

FLEPPC's Kathy Craddock Burks Education and Outreach Grant Program

By Jennifer Possley, FLEPPC Education Grant Committee Chair

INTRODUCTION

Eleven years since inception, FLEPPC's Kathy Craddock Burks Education and Outreach Grant program is still going strong. To date, the program has provided funding for more than 65 different invasive plant education programs. Each year, grant committee members carefully consider all applications, looking for projects that creatively engage the public. In this issue of *Wildland Weeds*, we feature reports from six previous recipients. More information on the program can be found at <http://www.fleppc.org/edgrants.html>.

1. Know the Enemy – Exotic Invasive Plants of Colt Creek State Park

By Scott Spaulding, Park Manager, Colt Creek State Park,
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Colt Creek State Park, formerly known as the C. M. Overstreet Ranch, was purchased from the Overstreet Family in 2006 and opened to the public as Florida's 160th state park in January of 2007. As we began to manage the park we encountered numerous exotic invasive plant species. Through the course of treating and removing them we felt it necessary and prudent to inform the public of what we were doing and why. Therefore, with the money we received from the FLEPPC's Kathy Craddock Burks Education Grant, we were able to purchase and install two custom made interpretive signs. One sign titled "Know the Enemy" describes four of the most prevalent and invasive plant species found in the park, while the second, "Know the Friends" sign describes six native plant species found throughout the region. In addition we planted samples of the native species below the sign and mounted a box which holds brochures produced in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the University of Florida IFAS Extension. The brochures titled "Invasive Plants You Should Know" identify the same invasive plants as seen on the interpretive sign and can be taken home by visitors for future reference. We are grateful for the funding we received as it made this form of public education and outreach possible.

2. Seminole County Natural Lands Program

By Sherry Williams, SCNLP Biologist
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The Seminole County Natural Lands Program (SCNLP) was established in 1990 and currently manages 13 properties totaling over 6,000 acres. Since inception, SCNLP has been



SCOTT SPAULDING

The FLEPPC education grant-funded sign is prominently featured at Colt Creek State Park.

educating the public on exotic invasive species. SCNLP's Ed Yarborough Nature Center provides environmental education programs for Seminole County public and private schools by request. Part of the education program discusses exotic invasive species and how they disrupt the normal functions of the ecosystem.

One of the most prevalent exotic invasive species in Seminole County is air potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*). In 2002, SCNLP began holding an "Air Potato Raid" at Spring Hammock Preserve to help remove this species from the property and to educate the public about exotic invasive species. The event combines volunteer work and education with a celebratory atmosphere, and includes prizes for the most pounds of potatoes collected, the hairiest potato, the largest potato, etc. Many participants return every year, bringing new volunteers with them. Over the past 10 years more than 40,000 pounds of air potato have been collected during our Air Potato Raid.

In 2010, SCNLP received FLEPPC's Kathy Craddock Burks education grant to expand their air potato outreach. A brochure focusing on air potato identification and removal was developed and distributed at various environmental events including Earth Day, Native Plant Awareness Day and the 2011 Air Potato Raid held by Seminole County and the Central Florida Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area. This latter event included both Seminole and Orange County properties as well as the Cities of Orlando, Casselberry, Altamonte Springs, and Winter Springs. A total of 706 volunteers collected 7,138 pounds of air potato and all received an air potato brochure.



SHERRY WILLIAMS

Potato Raiders from Lake Howell High School at Spring Hammock Park as part of the CF-CISMA Air Potato Mega-Raid.

3. “It’s A Jungle Out There” Invasive Plant Workshop And Tree Giveaway

By Linda Dye, Florida Master Gardener Volunteer and Fund Raising Chair of UF/IFAS Santa Rosa County Master Gardener Association
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**“It’s a jungle out there
Disorder and confusion everywhere
No one seems to care
Well I do.”**

Taking its theme from the Randy Newman lyric “It’s a Jungle Out There,” the UF/IFAS Santa Rosa County Master Gardeners conducted a two-hour invasive plant workshop and tree giveaway on November 5, 2011 at the UF/IFAS Santa Rosa County Extension Office in Milton. The event was publicized in varying formats, including newspaper articles, posters, flyers, and the Internet. Specific goals for the event included: (1) increasing awareness of common invasive trees and plants in area landscapes, (2) educating participants regarding control options for invasive plants, (3) encouraging the use of native trees and plants, (4) providing each participant two quality trees to replace invasive ones, and (5) assessing the workshop’s impact through pre- and post-tests.

“It’s a Jungle Out There” began with a workshop conducted by Theresa Friday, Residential Horticulture Extension Agent for Santa Rosa County. In her presentation, Friday emphasized the impact of invasive plants on biodiversity, wildlife habitat, and the economies of Florida and the U.S. She then went on to describe 16 invasive plant species common to Santa Rosa County, taught proper removal and disposal techniques, and gave suggestions for replacement plants. In addition to seeing photos of the featured invasive plants, seminar participants viewed live specimens. Participants were asked to “think locally and act neighborly” by telling friends, family, neighbors and others about invasive species.

Each member of the capacity audience of 104 participants received a folder of educational materials and two native trees. All printed materials were funded by FLEPPC’s Kathy Craddock Burks Education and Outreach Grant. Native trees were funded by a grant from International Paper and purchased from a local wholesaler at a reduced cost. Each participant was able to take home a 3-gallon tree and a 1-gallon tree from a choice of seven different species.

This program was both fun and effective. The auditorium was decorated with invasive plant specimens and inflatable jungle animals. Educational door prizes were provided as well. Workshop participants were given a pre-test and post-test to measure the effectiveness of our program. The mean score on the pre-test was 68% and the mean score on the post-test was 92%. More than three fourths of workshop participants scored 100% on the post-test. Ninety-eight participants took a written pledge to scout their landscapes, remove invasive species and properly dispose of them.

4. Plant This, Not That! Invasive and Native Plant Family Education Day at Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreational Area

By Lauren Swanson, Parks Services Specialist
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On March 10, 2012, Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area hosted a one-day event entitled “Plant This, *Not That!*” The family-friendly event provided several opportunities for residents of Flagler and other nearby counties to learn about the benefits of removing non-native invasive plants and planting Florida’s native flora.

The day began with a seminar with attendance by over 50 guests. Park Service Biologist Alice Bard informed people of native alternatives to landscaping, the benefits of native planting, and convinced everyone you can have a beautiful, colorful yard all year long with native Florida plants! Many guests stayed for the hike along the Joe Kenner Nature Trail at the park. The hike demonstrated a wide array of plants and gave visitors a chance to see up close and personal the wide variety of natives in the area. The event wrapped up with a wonderful watercolor workshop featuring paintings of beautiful native wildflowers.

The park was awarded funds from FLEPPC’s Kathy Craddock Burks Education and Outreach Grant to help fund the program. With these funds we were able to publicize the event with posters, purchase copies of the UF/IFAS publication “Invasive and Other Non-Native Plants Recognition Guide,” which were given out to the first 30 guests, and provide each guest with their very own Florida native plant, *Gaillardia pulchella*.

The event successfully reached out to guests by using recreation, information and the arts while instilling the importance of protecting Florida’s ecosystems with natives!

5. Flip: A Florida Invasive Plant Species Mobile Field Guide

By Marcia Anderson Clark, Senior Environmental Specialist,
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When trying to identify invasive plant species in Florida, wouldn't it be nice to have a user-friendly field guide at your fingertips? Now you can, by accessing a new web-based application called FLIP. The FLIP project was funded by the FLEPPC 2011 Kathy Craddock Burks Education and Outreach Grant awarded to the Orange County Environmental Protection Division for the development of a web-based application that would allow for easy identification of common invasive plant species. FLIP stands for Florida Invasive Plants and is designed to be a mobile field guide that can be accessed by a computer, smart phone, tablet, or other device with internet browser capability.



Developed in partnership with the University of South Florida (USF), FLIP contains 19 of the 2011 Category I invasive species and one Category II species, as designated by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (FLEPPC). The

FLIP application combines valuable information from the USF Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants, as well as Orange County staff knowledge, descriptions and photographs. It is intended to reach 10,000 people or more in an average year.

From the homepage, you can search for an invasive plant by common name, scientific name, or by using a set of characteristics (i.e. flower color). Each species has an information page with the following details: origin, ecological impact, description, identification tips, plant history, range, and prevention/management strategies. Scroll down the page further to find photos to help with identifications. Don't know what the term "rachis" means? Just click on the glossary button to find the definition. This application is designed for everyone, from the average student to the experienced plant enthusiast or professional. It also has the ability to be expanded in the future to include all of the species included on the FLEPPC invasive plant list.

FLIP can be accessed from the Orange County Water Atlas at www.orange.wateratlas.org

6. Spreading the Word About Invasive Plants to the Town of Hastings

By Shelby E. Jack, Hastings Town Manager, tohclerk@windstream.net

Shelby E. Jack, Hastings Town Manager, gets asked all sorts of questions throughout her day. When many questions took the form of, "I think I have Kudzu (*Pueraria montana*) taking over my land" or "I have a vine that grows potatoes" or "I have an evergreen shrub with these red lingering berries" or "I have a

plant coming up with thorns that produces a fruit like a small watermelon," she knew some education was in order for herself and her residents.

The rural Town of Hastings is the Potato capital of Florida and is located in St. Johns County. In 2011, Shelby E. Jack partnered with Amy Meide of the St. Johns County Environmental Division to apply for a Kathy Craddock Burks education grant from the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council. The \$500 award they received was used to create a single page informational sheet on the Top Four invasive plant species in the Town of Hastings: Air Potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*), Japanese Climbing Fern (*Lygodium japonicum*), Coral Ardisia (*Ardisia crenata*), and Tropical Soda Apple (*Solanum viarum*). The one-page fact sheet provided color photographs on these species and information about identification, origins, and control methods.

To distribute the fact sheet, Ms. Jack turned to a means most all of her residents would receive, utility bills. The fact sheets were included in Hastings Utility Bills for the month of September, 2011 and also available at the Town Hall, Hastings Branch library and Post Office community board. Tony Cubbedge, Land Resource Manager for St. Johns County provided information about the grant and the top four invasive plants at the October 10, 2011 Hastings Town Hall Meeting. Mr. Cubbedge answered several questions about the origin and best treatment methods of these invasive plant species. A treatment day for air potato followed on October 25, 2011 at the Cora C. Harrison Preserve, a park site recently acquired with grant funding from the Florida Communities Trust.

With many small governmental organizations strapped for funding, the Kathy Craddock Burks education grant allowed the Town of Hastings to spread the word about some of the aggressive invasive plants residents were encountering and the best methods to control them. To learn more about the Top Four invasive plant species in Hastings or to receive a fact sheet, contact Ms. Shelby E. Jack at 904-692-1420.

Congratulations to the 2012 Grant Recipients!

- Rosalind Rowe, *Florida guidelines for disposal of terrestrial invasive plants.*
- UF/IFAS Extension, Calhoun County, via applicant Judy Ludlow, *Invasive plant management workshop & tradeshow: "Tools of the trade for the private landowner."*
- Miami-Dade County, Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces, Natural Areas Management Division, via applicants Joanne Case and Eduardo Salcedo, *Natural Areas Management and TERRA Environmental Academy partnership for the management of Kendall Indian Hammocks Park.*
- Central Florida CISMA, via applicant Sherry Williams, *CF-CISMA Tabletop display.*
- Anglers for Conservation, via applicants Karen and Rodney Smith, *"Escape the invasive invasion" [invasive plant videos].*