Canal Current

A wave of information for Cape Coral's Canalwatch volunteers

Newsletter: 3rd Quarter 2021

Environmental News

Feeding of Wildlife Prohibited

Here at Environmental Resources Division, we often get residents asking, "is it ok to feed wildlife?" Many feel that giving a handout to turtles, squirrels, ducks or even burrowing owls is a harmless and generous act. However, this seemingly innocent deed of charity may have consequences often not considered by those that feed wild animals.

One of the most basic reasons is that it makes wildlife accustomed to the people handing out food. This "desensitizing" can lead to erroneous behavior to other people, who may not have a handout or don't like being pestered by wild animals. This can also lead to a dangerous situation, such as an alligator becoming acquainted to people, lose their fear or apprehensiveness, and can become aggressive. Those that become aggressive may have to be destroyed to protect people and property.

Another reason is that often human food is not healthy for wild animals. Breadcrumbs and other food scraps are not a natural part of any animal's diet. Accordingly, they do not need food from humans to survive. The diet of wild animals is often specialized, and while they are often eager to partake in, and even overindulge in human food, they can become malnourished or die if fed these foods. Foods that often hold no nutrition value for the animal. Additionally, animals are not able to distinguish food from wrappers or foil and can get sick eating these items. To an animal, if it has the scent of their favorite food item they get fed, it's close enough to food.

Animals fed by people are often drawn out from areas where they are concealed from predators for unnatural feeding. Birdfeeders can lead to a hawk or neighborhood cat attacking birds while feeding or the small dish of veggies rabbits frequent can attract coyotes to their new hunting ground. An urban backyard.

Parks and communities with stormwater ponds or lakes or Cape Coral with its numerous canals can also be affected by the feeding of waterfowl. Large concentrations of ducks being fed can create water quality issues. Some waterfowl species can drop up to a pound of feces every day! Being tolerant of algae and aquatic plants is also important as these submerged aquatic plants are part of the complex food web which feed aquatic birds, fishes, and other wildlife and aid in taking up nutrients.

Ultimately, the feeding wildlife is against the law, as stated in Florida Statute

379.412. Although difficult to enforce, the reasons stated here are justification to keep wildlife, wild.

However, there are no laws against providing for wildlife by other, more natural means. The many critters that visit backyards can be enjoyed by planting Florida native trees and shrubs that fruit, flower or provide shelter. Or providing fresh water with a bird bath or fountain. These provide a natural healthy source of food, nectar, protection from predators and a water source for our native wildlife.

You can learn more about native landscaping at the City's Florida Yards and Neighborhoods classes offered year-round at Rotary Park.

Questions? Comments? Let us know!

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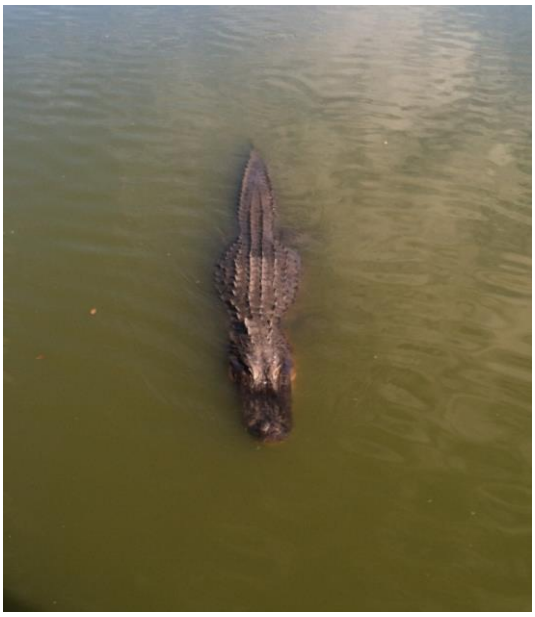

Never feed alligators.

Squirrel feeding on seagrape, a Florida native tree.

Aided by people feeding them, Muscovy ducks often overpopulate.

Native Plant Profile:

Dahoon Holly *Ilex cassine*

The Dahoon holly is found throughout the Southeast United States, the Caribbean and tropical parts of Mexico. In its natural environment, the Dahoon holly is often found in wetlands or riverine flood plains, but this species does well in many different soil and moister conditions. Because of this, and due to its compact size, the Dahoon holly is ideal for home landscape use. Much like other trees in the *Ilex* genus, the Dahoon holly typically reaches heights of 20 to 30 feet, and rarely exceed 40 feet. In nurseries as well as in its natural habitat, it can be found with singular or multi stemmed trunks. The Dahoon holly is attractive to municipalities or commercial development for median landscapes or right of way plantings where height restrictions or line of site are a concern.

This evergreen tree has dark, shiny leaves, but unlike other hollies, only a few prickly serrations are present on the leaf tips. Another characteristic that hollies are known for is their bright red berries. The Dahoon holly is no exception. Producing numerous clusters in the late fall and winter. However, hollies are dioecious (there is a distinction between male and female trees), so if bright red berries are desired, be sure to have both the female tree (bears the fruit) with a male tree nearby. While not edible to people, the berries serve as an excellent food source for birds and small animals. Additionally, the diminutive yellowish white flowers that appear in late spring early summer offer nectar to pollinators such and bees and butterflies.

Dahoon holly Oasis Charter School landscaping

The red berries of the Dahoon holly. Photo UF/IFAS University of Florida

	bd = below detection						benchmark numbers: Marked data are in the highest 20% of values found by Hand et. al, 1988.												
	July 2021						August 2021						September 2021						
	NO2	NO3	NH3	TKN	T-N	T-PO4	NO2	NO3	NH3	TKN	T-N	T-PO4	NO2	NO3	NH3	TKN	T-N	T-PO4	Avg
	<1.0	<1.0	none set		<2.0	<0.46	<1.0	<1.0	none set		<2.0	<0.46	<1.0	<1.0	none set		<2.0	<0.46	TSI
2B							0.025	0.05	0.3	0.4	0.10	0.10							28.39
4-2A													0.05	0.13	0.2	0.7	0.83	0.10	52.31
5D	0.025	0.05	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.10	0.025	0.10	0.3	0.9	0.10	0.10	0.05	0.05	0.2	0.6	0.60	0.10	40.40
6F	0.025	0.4	0.1	0.9	1.3	0.38							0.05	0.05	0.3	0.9	0.90	0.13	54.45
7E	0.025	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.6	0.10	0.025	0.05	0.2	0.6	0.10	0.10	0.05	0.24	0.1	0.8	1.04	0.14	44.20
9H	0.025	0.05	0.05	0.5	0.5	0.10	1.32	0.10	0.2	0.6	0.10	0.10	0.05	0.11	0.2	0.7	0.81	0.10	41.96
9I							0.025	0.05	0.2	0.6	0.10	0.10	0.05	0.05	0.1	0.7	0.70	0.10	40.68
12H							0.025	0.05	0.4	0.7	0.10	0.10	0.05	0.05	0.1	1.0	1.00	0.12	42.03
13B	0.025	0.05	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.10	0.025	0.05	0.5	0.4	0.10	0.10	0.05	0.10	0.1	0.7	0.80	0.11	43.22
16E	0.025	0.05	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.05							0.05	0.05	0.1	0.6	0.60	0.05	50.12
16I													0.05	0.05	0.1	0.6	0.60	0.05	54.71
18K							0.025	0.05	0.2	0.6	0.10	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.1	0.9	0.90	0.10	49.43
18L	0.025	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.6	0.10							0.05	0.14	0.1	0.9	0.90	0.14	50.62
18M	0.025	0.05	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.10							0.05	0.05	0.1	1.0	1.00	0.10	65.98
19D	0.025	0.1	0.05	0.7	0.8	0.12	0.025	0.10	0.2	1.2	0.10	0.10							43.36
21D	0.025	0.05	0.1	0.7	0.7	0.10	0.025	0.05	0.3	0.7	0.10	0.10	0.05	0.10	0.1	0.6	0.70	0.10	43.42
24D							0.025	0.05	0.3	0.6	0.10	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.1	0.5	0.50	0.05	48.32
30D													0.05	0.05	0.1	0.7	0.70	0.05	28.59
41B	0.025	0.05	0.2	0.6	0.6	0.05	0.025	0.05	0.3	0.8	0.10	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.1	0.7	0.70	0.05	37.95
44A	0.025	0.05	0.1	0.6	0.6	0.10	0.025	0.05	0.4	0.4	0.10	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.1	0.5	0.50	0.05	45.12
45D							0.025	0.05	0.2	0.4	0.10	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.5	0.50	0.05	29.36

48A	0.025	0.05	0.2	0.6	0.6	0.05	0.025	0.10	0.4	0.5	0.10	0.10							44.89
58I													0.05	0.05	0.1	0.7	0.70	0.10	53.50
59C	0.025	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.7	0.10	0.025	0.05	0.2	0.6	0.10	0.05							29.02
64H	0.025	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.6	0.10	0.025	0.05	0.3	0.3	0.10	0.10	0.05	0.10	0.1	0.4	0.50	0.10	38.77
71B	0.025	0.05	0.1	0.7	0.7	0.10													29.02
74C	0.025	0.05	0.1	0.7	0.7	0.11	0.025	0.05	0.5	0.8	0.10	0.10	0.05	0.05	0.1	0.6	0.6	0.10	44.14
74C							0.025	0.05	0.3	0.5	0.10	0.10							32.36
82A	0.025	0.05	0.4	0.8	0.8	0.05	0.025	0.05	0.2	0.9	0.10	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.1	0.8	0.8	0.05	53.49
96A							0.025	0.05	0.2	1.0	0.10	0.15	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.7	0.7	0.10	44.23
Median		**0.05**	**0.10**	**0.60**	**0.60**	**0.10**		**0.05**	**0.30**	**0.60**	**0.10**	**0.10**		**0.05**	**0.10**	**0.70**	**0.70**	**0.10**	**43.78**
Max		**0.40**	**0.40**	**0.90**	**1.30**	**0.38**		**0.10**	**0.50**	**1.20**	**0.10**	**0.15**		**0.24**	**0.30**	**1.00**	**1.04**	**0.14**	**65.98**

NO2 = Nitrite (inorganic)	TKN = Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (organic + NH4)
NO3 = Nitrate (inorganic)	TN = Total Nitrogen (inorganic + organic)
NH3 = Ammonia (inorganic)	TPO4 = Total Phosphate

High levels of nutrients in our canals can indicate the presence of fertilizer runoff or effluent from wastewater or septic systems. Excessive nutrients can lead to nuisance plant growth and algal blooms.

All nutrient concentrations shown in mg/L

TSI = Trophic State Index, a quick indicator of canal health. 29 sites this quarter scored as GOOD (<60). One site scored FAIR (60-70), and zero scored POOR (>70).

Water quality remained consistent (GOOD) throughout the summer for 3rd quarter results. As summer began, by June rainfall increased and was fairly consistant throughout the remainder of the summer. As those summer rainfall patterns came to an end, water clarity improved.

Secchi measurements improved for many of you and you may find that it is visible on the bottom throughout the dry season.

For up-to-date City of Cape Environmental Resources Division water quality date visit
https://www.capecoral.net/department/public_works/quarterly_water_quality_reports.php

Upcoming Events:

Butterfly Garden Design

Learn all about local and common butterflies and what plants to include in your landscape to best attract them. A tour of the Tom Allen Butterfly House and Gardens is also a part of this class.
$15 per household. 2/4/2022 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. For more information or registration, please call 239-549-4606.

Florida Friendly Landscaping Yard Tours

This guided tour of Cape Coral homes that are recognized by the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) for incorporating the 9 FYN principles in their landscape designs. See how residents have transformed their typical Cape Coral lots into beautiful, eco-friendly retreats. Please register in advance, limited seats available. Tour to be held on 3/5. $10 per person. For more information, please call 239-549-4606.

Tropical Plant Sale

Saturday March 19th from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm at Rotary Park. 5505 Rose Garden Rd. Cape Coral. Come shop for lush tropical foliage, orchids, and gardening accessories.

City of Cape Coral
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