PLANT LIFE COLUMN

WILD WOMEN

Watching wildlife and outdoor recreation are on the rise nationally. Where are some good places to take friends and family bird watching? Is there any place nearby to canoe or kayak? What do you need to know about hiking in our heat and humidity? Whether you hunt with a camera or a gun, would you know how to track a white tailed deer or where to find turkeys or quail?

Some of us were fortunate to have family members who passed on their love of nature and outdoor skills. But what if you weren't a scout as a youth? Maybe your experiences as a child didn't include woods walks or paddling. How can you learn?

There are several options available to help you enjoy our natural wonders. Join a local recreation club, go on a guided trip or go to camp. You can get exercise, share quality time with your family, expand your circle of friends and broaden your knowledge base while feeling a new sense of accomplishment.

Several organizations locally offer educational programs and field trips to help you get to know the area. Meetings provide social time so you can find others with similar interests.

Kissimmee Valley Audubon, Central Florida Chapter of Florida Trail Association, St. Cloud walking group, Wilderness Trekkers and the Tarflower Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society all have meetings and schedule a variety of field trips and tours. Annual conferences for members and guests provide a concentration of classes and workshops on a variety of topics. Local Parks and Recreation offices also offer classes.

Local businesses offer guided tours and teach about the outdoors. Have fun on a family outing and no one will know they are getting a lesson. Enjoy a morning birding or learn to and find out what type of equipment you might want to invest in. See an environmental restoration project in progress on a guided nature walk at the Disney Wilderness Preserve.

Experience the thrill of an airboat ride and see our lakes from a different perspective. Take a trip back in time and learn the history of our area at the Cannery in St. Cloud, the Grand Army of the Republic museum in St. Cloud or the Historic Pioneer Center on Bass Road in Kissimmee. There are also guides that will teach you the local ways of hunting, tracking and fishing spiced up with local history, myths and legends.

Contact the Kissimmee-St.Cloud Convention and Visitors Bureau at 407-847-5000 or Kissimmee-St. Cloud Convention and Visitors Bureau for their Nature and Heritage Guide for more information on tour guides and places to go.

Even adults can go to camp to learn to be woods wise. Outdoor cookery, camp craft, survival, outdoor photography, backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hunting, firearm safety and boating safety are some of the classes offered at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Becoming an Outdoors Woman program (BOW).

The Florida weekend camp programs are based on a nation-wide BOW program to help women be more comfortable with outdoor activities that are traditionally most popular with men. While the program is designed for women, anyone who wants to learn hands-on in a non-competitive atmosphere can register. Most instructors are women who volunteer to share what they have learned with others. It is a great place to experiment without the pressure of "all knowing" family members. It is also a great place for friends to learn together. Mothers and daughters frequently attend together and some long time participants have become instructors.
It is never too late to learn a new hobby or activity that can provide enjoyment for a lifetime.

The University of Florida's Osceola County Extension is offering a series of landscape classes at the St. Cloud Civic Center to help new and experienced gardeners. Jessica Sullivan, Florida Yards and Neighborhoods coordinator will be teaching Butterfly Gardening on Monday, July 29 at 6:30 pm. Even though our landscapes are treading water, it is important to select plants that will also endure our winter and spring dry seasons. As you consider replanting flood damaged areas, Planting for Drought will help you look ahead to the coming days when the rains finally stop. Class will be Tuesday, July 30 at 6:30 pm. Low-Maintenance Landscapes will be offered Wednesday, August 1 at 6:30 pm. Call (321) 697-3000 to pre-register and reserve a free information packet.

Eleanor Foerste
Natural Resources Agent
Osceola County Extension/University of Florida
1921 Kissimmee Valley Lane
Kissimmee, FL 34744
(321) 697-3000
Fax (321) 697-3010
efoe@osceola.org
osceola.ifas.ufl.edu
Date: July 26th, 2002