



# HOLIDAY EDITION



## What Shrieks in the Night... Could Mean Better Water Quality.

Shawna Himelright, Environmental Ed Coordinator

Each year, FDOT District 7 considers grant proposals from different municipalities and environmental interest groups in order to raise community awareness of water pollution. Projects and proposals come from a wide variety of inspired minds: the grants have helped create dog parks that emphasize the importance of cleaning up after Fido, supported children's programs from the Museum of Science and Industry, and encouraged Florida Friendly Yards. This year, some of the funding will go toward conserving some winged insectivores in the City of Plant City: BATS!



One of the primary goals of the Water Resource Management division is to encourage community awareness of stormwater pollution (both source and non-point), and it can be difficult to come up with ideas that will not only grab momentary attention, but will teach people practices that can easily be implemented into their daily lives. Since a large portion of all water pollution is linked to the use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers, discouraging the use of such chemicals is a hot topic in the field – but it's combated by a residential love for a nice, plush lawn. We can't encourage people to stray away from having a lovely front yard... but we can educate them on how to do it a bit more wisely if we can find a tool to make it interesting.

Integrated Pest Management, or IPM, is basically a fancy way of referring to "nature taking it's course." By planting native species in our yards and encouraging wildlife, we can reduce the amount of chemicals necessary to run off pest visitors. Ladybugs, wheel "assassin" bugs, praying mantis, and certain species of spiders are just a few examples of predator insects that can greatly reduce lawn maintenance. If you're lucky enough to have a few visitor bats, then you've got a powerful punch to your pest insect ratio—a single brown bat can catch more than 1,000 mosquito-sized insects in just one hour!

The City's involvement with encouraging residential bat populations will be spearheaded by a class in November, where residents will be invited to attend a workshop that will educate them on the important roles of bats in the community, agriculture, and water quality. Attendees will receive a copy of Bat Conservation International's *Bat House Builder's Handbook*, a bat house for their home, other supplemental materials and a chance to come face-to-face with both local and exotic bats from around the world, courtesy of the Florida Bat Conservatory. Best of all, attendees will get to take part in research that will benefit the City, the State, and the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences; by reporting the success of residential bat houses, our community will be able to provide valuable data that will influence future environmental studies.

The City's involvement with encouraging residential bat populations will be spearheaded by a class in November, where residents will be invited to attend a workshop that will educate them on the important roles of bats in the community, agriculture, and water quality. Attendees will receive a copy of Bat Conservation International's *Bat House Builder's Handbook*, a bat house for their home, other supplemental materials and a chance to come face-to-face with both local and exotic bats from around the world, courtesy of the Florida Bat Conservatory. Best of all, attendees will get to take part in research that will benefit the City, the State, and the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences; by reporting the success of residential bat houses, our community will be able to provide valuable data that will influence future environmental studies.

### Did you know:

- \* Less than one-half of one percent of bats contract rabies, a statistic even smaller than domestic dogs. When bats do contract rabies, they pose little threat to people who do not handle them—most fall from the roost and die within days.
- \* Most bats produce only one young per year, which makes them extremely vulnerable to extinction. They are the slowest reproducing mammal.
- \* It's illegal to handle, buy or sell bats—they are protected by Florida Fish and Wildlife's Non-Game Animal codes. Although they are typically docile creatures, it's best to NEVER handle a wild animal found laying on the ground or acting strangely.
- \* Mexican free-tailed bats can fly up to two miles high to feed.
- \* A colony of 150 big brown bats can protect farmers from up to 33 million rootworms each summer.

For more interesting bat facts, visit Bat Conservation International at [www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org).

If you are interested in attending one of the bat workshops in the fall or spring, please call 813-757-9289 x 249 and leave your name and address. As soon as a date and location is finalized, you will receive an invitation in the mail to call and confirm a spot.

### EXCUSE ME, WERE YOU GOING TO FRY THAT?

Fats, oils and grease can cause serious blockages to the municipal sewer system, costing residents thousands of tax dollars per year in repair fees. City residents now have an environmentally-friendly alternative to pouring grease and cooking oil down the drain—it can be deposited at the **Public Used Oil Collection Center** located at the corner of **Plant and Victoria Streets**. The tank can hold up to 350 gallons of grease and cooking oil, so after you're done frying that turkey, bring it over!





## GENERAL SERVICES: BRIGHTENING UP THE HOLIDAYS

*Bruce Swartz, Facilities Maintenance*

Each holiday season, a beautiful light display is set up by the Facilities Maintenance section of General Services for all to see and enjoy. The display is located in historic downtown Plant City—it extends from the train depot, throughout McCall Park, around City Hall and north to the Bruton Memorial Library.

The set-up takes eight employees and over ninety hours to put together. The employees start before Thanksgiving in order to have the display ready for the Lighting Ceremony. Most decorations are put up very early in the morning so that traffic is not disrupted. The electrical lines used to support the lights are regularly upgraded and maintained to accommodate the growing displays.

Many of the decorations are made from scratch by City employees, such as the wreaths on the street lamps, the strawberry at City Hall and the Happy Harley Days sign. After New Year's Day, the decorations come down—and of course, they come down much easier than they go up!

- **Lighting Ceremony: November 30th**
- **Christmas Parade: December 1st**
- **White Lights Spectacular: December 1st-3rd**



### Stained Glass Sugar Cookies

*Sharon Garrison, Utilities Operations*

- Make a basic sugar cookie dough.
- Roll out dough on a floured surface.
- Cut out round circles, and make a hole in the middle of each circle.
- Place on a cookie sheet.
- Crush a package of LifeSavers™ into pieces.
- Place several crushed candies in the hole of each cookie.
- Bake cookies as directed for sugar cookies—the candies will melt and spread in a thin layer.



*Right:* What is this object? What might it be used for? Best answer by 12/1/06 receives 5 strawberry shortcake coupons from Parkesdale Farms. Mail submissions to: Newsletter Contest, attn: Shawna Himelright, 1802 Spooner Drive, Plant City, FL 33563. Good luck!



### Electronics Recycling Event!

Each year, thousands of discarded electronics end up improperly disposed of. The City of Plant City will be partnering with Com-Cycle on Saturday, October 28th in the Lake Walden Square parking lot (across from the movie theater, near Alexander and Jim Redman Parkway) to offer residents an opportunity to dispose of these items. Donations for the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity will be accepted.

*Call 757-9289 x 249 for more info.*



Holiday Garbage Pick-Up Schedule 2006/2007		
<b>Thanksgiving</b>	Nov. 20-24th	No pick-up <u>Thursday and Friday</u>
<b>Christmas</b>	Dec. 25-29th	No pick-up <u>Monday and Tuesday</u>
<b>New Years</b>	Jan. 1-5th	No pick-up <u>Monday</u>