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January 2022 Issue

Happy New Year! We hope you had a great 2021 and safe and healthy holidays. Please enjoy this issue of The Dirt.

Susan Ladwig and Ellen Mahany, The Dirt co-editors

Dragons in the Garden

By Elizabeth Morse, Master Gardener Volunteer

With their slender shapes and colorful leaves, dracaenas (*Dracaena fragrans*) are the perfect plants to add a pop of color to shady areas in the garden or to brighten an interior as potted plants. The insignificant tight clusters of brown scapes hold fragrant white flowers that bloom in early spring and sometimes turn in small red berries. The true stars of dracaenas are, of course,

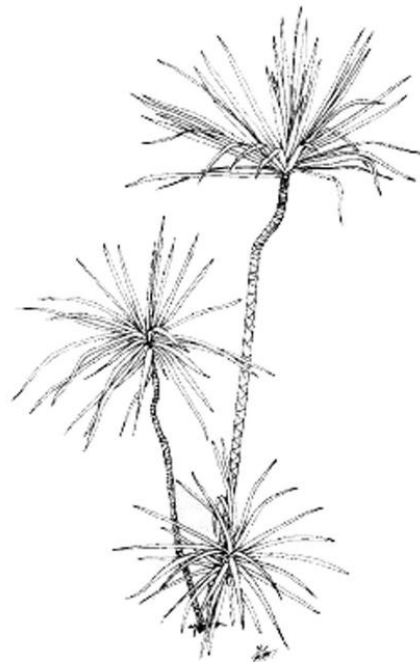




their leaves. These slow-growing, low-maintenance plants are mostly pest free, propagate easily and rarely need pruning.

The name *dracaena* comes from the Greek word *drakaina*, which means *female dragon*. The original tree, first described in 1835 as *D. cinnabari*, grows on an island in the Arabian Sea. Its red sap once helped give varnish its color. Now it is commonly known as the corn plant.

Once available only with wide green leaves, dracaena has developed into 120 varieties, of which sixty are common, offering an amazing variety of widths and colors. The species determines the look. The leaves can start from the bottom all the way up a ten-foot trunk or form a bushy top over a bare trunk, like airy lollipops. Outside some can grow as high as 60 feet, although inside they stay more in the six-foot range. Most species in my yard are under eight feet, although I have some over 25 feet.



D. Marginata is the only variety that grows in full sun. Trim to stagger height for more interest. (Illustrations by Univ. of Florida)

A warning to pet owners: ingesting the leaves can cause serious damage to cats and dogs.

Draceanas growing outside require little care. Plant them in the shade or dappled light for the best color. The one exception is *D. marginata*, which grows in full sun but needs more water. With the exception of lucky bamboo, dracaenas do not like wet feet, nor do they tolerate fluoride-treated water. Underwatering causes curled and faded leaves. Overwatering causes yellow leaves and brown spots and can lead to non-treatable fungus. A half-inch of compost or mulch applied in the spring is ample fertilizer. Trim during peak growing periods to stagger the height of the stems. Simply place cut sections in the ground to propagate this plant.



Potted dracaenas for inside and outside plantings require a well-drained mixture of potting soil, perlite, and compost. To compensate for angled growth, as the plant seeks the sun, tilt the plant, and pack the soil to create an upright position.

Dracaenas planted indoors need more care. Place the plants in bright light and use a houseplant fertilizer in the summer. Provide good air circulation to discourage pests. Aphids cause yellow leaves and sticky discharge. Wash them off with a soapy rag or insecticidal soap. Remove mealy bugs with water or a Q-tip soaked in alcohol and rinse. Clean scale with a soapy toothbrush and treat with a horticultural oil such as neem oil if it persists.

This list of more available dracaena varieties describes the leaves of each species.

- **Massangeana** with a yellow center stripe flanked by green is the most readily available.
- **Bausii** has a cream center stripe on a lime green leaf. This one is finicky about light and water needs.
- **Limelight** with neon- yellow/green leaves is the most resistant to frost, drought, and pests.

Lindenii, also sold as **Dorado**, has yellow edges with a solid green center. Other **Dorado** varieties are listed here:

- **Janet Craig Compacta**, the original dwarf, called pineapple because of its growth habit of shape of short dark green leaves in upward tight cones, is an extremely slow grower.
- **Janet Craig** has the same dark green leaves as the compacta variety, only longer.
- **Lemon Lime** has leaves in two shades of green and center stripes in grey and white. Because it is sensitive to light and water, the leaves vary color and striping.
- **Rikki** has wide green margins fading to almost lime green centers.
- **Warneckii** has pale green centers with white margins. Light affects the number and intensity of the stripes.

Two recent cultivars have short leaves that grow in a swirl pattern. Both compact, low growers are attractive in containers. **Lemon Surprise** shares the color patterns of Lemon Lime. but the leaves have wavy edges. An extremely slow grower, it sunburns quickly in full sun. **White Jewel** has dark green leaves with white stripes. **Reflexa**, commonly called **Pleomele**, has an upright growth pattern that can suddenly veer off at odd angles. It naturally forms tight clumps which intertwine. The two leaf-color variations are listed here: **Song of India**, with yellow edges with green center stripes and **Song of Jamaica**, its less showy sister, with green on lighter green leaves. **Marginata**, now called **D. reflexa var. angustifolia**, has very narrow multicolored leaves as a bushy top over a leafless thin trunk. Other varieties are listed here:

- **Marginata** has a red edge with dark green centers.
- **Tricolor** has a pronounced dark-pink edge that fades to pink then white with a green center.
- **Colorama** has a more intense pink edge that doesn't fade.
- **Kiwi** has a combination of yellows and greens with a very narrow red edge.



Sanderiana's or lucky bamboo's cane-like stem resembles bamboo. With a maximum height of 2 feet, it is shorter than other dracaenas, and can grow completely in water (no soil required), making a great houseplant. Extremely popular in Asia, it is supposed to bring financial prosperity if put in the far-left corner of a room or house. Find it sold in decorative pots in Asian markets in groups of three or nine stalks. If what you want is improved relations with a partner, then use two stalks (one for each of you) in the far-right corner of a room or house. The variegated version in two shades of green is known as the ribbon plant.

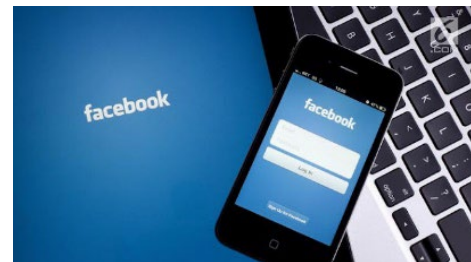
Surculose, a house plant, doesn't resemble other dracaenas. Its thin stems with short, dark-green oval leaves mottled in creamy white create a vine-like appearance. Developed in South Florida, it is sold under the name of Florida Beauty.

The availability of so many attractive choices may tempt you to add a dragon or more to your garden.

Social Media, Here We come!

By Debra Kramer, Master Gardener Volunteer

Now is the time for master gardener volunteers (MGVs) to expand their area of helping the public from the extension desk to social media. For instance, on a recent Facebook search, I counted over thirty gardening groups that have the word *Florida* in their names. Because of the popularity of social media, I believe that MGVs need to become more involved in giving advice through this source.



But it can be a tricky free-for-all in cyberspace for a variety of reasons. Someone posting the question has no knowledge of the experience level of the responder giving the most convincing advice. Responders believe their advice is correct, no matter how faulty it is. Master gardeners must give advice without putting down other responders offering misinformation. I have been participating in several gardening Facebook groups over the last several months and have suggestions to encourage master-gardener participation on social medial.

Start small. Choose one or two groups that interest you or have a large number of members. You will see the same kind of questions posted on Facebook that would be asked at the help desk. For example, these questions were recently posted on the Florida Backyard Gardening site:

- How do you deal with fire ants? They are horrible.
- What plant is this (picture of plant)?
- When hiring a company to remove a tree, what credentials should I ask about?
- What do you do to keep weeds out of a lawn?
- Has anyone used Tyvek as a weed barrier? How did it work out?
- Does anyone know what disease or pest is covering my plants (picture of plant)?



Join a group. This is a simple process. Most sites just ask you to follow the rules, and then the group administrator approves your membership within a few days. At this point the group posts will begin to arrive in your Facebook feed.

Pick your battles. You will read some advice that will make you cringe. If the misinformation is harmless, let it go. For instance, someone wants to know if applying a large amount of cinnamon onto a fire ant mound will kill ants. You know it will add a nice aroma to the area but won't affect the ants. In this case, there is no harm in trying, so don't counter the suggestion. Don't respond to every piece of bad information or you will feel overwhelmed.

Include University of Florida Sites. Identifying yourself as an MG is optional. But you can add links to IFAS publications to support your answers. For example, a response to a plant identification query can include a link to the IFAS fact sheet for that plant. You can also encourage participants to contact their county extension office and supply that link.

Keep your responses fact-based, neutral in tone and sprinkled with a dash of humor. If someone responds in a challenging manner, don't take it personally. Because our collective attention spans have been reduced to ten minutes or less, no one will recall the exchange once the next post comes along.

Feel free to post pictures of your own successes or failures. Have a nice native plant display? Are your tomatoes looking wimpy? A positive post will encourage readers. On the flip side, group members will learn from your mistakes.

Finally, if a group doesn't work for you, stop participating. It's time to try a new group.

Claim the time you spend on gardening sites as MG volunteer hours. Even if you don't post answers for every question, you are gleaning helpful information about the deficits of those attempting to garden in Florida.

Like it or not, social media has become the place where people look for help in all aspects of life, including gardening. We can pretend that this is a temporary situation and wait for a line to form at the help desk. Or we can overcome our distaste for social media to interact with a large number of fellow gardeners seeking help. Let's take advantage of the opportunity. See you on Facebook!

Pinellas Pines

By Linda Smock, Master Gardener

The first five letters of Pinellas spell "pine" – the tree for which our county is named. It was a common tree, covering much of the peninsula of what is now Pinellas County for centuries. The trees are seen throughout Florida, and you find them cultivated in the central, northeast, and northwest parts of Florida, where they are harvested and used for many products including paper, plywood, and utility poles.

These evergreens have long slim needles as leaves. These are grouped together into a "fascicle" with a variation in the number of needles determined by the type of pine. These needles live for several years but eventually turn brown and fall off, making pine straw, used for mulch. Pines reproduce with seeds but do not bear fruits or flowers. They instead produce male



and female cones, both on the same tree. The male cones produce pollen which is carried by the wind to the female cones. The ovules in the female cone are fertilized and begin their two-year maturation to become seeds. They are protected by the woody scales of the cone.

Five diverse types of pines are native to Pinellas County, and there are others that have been introduced. We will look only at those that are native and can still be found in Pinellas County.

For simplicity, we will divide the pines into groups by the letter their name starts with: S or L or in one case, SL. The pines that start with S have their needles in groups of two, while those that start with L have needles in groups of three. The slash pine, which has both the S and the L, has a combination of needles in twos and threes.

Pines that begin with L include the loblolly (*Pinus taeda*), common throughout parts of central and northern Florida, and may be seen in large stands used for commercial purposes. Another L is the longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*), once spread throughout Florida. It withstands lightning fires and provides native habitat for Florida wildlife.

The letter S pines include the sand pine (*Pinus clausa*), one with shorter needles and that grows best in sandy soils. Like the longleaf, it was common to Pinellas prior to so much development. The scientific name for the third pine is *serotina* but is commonly known as the pond pine (*Pinus serotina*). It looks much like the loblolly but may have tufts of needles growing from bulges on the trunk. As the name implies, it is usually found in wetter areas. It is in northern Pinellas with one in our Botanical Gardens.

The last pine native to Pinellas is the slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*), which like the loblolly, is a common tree on plantations, and is used for multiple wood products. You will find it in Pinellas in the native areas including our county parks and most of our city parks.

Pine trees produce oxygen for us and provide us with many products that we use daily. They add a beauty to our native landscapes and are a wonderful place for wildlife. They make a terrific addition to the yard and are a wonderful part of our native park areas. For more information about these amazing trees, check the IFAS document FOR21, Common Pines of Florida, by Niels Proctor and Martha Monroe.

Partner With Your HOA To Improve Your Landscape

By Evan Earle Jr., Master Gardener

My husband, Marion Yongue, and I moved into East Lake Woodlands in December 2018. One of our first projects at our new home was to introduce Florida native plants to our landscape which was predominantly St. Augustine Grass. By working closely with our HOA and following the by-laws and rules in place, we were able to propose a plan that was accepted by the HOA board of directors. The results have been very rewarding. We have added muhly grass, shiny leaf coffee, privet, beauty berry, coontie, Simpson stopper, Dahoon holly, silver buttonwood, spider lilies, and even a red bud to our landscape.



With the success we've achieved in our yard, we added natives to some of the common areas where we planted beach dune sunflower as a ground cover. We also created a new landscape area with saw palmetto, sunshine mimosa, and a silver buttonwood.

We have found that working with our HOA every step of the way has been successful. And our neighborhood is looking better (and more diverse) for it.

From Outdoor Gardening to Indoor Gardening

By Linda Smock, Master Gardener

Change. It's not easy for many of us, but it is always happening. Something is changing, and eventually for most of us, the time comes when we need to change the way we garden. It may happen due to health, accident, aging, or a move. For example, living in a condominium often means changing to indoor plants if no outdoor space is available.

How do we go about changing from our traditional gardening in our beautiful yards to container gardening? First, we need to realize that our attitude will make a difference, just as it does in all we go about doing. If we resent having to make this change, we need an attitude adjustment, and begin to think of it as a blessing that we can garden in containers.

Second, remember that many of the components are the same in gardening indoors as outdoors. You need good soil (unless you are growing hydroponically), you need the proper lighting, you need water, and you need healthy plants. Some of the insects and fungi of outdoor



gardening can also be problematic inside. But you won't have caterpillars or rabbits! No racoons will rob you of tomatoes and pineapple!

Next, do your research, just as you would for outdoor gardening. Decide on what type of gardening you want to do. Do you want to grow produce, do hydroponic gardening, have beautiful indoor plants to bring tranquility and joy to your home environment? There are books and internet resources galore to guide you. One suggestion is Gardening Solutions ([Indoor Gardens - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences \(ufl.edu\)](https://www.ifas.ufl.edu/indoor-gardens)). As you research, you will soon realize that growing vegetables other than a few herbs may be challenging unless you add lights. You will need to decide how much money you are willing to spend and may realize that indoor grown vegetables could cost more than purchasing them at the corner market. As with any project, you need to set your budget and stick to it.

You will also need to assess your space and determine what types of plants will work best for you. Do you have a screened area that receives some sunlight? Is there a small outdoor space where you can put a few containers, perhaps on the porch or steps? What directions do your windows face? Will plants be on shelving or on the floor? Do you need to limit your plants to ones that are small, perhaps succulents or African violets?

Also think about how much time you can spend with your plants. Some need watering more frequently, while others only need an occasional drink. How will you keep track of when to fertilize? As plants age, will you propagate or just toss them and buy new ones? Will you be shopping online or going to nurseries/stores/yard sales?

Finding the right containers can be fun and get your creative juices flowing. Consider things you have around your home but are not using including old shoes, cooking utensils, vases (especially for hydroponic plants). Make sure you have drainage and enjoy, realizing that many of these special containers will be in the garbage in a year or so! If you can get out of your home, check resale shops and yard sales for both traditional and non-traditional pots for your plants.

Yes, change is challenging. I know from experience, but I love my indoor garden plants just as I did my outdoor garden. It's different than digging in the dirt outside, but still gives me satisfaction. You can also have that satisfaction. Accept the change when the time comes and enjoy your new challenge.



Improve your living space with indoor gardening. Image by Linda Smock

Florida Native Plant Symposium - in the Gardens

By Margaret Gates and Jan Rosser

We are very excited to announce that the Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation will hold an in-person all day native plant symposium on March 5th, 2022, in the gardens at 12520 Ulmerton Road in Largo, Florida.

Botanical gardens are uniquely positioned to promote native plants in the landscape, while providing education about their value in natural settings. Recognizing this, many botanical gardens across the country have established an annual Native Plant Symposium.

This upcoming event has an enthusiastic steering committee made up of members of the Foundation's Education Committee (mostly Master Gardeners). Members of the steering committee are Margaret Gates - Chair, Vernon Bryant, Theresa Badurek, Janis Rosser, Alison Nourse-Miller, Pat Dieterich, Janet Kotash, Penny Cathey and Emily Bloxam.

The program has been designed with the goal of engaging, educating and **exciting** Symposium attendees, while appealing to a broad range of participants. It will involve both indoor presentations, as well as outdoor activities and UF/IFAS is also enthusiastically involved (see full schedule).



Our schedule will consist of two keynote presentations and various other break-out activities taking place throughout the Gardens, with the focus being, of course, on native plants. Included also are docent-led tours of some of the garden's native residents.

The keynote speakers include James Stevenson, whom you all know as presenting "infotainment" presentations, as well as, of course, wonderful content.

Also, we are pleased and excited to welcome Stacey Mattrazzo, Executive Director of the Florida Wildflower Foundation, whose keynote topic is "Native Plants for Florida Gardens".

Naturally, there will be a native plant sale! Also, informational tables will be on display down "Eco Alley" – the walkway to the auditorium. Not to be forgotten is a delicious box lunch. What can be better than a picnic in the gardens?

Importantly, since it is an Education Committee event, MG hours will be applicable.

Registration for both volunteers and participants will open in a few weeks and all participants must preregister. Cost is \$75 general admission including lunch. \$50 for foundation members including lunch.

The full schedule is listed at the bottom of the link.

<https://www.flbgfoundation.org/symposium>

Hope to see you there!

Registration will open around January 15th, and we urge speedy registration, since all events are capacity controlled.

How Much Food Can You Grow On Your City Lot?

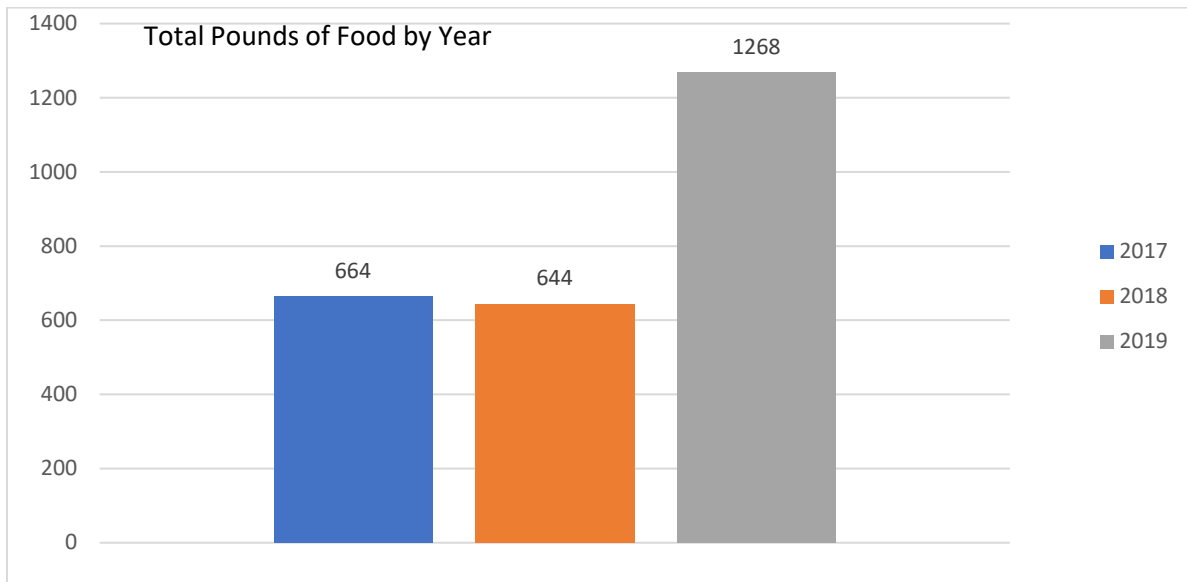
By Jay Gould, Master Gardener Volunteer

I "farm" on a wedge-shaped lot in the heart of south Pinellas County, the most densely populated county in the state. My homestead measures 120 feet on the south side, the longest. The north side is 19 feet shorter producing a wedge with a base of 106 feet to the east and about 65 feet on the west, street side.

On this pie slice sits a three-bedroom house, a circular paved driveway, and an 18' X 36' pool with two patios. On the remaining open space, there are 14 4X8 feet raised beds and three in-ground beds. The total cultivated growing surface is just over 600 square feet.

The most generous measure of food production includes bananas harvested from two large mats and papayas and pineapples randomly grown in free spaces. Also, overly heavy produce like cabbages and watermelons are included the total numbers.

Given these most favorable conditions, the Excel spreadsheet produced the following results for the growing seasons of 2017, 2018, and 2019. The growing season runs from September through May, so 2017 season starts September 2017 and ends in May 2018.



Wow! Over a thousand pounds in one season, but those watermelons really might inflate what a “kitchen” garden can produce.

Let’s limit the analysis to the traditional vegetables like string beans, carrots, beets, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumbers, and, of course, tomatoes. The lightweight, limited volume crops like spinach, kale, cilantro, arugula, and lettuce have also been removed. The staples remain.

Sum of lbs.	2017	2018	2019	Grand Total
Beans, green	12.3	8.9	31.9	53.2
Beets	2.5	20.9	45.4	68.8
Broccoli	9.6	2.0	24.0	35.6
Cabbage	53.1	16.1	88.9	158.1
Carrots	5.3	29.5	58.5	93.3
Cauliflower	8.2	8.4	43.9	60.4
Cucumber	11.8	37.7	35.0	84.4
Eggplant	45.3	9.6	85.8	140.8
Lettuce	3.1	1.9	12.2	17.1
Peppers	12.8	37.1	39.5	89.4
Tomatoes	4.1	25.0	237.7	266.8
Grand Total	168.0	197.3	702.8	1068.1

So, about 200 pounds a year and then an explosion in 2019! What happened? A new interest in preserving large crops by pickling and canning. Memories of pickled beets and cauliflower encouraged expanded bed space allocated to beets and cauliflower. 12 large plastic pots (20/30 gallon) were squeezed between the beds to add additional capacity for tomatoes.

Who can resist home-made salsa? And Better Boy, Juliet and Gardener’s Delight can deliver over 40 pounds of tomatoes per plant!



Looking at the specific crop level, here are the productivity numbers for 2019. All plants were spaced following the Square Foot gardening methodology (plants spaced according to a grid 12" on each side).

- Beets 45.4 pounds from one bed of 32 square feet, almost 1.5 pounds per square foot
- Carrots 58.5 pounds from one bed of 32 square feet, a bit less than two pounds per square foot.
- Cauliflower 43.9 pounds from 48 square feet, a bit less than one pound per square foot.
- Tomatoes 237.7 pounds from 48 square feet, a tad under five pounds per square foot!

Looks like even a small city plot can provide enough veggies for immediate consumption and preserving via pickling or canning. Don't let space considerations limit your farming activities.

Pinellas Master Gardeners Earn Statewide Award

By Ellen Mahany, Master Gardener Volunteer

A group of Pinellas County master gardeners has earned the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Award of Excellence for Beatification for their major renovation of five gardens at Folly Farms Nature Preserve in Safety Harbor.

The nine participants are Leslie Zambito, team leader; Gary Sawtelle, co-team leader; Barbara Berman, Janet DeLiso, Sandy Huff, Anna Marchand, Elsa Sota, Angela Strain, and Carol Zieres. They are seen here hard at work on the Folly Farm grounds.





Leslie Zambito states the purpose of this project is “to showcase the beauty and variety of native plants while demonstrating their use in conventional landscaping. It provides the inspiration and education to home gardeners (right plant, right place) for the creation of wildlife corridors. In all of the gardens the common theme is to showcase native and Florida friendly plants with emphasis on butterflies and pollinators.”

The five gardens are George’s Garden, Butterfly Labyrinth, Meadows Garden, Rain Garden and, finally, the Wind Garden, filled with native plants, pictured below.



To access the list of native plants in the gardens [click here](#).

I’m Afraid of the Water

By Rebekah Heppner, Pinellas County Master Gardener and Florida Water Steward

I come by my fear of water naturally—or “nurturally” you might say. My mother was afraid of the water and passed that fear on to me. But I am also a Pisces, the water sign, and I love to look at water and occasionally spend time in or on it, so go figure. After participating in the [Florida Water Stewardship Program](#) led by Lara Milligan, Pinellas County’s Natural Resources Extension Agent, I love water even more and I am not so much afraid OF the water as I am afraid FOR the water. The overall message of the course was this: Our water is in trouble. It needs our help, and we as future water stewards were challenged to answer, “Who speaks for water?” by saying “I do!”





What did I learn that made me so enamored of and worried about our water that I'm willing to speak for it? I'll share here a few of the interesting details along with some fun facts, both cautionary and hopeful from the class here, but really, you should enroll in this program yourself. There is so much more to learn.

Fun facts:

- You can calculate your water footprint using this [water calculator](#). Who knew that eating meat was such a big water user?
- Did you know 70 % of earth is water, but only 2.5 % of that is fresh water and only .3% is useable by humans, meaning not locked in ice or underground or in the atmosphere?
- In Florida, 95% of the water we use is groundwater, flowing through the Floridan Aquifer which holds more than a quadrillion gallons. Sounds like plenty, I know, but we don't live evenly spread over the state and we are already maxing out the water available near major population areas—like all of Pinellas County.
- You won't be surprised that the top two pollutants in Florida are nitrogen and phosphorous. The third is fecal coliform from leaky septic tanks. I did not want to know that.

We were also reminded that [urban forests control stormwater runoff and improve water quality](#).

Much of our class was online, but we did manage to get in a few field trips. At the [South Cross Bayou Advanced Water Reclamation Facility](#), we learned that “flushable” just means something will literally flush down the toilet, it doesn't mean that it biodegrades. The folks at South Cross have to fish out all sorts of disgusting stuff and send it to the solid waste department. Interesting, though, to learn that they also have a pelletizer facility that creates fertilizer pellets from the “solids” that *are* supposed to get flushed. You can't buy them, though, they are already spoken for by fertilizer companies that sell them for use in orange groves, palm nurseries and sod farms.



Water steward class. Image by Rebekah Heppner



The online portion of our class, both via ZOOM meetings and on our own, was kept lively with videos, personal stories and guest speakers. I watched all ten videos in a series titled [Ahead of the Tide](#) about how climate change affects Florida. Did you know: “Sunny day flooding” is now a regular thing in parts of Miami? And that both seawalls and beach renourishment are bad ideas? You’ll definitely want to know that if water levels rise into your septic tank your toilet flushes into your bathtub.

The video [Ocean Confetti](#) was a reminder that plastic litter can accumulate bacteria and other contaminants that end up being eaten by sea creatures that are then eaten by fish that are then eaten by us. Microplastics don’t just come from degrading grocery bags. Personal care products contain them, and synthetic clothing leaches them when it’s washed. There is a great deal of research going on in this fairly new and very troubling area.

Another fun fact: Florida is home to the largest concentration of freshwater springs anywhere. We have more than 700. But there is reason to worry about them too, as reported in this article in nonother than [National Geographic magazine](#).

The Suncoast Chapter of the Surfriders Foundation was part of panel discussion, live via Zoom. They have a program to encourage [Ocean Friendly Gardens](#). Turns out Ocean Friendly Gardens sound an awful lot like gardening for bees and butterflies. Those natives aren’t just good for our pollinators; they don’t need fertilizer or pesticides that pollute our water, so “win-win.”

For the record, we covered some highly technical stuff, too, but I’ll spare you those details. Just be assured I can now talk TMDLs and BMAPs with the best of them. And I know that all of Pinellas County is part of a Water Resource Caution Area, meaning there will not be enough water to meet projected twenty-year demands. Afraid for water yet?

I was surprised that so many of my classmates already had a strong background in the highly technical aspects of water and must admit that some of the material was a bit too technical for me, but I still learned a great deal and I didn’t have to go back to school for a science degree. And none of my classmates, and certainly not Lara, ever made me or anyone else feel less capable. We all had something to bring to the class discussions.

It was a wonderful and informative experience and I’d encourage every Master Gardener to become a Florida Water Steward. [Sign up](#) and start speaking for water. There’s really no need to be afraid.

Winter Blooms at Wall Springs Park Butterfly Garden

by Karen Brown Master Gardener Volunteer. All images by Karen Brown.

The butterfly garden at Walls Springs Park in Northern Pinellas County offers blooms even in winter. Master Gardener Melinda Vargas and I are responsible for maintenance of this garden, which we designed and developed in 2018. Winter visitors can see the below plants in bloom.



Panama Rose (Rodelia stigosa)



Brazilian Buttonbush (Centratherum punctatum)



Teabush (Melochia tomentosa)



Lady Margaret Pipevine (Passiflora incarnata)



Barleria (Barleria micans)



Firebush (Hamelia patens)



Firecracker plant (Russelia equiseti formis)



Climbing Aster (Ampelaster carolineas)

Tell us About your Project!

We the editors of The Dirt want to spotlight Master Gardener projects so everyone can hear about them. If you are working on a project you would like to share, please let us know. We can help write an article through an interview process. The goal is to highlight the great work our volunteers are doing in the community. Reach out to us using the email below. Thank you!



Submit Your Articles and Pictures to The Dirt

The Dirt is published January, April, June, and October for Master Gardeners by Master Gardeners. The deadline for the next issue is April 7, 2022. If you would like to submit an article or photo feature, see the following guidelines:

- Articles should be 250 to 300 words.
- The topic can be anything you would like to share to educate your fellow gardeners.
- You may send pictures, poetry, or garden-related articles.
- Submit only Word documents, not PDF, so that edits are possible.
- Send tips or information about a community or Master Gardener project for a potential article.
- Send photos as attachments and include proper attribution.
- Send submissions to Susan Ladwig at ladwig.susan@gmail.com

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