

Educating with Extension



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

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SEPTEMBER HAPPENINGS

National Papaya Month
National Honey Month
National Microplastics Awareness Month

September 2nd Labor Day!
All County offices closed in observation.



September 4th
National Wildlife Day!



September 11th
Marathon Garden Club
Open Nursery 9am-12pm
A great selection of plants and small trees. MM50 Bayside



September 16th
Green Drinks! 5:30PM-7PM
Club 504 Sidebar Key West
504 Angela St.
Lets Talk Green Again!!



Smart Travel How to Keep Your Devices Safe on the Go

By Alicia Betancourt,
Extension Director

When you're packing for a trip, your phone, tablet, or laptop are probably right next to your toothbrush. But while you're thinking about sunscreen and snacks, hackers are thinking about the wide-open digital doors that come with travelers using public Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and charging stations. Traveling soon? Learn how to keep your devices safe with smart tips for public Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, juice jacking, and offloading apps before your trip.

Here's how to keep your digital life secure while you enjoy your real-world adventures.

Public Wi-Fi Isn't Always Your Friend

Free Wi-Fi at airports, hotels, and coffee shops is convenient — but it's also a hotspot (pun intended) for cybercriminals. Hackers can snoop on unsecured networks or set up fake "free" Wi-Fi spots just to steal your info.

Stay safe:

- **Avoid logging into bank accounts or sensitive apps** over public Wi-Fi.
- Use a **VPN (Virtual Private Network)** to encrypt your connection.
- Turn off **file sharing** and ensure your **firewall is active**.
- When in doubt, use **your mobile data** or a **hotspot** instead.

Bluetooth: Keep It Off When Not in Use

Bluetooth is great for wireless headphones and smartwatches — but it's also a potential entry point for hackers, especially in crowded places.

Tips:

- Turn Bluetooth **off** when you're not using it.
- Don't accept pairing requests from unfamiliar devices.
- Set your Bluetooth to **"non-discoverable"** to stay invisible to others nearby.

Plant Clinics

Plant Clinic

Cancelled, will resume in October.

Key Deer Refuge Nature Cntr.

30587 o/s Hwy.
Big Pine Key

Wednesday, September 3rd

Plant Clinic

9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Key Largo Library

101485 O/S Hwy.
Key Largo

Tuesday, September 16th

Plant Clinic

9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Garden Club of Upper Keys

94040 O/S Hwy.
Tavernier

Thursday, September 18th

Plant Clinic

11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Islamorada Library

81830 O/S Hwy,
Islamorada

Saturday, September 20th

Plant Clinic

9 a.m. to Noon

Marathon Home Depot

4555 O/S Hwy,
Marathon

Saturday, September 20th

Plant Clinic

9 a.m. to Noon

KW Botanical Garden Nursery

5210 College Rd.
Stock Island

Sea Grant News



Shelly Krueger
UF/IFAS Florida Sea Grant Agent

Shelly recently accomplished the following activities:

- Shelly was appointed to be the Water Quality Protection Program representative on the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Adaptive Management Working Group. This working group was created to evaluate management measures and modify management to address resource protection needs.



- Shelly spoke on Morning Magazine about recording coral bleaching conditions next time you dive or snorkel at the FDEPs SEAFAN.net.



- Florida's Coral Reef Resilience Program communications team has been busy monitoring and produced the 2025 coral bleaching information sheet for distribution to the Disturbance Advisory Committee.

Save the Date



- Save the Date for the Water Quality Protection Program Research Symposium, October 9. Extension will be presenting on sponge restoration aquaculture. Marathon City Hall, 9 am to 5 pm.

- Shelly is a member of the University of South Florida Management Transition Advisory Group on the U.S. NOAA Monitoring and Event Response for Harmful Algal Blooms (MERHAB) Project, which is developing an operational Sargassum HAB monitoring and forecasting system for the southeastern US and US Caribbean. More specifically, this project is developing a satellite-based sargassum forecasting tool for the Upper Keys, Middle Keys, and Lower Keys, which has improved resolution from 2 miles to a football field. These tools are in beta testing and Shelly is working with the team to share these products locally once the satellite images are live. For more information, there was a USF press release in March 2025 that quoted Shelly: <https://www.usf.edu/marine-science/news/2025/new-sargassum-system-takes-aim-at-a-troublesome-seaweed.aspx>

The Environmental Horticulture Program and Master Gardener Volunteers are 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



Liah Continentino
UF/IFAS Environmental Horticulture Agent

- August was a busy month for the extension office! Liah and the Monroe County Master Gardeners offered one-on-one consultations via plant clinics, individual client communications, and the Virtual Help Desk. These consultations provided 33 residents with personalized information, advice, and solutions. Sixty educational publications were distributed through one-on-one consultations.



- The Monroe County Extension office facilitated resident participation in the Great Florida Pollinator Census through various group learning activities. As a result of our Pollinator Census events, 52 adults and 232 youth participated in impactful citizen science work!
- Monroe Master Gardener Volunteers worked hard this month, logging 281.53 hours of service! Master Gardeners are vital to extension; their hard work and dedication make our work possible. Thank you, Master Gardeners!

- Liah provided media outreach by speaking on US-1 Radio about the Great Florida Pollinator Census. Additionally, she authored four Master Gardener Newsletters and an article on the Pollinator Census, published in Upper Keys Weekly. Liah was quoted in an article written by Lourdes Mederos on effective cultural strategies for reducing mosquito populations and proper personal protection. This article was picked up and published by 20 different news outlets throughout the state. Liah was interviewed on the topic for the Manny Munoz radio show and the Tampa 10 News.

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 co-leads the [Community Voices, Informed Choices \(CIVIC\) program](#). CIVIC is a [Florida A&M](#) and [University of Florida IFAS Extension](#) program that helps communities address complex issues. Through deliberative discussions and town hall meetings, CIVIC activities provide information and engage community members in discussing contentious issues that require community-scale solutions. This program holds facilitated community workshops, trains facilitators, and participates in grant opportunities as educational and community development partners.



- Alicia joined the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN), which is a collaborative multi-state effort by Cooperative Extension Services across the country to improve the delivery of services to citizens affected by disasters. EDEN's mission is to reduce the impact of disasters through research-based education. Examples of UF's involvement in Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) programs include community-based resilience and the EDEN Readiness Series, focusing on topics like green infrastructure, hazard mitigation, and disaster preparedness for individuals and communities in Florida.

- Visit the [Extension Disaster Education Network \(EDEN\) website](#) to browse recent projects and find more information.
- Explore the [UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences \(IFAS\) website](#) and its EDEN readiness resources for Florida-specific programs and research.



- Extension spoke on the radio about the current and upcoming Florida Tax holidays. Find out more here <https://floridarevenue.com/Pages/SalesTaxHolidays.aspx>.



Continued from page 1

Juice Jacking: A Real Travel Threat

Ever plug into a free charging station at the airport or mall? It's tempting, but it could leave you vulnerable to **juice jacking** — when malicious software is secretly installed on your device through a USB port.



Protect yourself:

- Always travel with your own **wall charger** or **portable battery pack**.
- Use a **USB data blocker** or a **charge-only cable** to prevent data transfer.
- If you must use a public port, **power off** your device before plugging in.

Offload Unused Apps for Extra Protection

Before your trip, take stock of the apps on your device. Many apps request access to sensitive information — even when you're not using them. Offloading or deleting them can reduce your risk while freeing up space.

Tips:

- Offload unused apps** (on iPhone, go to *Settings > General > iPhone Storage*).
- Delete apps you won't need while traveling, especially those that access contacts, location, or financial info.
- Reinstall them later if needed — your data will still be saved in the cloud.



Lock Down and Update Before You Go

Don't wait until you're poolside to think about digital safety. A few steps before takeoff can save you a lot of stress later.

Checklist:

- Install the **latest software updates**.
- Enable a **screen lock** (PIN, fingerprint, or face ID).
- Set up **device encryption** and turn on **remote wipe** options in case your device is lost or stolen.
- Back up important files and photos to the cloud or an external drive.

Only Bring What You Need

Travel light — digitally, too. The fewer devices and sensitive data you carry, the lower the risk.

Try this:

- Only bring the devices you'll actually use.
- Log out of apps that store sensitive info (banking, work accounts, etc.).
- Avoid saving passwords or private documents directly to your device.



Final Thought

Cybersecurity might not be on your packing list, but it should be on your radar. With a little planning and a few smart habits — like turning off Bluetooth, skipping sketchy Wi-Fi, avoiding public charging ports, and offloading unneeded apps — you can keep your devices safe and your vacation stress-free.

Enjoy your travels. And don't let hackers crash your trip!

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



UF/IFAS/MONROE COUNTY EXTENSION

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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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For additional information or registration questions, contact Linda at lseals@ufl.edu

Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status.

UF/IFAS/MCES QUARTERLY CONTACTS

	June	July	Aug	Totals
Phone calls	36	53	50	139
Office visitors	40	41	64	145
Email Consultations	128	121	130	379
Learning events	31	26	28	85
Participants	545	590	628	1,763
Media submissions	8	9	11	28
Publications distributed	265	487	571	1,323
TOTAL contacts	1,053	1,327	1,482	3,862



Photo Above: Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuge Employees Certified in American Heart Association CPR and First Aid Skills.