PLANT LIFE COLUMN

DAD'S DAY

Whether you are a Dad, have one or remember one, Happy Father’s Day! For some, this is the national
day of ties, socks or shirts. After opening the presents and reading the newspaper, spend today building
memories. Dads won’t out-grow them and they won’t go out of style.

My father was a major influence in helping me to enjoy the outdoors. The memories of time spent with
him will last forever. I hope my experiences will give you some ideas on how to spend the day and build
memories of your own.

My dad enjoyed fishing. He took us girls fishing for bass, bream, speckled perch, mullet and snook. We
went to Lake Trafford, Lake Okeechobee and fished in the back bay near Pine Island Sound. We also
fished in the creek by the house with cane poles. I dug earthworms, learned to tie knots and make nets and
cleaned a bunch of fish.

I learned about fish biology; what, when and where they eat. I also learned patience since we spent more
time fishing than catching. I spent a lot of time being quiet. You can learn a lot by observing.

I also learned about cooking outdoors. We smoked, fried, broiled and barbequed fish over a buttonwood
fire. He taught me to build a fire from wood and charcoal. He showed me how to cook chicken, steak and
burgers on the grill outside. I still love the smell of wood smoke.

I watched my father work on cars, boat motors and lawn mowers. They seemed to need help a lot of
time. He taught me to make do and improvise until you could get the right part. I learned the difference
between a box wrench, a pipe wrench and a crescent wrench. I also learned the importance of paying
attention to detail, the value of a service manual and the good feeling when a project is done.

Dad took us camping, taught me how to shoot cans off a log with a rifle and enjoy wildlife. We watched a
great horned owl nest in the back yard. Bobcats, raccoons, quail, opossums and turkeys visited us. Dad
spent hours watching squirrels play and eat peanuts out of a number 10 can hanging on a clothes line.

Dad showed me how to build things. We built an incubator out of an ice chest and hatched chicken and
duck eggs. I built a martin house and helped build a chicken coop.

I learned how to use a variety of tools. I got blisters using a machete to cut palmettos and Brazilian pepper
bushes. I learned to put tools away. I learned to buy new tools that would last. I learned to buy lots of
tools.

We helped Dad plant a garden in the back yard. I planted seeds, saw things grow, pulled lots of weeds and
staked tomatoes. I helped my father put together a sprinkler system and run one of the earliest drip
irrigation systems. It used gravity to carry fertilizer water from a big drum to buckets of tomatoes.

I learned that raccoons know exactly when cantaloupes are ripe; the day before you plan to harvest
them. I also learned that it took at least three changes of water in the big kitchen sink to get the sand off
the collard greens. I learned that pickle worms can be chased out of cucumber by soaking them in cold
water.

If you haven’t made plans for today, then go fishing, plant some seeds, take a walk, ride a bike, play cards,
or make something. Whether you are a father or have a father, take time to share something you enjoy
together.

Never been fishing? Not a problem. Stop by any local bait and tackle shop and they will gladly share fish
stories and fishing tips. Some shops rent equipment so you can try out different rig combinations before
you make an investment. They will share ideas for baits, hooks, artificial lures and how to rig them. You can fish from shore or rent a boat from one of the local marinas. Maybe you can schedule to take a safe boating or hunter safety course together.

If you want to spend more time together exploring the outdoors, consider joining others who like similar activities and learn with them. Florida Trail Association, Audubon and Wilderness Trekkers are local groups that get together frequently for outings. There are hikes, trail work parties, conferences, kayak trips, canoe outings and field trips. Check our website at osceola.ifas.ufl.edu or call 407-846-4181 for contact information.

Today is a special day for fathers but it is even more special for their children. Hectic work schedules and competition for attention with television, computers, video games and friends make spending time together a challenge. Today, build memories. Take time to do something together.

Wilderness Trekkers
Kissimmee Audubon Society
Florida Trails Association

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