



SPECIAL TO THE NEIGHBOR

Dr. Martin Price, ECHO's co-founder, leads a container gardening workshop.

## Free gardening workshops by local and international experts

By **ANDREA GALABINSKI**

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Gardening in Florida can be tricky, so what better place to learn than at one of the world's premiere farms?

Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization, with it's the North Fort Myers-based Global Farm, is presenting free gardening workshops Friday, June 19, and Saturday, June 20, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The educational workshops will focus on ways to grow food in Florida backyards, using practical and simple gardening techniques and the way to use a wide variety of fruit trees and edible plants that grow in Florida's warm climate.

ECHO provides sustainable solutions to world hunger through agricultural training, innovative ideas and networking. By networking with community leaders and missionaries in 180 developing countries, ECHO's goal is to find agricultural solutions for families growing food under difficult conditions. ECHO's international headquarters is located in Fort Myers.

Workshops will include Organic Gardening, Fruit Tree Grafting, Summer Vegetable Gardening, Herbs for SW Florida, Container Gardening, Gardening with Earthworm Castings, Bamboo and How to "Fertilize Smart." They are for both new and experienced gardeners. They will be held in the Tropical Fruit Nursery.

### To go

#### Who

ECHO (Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization)

#### What

Gardening Event/workshops  
Friday, June 19, and Saturday, June 20  
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

#### Where

ECHO's Tropical Fruit Nursery  
17391 Durrance Road

#### Cost and information

Free  
543-3246

"The Tropical Fruit Nursery is a training tool, a living classroom, for students, interns and guests, but it is also a service to the community," said ECHO President/CEO Stan Doerr. "We hope that through this event the community will be able to provide more affordable foods for their families, even from their own backyards."

Many are reaping the benefits of gardening for food in this economy, said Danielle Flood, public relations and communications manager.

"Besides those who want to learn about gardening, there is a growing economic need

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for more gardens," she said. "We have heard of people coming into the nursery, saying they've lost their jobs and would like to start a garden. It's something they can do at home, they can save money and many said they have never had the time to do it and always wanted to."

They're already getting some good response to mailings about the workshops.

Many have inquired for help there as the ECHO Farm has tours.

"It's something that we talk about constantly because the seasons are so different; you have to relearn gardening almost entirely," said Tim Watkins, nursery manager. "Another interesting factor is the soils.

We're dealing with alkaline, and maybe even salty and sandy soil; high humidity that turns into a lot of [plant] disease; and pest pressure. Gardening just becomes really challenging unless you learn how to adapt to the Florida climate."

He talked about the workshops.

"We're going to provide workshops especially about sum-



**ECHO volunteer David Burd leads a hands-on grafting workshop.**

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mer gardens — one of the most challenging things," he said.

Summer gardening focuses on a new set of vegetables, not the traditional northern tomatoes and broccoli or cucumbers, but a lot of edible greens and tropical vegetables that many may not be familiar with.

"These are what we call under-uti-

lized crops. We're drawing from international experience, a lot of options we can present to the background gardener," he said. "These are nutritious items that can be grown in the summer."

One workshop he said he wanted to highlight is two identical content sessions on the new

#### **Fertilize Smart Ordinance.**

"We have Karen Bickford, with Lee County Department of Natural Resources as a speaker," he said. "She's helping coordinate the Florida Smart Fertilizer Campaign to educate homeowners, landscape managers and distribution about the ordinance."

At press time, they are scheduled at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on Friday, but check for formal time.

The regularly scheduled guided tour of ECHO's Global Demonstration Farm will still be available at 10 a.m. and an additional tour at 2 p.m. during the workshops.

There will also be summer discounts on plants in the nursery. You can save 15 percent off select varieties of bamboo and fruit trees and 10 percent off summer-safe fertilizer. Orchids will also be available for purchase from Pelican Coast Farms.

"It's all free, no registration," said Flood. "We suggest checking the Web site for a workshop schedule, so people can arrive at the correct time. You can also call for information."

ECHO is located at 17391 Durrance Road in North Fort Myers, near the Lee Civic Center. The phone number is 567-3312 and site [echonet.org](http://echonet.org).

For workshop specifics, view [echonet.org/gig.htm](http://echonet.org/gig.htm).