Magnificent Mentoring
By JEAN FIELD, Extension Specialist

Dick Davis has been a Master Gardener mentor for five years. The role has been a perfect fit for the retired psychologist and elementary school principal who spent his long career dealing with the educational and emotional needs of a variety of individuals, both young and old. His professional and mentoring experience paid off most recently when he convinced a Class of 2008 Master Gardener volunteer to return to the fold.

“Dick noticed I was missing and sent me a ‘how are you doing?’ e-mail,” she explained. “He invited me to join the fun on Tuesdays at the desk. ‘It’s the greatest learning experience in the world,’ he encouraged me. I’ve wanted to come back for some time, but for some reason I was afraid. When I got Dick’s e-mail, I knew it was time.”

Thanks to Dick Davis, the happy Master Gardener volunteer has returned with an eagerness to get plugged back in at the Extension Office. Even though she was not his assigned “mentee,” he realized this valuable volunteer might need extra support. Our walk-in clientele will benefit from his initiative and caring demeanor.

Way to go, Dick!

![Dick Davis assists a client at the Pinellas County Extension Lawn & Garden Diagnostic Center](image)

Note to mentors: Have you touched base with your 2008 “mentees” lately? Your call could make all the difference to a volunteer who needs a bit of
We are especially appreciative of staff, MGs, and others who contribute articles, events, and other items of interest to The Green Leaf each month. Please submit your input by the 20th of each month. This will help us assemble and publish the newsletter in a timely manner. Also, to save mailing costs, please limit your articles to 700-800 words or less. Limited newsletter space does not allow for full photograph viewing. If you would like a copy of any photograph presented in the newsletters, please contact me at 727-582-2117.

The Green Leaf is published by Pinellas County Extension for the County Master Gardeners and depends on submission of articles from Master Gardeners, Extension Staff and other authors.

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The Green Leaf is available on-line by clicking on “newsletter” at:

http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/home_landscape/mg/intro.shtml

Pinellas County Extension Receives Funds for Green Demonstration Home
By MARY CAMPBELL, Extension Director

Everything is coming up green at Pinellas County Extension and the newest addition will be the Green Demonstration Home. The new demonstration facility will be located at the west end of the Extension offices within the Florida Botanical Gardens. This structure, which is currently under design, will have the look of a typical residence and will showcase green building techniques and cutting edge green technology for a home. The U.S. Department of Energy is providing $475,750 to develop this LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified facility that will demonstrate alternative energy and reduced energy and water consumption. It will provide hands-on learning opportunities for homeowners and contractors and will further enhance the green programs available at Extension. Watch for a future website showing the facility’s development.

Mosaic roses are in bloom in the Wedding Garden

McKay Plaza palms look majestic after their recent pruning.
A Message from the FBG Foundation
By CHUCK SCAFFIDI, FBGF President

There’s no doubt about it – walking along the Botanical Gardens’ Tropical Path, through the Palm Garden and into the Wedding Garden is a little disheartening these days. For the public, of course, but especially for the Master Gardeners and volunteers who have worked so hard over the months and years. The devastating winter damage is heartbreaking.

What we all need to hold onto is that eventually - and hopefully soon - Mother Nature will start working her magic. And to know that in the meantime everyone is doing everything possible to restore the gardens according to the principles of corrective measures to minimize plant loss.

Please know that the Foundation appreciates the concerns expressed by many Master Gardeners and volunteers.

Dear Master Gardeners,

I have heard that many of you are upset over the palm trimming that was done in the FBG. Parks was following the recommendations in the UF/IFAS publication regarding cold damaged palms as much as possible, keeping in mind the look of the garden and staff allocation.

Since FBG is a destination garden that needs to look neat and tidy and also because parks is understaffed and not able to do routine and timely palm or tree trimming, they decided to remove the damaged fronds, and even some green fronds, because they would not be able to return in a month or two when those fronds were ready to be removed. Again, they want to project the image of neat and tidy.

The Tropical Pavilion and Wedding Garden: The wedding garden was spruced up because several weddings were taking place on February 14th. Even though this was not the “proper” time to trim back plants it was done for aesthetic reasons because of the weddings and the media exposure.

The tropical pavilion is looking bare because it is to be replanted with bromeliads from the bromeliad garden. Unfortunately, because of the very unusually severe winter weather, the bromeliads cannot be transplanted at this time. They are too stressed to be moved. We also want to have the use of well water before planting many new plants. Potable water is our only option at the time and we know that is a precious resource not to be wasted. Patience is warranted in this instance.

Please remember that park staff are doing their job as directed by their supervisor. Please treat county staff with respect and courtesy as they are only doing their job as directed.

Jane Morse, Commercial Horticulture Extension Agent
Touring an Organic Farm in Pinellas
By CARRIE SHELBY, MG

This month’s MG tour had a different quality. Usually we visit a fellow MG’s garden and get to delight in how they have put their garden knowledge to work in a residential setting. We have visited gardens in the microclimates of sunny Clearwater Beach, hilly Palm Harbor and shady Seminole. This month 30 MGs, all bundled up, some unrecognizable in their wooly hats and dark sunglasses, showed up on a chilly morning, to a strip of land, 100 feet wide by a quarter mile long. We were invited by the farmers, Hank and Pam Sindlinger, to tour Gateway Organic, their family run farm wedged into the High Point neighborhood of urban Clearwater.

Hank and Pam, originally from Ohio, with business backgrounds in engineering and psychology respectively, had not planned on spending their early retirement years as farmers. Family circumstances caused them to reevaluate their plans and now they are in their third crop year following a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) business model. CSA is a way for the public to buy locally grown food, create a relationship with a farm, and help to keep small farms in their community. Members make a financial commitment to the farm by buying shares, which provide the farm with the funds needed to grow and harvest the crops. When members pick up their weekly orders Pam’s granddaughter likes to call it “vegetarian trick or treat.” The Sindlingers also collaborate with many local chefs who appreciate the fresh and delicious quality of produce that they can offer in their fine cuisine.

Pam led the tour along the first planting field which had rows of carrots, kale, arugula, lettuce, choi, radish, turnips, giant red mustard and kohlrabi. At any time they will have about 12 different crops. November through May is their 30-week growing season. They offer eight to 10 different harvested items each week to their members. Currently they have about 40 members. Memberships are still available.

Only a portion of the land, which was previously a landscape nursery, has been cleared for food crops, shade houses, and composting. The planting layouts keep expanding and evolving. They have plans for using the vertical space along the fence to grow muscadine grapes. Pam is always looking for suggestions for other food crops that could be grown along this narrow space. They are still in the process of completing their organic certification, which entails a 26-page application, and their inspection tour is pending.

Right across the street from the farm is High Point Elementary School. The Sindlingers have teamed up with the students to build awareness about farming and sustainability. Every school day the children assist in composting by tossing their food scraps in designated bins. Approximately 80 to 100 lbs. are picked up daily. MG Ed McKenna, who volunteers at the farm, provides valuable assistance in composting and vermiculture. Ed’s expertise is greatly appreciated by the Sindlingers. In fact, the Sindlingers rely heavily on volunteers to help on the farm. Many of their members happily assist.

As a bonus to our tour we heard a presentation by Travis Quesada of OceanGrown Solutions. Travis is a sales representative for this Clearwater-based company that manufactures plant nutrients derived from ocean water. This product is certified organic. Since the Sindlingers have an interest in using the product for their hydroponic crops they thought our group would be interested in learning about it as well. This MG group was not at a loss for questions, which kept this session very interactive and engaging.

I admire the Sindlingers for the lifestyle they have chosen. It looks like a lot of hard work, but through their efforts the local community has a good neighbor, a green urban oasis, and a great source of delicious locally-grown vegetables.

If you are interested in learning more about the farm, CSA, or volunteering, you can contact Pam at 727-244-0724. Or visit their website: http://gatewayorganicfarm.com/
Looking towards the back of Gateway Organic farm, along the quarter mile fence. Farmer Pam Sindlinger shows MGs one of the crop fields.

A line of red giant mustard dominates the rows. MGs walk single file through the fields.

Pam discusses her plans for hydroponics in the shadehouse. MGs learn about OceanGrown Solutions.
Proper Pruning of Shrubs
by JANE MORSE, University of Florida/IFAS Pinellas County Extension Agent

Even though we think of March as the perfect time to prune, it may not be. Some plants set their flower buds on the previous year’s growth, the buds overwinter and then flower in the spring. These plants include azaleas, spireas, Indian hawthorn and some hydrangea. To get the most flowering from these plants, wait until after their spring bloom to prune. Then begin pinching the new shoots as they grow. This pinching will give the plant lots of lateral branches which can develop flower buds for next year. When June arrives, stop pinching. For the best flower display no more pruning should be done on these plants until the following spring after they bloom.

Plants that produce flowers on this year’s growth are usually pruned while dormant (early February), or just before the spring growth flush. These plants include hibiscus and rose. To encourage the most plant growth, prune just prior to the first spring growth flush. To slow growth and keep plants smaller, prune just after each growth flush. Again, pinching of new growth will encourage lateral branching and thus produce more flowers.

Pruning wounds callus the best when cuts are made just before, or immediately following, the spring growth flush. This quick wound closure is best to keep insects, diseases and decay organisms from entering the plant, and it also looks better.

Pruning at the wrong time can cause cold injury. Late fall and early winter pruning stimulates new growth, especially if we have a mild winter. This new growth is very succulent and is easily damaged by even a light frost. Pruning done close to spring bud break reduces this risk of cold injury.

The first step in pruning a shrub is to remove all dead, diseased, or injured branches. Also, remove branches that cross or touch each other, or those growing willy-nilly. Cut each branch separately to different lengths with hand pruners. Cut back long branches to a bud or lateral branch six to 12 inches below the desirable plant height. When heading (cutting back) terminal shoots, make the cut on a sight slant 1/4 inch above a healthy bud. The bud should be facing the direction you want the branch to grow. Pruning in this manner creates a beautiful shrub that does not show any pruning cuts.

If tender plants were killed this winter, then proper selection of new shrubs is a must. It is best to choose a plant based on the site conditions (sun/shade, wet/dry, cold/heat tolerance, etc.). Also, think about the mature height of the plant. Choosing a plant based on its mature height can eliminate regular pruning, saving time and money.

When pruning for a formal hedge, pruning should be done while the new growth is green and succulent, and plants should be trimmed so that the base of the hedge is wider than the top. It’s best to cut each branch separately rather than use hedge shears.

Always clean pruning equipment with a weak alcohol solution (1 part to 9 parts water) before using on a new plant, or if pruning diseased branches, clean before moving to the next branch.
YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO THE VOLUNTEER AWARDS AND POTLUCK LUNCHEON

MONDAY, MARCH 8TH, 2010
12:30-2:00
Immediately following up-date**

Meat, rolls and beverage sponsored by FBG Foundation

Bring your favorite salad, side dish or dessert to share

**Up-date speaker is Dr. Gary Vallad, IFAS plant pathologist, from 9:30-Noon. Be sure and see his presentation on vegetable diseases!
**IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- MG Update Meetings
- MG Garden Tour
- Extension Classes
- Palm Harbor Classes
- Weedon Island Classes

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**The Neighborhood Gardener**

Have you signed up for the monthly e-newsletter from the University of Florida Master Gardener and the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods programs? It is available on the Florida Master Gardener Web site: http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/mastergardener/newsletter/newsletters.shtml.

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**Master Gardener Update Schedule - Mark Your Calendar!**

**Monday, March 8, 9 a.m.** - Gary Vallad, IFAS, Plant Pathologist, Gulf Coast Research & Education Center, will discuss “Vegetable Diseases.”

**Thursday, April 8, 9 a.m.** - Mark Spearman, Division of Plant Industry, (Dept. of Agriculture) will discuss “Discovering new pests: How DPI works.”

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**MG Garden Tour—a Message from Phyl Lawson**

I know I promised a tour of Jason Beck's yard but he's had a lot of cold damage so we will see his garden another time. Instead I have talked to a commercial grower in Pinellas Park, Island Lawn Bamboo Landscape. Their specialty is bamboo. They are full of facts about bamboo that I'm sure will interest you. Bring your gardening friends. It looks like a great garden.

Join the tour on Monday March 22 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at 6540 85th Ave. Pinellas Park. http://www.islandlawnservices.com/index.php

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**Series of Extension Classes - Mark your Calendar!**

The following classes are some of the many offered by Extension for free to MGs, Volunteers and FBGF members who register. When you attend you must show one of the membership cards. All others pay a nominal fee of $15. Please see Extension’s on-line calendar page for details and to register.

- **Saturday March 6, or Apr. 17, 9-10:30 a.m. Rain Harvesting Workshop.** Have you ever thought, “What a waste!” when you see the rain water pouring out of your down spout and then down the street? Learn how to save that water for use on your potted plants, vegetable and herb gardens.

- **Wednesday March 10, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Welcome to Florida...Help!.** Learning about the tropical plants, strange and sometimes menacing-looking critters, unruly weather patterns, all while grappling the critical conservation issues can be challenging! Don’t worry—Sensing Nature®, LLC senior wildlife biologist, Jeanne Murphy and senior ecologist, Brian Lane will make it easy by introducing you to Florida basics and answering your questions from nature fact to folklore. 3 hours classroom; 1 hour outdoors. Wear comfortable clothing for an easy outdoor walk, closed-toed shoes, bring sunscreen and water.

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**Meet and Share with County Administrator, Robert LaSala**

Mark your calendar for Monday April 19, 4-6:30 p.m., at Extension. Our County Administrator, Bob LaSala has prepared the 2010 Pinellas County budget and supervised a dramatic reduction in county personnel. He looks forward to meeting with us, the volunteers, to learn first hand about our hopes and aspirations for the future. Volunteers will be contacted by e-mail and/or through their volunteer site coordinators about this opportunity to meet and share with Mr. LaSala.

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*You are cordially invited to the Volunteer Awards and Potluck Luncheon after the March 8 Update from 12:30 p.m.-2 p.m.*

Meat, rolls and beverages provided by the FBG Foundation. Bring your favorite salad, side dish or dessert to share.*
Palm Harbor Library MG Class Series
Classes are offered on Wednesdays from 2 to 3:30 p.m. and from 6:15 to 7:45 p.m. at the Palm Harbor Library located at 2330 Nebraska Avenue. To register for these classes, visit www.pinellascountyextension.org, click on the “Online Class Registration” button and then the “Lawn & Garden” tab. You may also call 727-582-2100 to register.

You Can Have a Happy, Healthy, FLorida Friendly Lawn—Wednesday, March 10 Pam Brown, Extension Agent Emeritus, will share tips on when and how to water, fertilize and mow your lawn. She will also discuss some of the challenges of caring for a lawn in Florida and what to do to overcome these challenges. Free. Registration required by Tuesday, March 9.

Common Landscape Problems—Wednesday, April 14 Insider’s Tips from the Plant Clinic: What makes some gardens thrive while others struggle, despite one’s best efforts? Frustrated residents often ask for advice only after a problem has overwhelmed both the garden and the gardener. Based on experiences at the Lawn and Garden Help Desk, UF/IFAS Master Gardener Nancy Bevilacqua will share ways to prevent and avoid trouble in your home landscape. Free. Registration required by Tuesday, April 13.

St Petersburg Community Library MG Class Series
Classes offered free at the West St. Petersburg Community Library, 6605 5 Ave. N. To register, visit www.pinellascountyextension.org, click on the “Online Class Registration” button and then the “Lawn & Garden” tab. You may also call (727) 582-2100 to register.

How to Repot Orchids—Wednesday, March 24, 2-3 p.m. Join MGs Richard and Terry Berube for instructions on how to properly repot orchids so as to maximize plant health and growth.

Florida Friendly Lawn Care—Wednesday, April 28, 2-3 p.m. Learn how to care for your Florida lawn. Pam Brown, Extension Agent Emeritus, will share tips on when and how to water, fertilize and mow your lawn. She will also discuss some of the challenges of caring for a lawn in Florida and what to do to overcome these challenges.

Weedon Island Classes
This class is offered free, twice on Saturday, March 27 at 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. and at 2 - 3 p.m. at the Weedon Island Environmental Education Center, 1800 Weedon Drive NE, St. Petersburg. Please call 727-453-6500 to reserve your seat in the class.

Landscaping for Wildlife
Learn how to invite the birds and butterflies to your yard by attending this landscaping for wildlife class. You will learn what plants attract wildlife, where to plant them, and how to take care of them.

Recording Your Volunteer Hours - Please Remember to Sign Out!
The computer program for logging volunteer hours is outside the volunteer office, near the help desk.
You must sign in and sign out when you are at Extension.
You can still log your time in the book or use e-mail, but it is preferred that you use the computer sign-in/sign-out method.
With over 200 volunteers at Extension it becomes a considerable burden on the volunteer coordinators to manually enter your hours.
When not at Extension email your hours to: cascaffidi@juno.com
Please direct your questions to volunteer coordinator Chuck Scaffidi or assistant Emma Eshbaugh.
Dear Master Gardeners,

Planning for the 2010 Florida Master Gardener Continued Training Conference is underway and I am pleased to let you know that this year we will be headed to northwest Florida. The conference is scheduled for Oct. 25-27 at the beautiful Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa. The conference provides a unique opportunity to get the latest information directly from the specialists, and is a great place to escape to for a vacation. You can also see the awards program where your fellow volunteers are recognized for their service and excellent projects.

If you enjoy playing golf or tennis, swimming in the indoor and two outdoor pools or any other outside activity, this is the place for you and your family. There is plenty of high-end and outlet shopping and a wide variety of restaurants nearby. The Florida panhandle has many great places to visit and incredible sights to see. Make this trip to the meetings a vacation by including your family for some quality time before or after the conference to enjoy this unique area of Florida.

I look forward to seeing you in October!

Learn more: http://www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/gardener/

Message from Tom Wichman, Florida Master Gardener Coordinator

30th Annual Florida Master Gardener Continued Training Conference
Oct. 25-27
Hilton Sandestin Beach, Destin, FL

Harvest Marketplace—Largo, Ulmer Park!
The Harvest Marketplace is Thursdays 9 a.m.-2 p.m. in Ulmer Park, 301 West Bay Drive, Largo. Fresh produce, specialty foods, "green" goods, live music and original creations by local artists and crafts people. Two volunteers per shift are needed to represent UF/IFAS, and the MG program.

March 11 from 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. -2:30 p.m.
April 8 from 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. -2:30 p.m.
April 29 from 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. -2:30 p.m.

You can sign up in the volunteer office or contact Jane Morse at 582-2562.

4-H Earth Day Celebration
Cindy Peacock needs volunteers to staff and manage the children's activities table on Saturday, April 17 from 9 a.m. -1 p.m. at Market in the Park, Heritage Village. Contact Cindy at 727-582-2671.

Green Thumb Festival—Mark the Dates!
Volunteers are needed to represent UF/IFAS, and the MG program. Saturday, April 24 and Sunday April 25 at Walter Fuller Park in St. Petersburg. Sign up in the volunteer office for either 8:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m. or 12:30 p.m. -4:30 p.m. shifts. There are still open slots, especially for Sunday morning.

Irrigation Expertise Needed for Community Vegetable Garden
A group of Dunedin citizens are looking for irrigation expertise for their community vegetable garden. If anybody can help in this group learn about irrigation in vegetable garden beds, please call: Jim McGinity 727-733-2928.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES & EVENTS
For March & April
- Largo Harvest Marketplace
- 4-H Earth Day Celebration
- Volunteer for Green Thumb
- Irrigation Expertise
Remember that our March 8 Update will be followed by the Volunteer Appreciation potluck lunch and the Master Gardener Awards Ceremony. Please remember to bring your favorite sides and desserts. The FBG Foundation is providing the main course, rolls and beverages.

We have three dates scheduled for the annual EPCOT International Flower and Garden Festival to which we will be taking 16 volunteers. Since this is such a highly desirable event, we needed to develop a selection criterion to allow those volunteers who have given the most to be rewarded for their efforts. The selection process identified 21 MGs who have volunteered 250 hours or more during the 2009 calendar year. We will contact these volunteers soon to see who is interested and then notify the 16 that have been selected. We appreciate all that you do. Even if you don’t make the cut this year, there’s always next year.

On a very bright note, we interviewed a candidate for the Urban Horticulture Agent/Master Gardener Coordinator position and she appears to be acceptable. IFAS will make the final approval, soon we hope. I know you all will be very happy to have an agent to call your own. Your dedication during this transitional time has been tremendous and much appreciated.

For those who are concerned about maintenance efforts in the Botanical Gardens, I responded to this concern by E-mail and it is also included in this newsletter.

Please remember that he most important thing is that we appreciate you very much!

Jane V. Morse
Extension Agent II, Commercial Horticulture
Thank You Volunteers!

Reminder—Mark Your Calendar!

- **MG Update Monday, March 8 at 9 a.m.**
  Gary Vallad, IFAS, Plant Pathologist—“Vegetable Diseases.”

You are cordially invited to attend the:

- **Volunteer Awards and Potluck Luncheon**
  After the March update from **12:30 p.m.–2 p.m.**
  Meat, rolls and beverages provided by the FBG Foundation.
  Bring your favorite salad, side dish or dessert to share.

Benefits to FBGF Membership and Master Gardener Certification

We have identified nursery owners in our communities who are willing to offer a 10% discount to members of the FBG and to Master Gardeners. When you make a purchase at these businesses, please present your membership card for the discount.

- Art Stone Orchids
- Carroll Brothers Nursery
- Country Club Nursery
- Earthscapes Garden Room in Palm Harbor
- Jene’s Tropicals
- Kathy’s Korner
- Palm Harbor Nursery & Landscaping
- Twigs & Leaves
- Wilcox Nursery
- Willow Tree Nursery