

Educating with Extension



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

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Florida Friendly Fishing Guides Online Course

By Shelly Krueger
Sea Grant Agent

We all know fishing is big business in Florida, contributing billions of dollars each year to the state's economy. Fishing captains and guides are an important part of that industry, providing locals and tourists alike with authentic Florida fishing experiences and memories that last a lifetime. The Florida Keys has some of the most esteemed fishing guides in the world, and our local guides are fishing ambassadors that demonstrate best practices for ethical angling to their customers. The University of Florida IFAS Extension has developed a program with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and input from fishing captains called Florida Friendly Fishing Guides. The target audience is offshore and inshore captains, including flats guides, charter boat captains, headboat captains, and crew. There is a free recreational version called Florida Friendly Anglers.

The Florida Friendly Fishing Guide certification recognizes fishing guides that are committed to preserving the future of Florida's fisheries through sustainable boating and fishing techniques. Florida Sea Grant provides free marketing for your business, which is a great way to direct customers to your website. The course usually costs \$130 but the UF/IFAS Monroe County Extension has free vouchers if you contact our office at 305-292-4502 or email shellykrueger@ufl.edu. This online course teaches best practices for catch and release fishing. Each lesson plan focuses on a different aspect of ethical angling. There are modules on seafood safety, fisheries management, and how to teach your customers about the environment. Learn how to identify barotrauma and the different regulations for descending and venting tools to return reef fish back to deepwater.

Since July 2020, in the Atlantic Ocean from North Carolina to Florida a descending device is required for head-boats, charter boats, commercial, and recreational vessels fishing

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, February 5th

Plant Clinic

9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Key Largo Library

101485 O/S Hwy.
Key Largo

Saturday, February 15th

Plant Clinic

9 a.m. to Noon

Marathon Home Depot
4555 O/S Hwy,
Marathon

Saturday, February 15th

Plant Clinic

9 a.m. to Noon

KW Botanical Garden Nursery

5210 College Rd.
Stock Island

Tuesday, February 18th

Plant Clinic

9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Garden Club of Upper Keys

94040 O/S Hwy.
Tavernier

Thursday, February 27th

Plant Clinic

9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Island Home Nursery
88720 O/S Hwy,
Islamorada

FEBRUARY HAPPENINGS

Pesticide Safety Education Awareness Month

February 15th & 16th
Florida Keys Seafood Festival
Truman Waterfront Park
floridakeysseafoodfestival.com

February 15th
Garden Club of the Upper Keys
Garden Walk 10AM-4PM
MM94 bayside

February 17th
Presidents Day
County offices closed
in observation.

February 21st-22nd
Key West Garden Club—
Garden Tours 10AM-3PM
For more info call (305) 294-3210



February 27th
National Strawberry Day!



Sea Grant News



Shelly Krueger
UF/IFAS Florida Sea Grant Agent

Shelly recently accomplished the following activities:

- Shelly was invited by the [UF Howard T. Odum Center for Wetlands](#) to present on sponges and water quality at the University of Florida seminar series Water, Wetlands, and Watersheds.



- Shelly was picked by her colleagues to be the vice chair of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Water Quality Protection Program (WQPP) communications subcommittee. Scott Atwell was appointed chair.

- Shelly shared the 2024 Monroe County angler travel and targeting summary with local nonprofit organizations. This summary can inform how to advertise or promote local fishing and fishing-based tourism specifically in Monroe County. The report describes information about where people come from when they fish Monroe County, and what they fish for. Where people come from (the “origin” of their fishing trip) may help identify advertising locations. The species they fish for, or “target” may inform the photos or text to use in advertisements or other outputs. All data here come from the National Marine Fisheries Service Marine Recreational Information Program. Additional information can be found in the full Angler Travel and Targeting Report: 2021 Monroe County, which Shelly Krueger can provide you.

- Shelly spoke on Morning Magazine about the Florida Keys Seafood Festival, now February 15-16 at Truman Waterfront. Shelly wrote an article for The Keys Weekly on 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. Sign up today at <https://www.flseagrant.org/fisheries/florida-friendly-angler-certification-program/>



- Shelly found the speaker for Green Drinks topic local filmmaker Sara of Sereia on sustainable seafood.

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



UF/IFAS Environmental Horticulture Program

- Monroe County Master Gardener Volunteers held their annual meeting on Friday at the Marathon Library. They discussed future projects, opportunities, and collaborations with other organizations. Special Guest speaker Jeff Wasielewski, commercial tropical fruit crops extension agent II UF/IFAS Miami-Dade County Extension, gave a wonderful presentation titled "Timing is Everything for Tropical Fruit"



- 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.

- Extension’s Master Gardener Volunteers created seed libraries in all five Monroe County Public Libraries. The seed libraries are free to the public and community members can obtain seeds, learn how to plant them, and watch them grow.



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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 worked with Climate Ready America to hold a technical assistance workshop for communities in designated Community Disaster Resilience Zones (CDRZ) by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Year two funding was approved for the project. Working as a Climate Navigator for thirteen CDRZ communities in Southeast Florida we match communities with grants and technical assistance to reach their climate resilience goals. You can find out more here <https://geosinstitute.org/climate-ready-america/southeast-navigator-network/>

- Alicia met with local environmental groups and Village of Islamorada staff to collaborate on educational programs in 2025 including Climate Smart Floridians, a program that is offered across the state. University of Florida graduate students will be updating the program material this semester. You can find out more here <https://sites.google.com/ufl.edu/climatesmartflorida/climate-smart-floridians-program>
- Alicia participated in grant writing with AI training. The platform was designed to produce grant applications for the Thriving Communities Grantmakers Program but can be utilized for other community grants.

- Alicia led a national meeting of Extension professionals working on advancing climate resilience assistance under the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy.



- Alicia participated in FEMA, Community Rating System, Program for Public Information annual meeting to discuss community risk educational materials and program strategy.
- Alicia spoke on the radio about the “Buy Nothing” movement and strategies to assess your relationship with consumerism.

Continued from page 1

for reef fish in federal waters. Descending devices are required on-board, rigged, and ready when fishing for fish in the snapper-grouper complex in the Atlantic Ocean from 3-miles offshore all the way to the Dry Tortugas. Since January 2022, in Gulf of Mexico federal waters anglers are required to have a descending device or venting tool onboard, rigged, and ready to use when fishing for reef fish. These regulations also apply in Florida state waters when fishing from a vessel. Barotrauma occurs when fish are caught and brought up from deep water, typically greater than 50 feet of depth. The rapid change in pressure when the fish is brought to the surface causes the swim bladder to expand (or even burst).



Greater Amberjack
photo credit: Kevin Krueger

Common signs of barotrauma are the stomach protruding out of the mouth, bulging eyes, and distended intestines. Descending devices use a weight to return the fish to depth, which recompresses the expanded gas and reverses the effects of barotrauma. Science has shown that descending gear is very effective at getting fish back down to depth, and this increases survival rates. Venting tools are hollow needles used to penetrate the swim bladder and remove the gas pressure onboard prior to release. The Florida Friendly Fishing Guide course will teach you how to identify barotrauma and select the right tool for sending fish back down to the depths!

One environmental impact of fishing is what we call discard mortality — this is when a caught fish is released but does not survive. Up to 60% of fish that are caught recreationally are released, which is why it is so important to know the best practices and regulations to increase the survival when releasing fish. Fishing guides are role models that can teach ethical angling through their onboard behaviors. This is a great opportunity for professional development, and a benefit to list your business and contact information on the Florida Friendly Fishing Guides website. The course takes approximately 4 hours to complete and you can finish at your own pace, and complete one module at a time. The cost is usually \$130 and includes a welcome package with boat decals, and free gear from product sponsors CaddyCan and SeaQualizer, public listing on the Florida Sea Grant website, and an optional social media promotion.

For more information and registration, go to <https://www.flseagrant.org/florida-friendly-fishing-guide-certification/> or contact your local Florida Sea Grant agent, Shelly Krueger, at shellykrueger@ufl.edu, 305-292-4502.



Cover Photo: Red Grouper and Yellowtail Snapper
photo credit: Florida Sea Grant

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UF/IFAS/MONROE COUNTY EXTENSION

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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>



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

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UF/IFAS Extension is Putting Florida First

EXTENSION HAPPENINGS



The Monroe County Master Gardener Volunteers held their annual meeting at the Marathon Library. They discussed future projects, opportunities, and collaborations with other organizations. Special Guest speaker Jeff Wasielewski, commercial tropical fruit crops extension agent II UF/IFAS Miami-Dade County Extension, gave a wonderful presentation "Timing is Everything for Tropical Fruit"



We were so delighted to get to teach these 7 Boy Scouts from Troop 573 Big Pine Key CPR and First Aid. They are preparing for a high adventure backpacking trip in New Mexico. What an awesome group! Way to be prepared!!!

UF/IFAS/MCES QUARTERLY CONTACTS

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Totals
Phone calls	32	52	30	114
Office visitors	3	5	11	19
Email Consultations	60	54	72	186
Learning events	21	23	22	66
Participants	372	1,249	467	2,088
Media submissions	7	6	7	20
Publications distributed	150	125	125	400
TOTAL contacts	645	1,514	734	2,893

February 15th & 16th



Truman Waterfront