

Edible Florida-Friendly Landscaping™: conserving water & improving food security

In 2020, agents from the UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service began a new Edible Ornamental Landscaping program with emphasis on the nine Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles to meet the growing demand from residents to have low-maintenance landscapes that also produce food. The objectives of the program are to educate homeowners and landowners in Marion and surrounding counties on:

1. The principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ to have a low-maintenance, attractive, and productive edible ornamental landscape that conserves water
2. How to plan, design, plant and maintain an edible ornamental landscape that provides fresh produce for their household or others to consume.

Five online classes with 926 participants have been conducted. To supplement these classes, an 11,000 square foot edible ornamental demonstration landscape was installed and completed in Ocala, FL in 2021. 27 people participated in three in-person programs at the demonstration garden that are sequential to the online classes. The majority of participants reported knowledge gain of the FFL principles and edible landscaping, have made changes to their landscape, and have improved their landscape management. Since attending a program, participants have added Florida-friendly edible plants to their landscapes and have eaten or intend to eat the fresh food they harvest. Program participants have also decreased the amount of water used for irrigation, resulting in an approximate savings of 855,000 gallons of water per year.

The Marion County Edible Ornamental Landscaping program has expanded the reach of the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles to new audiences, reducing water use and improving food security for Floridians.



Amanda Marek

Amanda Marek has been the Florida-Friendly Landscaping agent for the UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service since 2017. Her background is in environmental education program development and evaluation and natural resources management with the University of Florida, Florida Park Service and National Park Service.