



PARKS AND RECREATION

**MARION COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
YOURS TO DISCOVER**

Outdoor Times



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BOARD APPROVES MAINTENANCE OF SHOCKER PARK

Gina Peebles

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**IT STARTS IN
PARKS**
Coaching. Connecting. Community.



As of Jan. 1, 2013, the Parks and Recreation Department will assume

the day-to-day maintenance of Shocker Park, a girls fast-pitch softball facility.

The property is owned by Marion County, but was leased to Ocala Girls Softball for maintenance since

1994. In mid-2012, park supporters requested the County to help with maintenance so volunteer hours could be focused on attracting tournaments to the park.

With six softball fields, and its convenient central Florida location, Shocker Park is a destination for tournaments.

According to information provided by the Visitors and Convention Bureau, tournaments held at Shocker Park contributed to nearly \$8.8 million in economic impact to our community.

"Ocala Girls Softball will pay the County \$15,000 per

year toward field maintenance. That contribution, coupled with the impressive economic impact of \$8.8 million return to our community, made it a win-win situation for park volunteers and the County," stated Commission Vice-Chair, Carl Zalak who negotiated the deal.

The Board of County Commissioners concurred, unanimously voting to provide maintenance for the park at their Dec. 18 meeting.

Shocker Park is located at 4400 SE 24 Street in Ocala.

THE FOREST COMMUNITY CENTER CELEBRATES ITS FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Leah Hoffman

The Forest Community Center at Sandhill Park recently celebrated its first anniversary.

"During our first ten months, more than 16,000 people visited the facility," stated Cathy Norris, Recreation Manager. "That number does not include people who visited the park without coming inside the center," she added.

Since its' opening, a variety of programs have been

offered. Now through February activities including a monthly Community Yard Sale, Acoustic Jam Night, Art Club for Adults and Kids, Bear Paws Quilters, Introduction to X-Box, Line Dance Lessons, Pine Needles Quilt Club, Stretching, White Elephant Bingo, Parents Night Out, Kid's Valentine's Day, Valentine Luncheon for Seniors and Martial Arts are planned. New programs are added regularly.

Meeting rooms are available for your next meeting or special event for only \$15 - \$30, depending on the room rented. The Sandhill Room can accommodate 125 people and includes access to a warming kitchen.

The Forest Community Center is located at 777 S. CR 314A in Silver Springs.

For more information on the programs offered at the Center, please call 352-438-2840.

Outdoor Times is a monthly newsletter provided as a public service to park visitors and guests.

Any questions related to this publication can be directed to Leah Hoffman, Administrative Manager, in writing at Marion County Parks and Recreation, 111 SE 25 Avenue, Ocala, FL 34471, by telephone at 352-671-8560 or via email at leah.hoffman@marioncountyfl.org

DON'T MURDER THAT (CRAPE) MYRTLE!

Jim Couillard

By mid-winter most gardeners are eager to get outside and start preparing for summer. For Crape Myrtles it is important to restrain from the yearning to prune too early, or too hard.



a view or may be crowding a neighbor's fence, but that doesn't mean that all of the trees need to be pruned in the same manner. If a Crape Myrtle requires annual hard pruning just to "keep it in check,"

perhaps it should be replaced with a smaller, or even dwarf, variety of Crape Myrtle.

Crape Myrtles have historically received the brunt of poor pruning practices. While these trees are known for being fairly tough, they are ritualistically "murdered" each spring, while other types of trees are seldom pruned. While there is some logic that pruning encourages blooming. Most plants benefit from a light pruning. Pruning done correctly actually increases the density of branches and stems. These areas where new growth is generated will host new blooms. But if a tree is "topped" or "hatracked" every year, the number of blooming branches will not increase and put the tree under a lot of stress. Trees that are hard pruned spend the late spring and early summer recovering.

Pruning should be done on a tree-by-tree basis. One tree may need pruning while others may not. Certain trees may be blocking

Another method of improper pruning is the removal of the previous year's growth down to where previous cuts were made. This is referred to as "pollarding." The result of both "topping" or "pollarding" actually put unnecessary stress on the trees and promotes sucker growth at the bottom of the tree. Sucker growth, if not removed promptly, begins to use the nutrients and moisture that the tree typically uses. Sucker growth can be thick at times and ends up making the trees appear ratty and less appealing.

Several varieties of Crape Myrtles are known for displaying exfoliating bark and revealing brilliant colors of reds and tans as the trees grow.

Others have very muscle-like furrows that form over



the years. By being repeatedly hardpruned, these trees may not get the chance to show off these extra features. Their trunks fail to mature to the point of supporting the exfoliation or development of deeper furrows since most of their energy is exerted on forcing new shoots.

Proper pruning of Crape Myrtles consists of removal of excessive canopy clutter, any inward growing branches, rubbing branches and any dead, diseased or damaged branches.

For a tree which has been properly pruned, branches over 1/2" in diameter will probably not need to be removed. Old seed heads can be easily clipped and the overall shape and size of the tree can be preserved.

As with any pruning, first start by individually reviewing each tree's form and content. Look for dead, diseased or damaged branches and remove those first. Then remove any inward growing branches and crossing branches, particularly those that are rubbing each other. Then look at the overall shape of the tree. You may find that pruning any more isn't really necessary.

If pruning is necessary hand pruners are the preferred tool but loppers may be needed (or even a hand saw) to remove larger caliper branches. Remember, removing larger limbs should be done with care and caution. Tree limbs are heavy and knowing where they are going to fall can save you a lot of headaches. If proper proactive pruning cuts are made earlier in the tree's life, there should be less need for heavy pruning in the future. Valentine's Day is a good time to prune your Crape Myrtle. Proper horticultural timing is when the trees are dormant, and before new bud growth. Avoid pruning between

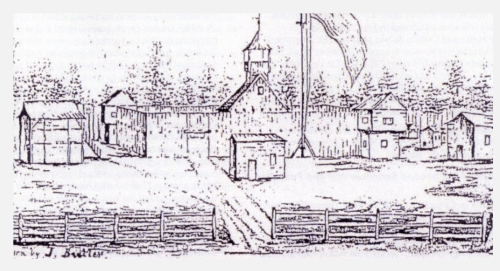
December and late winter as pruning during this time has shown to reduce cold hardiness and increase the risk of killing the trees. Tip pruning to remove

old flower clusters may promote recurrent blooming but is not practical for large plants or low maintenance landscapes. Tip pruning is largely unnecessary on many newer cultivars that naturally repeat-bloom, but it may enhance recurrent blooms on older cultivars. Crape Myrtles generally require little pruning. Some of the prettiest Crape Myrtles around town are the large varieties that have ample room to grow and show off their handsome trunks and large spreading canopies.



FORT KING HERITAGE ASSOCIATION HOSTS PUBLIC MEETING

Morrey Deen



The Fort King Heritage Association (FKHA) will hold a public meeting to introduce

The FKHA would like to invite all those who have an interest in this site and pro-

ject to join them as they begin the journey in developing a public / private partnership. As the 200th anniversary of the Fort and America's history approaches, which encompassed the First, Second and Third Seminole Wars in 1820-1842 Florida, the FKHA would like to rally our community to be a part of this momentous project and the rich history

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that took place in our very midst.

The public meeting will be held on Thursday, Jan. 17 at 4 p.m. at the Ocala Train Station, located at 531 NE 1 Avenue in Ocala.

For more information call 352-789-1526.

COMPLETE A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION - ADOPT-A-PARK

Leah Hoffman

Did you know you could Adopt-A-Park and complete a New Year's Resolution at the same time?

The Marion County Parks and Recreation offers an Adopt-A-Park program for individuals, families, businesses or community/civic groups. In exchange for six work days per year, the Parks and Recreation Department will provide your

group with T-shirts and install an Adopt-A-Park sign recognizing your commitment to the Marion County park of your choice.

Work day projects are coordinated with the area Park Ranger and may include picking up trash, raking playground mulch, painting, staining, weeding and other park beautification projects.

The program also offers students with required volunteer hours a chance to receive credit toward graduation.

If you are interested in giving back to our community, please contact Leah Hoffman at 352-671-8560 or via email leah.hoffman@marioncountyfl.org.



Coehadjoe Park workday with Ft. King Kiwanis and Rho Beta Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi

Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
Jan 5	8 a.m. 10 a.m. 12 p.m. 2 p.m.	Forest Community Yard Sale Art Van-Go (ages 5-15) Art Van-Go (ages 5-15) Art Van-Go (ages 5-15)	Forest Community Center Brick City Adventure Park Forest Community Center Wrigley Fields (Citra)
Jan 8	8:30 a.m.	Nature Hike/Ross Prairie	Brick City Adventure Park
Jan 8, 15, 22, 29	10 a.m. 1 p.m. 3:15 p.m. 4:15 p.m. 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.	Stretching Class White Elephant Bingo Youth Beginning Tennis Youth Intermediate Tennis Martial Arts Class (Youth / Adults)	Forest Community Center Forest Community Center Bellevue Sportsplex Bellevue Sportsplex Forest Community Center
Jan 2, 16	8:30 a.m.	Brick City Quarry Tour	Brick City Adventure Park

Please visit us online at <http://www.marioncountyfl.org/Parks>

and click ONLINE SERVICES or call 352-671-8560 to pre-register or for more information.

Calendar of Events (Cont.)

Date	Time	Event	Location
Jan 2, 9, 16, 23, 30	10 a.m.	Home School PE (Ages 5-8)	Brick City Adventure Park
	10 a.m.	Home School Art Program (Ages 9-14)	Brick City Adventure Park
	11 a.m.	Home School Art Program (Ages 5-8)	Brick City Adventure Park
	11 a.m.	Home School PE (Ages 9-14)	Brick City Adventure Park
	2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	Art Club for Adults	Forest Community Center
	4 p.m. - 5 p.m.	Kids Art Club (ages 6-16)	Forest Community Center
	5 p.m. - 8 p.m.	Bear Paw's Quilting	Forest Community Center
	5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.	Dance Lessons (ages 3-up)	Forest Community Center
Jan 3, 10, 17, 24, 31	10:30 a.m.	Pine Needles Quilt Club	Forest Community Center
	5 p.m. - 7 p.m.	Martial Arts Class (Youth / Adults)	Forest Community Center
	6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.	Forest Acoustic Jam	Forest Community Center
Jan 4, 11, 18, 25	3:15 p.m.	Youth Beginning Tennis	Coehadjoe Park
	4:15 p.m.	Youth Intermediate Tennis	Coehadjoe Park
	5 p.m. - 7 p.m.	Beginner and Up Line Dancing (Teens/Adults)	Forest Community Center
Jan 7	12 noon	Bellevue Sportsplex Monthly Meeting	SE 80th Sheriff's Sub-station
Jan 10, 13	9:30 a.m.	Eco Tram Tour	Ocklawaha Prairie
Jan 12	9:30 a.m.	Kayak 101 (Ages 10 up)	Carney Island
	6 p.m.	Carney Island Night Hike	Carney Island
Jan 15	9:30 a.m.	Kayak 101 (Adult)	Carney Island
Jan 16	3 p.m.	Parks and Recreation Advisory Council	Parks Administration
Jan 17	4 p.m.	FKHA Public Meeting	Ocala Train Station
Jan 19	8:30 a.m.	Kayak Outing (adults)	Rainbow River/KP Hole
Jan 19-Feb 23	9 a.m. - 11 a.m.	Youth Flag Football	Wrigley Fields
Jan 22	8:30 a.m.	Nature Hike/Yearling Trail	Brick City Adventure Park
Jan 27	8:30 a.m.	Kayak Outing (adults—Gores to Eureka)	Ocklawaha River/Ray Wayside
Jan 28	9 a.m.	Outdoor Adventure—Homeschool	Brick City Adventure Park
Jan 30	12 noon	Rotary Sportsplex Board Meeting	Parks Administration

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