

# Ag and More



UF-IFAS Brevard County Extension Newsletter



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## Show Off Your Green Thumb!

By Linda Seals, Commercial Horticulture Extension Agent

The 2010 Brevard County Fair is right around the corner, and that means horticulture competitions! Whether you grow vegetables, fruit, or prefer gardening, there is a category for everyone. Get the entire family involved! Competitions are open to a variety of age groups starting as young as kindergarten and up. Competitions will take place on Saturday, March 20 & 27, 2010 at the Brevard County Fair. In addition to the competitions, local gardening experts will be on hand teaching a variety of gardening topics including vegetable gardening, landscape maintenance, and plant care. You can also visit the Brevard County Master Gardener Florida Friendly Landscaping demonstration garden.

The competitions include three categories: gardening, vegetables, and fruit. The Gardening Category competitions are for container gardens including herbs, foliage plants, succulents, or unusual containers. If hanging baskets are more your style, competitions include foliage or blooming plants, and basket designs. If you are a vegetable gardener, then the Vegetable Category is for you. Enter in the largest vegetable or the



oddest shaped vegetable contest. Maybe you grow the prettiest, best tasting vegetables on the block! If so, enter the best quality vegetable contest. Vegetables that qualify include radishes, green beans, cabbage, eggplant, tomatoes, peppers, and much more.

The Fruit Category is your chance to show off your oranges, grapefruit, or tangerines. Prizes will also be awarded for the best strawberries, carambola, or papaya.

Whatever your skill level, the horticulture competitions are a fun and exciting way to meet other garden enthusiasts and show off your green thumb! For rules and more information, visit [brevardcountyfair.com](http://brevardcountyfair.com) or call our office at 321-633-1702.



James Fletcher, Director	Linda Seals	Sally Scalera
Gus Koerner	We've Got Answers	Joe Walter
Vanessa Spero	Gayle Whitworth	Beth Shephard

# Pumpkin Soup

Submitted By Beth Shephard, Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent  
From extension

Pumpkin is full of nutrients and is a great addition to your holiday table. For convenience, this recipe calls for canned pumpkin. However, if it is available, fresh pumpkin can also be used.

## Ingredients:

2 tsp. olive oil  
½ cup chopped onion  
2 celery stalks, chopped  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
1 tsp. peeled, minced fresh ginger  
2 tsp. sugar  
¼ tsp. ground nutmeg  
Pinch of cinnamon  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
1 can (14.5 oz.) pumpkin  
1 potato, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes  
4 cups vegetable or fat-free, reduced sodium chicken broth  
¼ cup nonfat sour cream  
2 green onions, chopped

## Instructions:

In large stock pot, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion, celery, garlic, ginger and sugar and cook 4 minutes, until tender.

Add nutmeg and cinnamon. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and stir to coat.

Add pumpkin, potato and broth. Bring to a boil.

Reduce heat to medium-low, partially cover and simmer 20 minutes, until pumpkin and potato are tender.

Ladle soup into bowls and top each serving with sour cream and green onions.

Nutritional Information: (Makes 6 servings)

Per serving:

89 calories  
2 grams total fat (<1 g saturated fat)  
16 grams carbohydrates  
4 grams protein  
2 grams dietary fiber  
409 mg sodium

(Adapted from the American Institute for Cancer Research)

Pumpkins are very high in Beta-carotene, and it is easy to see that just by the bright orange color. Beta-carotene is one of the plant carotenoids converted to vitamin A in the body.

Research indicates that a diet rich in foods containing beta-carotene may reduce the risk of developing certain types of cancer and offers protection against heart disease. Beta-carotene offers protection against other diseases as well as some degenerative aspects of aging.



# Florida Friendly Landscaping Principle #4

By Sally Scalera, Homeowner Horticulture Extension Agent

Following the principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping is a great way to have a healthy landscape without harming the environment. Today's topic is the fourth principle - mulch. Adding mulch around your plants benefits the plants in a number of ways.

Mulch can prevent water loss from the soil by evaporation. Another benefit of mulching is that it suppresses weeds when it is applied three to four inches deep. A thick layer of mulch shades and covers the soil so that any weed seeds on the surface won't germinate. Mulch is also great because it helps moderate the soil temperature. This is very important throughout most of the summer and during our cold spells in the winter. The most important reason for using mulch for me though, is that organic mulches improve our sandy soils by adding organic matter as they break down. Organic matter is food for the soil microbes that supply nutrients to the plants, and it improves the soil structure. Organic matter will also increase the water holding capacity of the soil which is very helpful during a drought. For those of you growing vegetables, mulch is great because it can help prevent soil from splashing up to the leaves which can spread diseases. Bacterial leaf spot of tomatoes is a common disease and it gets into the lower leaves of a tomato plant by the movement of the soil splashing up. If there is mulch over the soil there will be no splashing of the soil and bacteria so, no disease!

Now let's look at some of the different types of materials that can be used for mulch. Pine bark nuggets, wood chips like golden mulch from our landfills, grass clippings, brown leaves, aged pine needles and compost can all be used as mulch. Pine bark nuggets are great though their color is a darker brown. They work well under trees, shrubs and perennials and they are slower to break down so, they do last longer than some of the other materials. Wood chips, like the golden mulch that is available from our landfills, are also great to use under trees, shrubs and perennials. Because they are also larger pieces they tend to last longer before breaking down so, they don't need to be replenished as often. Grass clippings are good to use too, but it is best to let them dry out some before spreading them under plants like vegetables, annuals, etc. With grass clippings you will also get increased earthworm activity which is another added benefit! Brown leaves that you rake up (like the oak leaves and leaves of deciduous trees) are good to use as mulch. Oak leaves are fine to use whole, which just means they will be slower to break down, but they still make a great mulch. I often hear people say that oak leaves and pine needles make the soil acidic but that is not the case. I asked one of our specialists in Gainesville who is a soil scientist about that and he said that no mulch on the surface of the soil changes the pH below ground. So, if you have oak leaves and you were putting them out for the yard trash truck to pick up, you can now start saving them for your plants! Pine needles are great to use also, but it is best to pile them up and let them age for a little while before putting them under your plants. You can either use them whole or chop them up into smaller pieces. If you chop the brown leaves and pine needles up before mulching with them you will find that they break down faster. This is actually a good thing, but would mean that you would have to reapply mulch more often. Anyone who has a compost pile can use the humus (the end product of composting) as mulch. This will also increase earthworm activity just like using grass clippings, brown leaves and pine needles.



Mulching is pretty simple with just two rules (and their exceptions) to follow. Rule number one is to keep the mulch a couple inches away from the trunks or stems of plants. The one big exception to this rule is to keep the mulch 6-12 inches away from the trunks of citrus trees, but otherwise, it is still beneficial to mulch citrus trees. The second rule is to keep the mulch about three to four inches thick over the roots of plants with the exception being the use of mulch around trees. Keep the mulch thinner close to the trunk of a tree as heavy mulch can lead to the formation of girdling roots. So, go check your plants and see if they could use some more mulch!

# 4-H Participants Honored at Annual Awards Dinner

By Gus Koerner, 4-H Extension Agent

August 6th was a fun filled evening at the Agricultural Center for 4-H youth, families and volunteers to enjoy. Not only was this night the annual awards and recognition event, but also a birthday party to celebrate 100 years of the Florida 4-H program.

Leading the program was the 4-H Extension team of Agents Vanessa Spero, Gus Koerner, Program Assistant Pat Trautman and 4-H Secretary Diana Doughty. Special comments and recognition were given by 4-H Foundation members Frank Sullivan and Bob Pittman. Among the awards given were special presentations to chartered club leaders, clubs that went the extra mile beyond normal activities to provide special opportunities for youth in service and leadership, and the presentation of the annual Brevard County 4-H Foundation Scholarship to Alicia Tetrault (photo left). Business partners of Brevard County 4-H were also highlighted. In the opening speech, 4-H Agent Vanessa Spero summed up 4-H's mutually felt appreciation for volunteers with the following



words, "Success comes in many forms but one thing is certain: Brevard County 4-H youth and volunteers exhibit what it takes to excel in goals, relationships, and experiences that put them on the path to greatness. As Agents we support and provide the assistance necessary to get volunteers and youth started, but the true passion comes from dedication, devotion, discipline, and determination the Brevard County 4-H community holds close to their hearts."

The evening ended with everyone singing happy birthday to 4-H, a mega-balloon drop, and the announcement of the Centennial Birthday Cake Contest winner, which went to Titusville resident Sandy Koerner for her chocolate-marzipan garden cake. For more information on the University of Florida, Brevard County Extension 4-H program, please visit our website: <http://brevard.ifas.ufl.edu> or call the Extension office at 321-633-1702.

# Boating Safety

By Gayle Whitworth, Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent

In Florida we have the opportunity to enjoy boating year round. While boating is a fun and enjoyable way to spend time together, steps must be taken to keep everyone, including children, safe. To help keep your boating trip, fun and safe, follow these tips offered by Safe Kids World Wide and the US Coast Guard.

Always have your child wear a life jacket, also known as a personal flotation device (PFD), while on or near a boat. All states have requirements regarding the use of PFDs by children. PFDs should be approved by the US Coast Guard and should fit snugly so that the child's chin and ears cannot fit through the opening in the neck. All recreational boats are required to have one PFD for each person onboard that are easily accessible and in good condition, and vessels over 16 feet must also have at least one Type IV throwable device. Life jackets should be checked yearly for buoyancy. While adults are not required to wear them, parents choosing to do so set a good example for their children.



Make sure that the operator of the boat has participated in a boater safety class of some type. According to the US Coast Guard, 80% of all reported fatalities on boats occurred on those whose operators had not received boating safety instruction. A new course, America's Boating Course, is available electronically. This course, produced through a partnership with the US Coast Guard Auxiliary and the US Power Squadrons®, allows you to study at your own pace, time and location. The course is available at <http://www.americasboatingcourse.com>. Do not allow children to operate personal watercraft, such as jet skis.

Do not allow the operator of a boat to drink and drive. Even those who are not driving should consider not drinking, as alcohol can cause dehydration, affect balance and vision, the ability to move around the boat and the ability to swim in an emergency.

Have a vessel safety check performed on your boat. The US Coast Guard Auxiliary and the US Power Squadrons® offer free vessel checks, which take only about 20 minutes. For more information, go to: <http://www.uscgboating.org>

Learn CPR and rescue safety tips for adults and children. These important tools can save valuable time, and perhaps even a life, in the event of an accident.

Watch your speed. During holiday weekends, the number of boats on the water increases. Maintaining slower speeds can help keep you away from other watercraft as well as from people.

Install and maintain a carbon monoxide detector on your boat. Do not ignore alarms.

Keep your eyes on children at all times when on or in the water. Choose a designated person who has sole responsibility for watching the children. Change designee every half hour.



Sources: United States Coast Guard (<http://www.uscgboating.org>), and Safe Kids World Wide (<http://www.usa.safekids.org/water/boating.html>)



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## Swine Flu Name Misleading and Costly

*By Joe Walter, Agriculture Extension Agent*

Misperceptions can be damaging to any industry but when it involves our food supply it is devastating. The most recent example is the H1N1 influenza outbreak that has been labeled as “swine flu”.

The International Society for Infectious Diseases have stated “since we know nothing of how this particular virus has gotten into the human population but there is apparently no history of swine exposure, it probably makes more sense epidemiologically to refer to this simply as H1N1 influenza virus.” When this virus first emerged last year it was termed Swine flu” because it had some common genes with the swine influenza, they have subsequently determined that the outbreak is a new hybrid virus. The H1N1 virus has not been found in any swine in this county. People can’t get the “swine flu”/H1N1 from eating pork. “Health officials have repeatedly stated that pork is safe to eat as there’s no threat to people from consuming properly handled and cooked pork,” according to Agricultural Commissioner Charles Bronson.

Pork producers and processors have been negatively impacted by the inaccurate characterization of this virus. Further damage can be minimizing by referring to this virus as H1N1 virus.