

Lifestyles

AFTERTHOUGHTS

Margaret Hobbs

Value your time with loved ones

Another summer vacation has come and gone for us, and we discovered a beautiful spot, appropriately called the forgotten coast.

The area is located on the Gulf of Mexico in North Florida's panhandle along the Big Bend Scenic Byway. We spent time in Apalachicola and St. George Island, feasting on seafood and enjoying the pristine beaches.

I'm not a seafood lover, but my husband, Michael, is. He especially enjoyed dining on the oysters harvested in Apalachicola. It seems they are noted for having some of the finest in the country, providing restaurants all over the United States with the delicacies. I'm told they have a pure, mild, briny flavor that is recognized by top chefs.

We watched a mass of small open-bay boats tong for oysters along the Apalachicola Bay. The oystermen harvest the oysters today in the same manner they have for a century, using a tool that looks like two attached rakes, hauling them on board for sorting. The business is a very important part of the county, employing more than 1,000 people, shucking almost 2.6 million pounds of oyster meat. More than 90 percent of Florida's oysters and 10 percent of the nationwide supply comes from these waters. This is in addition to the shrimp, blue crab, scallops and other seafood that is caught. All very interesting even to someone who doesn't eat them.

Walking the historic streets of downtown Apalachicola reminded me of Franklin, with their old buildings filled with restaurants and unique shops. The port town was established in 1831 shipping cotton on steamboats. Many of the original buildings still stand, with more than 900 historic homes, buildings and sites listed on the National Register District. What I liked most about the town was how they preserved the past, and found a way to make it work. There is only one chain hotel, mostly local restaurants, shops and a few bed and breakfast facilities.

We are beach lovers, so we had to venture to St. George Island, a 22-mile barrier island accessible from Apalachicola by crossing two very long bridges. Not recommended for the faint of heart, or someone who doesn't feel comfortable looking out at open water.

St. George Island is another treasure, with some of the most beautiful and serene beaches in Florida. In fact it was voted by Dr. Stephen Leatherman (aka Dr. Beach) as the third best beach in the United States for the second year in a row. Michael and I decided that was a job we needed, visiting and ranking beaches!

St. George Island State Park occupies the far eastern end of the island, with nine miles of undeveloped shoreline, majestic dunes, bay forest, sandy coves and salt marshes. We spent two afternoons there, with little or no interaction with other visitors, making us feel very special on our own private beach.

I hope everyone gets a little down time this summer, taking time to be with someone you care about in a special place.

Junior Master Gardeners take big look at little bugs

By LISA HOBBS
Staff Reporter for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tenn.)

A Junior Master Gardener class at TSU Research Center held last week gave 31 children the chance to learn about gardening, including bugs.

"We have a different theme for each year," said Warren County Extension employee Tina Smock. "This year's theme is What's Bugging You." We are learning about bugs. We are also showing them everything from how to plant your own garden to how to make your own compost — from seeds to trash."

The class is sponsored by the Warren County Extension Office and given by the Warren County Master Gardeners Association. With this year being the first year the class has been offered at TSU's Research Center, employees offered classes.

"I'm going to be teaching the students how to make a hobo greenhouse," said TSU Research Center employee Adam Blaylock, who is the Nursery Extension specialist who offered a class to the students on propagation. "You can make it out of the plastic donut containers like you get at the grocery store. You can make little greenhouses out of them."

An entomologist, a person who specializes in a branch of zoology that deals with insects, offered a session on bugs — those that are beneficial and those that are not. Another employee offered a class on how to build a compost area.

The three-day class was uneventful, except for those children who didn't want to go home.

"I'm having so much fun, I really don't want to leave," said Marli McBride.

Nile Jones brought her



The theme for this year's Junior Master Gardener's class was "What's Bugging You." Along with gardening, students learned which bugs are beneficial and which are not. Children, from left, Abby Cantrell, Austin Conner and Destiny George examine a bug on Austin's arm.

own butterfly collection to show everyone.

"I've been interested in butterflies for two years," said Jones. "I found this one on my mom's car. It was dead. I started collecting them when I found them. I got this wing at the aquarium, where they have butterflies. My dad asked if I could have it and they said I could."

Jones has exhibits in a glass case, as well as a live butterfly in a container.

"I've had this butterfly since Wednesday," said Jones. "They drink sugar water. They eat oranges, too. If you want to catch a butterfly, you have to grab them by the wings or use a net."

For more information about the Master Gardener class, call the Warren County Extension Office at 473-8484.



Taking a hands-on approach to gardening are, from left, Molly Dodd, Marli McBride and Kalan Lusk. The trio were working on a composting project.



Junior Master Gardener students work together in a composting station during a recent session at the TSU Research Station.



Randy Cantrell demonstrates how to make a pot out of newspaper, using the origami paper folding technique.



Happy boys, from left, are Cameron Chilcutt, Johnnie Fults and Antonio Hernandez learning how to grow plants.