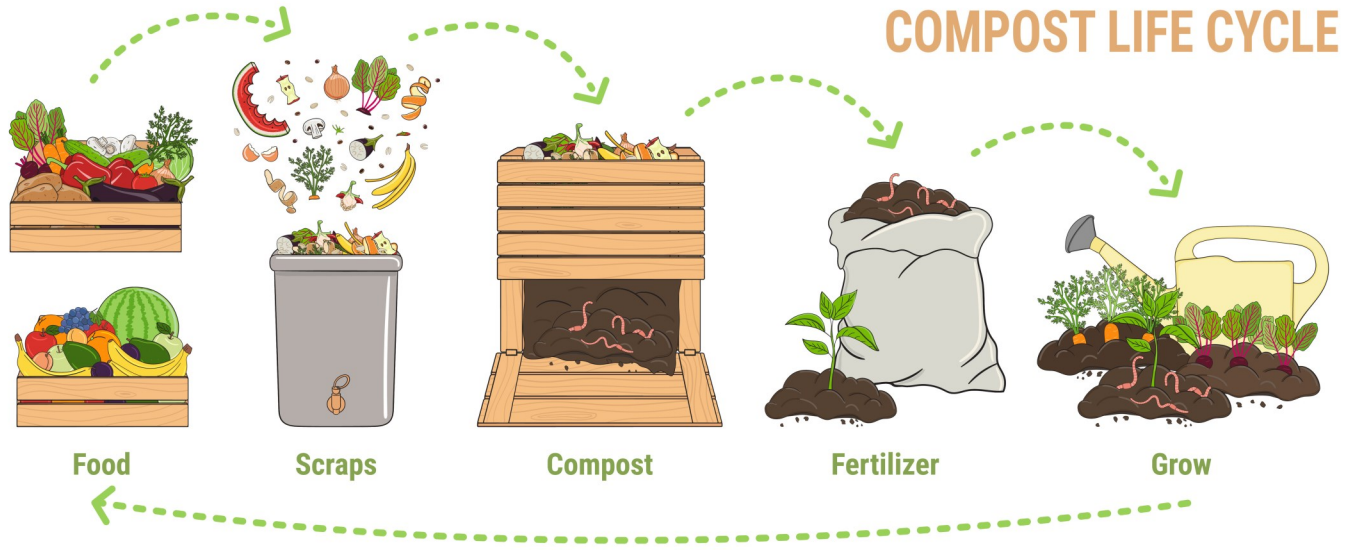
Composting is one of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce waste, improve soil health, and support a more sustainable environment. By recycling everyday organic materials—like fruit peels, coffee grounds, and yard clippings—you can create nutrient-rich compost that strengthens your garden and keeps food waste out of local landfills.

Why Compost? Composting:

- Enriches soil naturally without synthetic fertilizers.
- Helps retain moisture and suppresses plant diseases.
- Significantly reduces methane emissions from landfills.
- Supports home gardening, local food systems, and climate-friendly practices.

Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned gardener, composting is a step anyone can take to make a positive impact. .

Ready to get started? Reach out to your local compost community, extension office or attend one of their upcoming workshops to learn how to turn your waste into "garden gold."



Summer Gardens: More Than Just Tomatoes and Watermelons. Let's Grow Something New!

Contributors: Linda Sapp and Lester Gaskins

When summer rolls around, we often think of garden classics like juicy tomatoes, refreshing watermelons, and crunchy cucumbers. While these favorites certainly have their place, there's a whole world of summer fruits and vegetables that are just as easy to grow—and just as nutritious.

Crops like eggplants, peppers, squash, and corn thrive in the warmth and long sunny days of summer. Not only are they high-yielding, but they also offer health benefits that support heart health, digestion, and a strong immune system. These vegetables are staples in many Asian diets, where plant-forward eating contributes to long, healthy lives. Taking inspiration from those traditions could be just what your garden—and your plate—needs.

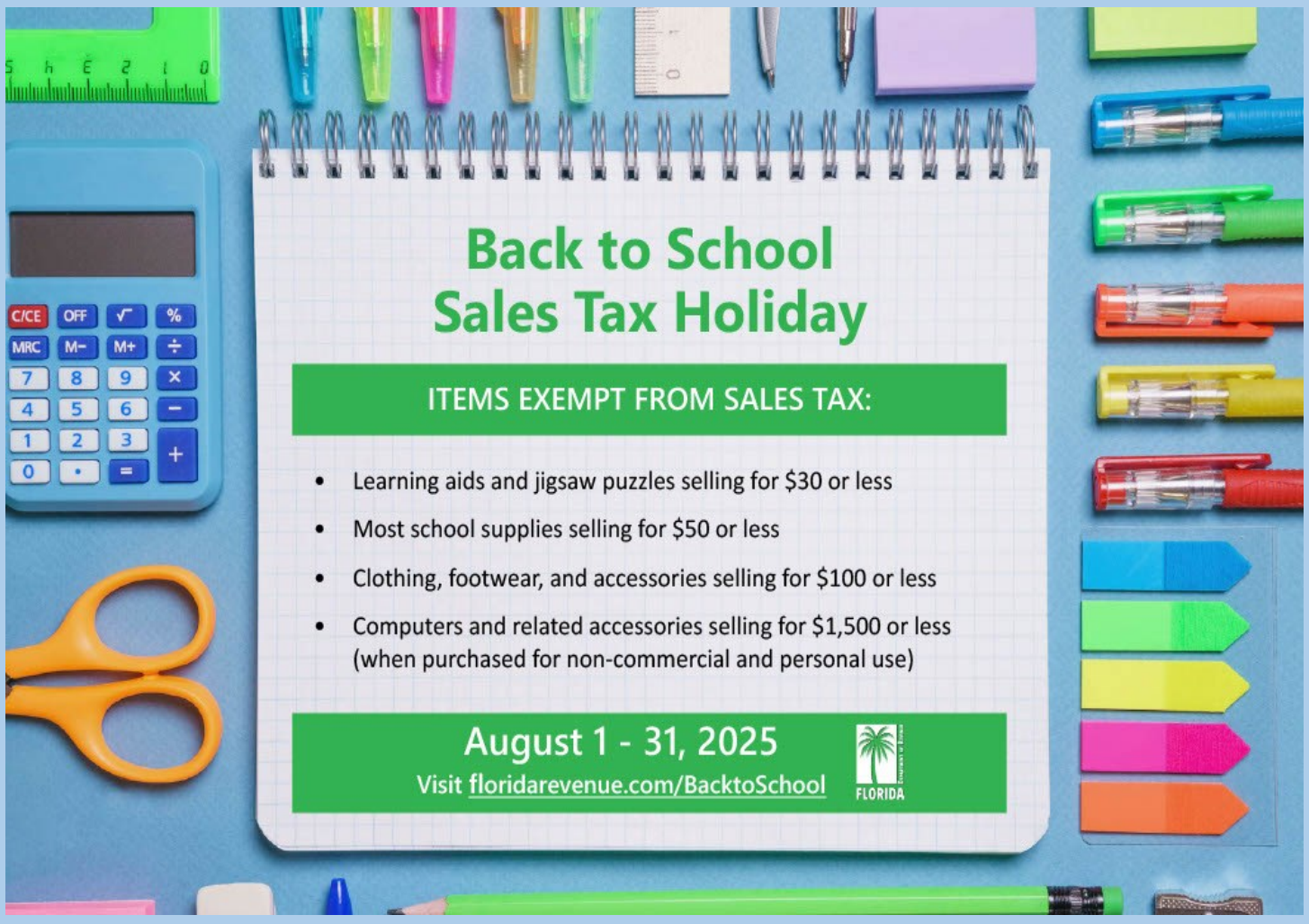
Some gardeners in our community are also branching out into lesser-known but equally nutritious leafy greens, including Okinawa spinach, Malabar spinach, and bitter melon. These heat-loving plants flourish in our climate, adding vibrant color to the garden and a boost of vitamins and antioxidants to every meal.

At the FAMU Community Garden, we are celebrating this seasonal abundance by growing a wide variety of summer crops. From beloved Southern staples to globally inspired greens, we're inviting our community to diversify their garden beds and dinner plates. Trying new crops not only improves nutrition—it also creates opportunities to share cultures and strengthen local food systems.

So as you plan your summer garden, think beyond the usual tomatoes and melons. Why not try something new and healthy? You just might discover a fresh favorite growing right in your own backyard.

State of FLORIDA

Consumers can purchase qualifying back to school supplies exempt from tax during the 2025 Back to School Sales Tax Holiday. Passed by the Florida Legislature and signed into law, the sales tax holiday begins Friday, August 1 and extends through Sunday, August 31.



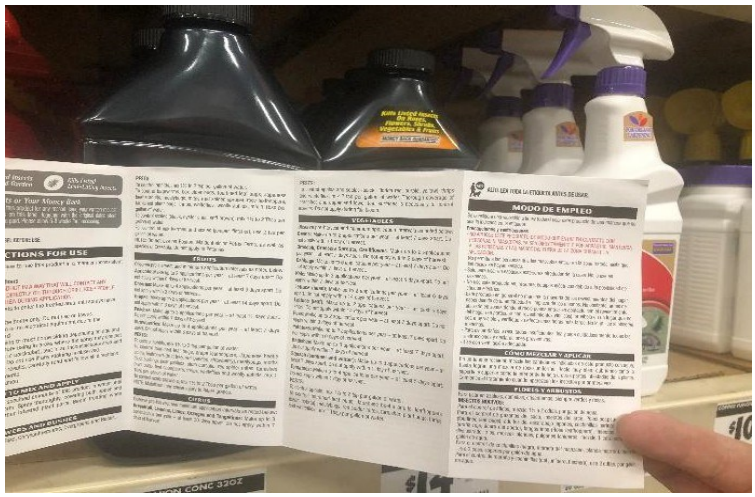
Understanding Pesticide Labels

Contributors: Samuel Hand and Edwin Duke, Ph.D.

Every pesticide, whether organic or synthetic, sold in the United States comes with a pesticide label. That label is a legal document detailing the expectations on you for the safe, proper and legal use of the pesticide. The purchaser and/or applicator is assuming certain responsibilities when deciding to use a pesticide. Using a pesticide in a way that is inconsistent with its label is a violation of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act of 1996 (FIFRA).

The pesticide label is the best guide to a using pesticide safely and effectively. The directions on the label are there primarily to help achieve maximum benefits – the control of the pest – with minimum risk. Both depend on following label directions and correctly using the pesticide. Read the label before buying the pesticide. Using pesticides in any way that does not comply with the label's directions and precautions is illegal.

Pesticide manufacturers are required by law to provide certain information on the label. Each label will show the brand name or trade name of the product. The brand name is designed so that the product is easily recognized and remembered. Active ingredients are the chemicals in the pesticide that control the target pest. Products with the same active ingredient may have completely different brand names, therefore the label also must show the active ingredient. The percentage or amount of active ingredient by weight must be stated. Inert (non-active) ingredients are not required to be listed individually or identified by name.



Reading the pesticide label can help with the decision on which pesticide to buy.

All pesticide products must be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and each is given a unique registration number. This number indicates that the EPA has reviewed the product and determined that it can be used with minimal or low risk if directions are followed.

The name, address and contact information of the manufacturer or formulator of the product must be on the label.

Signal Words

The signal words – CAUTION, WARNING, or DANGER – indicate the acute (short-term) toxicity of the product to humans. The statement “keep out of reach of children” must also appear with signal words on the label of all pesticides.

CAUTION means the product is slightly toxic if eaten, absorbed through the skin, inhaled, or causes slight eye or skin irritation.

WARNING indicates the pesticide product is moderately toxic if eaten, absorbed through the skin, inhaled, or causes moderate eye or skin irritation.

DANGER means that the pesticide product is highly toxic by at least one route of exposure. This signal word is accompanied by a skull and crossbones.

Restricted Use Pesticide Statement

This statement appears if the product is a restricted use pesticide. This determination is usually based on the product's individual human toxicity or on chemical properties that may impact the environment. Most pesticides labeled with the signal word 'Danger' are restricted use pesticides. These pesticides only may be purchased and used by individuals having a pesticide license. Pesticides without this statement are considered general use pesticides and do not require a license for purchase and use.

Please note that, in Florida and most other states, anyone applying a pesticide, whether restricted or general use, as a part of their employment must have a pesticide license or work under the direct supervision of someone possessing a license.

Precautionary Statements

This section contains information about potential hazards related to the product's use, including risks to people, domestic animals, other non-target organisms, wildlife, and the environment. This section also may spell out any physical or chemical hazards like fire or explosion risks that the particular product may pose.

The type of personal protective equipment (PPE) that must be used with a particular pesticide can be found here. Shirts with long sleeves, long pants, and closed-toed shoes should be worn when applying any pesticides, even if the label doesn't contain a protective clothing statement. Other protective equipment may include, but is not limited to goggles, gloves, and respirators.

The label may specify how long someone without appropriate PPE must wait before re-entering a treated area. If no re-entry period is specified, the rule is that liquid sprays must have dried and dusts must have settled. If the chemical is to be applied to an edible crop for humans or animals, the label also may specify the pre-harvest interval. This is the least amount of time that must elapse between the last application and the harvest of the crop.

A section on first aid may be included in this part of the label. This statement gives the procedures that must be taken following an accidental exposure (oral, dermal, inhalation or eye) to the product. This information should be read and understood before use of the product and should be relayed to medical personnel responding to an emergency.

Storage and disposal instructions for the pesticide and its container are specified on the label. Chemicals can lose their effectiveness over time. It is very important that chemicals should be stored in the original labeled container in which it was purchased. Any remaining unused chemical should not be stored in the applicator container. Only the amount of chemical that is necessary for a specific job should be prepared at any one time.

Directions for Use

This portion of the label gives instructions on how to properly use the product. Mixing instructions, compatibility with other products, timing, frequency of application, and proper application methods and equipment are all spelled out in this portion of the label.

Always read the label directions before purchasing a pesticide. Let the label guide your purchase decision. Reading and following label directions is part of good pesticide use. It protects human health, pollinators, wildlife, and the environment. Most importantly, it is the law.

Article re-published from January 2022


U-pick

Training Beginning Farmers & Ranchers in Direct to Consumer Marketing Using a U-Pick Demonstration

Contributor: Gilbert Queeley, PhD.

Given the numerous challenges faced by small family farms, many are adopting 'smart' marketing strategies that can provide a competitive advantage. Direct marketing to consumers through " U-Pick " operations is one such example. As the name implies, a U-Pick operation is a direct to consumer marketing strategy where the customers harvest the produce and pays for it as they leave the farm. U-Pick system offers many cost-saving and intrinsic benefits to small-scale farmers. For example:

- Lowers labor costs since harvesting is done by the customers.
- Lowers packaging costs because customers often bring their own packaging.
- The farmer receives immediate payment for his/her produce.
- The system also lends itself well to agritourism. Many individuals travel from distant states to buy fresh 'hard to find' produce.
- U-pick farms provide great learning opportunities for children and families who enjoy time together harvesting and sampling fresh produce.

Tips for Establishing Successful U-Pick Systems:

As with other types of business operations, advertising is important. The following are tips that can lead to successful U-Pick operations:

◊ **Easy access to the farm**: Farms that are located close to frequently travelled highways may have a competitive advantage.

◊ **Field layout**: Wide clear rows can allow for mobility and prevent damage or contamination of produce.

◊ **Crop selection**: Growing non-traditional crops (niche crops) can provide a competitive advantage. It is always a good practice to avoid growing similar crops to your competitors.

◊ **Know your competition**: Identify the number of similar farmers in your area and the type of produce and services they offer.

◊ **Year-round production**: Utilizing protected structures that offer year-round growing opportunities can provide year-round revenue generation.

The Cooperative Extension Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program has a U-Pick demonstration at Orange Avenue in Tallahassee that is intended to train beginning farmers and ranchers to establish U-Pick operations.

Currently two non-traditional crops, Pigeon-pea (Cajanus cajan) and Roselle (Hibiscus sabdariffa) are featured. Pigeon pea is popular in traditional Caribbean cuisines for its unique taste and high protein content. Roselle has made in-roads into the food, beverage and pharmaceutical industries as a health-food and for making condiments. Other crops to be added soon include blueberries, blackberries, and strawberries. Field tours of the demonstration will commence in Fall 2025.

For more information, contact: Gilbert Queeley, Ph.D. at (850) 412-5255 or gilbert.queeley@famu.edu

The Dwellings: A Place Like No Other

Contributor: Linda Sapp

Just west of downtown Tallahassee, nestled among southern pines, sits The Dwellings—America's premier planned tiny-home community focused on affordability, opportunity, and second chances.

Residents choose from fully furnished small, medium, or large homes—all with utilities, Wi-Fi, and essential amenities included. But The Dwellings offers more than housing—it fosters growth through innovation and care.

Recently, agents from FAMU Cooperative Extension visited the community's hydroponic greenhouse and garden. Established in 2021, the greenhouse uses vertical, water-efficient hydroponic systems to grow fresh produce year-round. These crops support communal meals, nutrition classes, and are shared with residents in need. The site also serves as a hands-on classroom, where participants learn sustainable gardening, cooking skills, and life practices that support long-term stability.

At the Dwellings, the community gardens and hydroponic greenhouse are not just amenities they are hubs of learning, wellness, and togetherness. They cultivate growth in every sense of the word, reinforcing the community's mission of hope, dignity, and self-reliance.

At the heart of it all is the Community Kitchen and Dining Hall—a fully equipped space offering residents the opportunity to cook healthy meals and gather for food, fellowship, and learning. From workshops to shared meals, this space strengthens the bonds of community.

At The Dwellings, food, farming, and fellowship work together to cultivate dignity, resilience, and a fresh start.

Greenhouse photo courtesy of TheDwellings.org

Artificial Insemination vs Natural Synchronization in Cattle

Contributor: David Jones

In the world of cattle, we have breeding seasons and sometimes the cattleman wants to control late or early calving. This is where artificial insemination or natural synchronization would help control when calves are born and their genetic makeup.

Artificial insemination (Al) is very important in the process of deciding on whether you want to have a bull on the farm. Bull upkeep can become expensive and they require a good diet and excellent forage. Al provides a solution that can improve herd genetics and at the same it can cut costs of having 1 or more bulls on the farm. The type of Al that each individual farmer will use will be vastly different, in fact it's recommended to review the various estrus synchronizations programs available before deciding which one to use. The local veterinarian or the local county extension office would a viable resource for further information on selection of Al protocols. (UNL Beef, 2025)

Another important factor to consider when using Al is the potential for a uniform calf weight. This would be crucial when considering the market available and deciding whether that calf will be at the potential weight needed at the 6-8-month mark. (UNL Beef, 2025)

When considering natural synchronization, there are also protocols for this. An example is the PGF Protocol, where an injection is required on all the heifers and cows on day 5 after the bulls are turned out on the pasture with them. There are several other protocols available for the cattleman to utilize. Again, it is recommended to research and consult with the local veterinarian and/or the local county extension office. (Grussing, 2023)

Overall, by having a subsequent calving season and frontloading the breeding season, there will be better use of labor and resources. However, there will be still calves born either late or early than what the farmer may or not want. If using natural synchronization, it is recommended to get breeding soundness exam and do a health and body condition evaluation on the bull before considering using them on the herd. (Grussing, 2023)

Photos: Amelia Davis/Grass-fed cattle at the FAMU REC, Quincy, FL

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Seed It Your Way: An Extension Program to Get Fresh Vegetables in Local Residents' Diet

Contributor: Donna Arnold

Fresh vegetables may soon become a more common staple in local kitchens thanks to "Seed It Your Way," a new extension program designed to bring high-quality seeds and expert agricultural knowledge directly to residents.

The initiative is a is made possible through grant donations and partnership between Gadsden County Extension, Florida A&M University (FAMU) and the University of Florida (UF), working to collaboratively to make university-based agricultural research and resources accessible to the community, promoting sustainable farming and healthier diets.

Sowing the Seeds of Change

The program has four primary goals: expanding seed access to schools, community gardens, low-income families, ranchers, and farmers; offering educational support on seed selection and crop management; encouraging self-sufficiency through gardening; and promoting environmentally sustainable farming practices.

"Our aim is to empower residents with the tools and knowledge they need to grow their own fresh food.

How It Works

"Seed It Your Way" takes a multi-pronged approach:

- **Seed Distribution:** climate-appropriate seeds, distributed through extension offices, schools, and community events.
- **Educational Workshops:** Topics like soil health, seed viability, pest management, and sustainable growing methods.
- **Community Engagement:** Local gardening projects promote collaboration and skill-sharing among residents, with educational materials available at schools and community centers.
- **Sustainability Training:** Sessions focus on soil conservation, efficient water use, and climate-smart agriculture.

Looking Ahead

By addressing key barriers like seed access, affordability, and education, "Seed It Your Way" is helping to strengthen local food systems and build economic resilience in Gadsden County. Organizers hope that by continuing to refine their methods, the program will serve as a model for other communities seeking to cultivate a healthier, more sustainable future one seed at a time.

Poster Presentation:

2025 Annual Meeting and Professional Conference June 29– July 2, 2025—Billings, Montana

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Farming Your Hobby into a Business

Contributor: Donna Arnold

People in Florida often turn their backyards into farms for a variety of cultural and practical reasons. While these endeavors often start as hobbies, they can be turned into a profitable business. Turning your love for farming into a profitable business starts with a clear plan and smart strategies. Whether you dream of creating a relaxing weekend retreat or building a steady income source, defining your purpose is the essential first step toward building a successful future. You should ask yourself: Is my farm primarily for enjoyment, or do I hope to turn it into a business?

Understanding your "why" will guide every decision you make, including choosing a niche that fits your interests and/or the local market demand.

Hobby Farm vs. Business Farm

Hobby Farming to Business (Photos courtesy of Donna Arnold)

There is a key distinction between a hobby farm and a business farm. A hobby farm is grown for personal enjoyment, with no real intention of generating profit. A business farm, however, operates to make money and may require licenses, careful record-keeping, and tax reporting. Transitioning from a hobby to a business means treating your farm like an enterprise from day one. (Resources).

Time and Labor Commitment

Time and labor are critical factors to consider. Hobbies offer flexibility—you can work whenever you like. Businesses, on the other hand, demand consistency. Customers expect reliability, and operations like planting, harvesting, marketing, and sales need to be maintained even when life gets busy. Before committing, honestly evaluate whether you have the time and energy needed to run a full farm operation. If you can make the entire process enjoyable then that enables you to thrive under pressure as well. Which should not be too tough, because to start with this was your hobby.

Steps to Make Your Hobby a Business

When you are ready to take the next step, you will need to register your farm as a business. This involves obtaining the appropriate licenses and a tax ID or Employer Identification Number (EIN) number. According to the Small Business Administration (SBA), "Your Employer Identification Number (EIN) is your business's federal tax ID number. You need it to pay federal taxes, hire employees, open a bank account, and apply for business licenses and permits." Contact your local Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for guidance with business planning and registration.

Food Laws

Additionally, it is vital to learn about food safety laws and regulations (Food Safety). New and small farmers must comply with food handling rules and stay informed about cottage food laws, especially if you plan to sell baked goods, jams, honey, or other homemade products. Accurate labeling, compliance with food safety standards, and participation in food safety training (many of which are offered through Extension Offices) are key steps toward running a legal and safe farm business.

Mixed Farming

Many small-scale growers and hobbyist farmers are finding success by practicing mixed farming, growing fruits, vegetables, composting, and practicing apiculture (beekeeping) in the same space.

Benefits

- Bees boost pollination, and enhanced pollination from bees can significantly increase crop yield. Having a variety of crops (as opposed to a monoculture) attracts a wider variety of beneficial insects which can help naturally manage pest populations. Creating natural reservoirs for beneficial insects like ladybugs, lacewings, and parasitic wasps, helping to control pest populations naturally.
- Compost improves soil fertility and health, allows for the recycling of organic waste, and can save money by reducing pesticide use while boosting production, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Spacing Requirement

Understanding and analyzing the available space, strategic layout, or smart spacing, is essential. Compost piles should be placed away from edible crops to avoid contamination, and bee hives should be positioned at least 15 to 20 feet from active work areas to ensure the safety of both bees and workers. Crops should also be spaced to allow for good air circulation, reducing the risk of fungal diseases.

Harvesting and Packaging

Harvesting and packaging play crucial roles in maintaining product quality and food safety. Crops should be harvested during the cooler parts of the day to preserve freshness, and food-safe, reusable packaging should be used to market products effectively.

Pathogens and Pests

Managing pathogens and pests is another critical task. Compost must be properly aged—reaching internal temperatures of at least 130-140°F to eliminate harmful bacteria. Regular inspections for pests and diseases, along with crop rotation strategies, help maintain a healthy farm system.

However, there are drawbacks to be aware of. If composting is not managed correctly, harmful pathogens like E. coli or Salmonella can contaminate crops. Overcrowding of plants and beehives can also lead to disease outbreaks and reduced productivity. It is advisable to stay in contact with your FDACS Apiary Inspector to monitor and maintain hive health. Careful spacing, consistent monitoring, and strict adherence to good agricultural practices are essential to protect your crops and your business.

By blending fruits, vegetables, composting, and beekeeping into a single, productive operation—and managing it with care—you can transform your hobby farm into a thriving small business. Start small, stay focused on soil health and crop care, and watch your passion grow into a sustainable, profitable enterprise.

Mixed farming allows you to maximize productivity, diversify your income streams, and turn your passion into profit. When managed carefully, this approach creates a self-sustaining mini-ecosystem. Transitioning a small mixed farming operation from a hobby to a business could be a win-win, if you plan the transition wisely, carefully weigh the pros and cons, and be aware of all the dos and don'ts.

Previously published in: Farming Your Hobby into a Business | Panhandle Agriculture

City of West Palm Beach and FAMU Cooperative Extension Hosts Compost Workshop & Giveaway to Promote Sustainable Living

Contributor: Tavia Gordon

Photos (top to bottom): Photo 1: From left to right: Tavia Gordon (FAMU Extension Urban Ag Agent), Leon Pinder* (Director Public Works), Elaine Christian* (Interim Sustainability Supervisor), Nayla Alcocer-Martos* (*Keep West Palm Beach Beautiful Coordinator),* Linda Sapp (FAMU Extension Agent)- *City of West Palm Beach,: Photo 2: Mr. Gibson (participant) & Tavia (Extension Agent); Photo 3 Attendees checking out outreach materials , Photo 4: Workshop attendees.

Did you know that the average single-family home in Palm Beach County generates nearly 1,700 pounds of yard waste each year? According to the Solid Waste Authority of Palm Beach County (SWA), that's over 40% of a household's total solid waste. Countywide, more than 200,000 tons of yard waste are collected annually, most of which ends up in landfills. One simple yet impactful solution is backyard composting. Composting helps reduce the amount of organic waste sent to landfills, extends landfill lifespan, and naturally improves soil health and garden productivity.

On July 12, 2025, to promote environmental sustainability and healthy living, the City of West Palm Beach, in partnership with FAMU Cooperative Extension, hosted a Compost Workshop and Giveaway to educate residents on how composting can benefit their homes, gardens, and the environment. Held at the South Olive Community Center and led by Tavia Gordon, FAMU's Urban Agriculture Extension Agent, the event welcomed 33 Palm Beach residents for an introduction to composting. Participants learned about: What materials can be composted, the ideal balance of greens and browns, how composting supports soil health, waste reduction, and climate resilience.

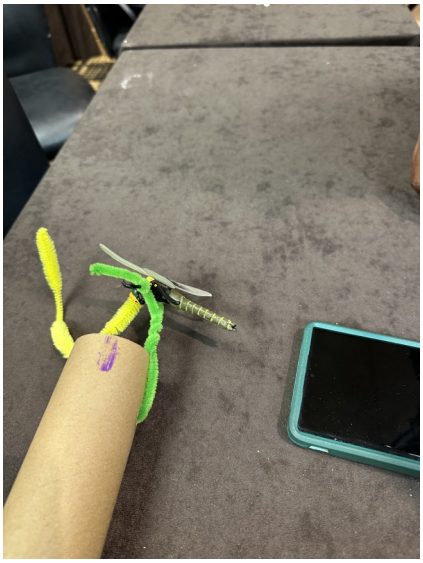
To encourage residents to put their new knowledge into practice, the city distributed twenty-two (22) free 43-gallon compost tumblers, made possible through Keep West Palm Beach Beautiful. Participants also received mini kitchen compost collection buckets to make it easier to gather food scraps at home and jumpstart their composting efforts.

This initiative reflects FAMU's Cooperative Extension broader commitment to environmental stewardship, community education, and urban agriculture. Through continued partnerships and public outreach, FAMU Cooperative Extension and the City of West Palm Beach remain dedicated to empowering residents with the tools and knowledge to lead more sustainable lives.

To learn more about upcoming workshops and sustainability programs in city of West Palm Beach, visit: https://www.wpb.org/Departments/Housing-Community-Development/WPB-and-FAMU-Partnership

Using Insects to Spark Learning at National Ag in the Classroom

Contributor: Sabrina Hayes, Ph.D.



At this year's National Ag in the Classroom Conference, in Minneapolis Minnesota. educators gathered to explore a tiny but mighty teaching tool: insects. In a hands-on workshop that had participants buzzing with excitement, teachers learned how these fascinating creatures can enrich science, agriculture, and environmental education across grade levels.

The session invited educators to tap into student curiosity by integrating insects into lesson plans that are interactive, creative, and curriculum-aligned. From creepy crawlers to fluttering pollinators, insects became the centerpiece of an unforgettable learning experience.

To reinforce insect anatomy in a tangible way, attendees crafted realistic insect fossils, imprinting models into clay to simulate the process of fossilization. This project bridged science and art, helping students visualize body segments and structural features—from antennae to exoskeletons—while learning about preservation and time.

Next, the workshop challenged participants to build habitat models that support insects in real-world ecosystems. Using simple materials, educators created environments that cater to pollinators, decomposers, and beneficial bugs. These mini-habitats doubled as platforms to explore food chains, biodiversity, and sustainability in agriculture.

The most memorable moment? Interacting with live insects, from gentle roaches to squirming larvae. Educators were encouraged to observe behavior, ask questions, and experience the wonder their students feel when encountering living organisms up close. These real-time observations laid the groundwork for inquiry-based learning and inspired new ways to connect the science of agriculture to everyday life.

Through this insect-infused journey, educators left the workshop with fresh lesson ideas and renewed appreciation for the role insects play in agriculture and ecology. With tools like fossils, habitats, and live specimens, classrooms nationwide are about to get a whole lot crawlier—and a whole lot more curious

Trails: An Enchantment

Contributor: Angel S. Forde, Ph.D.

Figure 1: A Typical roadway for multipurpose usage in a high intensity usage national park

There's something timeless about a trail: it doesn't demand anything from you except to keep walking. It's a place where your thoughts can stretch as wide as the sky above, and every twist or rustling leaf invites curiosity. Whether it's forest shade, desert silence, or mountain air, each trail writes a story, and you're the co-author with nature.

Benefits and Purpose of Trails

Beyond their connective appeal and geographical variety, trails provide a wealth of tangible benefits. Perhaps most prominently, they are invaluable assets for physical and mental well-being. Walking, running, or cycling on a trail engages our bodies, strengthening muscles, improving cardiovascular health, and boosting endurance. The irregular terrain often found on natural trails also engages stabilizer muscles and improves balance, skills often neglected on flat surfaces.

Beyond the physical, the psychological benefits of spending time on trails are profound. The gentle rhythm of walking, the fresh air, and the immersive natural surroundings have been shown to reduce stress, improve mood, and enhance cognitive function.

The beauty of trails lies in their diversity. They can be grand, multi-day treks through towering mountain ranges, like the Appalachian Trail in the Eastern United States or the Camino de Santiago across Spain. They can be gentle, paved paths winding through urban parks, offering a quick escape for city dwellers. They can be rugged, single-track routes for mountain bikers, challenging their skills and stamina. They can be historic pathways tracing the footsteps of pioneers, explorers, or even prehistoric creatures. More than just a strip of cleared land, a trail is a dynamic ribbon connecting us to nature, to history, and to ourselves. Each trail offers a unique narrative, a different landscape, and a distinct experience.

In this current world where concrete and digital screens dominate, the enduring appeal of trails offers a vital antidote – a chance to breathe, to explore, and to reconnect with self, friends, and neighbors as well as with the wildlife of our state.

The concept of "forest bathing," or shinrin-yoku, originating in Japan, highlights the therapeutic power of simply being present in a natural environment. Trails provide the perfect conduit for this restorative practice, allowing us to unplug from the demands of daily life and find solace in the tranquility of the outdoors.

Figure 2: Finding tranquility and solace in varying areas along the trail

Trails Design and Layout

Tail design and layout are an art that requires study and experience in locating the trail's corridor and centerline. Proposed location and development will result in a sustainable trail that will be easy to maintain and a joy to hike.

The design and layout of a trail requires the consideration of, but is not limited to, usage, geology, hydrology, botany, wildlife, and aesthetics. A well- designed trail results in cost savings, storm-related failure reduction, and minimal maintenance.

Vital to any trail layout and design are five trail fundamentals. These five fundamentals are the cornerstones of USDA-FS trail Management:

- Trail Type (terra firma, water, etc.)
- Trail Class (1-5)
- Managed Use (hiker, bicycle, horse)
- Designed Use (level of development for managed usages)
- Design Perimeters

Trail class and parameters are specifications, while design and layout are techniques and skills. The design and layout are about fitting a sustainable trail to the land. The successful design, construction, and management of a trail is essential to building a trail pathway that accommodates the widest range of both recreational and transportation users.

Trails are also powerful tools for conservation and education. Well-maintained trails help concentrate human impact, preventing uncontrolled trampling of delicate ecosystems. Interpretive signage along trails can educate visitors about local flora and fauna, historical events, and responsible outdoor ethics. By fostering a deeper appreciation for the natural world, trails can inspire a new generation of environmental stewards.

Types of Trails

The development and maintenance of trails are often collaborative efforts, involving government agencies, non -profit organizations, and countless dedicated volunteers. This community involvement further strengthens the bond between people and their local natural spaces. Trail organizations work tirelessly to build new routes, repair existing ones, and advocate for public access to wild places.

A trail is an experience, and the designer must integrate points of interest and aesthetics with mechanical sound alignment to provide users with the optimum experience. Trails can be either pedestrian, equestrian, mountain biking, motorized, or multi-use and will require a specific surface type. Surface design can be asphalt, natural, concrete, crushed stone, rocks, grass, soil, wood chips, boardwalk, or recycled materials. The trail surface selection is based on its major usage, location, and maintenance.

As we look to the future, the importance of trails will only continue to grow. With increasing urbanization and the challenges of climate change, preserving and expanding our trail networks becomes even more critical. They offer vital green corridors, connect fragmented habitats, and provide accessible spaces for everyone to experience the restorative power of nature. So, whether you're seeking a challenging adventure, a peaceful escape, or simply a breath of fresh air, step onto a trail. Let its winding path guide you to new discoveries, improve your well-being, and deepen your connection to the incredible world around us. The journey, on a trail, is always its own reward.

Figure 3: Illustration of a natural and soil-based trail with low intensity usage.

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In 1890, the Land-grant University System was expanded to include institutions for Black citizens. Today, these institutions continue to provide access to higher education for underserved communities, and their research and Extension programs impact people worldwide through advancements in agricultural productivity and sustainability, food security, human health, and community and youth development.


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Upcoming Events
CALENDAR
FRIDAY
Campaign Days
- revise older post
- plan for Location
Marketing Plan Meeting
Marketing Plan Meeting
Marketing Plan Meeting
- finish 10th post in notepad
Holiday

July 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THUIRSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4  Independence Day	5
6	7	8	9	10 Garden Days- West Palm Beach Pleasant City Community Garden	11	12
13	14	15 Garden Days- West Palm Beach Coleman Park Community Garden	16	17	18	19
20 National Ice Cream Day! 	21	22	23	24	25	26 Ready, Set, Go- 4H Workshop (BAERS)
27	28	29	30	31		

August 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THUIRSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	National Make A Will Month				1  Florida Back To School Tax Holiday 8/1– 8/31	2
3 National Watermelon Day! 	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23 Grape Harvest Festival 
24 Intl. Overdose Awareness Day 31	25 Fall Semester 2025 Begins!! Welcome New & Returning Rattlers!	26 National Dog Day! 	27	28	29	30 Ready, Set, Go- 4H Workshop (BAERS)

September 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THUIRSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 	2	3	4	5 **National Food Bank Day !**	6
7	8 **#988 DAY** Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Day	9	10	11	12	13
	135th Celebration– Second Morrill Act, Washington, DC					
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27 **Ready, Set, Go- 4H Workshop (BAERS)**
28	29	30	**National Preparedness Month** **Prostate Cancer Awareness Month**			

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