Forget the Supply Chain, Have a Greener Holiday

By Alicia Betancourt, Extension Director

After all “Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn’t before! What if Christmas, he thought, doesn’t come from a store. What if Christmas…perhaps…means a little bit more!”

Yes, ’tis the season to spread good cheer for all the holidays. However, for many families, the holiday cheer also means stretching their budget. Can we shop eco-friendly and budget friendly too? Incredibly most “green” shopping is easy on the budget. To help you save money and help the environment this holiday season, I have put together some practical tips to help make this holiday season a joyous time.

First let’s budget, take a hard look at what you typically spend on gifts, decorations, new outfits, wrapping paper, cards, special meals and year-end gratuities. At the same time, look at the rest of your budget and estimate how much you can afford to spend without racking up debt. Some financial planners recommend spending less than 1.5 percent of your annual income on holiday expenses. If you haven’t saved that much, look for ways to cut back.

Next, record everyone on your gift list and set an amount you expect to spend on that person. Keep track along the way of what you actually spend and compare it against your budgeted amount. One way to do this is the envelope method, make one envelope for each person and only put in what you plan to spend. If you overspend in one area, you should reduce costs in another. Think about some of the unnecessary gifts you received last year: would you have been any less happy without them?

Finally, make a list – check it twice. Decide what you want to spend on each item and stick to your guns. It helps to know in advance what you want to buy so you’re not enticed by all the attractive merchandise on the shelves. Monitor your spending. Plan ahead. This is supposed to be a joyous time; don’t let the temptation to overspend ruin your holidays – and make you pay for months afterward.

...Continued on page 3
Shelly recently accomplished the following activities:

- Shelly is on the steering committee for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Water Quality Protection Program and made a motion to add the Key West sustainability coordinator to the management committee as the City of Key West prepares to evaluate water quality monitoring in the nearshore waters.

- Shelly is the Florida Horseshoe Crab Watch program coordinator for Monroe County and this year a new site was created by state park staff at Long Key State Park after Shelly trained 4 staff last spring. This has been a very exciting partnership and state park staff have been busy counting and measuring horseshoe crabs and tagged 18 for the first ever FWC horseshoe crab stock assessment. Shelly connected Long Key State Park with the Key West Aquarium to borrow horseshoe crabs for a touch tank at Mote Oceanfest in Islamorada.

- Shelly is the vice-chair of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council outreach and education advisory panel and they met (virtually) with a full agenda to assist the Council with initiatives related to barotrauma, citizen science, Fish Rules smartphone app for recreational and commercial fishing, and the new website design.

Michelle recently accomplished the following activities:

- Master Gardener Volunteers installed the second wildflower demonstration garden at Crane Point Hammock in Marathon. The wildflower garden was planted around The Red Nun art installation project as part of the Florida Keys Sculpture Trail. It features 25 different species native to the Florida Keys.

- The Environmental Horticulture Mobile Extension Booth reached over 135 residents at various community events and plant clinics located throughout the Keys. Master Gardener Volunteers assist the Extension Agent, Michelle Mularz, answering relevant plant-related questions. These free services help residents reduce pesticide use, improve fertilization practices, identify invasive species, and incorporate best practices.
Alicia recently accomplished the following activities:

- Alicia is working with the Florida Sea Grant, Climate Action Team to develop strategies to increase climate literacy across the state. See some of the efforts at https://sites.google.com/ufl.edu/climatesmartflorida/home

Alicia participated in the Southern Energy Efficiency Alliance (SEEA) Monroe County meeting to build local government capacity to implement data-driven energy efficiency strategies. This project will provide:

- A convening process to bring housing agencies, affordable housing analysts, advocates, researchers, and sustainability staff together to share data, insights, community needs, and analysis

- A data collection to inform technical and economic energy efficiency potential in the housing stock inhabited by our most economically vulnerable households; and

- An aggregated, county-level analysis to identify the emissions abatement potential of local energy actions.

- Alicia organized and co-taught the Florida, Sustainable Living and Leadership Series. Series topics included sustainability 101, energy, water and food, and how these interconnected systems function together and independently. 24 Participants learned about sustainability through a “systems lens” and we had local experts help us explore issues in sustainability.

Continued from page 1

Here are some ideas for budget and earth conscious gifts that will not rely on those shipping containers from across the world.

Give A Priceless Gift: When you make a gift, you give of your time — the most valued gift of all. Make a “Gift of Time” certificate, make a painting, homemade jam or wine anyone? The list of things you can give is endless: a gift certificate for a chore an older relative can’t easily do; a trip to the park or a slumber party for the kids.

Make gifts: get your kids involved in this family activity. My favorite is a painted flower pot with kids hand prints.

Give experience gifts: such as tickets to an event, dance lessons or membership to a museum or gym. Consider giving an environmental excursion, such as kayaking or camping trip or make a gift to charity in a loved one’s name.

Make edible gifts: such as breads, cookies, dried fruits, or nuts. Package them in reusable tins, baskets, jars, or decorative bags or boxes.

Avoid gifts: that will be thrown away, use excessive packaging, or are made from environmentally sensitive materials.

Holiday plants: make wonderful “green” gifts for any budget. Plants can be enjoyed long after the holiday season is over. Whatever plant you choose, add an informative publication to your gift. The Monroe County Extension Service can provide you a specific “how to care for” publication on a wide variety of plants.

Give investment gifts: check local extension offices for money management classes or look at “Financial Gifts for the Children”.

Give local products: like locally grown citrus, honey or work from a local artist. This is particularly cheap if your neighbor has a lot of fruit trees.

Make, and give, holiday arrangements: like centerpieces and decorations. Links to holiday arrangements you can make your self can be found here.

Draw Names and Give Fewer, Nicer Gifts: This works equally well with friends, families, and co-workers.

Avoiding the holiday finance hangover is tricky, some of the things to consider are:

Consider setting up a holiday account at your bank, set up a direct debit from each paycheck to be deposited into a Christmas fund. This can eliminate holiday-season debt.

I’ve learned to let the relatives cover some of the holiday shopping! In all seriousness, I’ve learned to back off on my own buying for the kids because I know they will get plenty (too much) for the holiday anyway. I try to make it less about the gifts and more about tradition: Christmas Eve they always get Christmas pajamas and a new book for us to read together.

When giving a gift card, be sure to include any information you receive as well as the gift receipt. If you receive a gift card, carefully read all the information about the card and its use and check for an expiration date. Safeguard your gift cards as you do cash.

Have a safe and green holiday!
Wildflower demonstration garden installed by Master Gardener Volunteers at Crane Point in Marathon.

An Equal Opportunity Institution. UF/IFAS Extension, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension. Single copies of UF/IFAS Extension publications (excluding 4-H and youth publications) are available free to Florida residents from county UF/IFAS Extension offices. https://ics.ifas.ufl.edu/ufifas-diversity-and-legaleeostatements/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UF/IFAS/MCES QUARTERLY CONTACTS</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone calls</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office visitors</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Consultations</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning events</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>1,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media submissions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications distributed</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL contacts</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>2,806</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UF/IFAS Extension is Putting Florida First

Scan this code to go directly to our UF/IFAS Website for more information!

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

Facebook Twitter Instagram

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

Remember to pull out all plastic and styrofoam before you recycle your shipping boxes.

Save shipping boxes to use to wrap presents under the tree.

Christmas wrapping paper cannot be recycled.

An Equal Opportunity Institution. UF/IFAS Extension, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension. Single copies of UF/IFAS Extension publications (excluding 4-H and youth publications) are available free to Florida residents from county UF/IFAS Extension offices. https://ics.ifas.ufl.edu/ufifas-diversity-and-legaleeostatements/

TO EVERYONE THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE PEANUT BUTTER CHALLENGE,

THANK YOU!!!!!

Because of your generosity we were able to donate over 158 lbs of Peanut Butter to our local food pantries!

THE FLORIDA PEANUT PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION AND FLORIDA PEANUT FEDERATION MATCHED OUR DONATIONS AND DISTRIBUTED THE PEANUT BUTTER TO FOOD PANTRIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

Presents! Presents! Presents!

⇒ Remember to pull out all plastic and styrofoam before you recycle your shipping boxes.
⇒ Save shipping boxes to use to wrap presents under the tree.
⇒ Christmas wrapping paper cannot be recycled.