

Osceola County's **SOLUTIONS** *for your LIFE*

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Welcome to the first issue of the new Extension Services newsletter. Through our partnership between the Osceola County Board of County Commissioners, the University Of Florida and the United States Department of Agriculture, we work to bring you current, researched based, unbiased information that will help you, your family, and your business. This newsletter will highlight the volunteer groups, such as the Home and Community Education clubs, the Master Gardeners, 4-H, Florida LAKEWATCH and Florida Master Naturalists that assist us in extending our educational message through classes, the plant clinic, workshops, newspaper, TV, etc. This newsletter will be different from *TIDBIT* and *Roots and Shoots*. Through this new look we hope to highlight our partner, the University of Florida's theme of Solutions for YOUR Life, and introduce you to educational programs and subjects that will expand your knowledge of the Osceola County Extension Services mission and variety of services. We want to help you find the Solutions for YOUR life.

Mary Beth Salisbury,
County Extension Director

Exercise: An Eight Letter Word

By Mary Beth Salisbury, Family & Consumer Science

It seems exercise is one of those things the average person plans to do, but is the one thing they might not make the time to do for themselves.

Exercise has many purposes. It improves flexibility, builds muscle and tone, reduces and relieves tension, improves lung strength, helps to improve the efficiency of insulin, improves your quality of sleep, reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and assists in weight loss. In past years it was believed that you had to exercise continuously for thirty or more minutes to receive a benefit from exercise. Now we know that even short spurts of exercise

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HYDRILLA: Help Stop the Spread!

By Dr. Tina Bond, Aquatics

Osceola County was awarded a \$2.881 million dollar grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to find new and alternative methods to control hydrilla and hygrophila in the Upper Kissimmee Chain of Lakes. What are hydrilla and hygrophila? They are two very invasive submerged aquatic plants that grow very quickly in the warm waters in Florida. Hydrilla and hygrophila were introduced to the United States in the 1950's and 60's by the aquarium trade to be used as



aquarium plants. Unfortunately, the plants were released and have become a very large and expensive problem for Florida and many other states in the U.S.

Hydrilla and hygrophila are very difficult to control. One of the big problems with hydrilla is that it has become resistant to fluridone, a herbicide that used to work very well at killing hydrilla. Mechanical harvesters can be used to harvest hydrilla, but this can make the

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problem worse. Harvesters fragment the aquatic plants which help it spread. Harvesters are also non-selective, which means they will harvest anything, including fish, turtles or other desirable species. Grass carp are a very good biological control option; however we cannot use them in the Kissimmee Chain because of permitting regulations established by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Barriers are required by the FFWCC in order to contain the carp in a closed system because grass carp eat everything and can harm native fish populations due to their aggressive nature. Barriers alone cause a problem because it is virtually impossible to ensure that the grass carp would be confined to Lake Toho and not escape to Lake Kissimmee or other lakes. Even if we could remove all of the hydrilla, there is still one small problem: turions. Turions are survival structures, like a small potato, that can remain dormant in the soil for years until conditions are right for the turions to germinate. We have no way of controlling turions.

So, what can we do? Osceola County is working with the University of Florida and SePRO on the EPA grant to find new ways that we can better control hydrilla, hygrophylla and other aquatic invasive weeds in our waterways. We are currently looking at new herbicides that are being developed for use on aquatic plants. We are also evaluating existing herbicides and different application methods, rates, etc. to improve their effectiveness on aquatic weeds. Researchers are searching for natural enemies of hydrilla and hygrophylla in Africa and India. One of the biological control agents being looked at is a fungus called Mt. This fungus attacks hydrilla and makes the hydrilla vulnerable to herbicide treatments.

Another component of the grant is education and outreach. We hope by educating the public that people will begin to recognize these problematic weeds and help prevent their spread and to help residents understand why it is important to manage aquatic invasive weeds. You can visit our website to get up to date information on the status of the research. For more information, check out our website: <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/osceola/index.html>.

Join Efforts with EFNEP to Be Part of the Solution

By Grisel Negrón, Expanded Food & Nutrition Education

In 2006, 9 million American children were considered “super sized”, overweight or obese. Over the last 30 years, obesity rates have doubled among pre-schooler’s and tripled for those children 6 to 11 years of age. Adult diabetes has rapidly become a childhood disease. High cholesterol and high blood pressure and other grown up problems are being seen among pediatric patients.

Many overweight kids even suffer from sleep apnea. Adolescent apnea means that students will be irritable, sleepy and ready to catch any cold germ that is around them. This has escalated to a social and health problem that needs attention. Together we can be part of the solution. We need to be informed, and motivate not only children but adults, parents and care takers to be part of a wellness effort that helps and support children to have better nutrition and a healthier life.

At Osceola County Extension office the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) bring to the district schools, after school and summer programs interactive lessons on nutrition incorporating physical activities that correlate and support the Florida Department of Education Sunshine State Standards. The goal of this free program is to help children and youth learn and develop lifelong behaviors of good nutrition and physical activity. The program target is children 5 to 18 years of age.

This year we have added to our lessons the Organ Wise Guys, fun characters which help children and youth learn about their internal body organs (Hearty Heart, Pepto, the stomach, the Kidney brothers, etc.) and how good healthy foods help their body perform to their best and stay free of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease or other health problems. For more information or if you want your child to have Fun with Foods and be Organ Wise visit our website or call us.