

# Conservation Newsletter



**Hillsborough  
Soil & Water**  
Conservation District  
Florida



HILLSBOROUGH RIVER STATE PARK

## Hurricane Idalia, Debby, Helene, & Milton Resources

**What do you do next?**  
There are various resources and assistance to help you in this time of need.

**FEMA:**

- DisasterAssistance.gov
- use the FEMA app
- Call: 800-621-3362

**FDACS loan program**

Application are being accepted for Hurricane Debby, Helene, & Milton.  
<https://disasterloan.fdacs.gov>

**SAIL (State Assistance Information Line)**

Call: 800-342-3557

**Hillsborough County Residents Strom Recovery Resources**

<https://hcfl.gov/residents/stay-safe-recovery-resources>

**Please check out our website for more information:**

<https://www.hillsboroughswcd.com/disaster-assistance-and-information>.

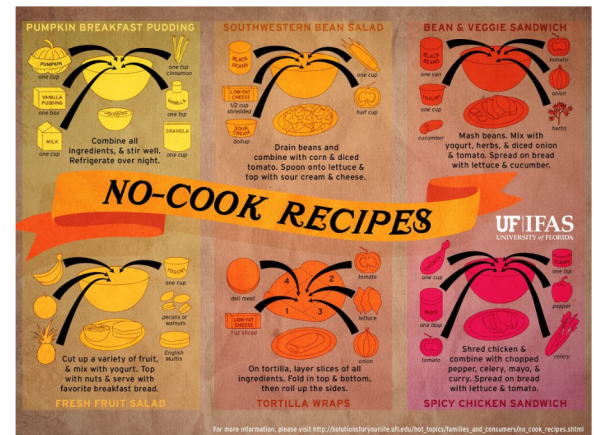
We are also excited to announce that we will be hosting our annual charity auction next month. This event is a fun and interactive way to support our cause while also enjoying great food, drinks, and entertainment. We hope to see you there!

Finally, we want to remind everyone that our charity relies on the kindness and support of our community. If you are able to donate your time or resources, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Together, we can make a real difference in the lives of those who need it most. Thank you for your continued support!

Enjoy this month's newsletter!

## Welcome to HSWCD's quarterly Conservation Newsletter!



*HSWCD Staff x*



## **Community News:** **Meacham Urban Farm [meachamfarm.com](http://meachamfarm.com)** 1108 E Scott St, Tampa, FL 33602 (813) 841-8003

Meacham Urban Farm is promoting urban regenerative agriculture using innovative forms of technology to feed and educate the community of Tampa Bay. Opened in 2020, the project was the first of its kind in the City of Tampa. Meacham Urban Farm transformed a vacant downtown 2-acre lot into a productive greenspace. The farm is integrated into the Encore redevelopment project, a 1,500-unit mixed income housing and mixed-use subsidized neighborhood. The farm was built in collaboration with the Tampa Housing Authority, Hillsborough County School District, and two independent farmers: Travis Malloy and Joe Dalessio. Meacham Urban Farm is a for-profit production farm as well as an educational non-profit entity that focuses on agricultural and food education. Meacham Urban Farm produces over thirty varieties of fresh, organic fruits and vegetables that are available in the on-site Farm Store. The Farm Store also aggregates organic produce and farm products from the local region.



Our farming ethos is to grow the highest quality, nutrient dense food we possibly can, through cultural practices that promote soil health and work in conjunction with nature. We grow on a permanent bed system minimally disturbing the soil. We manage our crops using mechanical cultivation, organic fertilizers, cover cropping, crop rotations, and integrated pest management. Our crops are always free from pesticides, herbicides, and synthetic fertilizers.

Meacham Urban Farm is named after Christina Meacham, who had served as principal in 1914 of Tampa's first African American school, Harlem Academy. The school sat in the area known as the "Scrub" where the farm is located today. We want to continue the neighborhood's educational heritage by transforming Meacham Urban Farm into a welcoming hands-on educational resource for the school district students and the public.



# Supervisor Highlights



## Gretchen Hoke

Welcome Aboard Supervisor Hoke! Supervisor Hoke represents District Seat 3. Gretchen Genrich Hoke is a passionate advocate for agriculture, wildlife, and the environment, proudly rooted as a 7th generation Floridian. She is devoted to preserving Florida's natural resources and has committed her life to advocating for rural working lands, encouraging a peaceful coexistence with Wild Florida, and protecting wildlife habitats to ensure a healthy Florida for generations to come. As a co-founder of Rain Frog Ranch Inc., she connects people with Florida's beautiful landscapes through equine therapy and outdoor education. She actively participates in initiatives to enhance green spaces and is a team member of the Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation, working to protect vital wildlife corridors across the state. Gretchen believes in the power of community and education, especially in teaching children the importance of agriculture and environmental stewardship. Her faith in Jesus inspires her to serve others and care for creation, motivating her to instill values of compassion and responsibility in the younger generation. Recently, she published a children's book titled *Too Cute For A Chicken Coop*, which highlights the importance of friendship, second chances, and animal rescue while encouraging kids to explore the wonders of nature. When she's not advocating for the environment, you can find her hosting guests at her unique Airbnb, The Old Florida Cowboy Cabin, or sharing her love for nature with her family. Gretchen hopes her work inspires children and others to explore, think big, and become stewards of the earth!

## Top 10 Hillsborough County Parks



## Aly Sullivan

Welcome Aboard Supervisor Sullivan! Supervisor Sullivan represents District Seat 5. Aly Joyner Sullivan is part owner of her family's small-scale cattle operation, Circle J Farms LLC, in Plant City Florida. She co-manages its daily operations, oversees herd management and breeding programs, as well as implements best practices in animal husbandry to ensure optimal health and productivity. In addition, she coordinates financial planning and budgeting to maintain sustainable farm operations. Aly is passionate about using her strong communication and organizational skills, combined with her love for farming and agricultural, to contribute to a dynamic agricultural environment. Making sure the next generation of agricultural leaders and farmers understand the value of the agricultural industry is something she finds of the utmost importance. When she's not working on her family farm, you can find Aly with her two boys, working with their livestock projects, teaching them how to help around the farm, at church, or on the TBall fields.

1. Eureka Springs Park
2. Burnett Park
3. Bell Creek Nature Preserve
4. Riverview Park & Civic Center
5. Anderson Park

## Florida Fun Activities to do in the Fall



- Visit a local orchard to do a U-Pick
- Corn Maze/Sunflower Maze Check local listings. Check out: Southern Hill Farms in Clermont. Sept 28-Nov 17
- Pumpkin Festival
- Trunk or Treat Event
- Train Ride
- harvest Moon Fun Farm
- Make a Scarecrow
- Carve Pumpkins
- Take a Hike
- Create Your Own Scavenger Hunt
- Build a backyard campfire for smore's
- Visit a petting zoo
- Go on a Hayride
- Visit the Hillsborough County Fair
- Epcot International Food & Wine Festival Aug 29-Nov 23
- 31st Annual Fall Festival of the Arts in Deland, FL Nov 23-Nov 25
- TECO Manatee Viewing Center OPENS Nov 1



6. Paul Sanders Park
7. Lettuce Lake Park
8. EG Simmons Park
9. Lithia Springs Park
10. Ballast Point Park

**Invasive Terrestrial Plants**

Invasive species pose a significant threat to ecosystems around the world, disrupting habitats and outcompeting native flora and fauna. Understanding and managing these invasive plants is crucial for maintaining biodiversity and ecological balance. Below we will explore several prominent invasive species, in the state of Florida including the Melaleuca tree, Cogongrass, the Old World climbing fern and Brazilian pepper trees. Each of these species presents unique challenges and requires targeted control strategies to mitigate their impact. Learn about the various methods used to manage these invasives and how ongoing research and community efforts contribute to restoring and preserving our natural environments. Visit the [Center of Aquatic and Invasive Plants](#) for even more information.

Brazilian Pepper



Old World Climbing Fern



The Melaleuca Tree



Cogongrass



**Conservation Quiz Corner**

Are you smarter than a 5th grader?



Answer the following questions to find out!

1. What are the 4Rs that help us make less garbage?  
Circle the correct four words: rescue, reduce, recess, reuse, revise, recycle, return, rot
2. Raw materials taken from earth to make human-made objects are called: a. electricity b. natural products c. dirt d. natural resources
3. What percentage of earth's water is fresh water?  
a. 50% b. 3% c. 10% d. 25%
4. Recycling paper can save which natural resource?  
a. rocks b. trees c. air d. coal
5. Plastic is made from which natural resource? a. trees b. metals c. oil d. sand

Answers: 1. Reduce, reuse, recycle, rot 2. D 3. B 4.B 5. C

*Thank you for reading!*

**Aquatic Invasive Plants**

Common aquatic invasive plants, such as hydrilla, water hyacinth and water lettuce, significantly impact ecosystems by hindering water flow, reducing oxygen levels and disrupting native habitats. These species can outcompete native plants, negatively affect fish populations and interfere with human activities like boating and fishing. Methods used to control these invasives include mechanical harvesting to physically remove the plants, chemical treatments using herbicides to manage growth and biological control by introducing natural predators like grass carp to keep plant populations in check. Click for more information on invasive [aquatic plants](#).

More on Invasive Aquatic Plants: Hydrilla  
Hydrilla, an invasive aquatic plant, thrives in Florida's water bodies due to its efficient photosynthesis process, allowing it to rapidly convert nutrients and carbon dioxide into growth. This advantage enables hydrilla to outcompete native species, forming dense mats on the water surface that block sunlight, deplete oxygen and disrupt ecosystems. These mats reduce biodiversity, create breeding grounds for mosquitoes and interfere with recreational activities like boating and fishing. Effective management combines mechanical, chemical and biological methods, with strategies tailored to hydrilla's growth patterns. For more information, visit the [UF/IFAS blog](#).

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<p>www.hillsboroughswcd.com Follow us on Facebook and LinkedIn</p>	<p>4503 Coronet Rd, Plant City FL</p>