

# Educating with Extension



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

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**January 1st**  
Happy New Year! County Offices closed in observance.



**January 10th**  
National Cut Your Energy Costs Day!!

**January 12th** Lower Keys Guides Association: Get Trashed Clean-Up. Collect Marine Debris and drop it off at Sugarloaf Marina between 1-4PM [lkga.org](http://lkga.org)

**January 15th**  
Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
County offices closed in observation.



**January 13th**  
Key Largo Library: Eco Voices Lecture- Florida Keys Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center Tradewinds Plaza 11AM

**January 25th**  
20th Annual Big Pine & Lower Keys Nautical Expo  
Sat. 8AM-4PM Sun. 8AM-2PM  
MM31



## Buy Nothing for a Year Trend

By Alicia Betancourt  
Extension Director

It is a new year, and I want to work on what I can do to make it more planet-friendly. To live more climate-aware and reduce my environmental impact, I plan to start by being more mindful of what I consume. I have been looking into the "Buy Nothing for a Year" trend. It is a minimalist, sustainability-driven movement where people commit to significantly reducing or completely stopping non-essential purchases for an entire year. I want to be more mindful about consumption, save money, and minimize my environmental impact by lowering the demand for new products.

The key principles of the trend include:

- **Essential Purchases Only:** Participants can only buy necessities like food, medications, toiletries, and items required for safety or health.
- **Borrow, Share, or Swap:** Instead of buying, people borrow items from friends or family, participate in local sharing communities, or swap goods they already own.
- **DIY and Repair:** Creativity and resourcefulness are encouraged by fixing broken items, repurposing belongings, or making things from scratch.
- **Declutter and Use What You Have:** The trend often begins with using existing items, rediscovering forgotten possessions, and appreciating what one already owns.

When I think about what is "essential," there are quite a few things I regularly use and could do without. I have been working on using fewer paper products around the home, so I invested in reusable kitchen towels. Facebook is a great place to find items that are used locally.

## Plant Clinics

1st Saturday of the Month

### Plant Clinic

9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Key Deer Refuge Nature Cntr.

30587 o/s Hwy.  
Big Pine Key

Wednesday, January 8th

### Plant Clinic

9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Key Largo Library

101485 O/S Hwy.  
Key Largo

Saturday, January 18th

### Plant Clinic

9 a.m. to Noon

Marathon Home Depot

4555 O/S Hwy,  
Marathon

Saturday, January 18th

### Plant Clinic

9 a.m. to Noon

KW Botanical Garden Nursery

5210 College Rd.  
Stock Island

Tuesday, January 21st

### Plant Clinic

9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Garden Club of Upper Keys

94040 O/S Hwy.  
Tavernier

Thursday, January 23rd

### Plant Clinic

9:30 a.m. to 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 worked to finalize the agenda for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Water Quality Protection Program meeting and invited Dr. John Bowden from the University of Florida to speak about PFAS in Florida Keys drinking water. Save the Date: March 12 in Marathon.



- Shelly reported on 2024 accomplishments of the Sea Grant aquatic invasive species working group about social media campaigns, new websites, and press releases for the potential invasive Pulse Corals, which are currently in Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and northern Cuba. Shelly provided content to the new FWC page "Invasive Soft Corals" – link <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/invertebrates/pulse-corals/> and the Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment in the Caribbean on The Invasive Xeniid Soft Coral Exchange at <https://www.agrra.org/the-unomia-learning-exchange/>. Thankfully, the underwater surveillance network we have created has not reported these species.

- Florida's Coral Reef Resilience Program is a statewide, highly collaborative public-private partnership to facilitate the recovery of Florida's Coral Reef into a resilient and self-sustaining ecosystem. Shelly continues to provide leadership of the Communication Team since 2019 and the new website is a terrific repository of technical and public documents at [fcrp.org](http://fcrp.org).
- Shelly spoke on Morning Magazine about the Florida Friendly Angler program. This is a free short online course for recreational anglers looking to improve their fishing skills and sustainable boating that is available in English and Spanish. This course won the 2024 Superior Outreach Programming Award from NOAA Sea Grant Extension Assembly.

## 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](mailto:Monroe@ifas.ufl.edu) or  
Call (305)292-4501 to schedule an appointment

**EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:**  
[mastergardener@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto: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



UF/IFAS Environmental Horticulture Program

- Monroe County Master Gardener Volunteers partnered with several organizations to host the Native Plant Sale/Children's Art Workshop/ Composting Workshop at the Key West Tropical Forest and Botanical Garden. They also hosted a Merry Citrus Event at the Key Largo Library where participants learned how to make festive orange and clove pomanders for the holiday season.



- Monroe County Master Gardeners Volunteers conducted five plant clinics with participation ranging from 4 to 15 people per clinic. These events provided essential opportunities for the community to learn about horticulture and environmentally friendly practices.

- Monroe County Master Gardener Volunteers managed the Virtual Help Desk and were able to assist 10 community members with questions on proper landscaping, planting, diseases and pests.



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 presented resources and technical assistance for community resilience planning at the Southeast Florida Climate Compacts, 16th Annual Climate Leadership Summit. The Summit was attended by 372 climate leaders, elected officials, municipal staff, and consultants, all working toward resilience planning.
- Alicia met with the City of Homestead, to interview staff about their experience as part of the Climate Navigator Network.
- Alicia led the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy, a Climate working group focused on fostering climate-resilient communities. This effort includes Extension administrators, state specialists, and agents from across the U.S. The group analyzed the Extension Climate Action Plan and developed two areas of focus for the coming year. The focus areas include strengthening collaboration with federal programs and community organizations as well as developing community-centric planning.



- Alicia helps to organize science day at a K-8 school. She conducted a lava lamp experiment with the kids to show how oil and water interact. She discussed the importance of keeping our ocean and bay water clean.
- Alicia wrote an article about holiday travel tips. Some good tips anytime you travel are: firstly, plan for something to go wrong, arrive at the airport early, use travel apps, and finally, pack light. Then, edit your bag and pack less.



Continued from page 1

People reported their motivations behind the trend, including;

- **Environmental impact:** reducing consumption lowers waste and decreases the carbon footprint associated with production and transportation.
- **Financial Benefits:** Participants save money by avoiding unnecessary purchases and reassessing spending habits.
- **Mental Clarity:** Simplifying possessions and spending patterns helps some people feel less overwhelmed and more focused on what truly matters.
- **Consumer Awareness:** It encourages critical thinking about advertising, consumer culture, and the long-term value of purchases.

Some common challenges participants report are resisting the temptation to shop, especially during sales or holiday seasons, managing social situations involving gift-giving or spending, and adjusting to a lifestyle that might require more time and effort, such as borrowing or repairing items instead of buying new ones.



Are you interested in trying this viral challenge? According to folks who have tried, here are some tips to help you;

- **Set Clear Rules:** Define what constitutes a "necessary" purchase to avoid loopholes.
- **Join a Community:** Engage with others participating in similar challenges, like the Buy Nothing Project, for support and inspiration.
- **Track Progress:** Keep a journal or spreadsheet to monitor what you've avoided buying and how much you've saved.
- **Focus on Benefits:** Reflect on reduced consumption's environmental and personal advantages to stay motivated.

This trend aligns with larger sustainability efforts, encouraging people to rethink their relationship with material possessions and prioritize experiences and connections over things. Would you consider trying this, even for a shorter period, like a month?

How successful will I be? I don't know, but I'll still focus on buying only what I genuinely need, supporting sustainable brands, and choosing second-hand or refurbished items whenever possible to reduce waste. I'll prioritize reusable options like bags, bottles, and containers to reduce waste. Recycling properly is another area I'll focus on by learning the rules in my area to avoid contamination. When it comes to food, I'll focus on incorporating more plant-based meals into my diet, prioritizing locally grown and seasonal produce, and actively reducing food waste by planning my meals thoughtfully, storing ingredients properly, and finding creative ways to repurpose leftovers.

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



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 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>



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UF/IFAS Extension is Putting Florida First

**16th annual Southeast Florida Regional Climate Leadership Summit in Key West**



The 16th annual Southeast Florida Regional Climate Leadership Summit was held in Key West. Approximately 400 thinkers and leaders from business, government, higher education, and nonprofits attended this event. We were proud to have Extension Director, Alicia Betancourt, as one of the key speakers.

**UF/IFAS/MCES QUARTERLY CONTACTS**

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
Phone calls	30	32	52	114
Office visitors	8	3	5	16
Email Consultations	90	60	54	204
Learning events	19	21	23	63
Participants	414	372	1,249	2,035
Media submissions	8	7	6	21
Publications distributed	151	150	125	426
<b>TOTAL contacts</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>1,514</b>	<b>2,879</b>



**Key West Seafood Festival**  
 Tuman Waterfront Feb. 15-16  
 Florida Keys Seafood Festival  
 Admission \$10, good both days

**CPR Training**   
 for Adults, Children & Infants

**Wednesday January 15th CPR & First Aid 5PM**  
 Location: Big Pine Key Community Center  
 179 Key Deer Blvd. (Winn-Dixie Plaza)

**Wednesday January 22nd CPR & First Aid 10AM**  
 Location: Harvey Government Center  
 1200 Truman Ave. Key West

**Tuesday January 28th CPR & First Aid 10AM**  
 Location: Marathon Government Center BOCC Room  
 2798 Overseas Hwy. Marathon 2nd Floor

Availability is limited. CPR & First Aid course is \$50

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