

Highlights in

*Horticulture*

Baker County

January 2011

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Dear Extension Friends,

Each new year gives us new hope and a chance to start fresh! I plan to expand horticulture programming this year, but please let me know if you see a need in the community that isn't currently being addressed. And make a new year's resolution to come out and attend one of our many classes and workshops. You might be surprised at what you may learn!

Best Regards,

*Alicia*

Alicia R. Lamborn  
Horticulture Extension Agent  
Baker County Extension Service

**2011 Master Gardener Training Starts Soon!**

**Applications accepted until January 31st. Turn yours in today!**

The Master Gardener program is a national program of volunteers who help the Extension Service by extending unbiased, research-based horticultural information to people in our community who need that information. This is a great opportunity for anyone who enjoys gardening and wants to volunteer for our community.

In Baker County, a Master Gardener might serve in one of the following roles:

- ◆ Work with horticulture Extension staff at the office
- ◆ Assist horticulture agent with Extension programs
- ◆ Assist horticulture agent with yard visits to homeowners
- ◆ Answer homeowner questions during plant clinics
- ◆ Work with youth to plant and maintain school gardens
- ◆ Plant and maintain demonstration gardens
- ◆ Grow a flower crop in the Extension greenhouse
- ◆ Work with youth in the Jr. Master Gardener Program

**All trainings will take place at the Baker County Extension Office**

**Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00am to 1:00pm from February 15th until the end of March.**

**The cost for all training materials is \$55 for individuals and \$65 for couples.**

**Visit our website or stop by the Extension office for an application packet.**



# Species Spotlight

*Species spotlight is a new section this year that will appear each month, highlighting a different species of plant, insect or animal. I hope that you will enjoy learning more about some of the special and interesting species found in Florida, and let us know if there is a particular species that you would like us to feature.*

*This month, we feature two species:  
the Polyphemus Moth and one of its host plants, the River Birch.*

## **Polyphemus Moth:**

The Polyphemus Moth is a giant silkmoth named after Polyphemus, the one-eyed giant of Greek mythology. This moth has a large, oval, transparent eyespot on each hind wing edged with yellow, blue, and black (shown right).

This moth is relatively common in Florida and can also be found throughout the United States, southern Canada, and south into Mexico. The larva (caterpillar) feeds on the foliage of many species of trees (called host plants), including oak, maple, basswood, beech, butternut, walnut, birch, yellow-poplar, sassafras, ash, willow, elm, and sycamore.

This species usually spends the winter in its silken cocoon, which is typically covered in leaves but easily noticed hanging from the twigs of its deciduous host plants. Adult moths emerge from their cocoons after March, although warm temperatures in January or February may cause it to emerge early. Because of Florida's mild weather, this moth may be seen at any time of the year, usually at night around street lights.

## **River Birch Tree:**

The River Birch (*Betula nigra*) can grow 50 to 90 feet tall but is often seen 40 to 50 feet. It has a narrow, oval to pyramidal crown when young, spreading wider with age as several branches become dominant. River birch can be easily trained with one central leader or as a multi-stemmed tree. It lacks the white trunk bark associated with other birches but is distinguished by reddish, brown peeling bark which provides interest all year round.



As the name implies, River Birch is well-suited for planting along stream banks but actually tolerates a wide range of soil types including clay, sand, loam, extended flooding and well-drained. It is also very resistant to pests and diseases. This tree grows quickly, needing full or partial sun, plenty of space for root growth, acidic soils and adequate water during dry spells.

The cultivar 'Heritage' grows 50 feet tall, has an oval shape, and scaly bark that is beige in color and is the closest to a paper white birch that will survive in hot areas; it grows from Minnesota to Florida. It is also tolerant of poor drainage. It is reportedly resistant to bronze birch borer and unlike most birches it is resistant to leaf spot. It is more vigorous than the species.



Cocoons covered in leaves

Abandoned cocoon showing opening



## Arboretum Update

The Baker County Arboretum is currently being installed at the Baker County Extension Office! Installation began on December 15th and will continue into the new year.

Don't forget to visit our website occasionally for up-to-date information and visit the new photo gallery section while you're there!

<http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu/BakerCoArboretumandTeachingGardens.html>

The Baker County Arboretum Grand Opening is scheduled for April 29, 2011 (National Arbor Day).



'High Rise'  
Live Oak

## Baker Co. Extension Horticulture Program: Facts and Figures

Did you know?... With the help of Master Gardener volunteers, the Extension Horticulture Program reached approximately 14% of the county population during 2010! Please let us know how we can help you in 2011!

Phone Calls: 1012  
Office Visits: 920  
Field Consultations: 163  
Class/Workshop Participants: 871  
Email Consultations: 34  
Newsletter Recipients: 310  
Website Visits: 57,507

## Vegetable Gardening Class

Monday, February 21st  
6:00pm—7:30pm  
Baker County Extension Office

*Topics covered: preparing the garden, plant selection, planting, watering, fertilizing. We will also discuss soil pH and the use of lime which is commonly misused.*

Call 259-3520 to register  
by Friday, Feb. 18th

## Hobby Beekeeping Short Course Coming Soon — Sign Up Now!

The Baker County Extension Office will host a hands-on beekeeping short course, where participants are involved with working an active hive on Extension Center property. At the end of the course we will demonstrate how honey is “robbed” from the bees and all participants will take home a jar of local honey. This course will allow participants to receive a complete perspective of the process/expense involved with keeping honey bees as a hobby. For others, it offers an excellent opportunity to learn about this interesting/useful, often misunderstood insect so important to our food supply.

**Saturday, March 26, 2011 - 9:00 am to 5:00 pm**

There is a \$10 registration fee (\$15 per couple) for the course to cover the purchase of materials.

Please visit our website (<http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu>) for further details and registration form. We must have at least 15 participants registered to hold the course, so sign up today!



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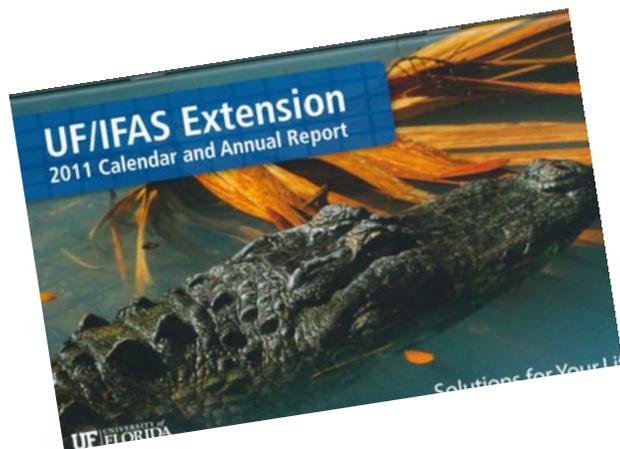
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## **ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

Extension programs are open to all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, handicap, or national origin. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person needing a special accommodation to participate in any activity, should contact the Baker County Cooperative Extension Service at 1025 West Macclenny Avenue, Macclenny, FL 32063 or telephone (904) 259-3520 no later than five (5) days prior to the event. Hearing impaired persons can access the foregoing telephone by contacting the Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8770 (voice) or 1-800-955-8771 (TDD).

## **Get Your 2011 UF/IFAS Extension Calendar**



**Stop by the Extension Office to  
pick up a free 2011 calendar filled  
with colorful photos and solutions  
for your life!**

**Available while supplies last.**

## **Budding & Grafting Workshop**

**Thursday, February 3rd  
6:00 pm to 7:00 pm  
Baker County Extension Office**

**Cost: \$5**

**Local growers will be demonstrating  
budding and grafting techniques  
and provide materials for a  
hands-on experience!**

**Class is limited to 20 participants  
- sign up today!**