

NASSAU LIFE

Master gardeners: award-winning green thumbs

BY AMANDA BISHOP
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Area master gardeners proved they had award-winning green thumbs by planting the University of Florida's top pick for the 2006 Grand Image Award.

Judges from UF chose the Nassau County Demonstration Garden and the Citrus County Extension's program, "Shoreline Stewardship - Be a Lake Pan Pal" as co-winners of the award. The two entities each received \$500 for continued improvements to their projects.

The county demonstration garden was officially dedicated Nov. 30, 2005, at its location at the county's government complex in Yulee.

Throughout 2006-07, gardeners have continued to plant and developed their project into a complete garden. Planted throughout the garden and within the neighboring parking lot are a variety of plants, flowers and trees that grow well in northern Florida.

The garden also demonstrates micro-irrigation, mulching, recycling, ways to attract wildlife and integrated pest management.

Master gardeners offer tours and informational brochures are available at the garden's entrance for self-guided tours.

Becky Jordi, UF/IFAS Nassau County Environmental Horticulture Extension Agent, along with 12 other area master gardeners were presented



with award certificates during the county commission's meeting June 6.

The gardeners had to submit a five-question application to UF, and received a perfect score of 100 on it.

"We received many outstanding entries," John Battenfield, IV, director of the UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, wrote in a congratulatory letter to Jordi. "You are among a group of dedicated and very talented people throughout Florida serving its residents by promoting

UF/IFAS and its programs. You are to be commended for a job well done."

The garden serves as a classroom for novice gardeners and students countywide. The master gardeners volunteer their time to present "Landscape Matters," a program held several times each year to introduce the community to topics such as beneficial insects, perennials, butterfly gardening, micro-irrigation, mulching and other garden-oriented topics. A second program, "Good Bug, Bad Bug,"

teaches area students how to identify bugs.

The judge was very impressed by the entry and noted its usefulness in remarks given to the gardeners.

"What an excellent project. I love the collaboration that went into this project from the very beginning. I love that you involved the community in every facet of development and that the community as a whole continues to benefit from it every day. But what really makes this the winner is the thoroughness with which

you prepared your entry," the judge wrote, continuing later, "I also appreciate that you designed this project to encourage sustainable landscaping practices for future generations. It's clear that you've made a major impact on your community."

Master gardeners who received certificates for their efforts included Bea Walker, Paul Gosnell, Bertie Tanner, Marshall Tanner, Anne Mankovich, Diane Graham, Jim Kelley, Dottie Kelley, Becky Altman, Shirley Fenton, Jane

Brown, Kathy Warner and Jordi.

Visitors are welcome at the garden any time. Self-guided tours can be done through use of plant signage and information sheets available at the garden's entrance. More information is available by calling the extension office at 548-1116, e-mailing Jordi at rjordi@ufl.edu, or visiting <http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture/demogarden/demogarden/html>.

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