

Educating with Extension



By Brynn Morey, Extension Coordinator, and in collaboration with Alicia Betancourt, Shelly Krueger, and Maria Quirico

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FEBRUARY HAPPENINGS



American Heart Month
Pesticide Safety Education
Awareness Month!

February 8th & 15th
Marathon Garden Club Open Nursery Sales. 9AM –12PM
5270 Overseas Hwy. Marathon



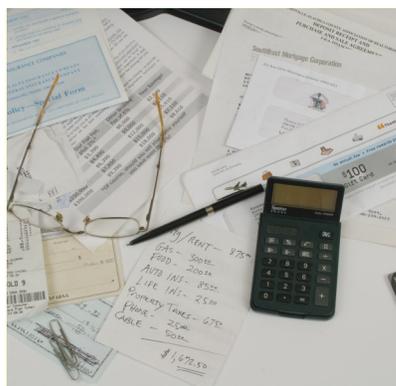
January 15th
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
County Offices Closed



February 17th Key West
Tropical Forest and Botanical Garden Native Plant Sale
9AM-12PM 5210 College Rd.

February 17th
Random Acts of Kindness Day!
Do something kind to a friend or stranger!!!

February 27th
National Strawberry Day!!



Is 2024 the End of the Paper Check?

By Alicia Betancourt
Extension Director

Imagine you mail a check to pay a bill, and someone stole it. The thieves altered it, cashed it, and cleaned out your account. If you catch it quickly, you can contact the bank and reverse the charges, but sometimes you can't. If the thieves cashed it through a second bank, you may have to wait weeks for that bank to investigate. Most of us are not using checks regularly. But are you still making payments by mail to medical providers or insurance companies? Now is an excellent time to stop. According to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, check fraud tied to mail theft is up 30% nationwide. There are several types of check fraud.

Counterfeit Checks: Counterfeit checks involve the creation of fake checks that closely resemble legitimate ones. Fraudsters use advanced printing techniques to replicate bank logos, watermarks, and other security features, making it difficult for individuals and businesses to discern the authenticity of the checks.

Forged Signatures: Forging signatures is a classic method of check fraud. Criminals may steal a checkbook and sign the owner's name without their knowledge. Modern technology has made it easier to mimic signatures, making this form of fraud prevalent.

Altered Checks: Altering checks involves changing the payee's name, the amount, or other details on a legitimate check. Criminals may use chemicals or other methods to erase or modify the ink, turning a genuine check into a fraudulent one.

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Plant Clinics

- 1st & 3rd Saturday
Plant Clinic
9 a.m. to Noon
Key Deer Refuge Nature Cntr.
30587 O/S Hwy.
Big Pine Key
- Tuesday, February 6th
Plant Clinic
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Key West Garden Club
1100 Atlantic Blvd.
Key West
- Wednesday, February 7th
Plant Clinic
9 a.m. to Noon
Key Largo Library
101485 O/S Hwy.
Key Largo
- Saturday, February 17th
Plant Clinic
9 a.m. to Noon
Marathon Home Depot
4555 O/S Hwy,
Marathon
- Saturday, February 17th
Plant Clinic
9 a.m. to Noon
KW Botanical Garden Nursery
5210 College Rd.
Stock Island
- Tuesday, February 20th
Plant Clinic
9 a.m. 11 a.m.
Garden Club of Upper Keys
94040 O/S Hwy.
Tavernier
- Thursday, February 22nd
Plant Clinic
9:30 a.m. 12:30 p.m.
Island Home Nursery
88720 O/S Hwy,
Islamorada

Sea Grant News



Shelly Krueger
UF/IFAS Florida Sea Grant Agent

Shelly recently accomplished the following activities:

- Shelly is a technical advisor for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve sponge advisory board. They held their inaugural meeting to start planning an EPA-grant funded pilot project to restore sponges in the Bay. Shelly and the FWC were on hand to help with technical considerations on the new methods they are considering and the sponge species to choose.



- Shelly assisted Dr. Steven Scyphers' group from the University of South Alabama reach relevant stakeholder groups for interviews at Key West City Hall and other locations related to a NOAA Adaptations Sciences Program grant. The objectives are to research end-users involved in conservation, community planning, and climate adaptation. The group of 6 were in Monroe County for a week to talk to residents and resource managers to understand stakeholder attitudes regarding the benefits, consequences, and trade-offs of coastal flood protection decisions across diverse social and environmental contexts.

- Shelly presented to over 115 attendees on Florida Keys Water Watch Sponge Restoration Aquaculture at the Florida Sea Grant Symposium. University of Florida leadership was well represented, researchers, students, and faculty at this biannual event in Gainesville.
- The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council communication staff were in Key West where they were scanning historic fishing photos at the Florida Keys Seafood Festival. People interested in having their photos scanned can contact our office. If you are interested in looking at Monroe County historical photos, the Florida Keys History Center has an amazing repository online at https://www.flickr.com/search/?user_id=97623182%40N00&view_all=1&text=fishing. Many thanks to Dr. Corey Malcom for providing these resources!



The Environmental Horticulture Program and Master Gardener Volunteers remain dedicated to helping you with your plant related questions.



CALL OUR OFFICE:
(305)292-4501

We have many different ways we can assist!

VISIT OUR OFFICE:

Email Monroe@ifas.ufl.edu or
Call (305)292-4501 to schedule an appointment

EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:
mastergardener@monroecounty-fl.gov

Please include a detailed description of the problem and photos if available

FACEBOOK PAGE:

Visit our Facebook page for updates, requests, information and so much more!

<https://www.facebook.com/MonroeCountyExtension>



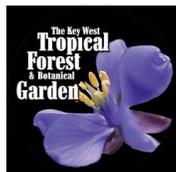
Horticulture News



Maria Quirico
UF/IFAS Environmental Horticulture Agent

Maria recently accomplished the following activities:

- In January, Maria Quirico engaged in various community engagement and education activities. Highlights include the radio interview on US 1 Radio, the plant walk with Master Gardeners, and attending meetings to enhance personal and team effectiveness.



- On January 18th, Maria had a meeting with the Montessori school and the Key West Tropical Forest and Botanical Garden to organize the native plant labeling of the Key West City Hall gardens, further strengthening collaborations and initiatives aimed at promoting native plant species and environmental awareness within the local community.

- Maria visited plant clinics to offer support and guidance, underscoring her commitment to horticultural education and outreach. Participation in events like the Master Gardeners gathering and the Native Plant Day further solidifies Maria's dedication to promoting sustainable gardening practices and environmental stewardship within the community.



Be sure to "Like" us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)!

Extension Director's News

Alicia Betancourt
 UF/IFAS Family and Community Development Agent and
 Monroe County Extension Director

Alicia recently accomplished the following activities:

- Alicia is continuing work on the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant and the advisory team has identified projects that will be drafted into the Priority Action Plan. This plan will be completed in March 2024. The identified projects include high-priority, near-term emissions reductions.



- Alicia and intern Victoria are working with communities designated by FEMA Community Disaster Redevelopment Zones (CDRZ) to show them how to access technical assistance and funding specifically for them. They are working with 13 CDRZ communities in South East Florida under the Climate Navigators project.



- Alicia presented Preparing for Climate Change; Steps, Strategies, and Methods to 42 nationally recognized Extension specialists, researchers, and agents. This workshop was in preparation for developing a Cooperative Extension Climate Framework in February.
- Alicia spoke on the radio about easy New Year's resolutions.



Continued from page 1

Account Takeover: Account takeover occurs when fraudsters gain unauthorized access to a bank account, allowing them to issue fraudulent checks or manipulate existing ones. This scam often involves phishing, identity theft, or exploiting weak online security measures.

The best prevention is to stop using checks and use a credit card instead, providing much more protection from fraud. Safeguarding checkbooks and other sensitive financial documents is crucial. Locking them securely away helps prevent unauthorized access and reduces the risk of physical check theft.

Find alternative ways to pay. I have noticed that more companies provide a QR code link to pay online. Check the bill for online instructions. If you need to pay an individual, ask if they accept electronic payment through bank transfer or a cash app. You can call and request phone payments if you have a bill without online payment options.

If you're using the mail or a carrier, take it directly to them and get a tracking number. Experts advise using a black gel pen to write checks; it is the hardest to "wash" out. If you send a check, follow up and ensure it arrives. Stop payment if it takes more than a couple of weeks.

Lastly, keep a low balance in your checking account and link a savings account. Thieves will have access to fewer funds if your account gets compromised.

Call your bank immediately if you suspect a check has fallen into the wrong hands. Then file a police report.

As technology advances, so does the sophistication of check fraud schemes. Staying vigilant, adopting enhanced security measures, and embracing digital alternatives are essential steps in mitigating the risks associated with check fraud.

MONROE COUNTY MASTER GARDENER COURSE

UF/IFAS Monroe County extension service Florida Master Gardener learning program, scheduled to run from February 22 to April 25, 2024. This comprehensive program, spanning eight weeks with classes every Thursday, will delve into various horticulture topics such as:

- Botany
- Entomology
- Florida Friendly Landscaping
- Volunteer Service
- Plant Identification, Selection, and Use
- Pesticide Safety
- Turfgrass Management
- Vegetable Gardening
- Proper Pruning Practices
- Palm Biology
- Diagnosing Plant Problems

Register using the QR code below or
 Call our office to register

Dates: February 22 to April 25, 2024
 Day: Thursdays
 Time: 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
 Location: Online & Marathon Library
 Cost: \$200 includes class registration
 and class materials



Questions: call (305)292-4501 or email monroe@ifas.ufl.edu

UF | IFAS Extension
 UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



Florida-Friendly
 Landscaping PROGRAM



UF/IFAS/MONROE COUNTY EXTENSION

1100 Simonton Street, Suite 2-260, Key West, FL 33040
 102050 Overseas Hwy., Suite 244, Key Largo, FL 33037

KW Phone: 305-292-4501 KL Phone: 305-453-8747
 KW Fax: 305-292-4415 KL Fax: 305-453-8749

General e-mail: monroe@ifas.ufl.edu
 County Extension Director: Alicia Betancourt
 Newsletter Editor: Brynn Morey, Extension Coordinator

This newsletter can be accessed online at:
<http://monroe.ifas.ufl.edu/newsletter.shtml>

We're on the Web at: <http://monroe.ifas.ufl.edu>



University of Florida (UF)
<http://SolutionsForYourLife.ufl.edu>
<http://ufl.edu>
 Electronic Data Information Source (EDIS)
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>



UF/IFAS Extension is
 Putting Florida First

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An Equal Opportunity Institution. UF/IFAS Extension, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Andra Johnson, Dean and Director. Single copies of UF/IFAS Extension publications (excluding 4-H and youth publications) are available free to Florida residents from county UF/IFAS Extension offices. <https://ics.ifas.ufl.edu/ufifas-diversity-and-legalee-statements/>

UF/IFAS/MCES QUARTERLY CONTACTS

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Totals
Phone calls	26	35	35	96
Office visitors	31	29	12	72
Email Consultations	85	72	105	262
Learning events	20	20	28	68
Participants	445	140	351	936
Media submissions	8	10	7	25
Publications distributed	156	108	158	422
TOTAL contacts	771	414	696	1,881

Food Waste/Compost Presentation & Seed Sowing Project

Monroe County Horticulture Agent, Maria Quirico & Melody Tuschel, Recycling Coordinator for Monroe County Solid Waste Management talk about composting food waste and sowing seeds. This event is FREE! No Registration required.

Date: Feb. 13th
 Time: 10AM - 12PM
 Monroe County Public Library
 Marathon Branch
 3490 Overseas Hwy.

Date: Feb. 20th
 Time: 11AM - 1PM
 Monroe County Public Library
 Islamorada Branch
 81830 Overseas Hwy.

Date: Feb. 24th
 Time: 11AM - 1PM
 Monroe County Public Library
 Key West Branch
 700 Flemming St.

Date: Mar. 2nd
 Time: 2PM - 4PM
 Monroe County Public Library
 Big Pine Key Branch
 213 Key Deet Blvd.

Date: Mar. 28th
 Time: 12PM - 2PM
 Monroe County Public Library
 Key Largo Branch
 101485 Overseas Hwy.



CPR Training 

for Adults, Children & Infants

Monroe County Extension will be offering CPR Certification courses throughout the Keys!

Wednesday February 14th 10AM 6 Spots left!

Location: Plantation Key Community Center
 53 High Point Rd. Plantation Key.....

Tuesday March 14th CPR & First Aid 9AM

Location: Historic Gato Building 1100 Simonton St. Key West

Tuesday March 19th CPR & First Aid 9AM

Location: Historic Gato Building 1100 Simonton St. Key West

Availability is limited. CPR class is \$31 & First Aid/CPR is \$41

Please contact our office if you have questions or if you would like to register for this course (305) 292-4501