



### Inside this issue:

Sea Grant News from Shelly Krueger	2
Horticultural News from Michelle Leonard-Mularz	2
Plant Clinic Dates	2
Extension Director News from Alicia Betancourt	3
Page 1 story continued	3
Check us out!	4
Contact us!	4

**Congratulations to our Sea Grant Agent Shelly Krueger!**



Shelly has achieved permanent status with the University of Florida! We applaud her dedication to the marine life of the Florida Keys, her service to the University, the Florida Sea Grant program, and to Monroe County!

Way to go Shelly! We are so happy to have you on our team!



## Sargassum Watch

By Shelly Krueger, Florida Sea Grant Agent

This summer you may have noticed brown seaweed floating in the water and along the shorelines of the Florida Keys. What is it, and why is it coming to shore? The seaweed is a type of open-ocean brown algae, called sargassum. Another common name for sargassum is gulfweed, and while some species also grow on the bottom like kelp (another type of brown algae), once it breaks off from the bottom it floats to the surface and stays afloat with gas-filled berrylike bladders. Once it floats to the surface, it remains there and continues to grow on the surface of the open ocean in massive accumulations in an area of the North Atlantic Ocean called the Sargasso Sea. The Sargasso Sea is between the United States and West Africa, bordered on the western side by the Gulf Stream.

If you like to fish, you may have heard these floating algae mats called the “weed line,” and they are fantastic spots to sportfish. Sargassum is a very important habitat in the open ocean and provides one of the only places for fish, invertebrates, and juvenile loggerhead sea turtles to forage and hide from predators. A thick clump of sargassum provides a feast for many species, including seabirds, mahi, and white marlin, because of the hundreds of fish and invertebrate species that live in this floating ecosystem. NOAA Fisheries considers sargassum essential fish habitat for highly migratory species like mackerel, tuna, and wahoo.

...Continued on page 3

### August Calendar

Monday, August 5th  
**Plant Clinic**  
9 a.m. to Noon  
Suite 2-260  
1100 Simonton Street,  
Key West

Wednesday, August 7th  
**Plant Clinic**  
9 a.m. to Noon  
Suite 244 (2nd Floor)  
102050 Overseas Hwy,  
Key Largo

Saturday, August 17th  
**Plant Clinic**  
9 a.m. to Noon  
Marathon Home Depot  
Garden Center

Monday, August 19th  
**Plant Clinic**  
9 a.m. to Noon  
Suite 2-260  
1100 Simonton Street,  
Key West

Tuesday, August 20th  
**Monroe County Climate Change Advisory Committee Meeting**  
12:30 - 4:00 p.m.  
Marathon Gov. Center  
2798 Overseas Highway,  
Marathon

Wednesday, August 21st  
**Plant Clinic**  
9 a.m. to Noon  
Suite 244 (2nd Floor)  
102050 Overseas Hwy,  
Key Largo

Thursday, August 22nd  
**Plant Clinic**  
9 a.m. to Noon  
Island Home Nursery  
88720 Overseas Hwy  
Tavernier

# Sea Grant News



Shelly Krueger  
UF/IFAS Florida Sea Grant Agent

Shelly recently accomplished the following activities:

- Shelly represented Florida Sea Grant at the National Sea Grant Aquaculture in Action professional development training in Baltimore, Maryland. This is part of the aquaculture initiative to advance aquaculture in the United States. Shelly is part of the Sea Grant Aquaculture Extension Network and was invited to the federal visioning process in 2018.
- Shelly trained Dive N2 Life, a SCUBA club for middle school students, in UF/IFAS Stony Coral

Tissue Loss Disease Observer training for disease identification and reporting around Looe Key.



- Shelly is co-lead of the Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease Communications and Outreach Team along with Gena Parsons from Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. This is one of 8 teams focused on the Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease in the Florida Reef Tract and Caribbean with lead agencies FDEP, FWC, NOAA, and

NPS. Shelly continues to represent Monroe County on the management team.

### **Regular Spiny Lobster Season begins August 6th!**

**Bag Limit:**

6 lobster per person, per day.

**Minimum Size Limit:**

Carapace must be larger than 3", measured in the water.

**Egg-bearing Lobster MUST be released!**

For more information:

<https://myfwc.com/fishing/saltwater/recreational/lobster/>



## Plant Clinics

The Monroe County Master Gardener Volunteers will help you with plant problems or insect identification at the following locations throughout the Summer and Fall:

<p><b>KEY WEST</b> Gato Building Extension Office 1100 Simonton Street, #2-260 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon</p> <p>August 5th and 19th September 16th October 7th and 21st</p>	<p><b>MARATHON</b> Marathon Home Depot 4555 Overseas Highway (at the Garden Center) 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon</p> <p>August 17th September 21st October 19th</p>	<p><b>ISLAMORADA</b> Island Home Nursery 88720 Overseas Highway (Mile Marker 88) 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon</p> <p>August 22nd September 26th October 24th</p>	<p><b>KEY LARGO</b> Murray E. Nelson Government &amp; Cultural Center 102050 Overseas Hwy., #244 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon</p> <p>August 7th and 21st September 4th and 18th October 2nd and 16th</p>
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# Horticulture News

Michelle Leonard-Mularz  
UF/IFAS Environmental Horticulture Agent

Michelle recently accomplished the following activities:

- 17 Master Gardeners participated in an advanced training to become Florida Friendly landscape advisors. The yard recognition program is part of the Florida Friendly Landscape outreach and recognizes homeowners, businesses, schools, and municipal properties for following 9 sustainable landscape principles for the conservation and protection of our water resources. For more about the program: <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/index.html>
- Michelle held a Green Industries Best Management Practices Program for the City of Key West. City employees learned about landscaping practices for the protection of Florida's ground and surface waters. Topics covered proper fertilization, irrigation, and pesticide use. If you work in the green industry as a landscaper, grounds-keeper, municipal parks personnel, pesticide applicator, or anyone looking to learn more about best management practices, contact our office for upcoming classes.
- Michelle is working with Monroe County to provide pesticide training for municipal employees. If you have an employee that needs certification in Ornamental & Turf pesticide category or if you already have a pesticide license and are looking for CEU's or to add the O&T category to your license, contact our office.



## 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 began development of a Florida "Climate Master" Program. The program is designed to educate residents on the individual contributions and actions that can reduce climate change impacts in the areas of energy, building, transportation, waste, water, and food. The program will be completed this fall.
- Alicia co-authored the publication of a new handbook for Extension faculty "Facilitating Community Change-A guide for Extension faculty".
- Alicia had two abstracts selected for full chapter submission in "Handbook of Climate Change Management: Research, Leadership, Transformation". Comprising works by scholars, professionals and practitioners from around the globe, the manual is envisaged as a groundbreaking interdisciplinary publication on climate change management that identifies innovative management methods and tools that are field-tested and practice-approved. It will be published as part of Springer Nature's "Climate Change Management Series", the world's leading peer-reviewed book series on matters related to climate change.
- Alicia was awarded an Extension Professional Development mini-grant of \$1,700 to participate in the Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals conference in May 2020.
- Alicia co-authored a peer reviewed manuscript, "Climate Change and Florida: Frequently Asked Questions".
- Alicia worked with county staff and elected officials on the Transportation Improvement Group to develop options for consideration addressing transportation challenges in Monroe County.



Continued from page 1

Sargassum frequently comes to shore, especially in the summertime when the prevailing breezes are out of the south-southeast. Washed-up sargassum helps to create beaches and sustain shorelines in the Florida Keys, as the algae helps to keep what little sand we have from eroding and provides beach plants with the nutrients they need to grow. Unfortunately, when there is a heavy sargassum year, the sargassum can block out the light and kill the seagrasses growing on the bottom. To make matters worse, when the sargassum dies and decomposes, the decaying organic matter removes the oxygen from the water, which can cause fish kills. You have probably experienced the smell of the decay, as it sinks and stinks!

The amount of sargassum coming to shore has been increasing in recent years, especially in the Caribbean, where 8-foot-high mounds have been reported in Mexico. Unfortunately, the dead and decaying sargassum can remove oxygen from the water and lead to fish kills, smother seagrasses and turtle nests, and can become packed so thick inside residential canals and marinas it can become difficult to get a boat out to open water, not to mention the smell and decrease in water quality. Why is the sargassum increasing? Scientists hypothesize there may be more sargassum due to increased nutrient runoff from the Amazon River. Algae are just like land-based plants and need the same things to grow: sunlight and nutrients (phosphorus, nitrogen, and carbon). Next time you are fertilizing your

garden look at the label, you will see two of the main ingredients are phosphorus and nitrogen, the same nutrients that fuel sargassum growth.

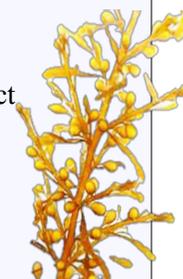


(above) Sargassum along the Boca Chica shoreline

Sargassum is also wind-driven. In the Florida Keys, prevailing winds from the south and southeast in the summer routinely bring these massive floating mats of sargassum onto shore and into residential canals with the wind and waves that have travelled from hundreds of miles offshore. This can be problematic for waterfront and canal front residents and is not likely to decrease in the coming years. Residents may want to consider installing weed control measures, and should reach out to the various regulatory agencies for permit information prior to installation of structures. The regulatory agencies can be found at the County's site here:

<http://www.monroecounty-fl.gov/canalwork>

If you would like more information, please contact Shelly Krueger at the Monroe County Extension Service at 305-292-4501 or at [Monroe@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:Monroe@ifas.ufl.edu)!





**UF/IFAS/MONROE COUNTY EXTENSION**

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 County Extension Director: Alicia Betancourt  
 Newsletter Editor: Liz Yongue, Extension Coordinator

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>



University of Florida (UF)  
<http://SolutionsForYourLife.ufl.edu>  
<http://ufl.edu>  
 Electronic Data Information Source (EDIS)  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>



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To see what groups like the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Keys Marine Lab, Mote Marine Laboratory, the Florida FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, Nova Southeastern University and Coral Restoration Foundation have done to fight Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease in the Keys, check out this episode of Changing Seas: Corals in Crisis, which aired on PBS this June!

<https://www.pbs.org/video/corals-in-crisis-liajfd/>



Check us out!

Michelle Leonard-Mularz hosted a Green Industries—Best Management Practices Training for City of Key West staff in June!

**UF/IFAS/MCES QUARTERLY CONTACTS**

	May	June	July	Totals
Phone calls	61	46	43	150
Office visitors	10	8	10	28
Visits to clients	12	17	11	40
Learning events	34	24	24	82
Participants	578	713	269	1,560
Media submissions	8	5	5	18
Publications distributed	905	297	167	1,369
<b>TOTAL contacts</b>	<b>1,608</b>	<b>1,110</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>3,247</b>

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