

**Osceola County's****SOLUTIONS**  
*for your LIFE*April, May, June  
2011**Strategic Plan 2011**

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The University of Florida/IFAS is about to embark on their strategic plan development which is being called Shaping Solutions for Florida's Future. The three main reasons this is being done is to make sure we are meeting the needs of our constituents, to refocus resources to areas that are identified and to forge new partnerships in support of our efforts. The University of Florida -IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Science) is the unit which houses Extension, Teaching and Research. As a result of the economy, strategic planning was not done four years ago as it was scheduled. The process which is just beginning is expected to provide direction for the next ten years. The first part of this process will begin during the next two months at the county level when each of the advisory committees of the Osceola County Extension office will be asked to prioritize the needs as they see them for our county. The next step will be the hosting of a listening session which encourages others interested in Extension and the community in general to share their thoughts of where we are and where we should be headed during the next ten years educationally to meet the needs of Osceola County residents and businesses.

The listening session has been set for Osceola County on May 23, 2011 at 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. If you

are willing to be a part of this listening session please contact Jayne at 321-697-3000 or [jayne.poindexter@osceola.org](mailto:jayne.poindexter@osceola.org) to register. If you are unable to attend the session but would like to offer your input online please let Jayne know and when the website is set up we will notify you.

Following the listening session and the collection of the online data, the results will be presented to the administration of the University of Florida / IFAS to be collected, collated and reviewed on the state level. Once program priorities are determined the University will be responsible for reallocating resources and developing teams of specialists and faculty to address the identified issues. These teams will then provide support to those in county Extension offices in areas not already addressed through previous strategic plans.

This effort is one that provides everyone in the community an opportunity to share with us the areas that we should focus on to assist residents and businesses in the next ten years. The key to this effort of strategic planning is to understand that our mission is education. Please plan to help us focus on how we can extend our efforts into the community to Shape Solutions for Osceola County. If you have any questions on this process, please contact Mary Beth at 321-697-3000 or [msal2@osceola.org](mailto:msal2@osceola.org).

Unfortunately, we cannot always prevent food borne illness. So how do you know you are sick and how do you treat it? Most common symptoms are fever, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach cramps, and dehydration. Treatment includes drinking plenty of water and eating light foods that will not aggravate your stomach further (if you can!). In severe cases, one can experience bloody stool, diarrhea and/or vomiting lasting more than three days, high fever, and confusion or disorientation. Seek medical attention if you experience any of these symptoms.

By following a few simple food safety rules, you can stay healthy and illness-free so that you can enjoy as much Florida sunshine as possible! For more information contact Gabriela Murza at 321-697-3000.

### Celebrating People in Action: National Volunteer Week

Karen Miliffe

National Volunteer Week is a time to “honor the people who dedicate themselves to taking action and solving problems in their communities.” National Volunteer Week takes place April 11 to 15 this year. All of Extension’s programs, especially the 4-H Youth Development program, utilize volunteers to reach the organization’s goals and mission.

The celebration of National Volunteer Week began in 1974. The idea and celebration has grown each year as elected officials, governors and U.S. presidents have supported the importance of volunteers in our society. The Osceola County 4-H program survives and thrives thanks to the countless volunteers and the many, many volunteer hours.

To all of you who are currently serving as Extension volunteers: thank you. Thank you for inspiring, encouraging and teaching others. For those looking for opportunities to serve, the 4-H program is always looking for people to work with our young people. Volunteers are needed to teach, serve as a judge, be a project leader and lead 4-H clubs. This is an opportunity to take action and solve the problems in our community by engaging our young people!



### Endangered Birds, Invasive Snails, and Aquatic Weeds

Stacia Hetrick

Osceola County is home to one of the most endangered birds in the United States, the Everglades snail kite. It is also home to a very invasive freshwater snail, the island apple snail, and one of the most troublesome aquatic weeds in the country, hydrilla. This has created a unique ecological situation on our local lakes where invasive hydrilla is serving as important foraging habitat for the endangered snail kite due to the presence of invasive apple snails. How did this happen? Read on to find out....

Snail kites are a medium-sized hawk whose diet consists entirely of apple snails. Their population has declined to less than 700 birds and their entire U.S. population is restricted to central and southern Florida. The kite has lost most of its historic nesting and feeding habitat in south Florida because of droughts and floods and many kites have moved north to the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes in Osceola County. In the past few years, about 30 to 80% of all nesting snail kites have nested solely on one lake: Lake Tohopekaliga (Lake Toho). This is a vulnerable situation because if the kites have a bad nesting year on Lake Toho then their entire population is greatly affected.



Everglades Snail Kite

One of the main reasons that snail kites have chosen Lake Toho for nesting is an abundance of an invasive, exotic apple snail from South America known as the island apple snail. Island apple snails came to Florida by being deliberately or accidentally released by aquarium hobbyists. They appeared in Lake Toho around 2004 and have spread to other local lakes and ponds and have become much more abundant than our native Florida apple snail in most areas. Although the endangered snail kites have specialized bills and feet that are designed for catching and eating the Florida apple snails, which are about the size of a golf ball, the kites have adapted to eating the much larger

island apple snails, which can grow to be as large as a baseball. Unlike our native Florida apple snails that feed on algae and are found in relatively shallow water, the island apple snail eats aquatic plants and can occur in deeper areas of the lake.

Lake Toho supports an enormous amount of island apple snails because the lake contains so much hydrilla which the snails feed upon. The aquatic weed hydrilla is an invasive, exotic plant that was introduced to Florida from Asia in the 1950s through the aquarium trade. It has since spread throughout much of the United States and many Osceola County lakes and ponds are filled with this nuisance weed.



Hydrilla

Although state agencies typically conduct management to control hydrilla on lakes, they are currently implementing an adaptive approach to hydrilla treatment to help protect the endangered snail kite by increasing the bird's access to its food source, the apple snails. This translates to less hydrilla being managed on Lake Toho and some other local lakes.

In summary, an abundance of invasive hydrilla and invasive apple snails have made Lake Toho one of the best areas in the state for endangered snail kites to forage and nest. Management agencies are working to balance the needs of the endangered kites with the needs of the people and businesses that use the lake or depend on it for their income.

To learn more about hydrilla and the Demonstration Project that is being conducted in Osceola County, visit <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/osceola>. To learn more about snail kites, visit <http://myfwc.com>.

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### Termite Troubles

Jennifer Pelham

Keep an eye out because they will soon be swarming. With warm weather and spring showers, termites will be out looking for a new place to nest. Causing over \$1 billion of damage annually, termites are very destructive household insects.

Termites mainly feed on wood, but can also con-

sume other items that contain cellulose, such as paper, fiberboard, and some fabrics derived from cotton or plant fibers. In Central Florida, there are two main types of termites that are of concern – subterranean and drywood termites. Subterranean termites are the most destructive and frequently encountered kind of termite, causing 75% of the termite damage.

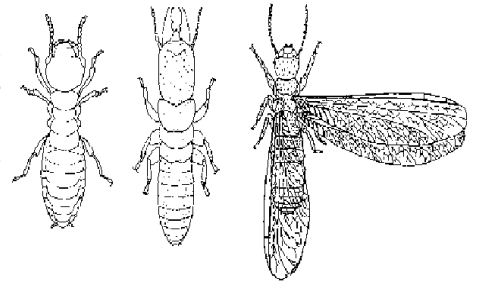
Subterranean termite colonies are usually found in the soil, however, they often attack nearby structures, such as our homes. Termites nest in the soil to obtain moisture. Any wood in contact with the ground can be easily attacked by subterranean termites. But even if the wood does not come in contact with the soil, they can build mud tubes to reach several feet above the ground just to get to the wood. Drywood termites are different from subterranean termites in that they do not need contact with the soil in order to establish colonies within a wood structure.



Termite Soldier

Termites remain hidden within wood and are often difficult to detect. However, they may be detected by the presence of winged adults, mud tubes, and wood damage.

The winged adults emerge from colonies in great numbers usually in the spring and during daylight hours.



From left to right Termite Worker, Soldier, and Winged Reproductive

This is when we usually first notice that termites may be a problem. If you notice large numbers of winged termites in a house, this is a good indication of probable infestation.

Chemical barriers and bait stations are available to reduce subterranean termite infestations; however, you can also help to reduce the chance of infestations by following a few other simple steps:

- Landscape plants and irrigation should not be placed within two feet of the foundation wall. Mulch should not be within one foot.