

Demonstration Garden dedicated in Yulee

BY AMANDA BISHOP
NCR Reporter

Nassau County's demonstration garden is open for garden enthusiasts to view.

The garden was formally dedicated Wednesday at the Nassau County Governmental Complex, 96135 Nassau Place Rd., Yulee.

It is available for people to see examples of plants best suited for the soils of Northeast Florida and learn proper care and maintenance of them.

The garden, which is approximately 60 foot by 70 foot, was designed by Anne Mankovich, a Nassau County master gardener, and installed by the Nassau County master gardeners, 4-H youth and community volunteers. Master gardeners will maintain the garden. Becky Jordi, UF/IFAS Environmental Horticulture Agent II, Nassau County Cooperative Extension, estimates that the volunteers donated more than 500 hours of work.

At least 36 types of plants, recommended for Florida landscape, were planted in the garden, including a variety of trees, shrubs, groundcovers, grasses, perennials and hardy sub-tropicals.

Jordi said the community has been very supportive of the project and that many people now stroll through the garden's short pathway to get a closer view of the plants.

The demonstration garden is located near the entrance to the Nassau County Board of Commissioners chambers.

"The idea has been a desire of mine and the master gardeners since I came here in 2001," Jordi said. "Since we got a satellite office in Yulee there was property around the office that was vacant and dormant. Master gardeners asked about developing the garden at the new site and it took off."

Jordi said the garden seems to have others appreciating the area more.

"We have seen fewer cigarette butts and trash in the area that was once used as an outdoor ashtray — that alone is enough to make you smile," she said. "There is something about looking at plants growing that makes you feel better about your work environment — it is hard to put an exact value on it but you know it is making a difference."

The demonstration garden shows examples of "best management practices" outlined by the University of Florida's "Florida Yards and Neighborhoods" program. These practices include micro-irrigation, mulching, recycling, attracting wildlife and integrated pest management.

In addition to the demonstration garden, the "butterfly experience" presentation, geared for young children, is also available. It includes information on the butterfly's life cycle, including its metamorphosis from larva to becoming a caterpillar to becoming an adult butterfly. Master gardeners will explain why butterflies are important in the pollination of plants, flowers and trees and children will be able to make butterfly art and take their creations home.

"We are all pleased with the initial outcome," Jordi said. "We all anticipate a beautiful spring. This project is evolving and we anticipate many educational activities being conducted and built around this garden. We will be able to hold outdoor teaching activities with local youth groups from public and private schools as well as home-schooled students."

To schedule a guided group or school tour of the demonstration garden and butterfly experience, call the extension office at 321-5715 or email rjordi@ifas.ufl.edu. Self-guid-



ed visits to the garden are welcome anytime.

E-mail comments and suggestions to abishop@nassaucountyrecord.com.

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Nassau County master gardeners and guests attended the demonstration garden's dedication Wednesday morning.
Becky Jordi from Nassau County Cooperative Extension shows the garden to a patron, Nassau County Commissioner Jim Higginbotham walks through the garden, examining the plant signs, such as the one shown here. Master gardeners Bea Walker and Jim Kelley discuss the garden's plants.

