



Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Creating a Wildlife Habitat in Your Backyard

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October 16, 2017



Living in Florida...

- ✿ More than 1200 species of animals
- ✿ Ranked 3rd in the US for most diverse wildlife populations

Species in FL	Native	Introduced
Mammals	86	11
Frogs	30	3
Lizards	16	43
Snakes	45	5
Turtles	26	4
Crocodilians	2	1
Birds	499	18

- ✿ Butterflies and Moths ~2,932 species!!!
- ✿ Florida is part of the coastal route of the North American Flyover and provides key wintering and stopover sites for migrating birds

Benefits to “Naturescaping” Your Yard

- ✿ Provides habitat for native plants and animals
- ✿ Increases connectivity with natural areas
- ✿ Eases yard maintenance, recreates vital ecosystems that provide clean water to local watersheds and protects wildlife from becoming threatened or endangered
- ✿ Benefits to people:
 - ✱ Saves money
 - ✱ Conserves water
 - ✱ Minimizes pesticide and fertilizer use
 - ✱ Reduces maintenance time
- ✿ Benefits to wildlife:
 - ✱ Promotes native species
 - ✱ Provides habitat for animals
 - ✱ Maintains diversity
 - ✱ Fights invasive species

Providing the Basics

✿ Food



✿ Water



✿ Shelter



✿ Nest Space



Creating Natural Habitats

- ✿ Most birds and animals live in specific habitats which may change by season or lifecycle
- ✿ Simulate small areas of nearby habitat types
- ✿ The “edges” where these habitat types meet will probably be the most visited areas
- ✿ By using native plants, you will attract the widest variety of wildlife to your yard

Where would you rather live?



How about here?



How many animals might live here?



Food Source Considerations

- ✿ Fruit and seed bearing plants
- ✿ Foliage and flowers that you are willing to see eaten
- ✿ Native plants
- ✿ Varieties of plants to provide fruit and flowers throughout the year
- ✿ Do not use pest control in your yard (and be aware that nurseries may use pest control)

Food Sources

* Fruit and Seed Bearing Trees



Yaupon Holly – AlterNative
for Brazilian Pepper
Ilex vomitoria

Heavy production of red
berries from fall - spring



Southern Red Cedar
Junipeous silicicola
Berries are a favorite of
birds and dense foliage is
great for cover



Redbay
Persea borbonia
Fruit attract wildlife
Larval host for Palamedes
Swallowtails

Food Sources

* Fruit and Seed Bearing Trees



Sand Live Oak
Quercus geminata
Host for at least 5
species of butterfly larvae

Southern Wax Myrtle (Bayberry)
Myrica cerifera
Important food source for
wildlife and larval host plant



Cherry Laurel
Prunus caroliniana
Blooms and berries attract
wildlife.

Food Sources

*Fruit and Seed Bearing Shrubs and Bushes



Coral Bean
Erythrina herbacea
Blooms Dec. – June
Favorite of hummingbirds



American Beautyberry
Callicarpa americana
Bird and Butterfly attractant



Tough Buckthorn or Bully
Sideroxylon tenax
Has thorns

Food Sources

*Fruit and Seed Bearing Shrubs and Bushes



Deerberry
Vaccinium stamineum
Flowers for butterflies
Berries for wildlife



Soapberry
Sapindus saponaria



Florida Privet
Forestiera segregata



Food Sources

*Flowering Plants



Horsemint or Spotted Beebalm
Monarda punctata



Indian Blanket Flower
Gallardia pulchella



Standing Cypress
Ipomopsis rubra



Pokeweed
Phytolacca americana



Seaside Goldenrod
Solidago sempervirens



Oakleaf Hydrangea
Hydrangea quercifolia

Food Sources

* Flowering Vines



Purple Passion Flower
Passiflora incarnata



Coral Honeysuckle
Lonicera sempervirens



Carolina Yellow Jessamine
Gelsemium sempervirens



Corky Passion Flower
Passiflora suberosa



Trumpet Vine
Campsis radicans

Water Source Considerations

- ✿ Furnish clean water for drinking and bathing
- ✿ Locate in a shady, protected spot
- ✿ Mount approximately 3 ft. off of the ground
- ✿ Provide a “dry” edge or “beach”
- ✿ Provide a rough bottom for safe footholds
- ✿ Provide dripping or moving water if possible...birds are attracted to moving water

Water Sources



Pedestal Bird Bath



Hanging Bird Baths



Sprinkler



Fountains



Ponds and Waterfalls



Dripper



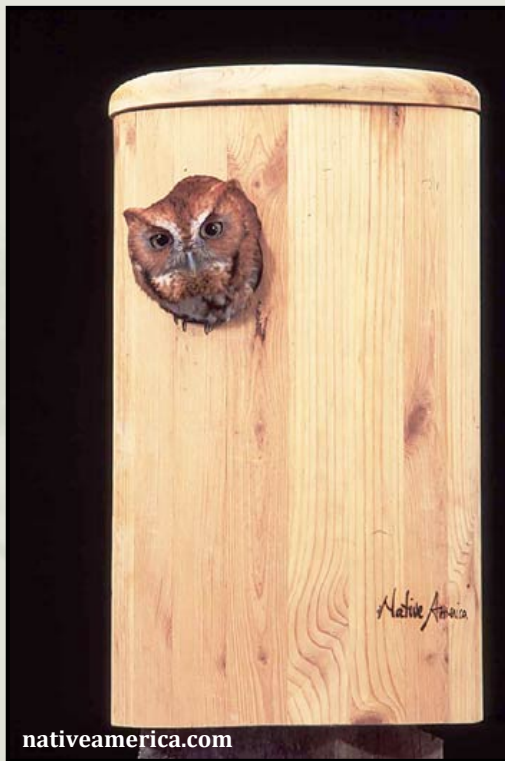
Bird Bowl

Providing Cover

- ✱ The scarcity of nesting and roosting limits woodpeckers, nuthatches, owls, bluebirds, squirrels and other backyard dwellers
- ✱ Most people harvest or remove mature and dead trees
- ✱ Leave at least one or two dead trees standing
- ✱ Most cavity-nesting birds are insectivorous and play an important part in the control of forests and insect pests

Cover

Birdhouses and Nest Boxes



Cover

Snags and Tree Cavities



Grasses

- ✿ Grasses can provide cover and space for wildlife
- ✿ Grasses are also a good buffer zone between lawns and water
 - ✧ Buffer zones prevent runoff of pesticides and fertilizers
 - ✧ Because grasses are low, they don't obstruct views
 - ✧ Stabilize soils and prevent erosion

Grasses



Fakahatchee or
Florida Gamma Grass
Tripsacum spp.



Muhly Grass
Muhlenbergia capillaris



Cordgrass
Spartina spp.



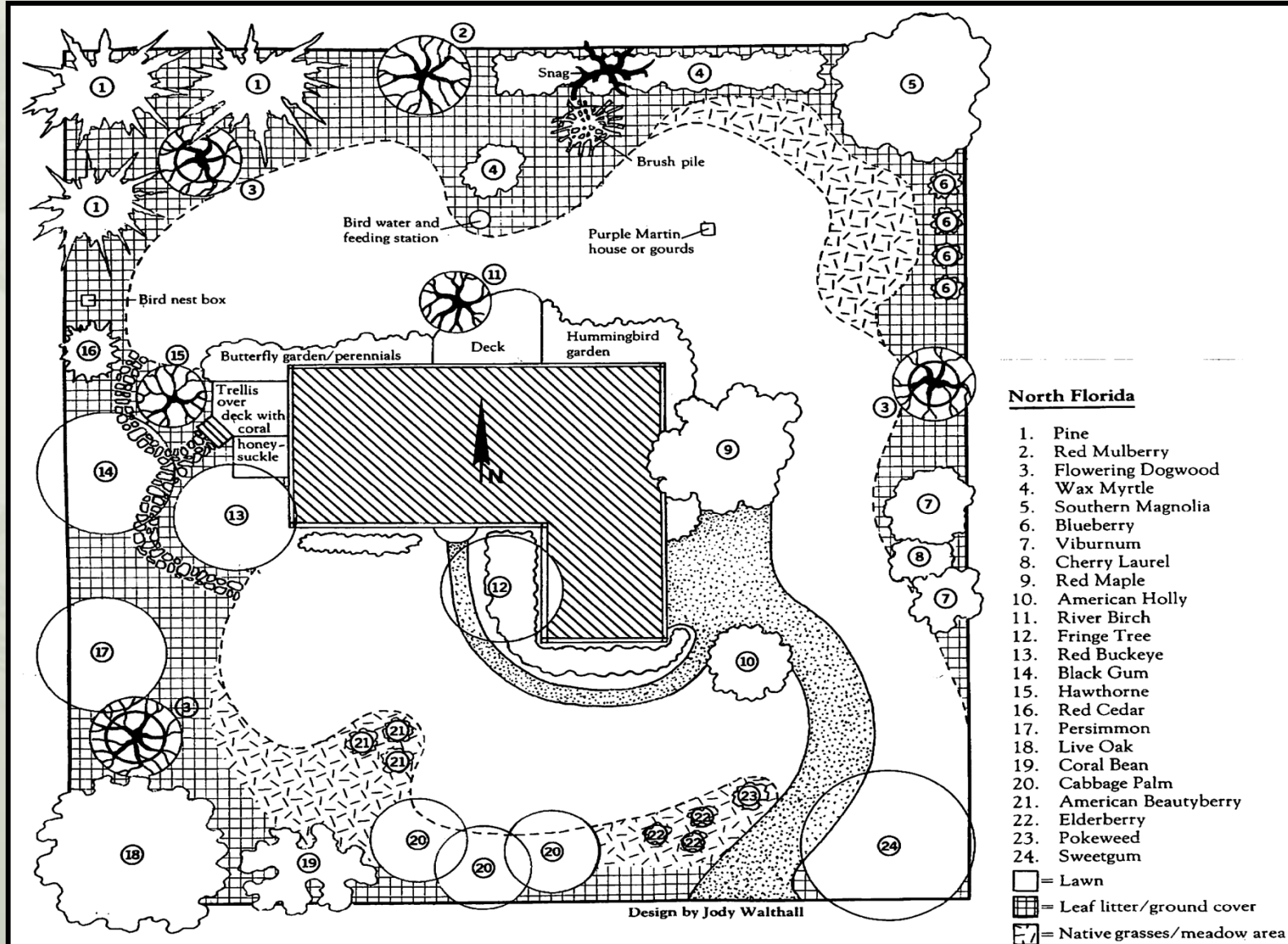
Providing Space

- ✿ Offer habitat diversity in your landscaping... ..different animals require different vegetation and habitats
- ✿ Provide “vertical layering” of trees, shrubs and plants...overhang and shelter different layers of vegetation
- ✿ Think Big! Include your neighbors to provide a larger wildlife habitat plan
- ✿ Experiment with you landscaping...observe and see what works

Providing Space



Creating a Backyard Habitat Plan



Evaluate Your Site

✿ Step 1: Sketch a Base Map

- ✿ Property Dimensions
- ✿ Include structures and locations of underground pipes, utilities, septic tanks, irrigation lines, sprinkler heads
- ✿ Sketch areas of sun and shade...how do these shift during the day or throughout the year
- ✿ Examine your soil... what soil types are in your yard
- ✿ Indicate areas of poor drainage or erosion
- ✿ Create a list of your trees and shrubs...note their age, size, health whether they are exotic or native
- ✿ Take note of how your current vegetation interacts with the physical characteristics of your site to form habitats

Evaluate Your Site

✿ **Step 2: Consider Your Family Uses for Your Property**

- ✿ How will the yard be used...consider space requirements for work, play, entertainment, access, traffic patterns, trash collection, security and privacy
- ✿ Consider your pets...can lower your expectations for wildlife

✿ **Step 3: List the Wildlife that Visits Your Property**

- ✿ Consider your current habitats...do they provide food, water and cover?
- ✿ Are there any native seed bearing plants that produce fruit on a continuous basis?
- ✿ Does your property have any connected shrubs or hedges that provide cover for smaller animals to move about?

Draw A Plan

✳️ Step 4: Prepare a Landscape Drawing for Years to Come

- ✳️ Come up with a 5 year plan...don't try to do everything at once...decide what you can do for each year
- ✳️ Encourage your neighbors to join in and incorporate their yards into the overall wildlife plan



Consider the Conditions

Bare or New Lot

- ✿ Frame your property with a backdrop of native trees
- ✿ Create an understory by planting smaller flowering or orchard trees in clusters near the tall trees
- ✿ Surround the small trees with masses of shrubs or ground cover
- ✿ Install shrubs and ground covers near the foundation of your home
- ✿ Lawns are labor and water intensive...consider drought tolerant native plantings



Consider the Conditions

Modifying an Existing Lot

- ✿ Surround your lawn areas with beds of trees and shrubs
- ✿ Plant small shrubs and ground covers around solitary trees
- ✿ Mulch the tree and shrub beds with leaf litter, pine straw or wood chips.
- ✿ Remove any invasive exotic plants on your property
- ✿ Gradually replace non-native plants with native species
- ✿ Convert some of your open lawn to meadow
- ✿ Encourage a variety of plant heights for your hedges
- ✿ Avoid pruning during the nesting season



Before



After



Before



After

Creating a Butterfly Friendly Yard

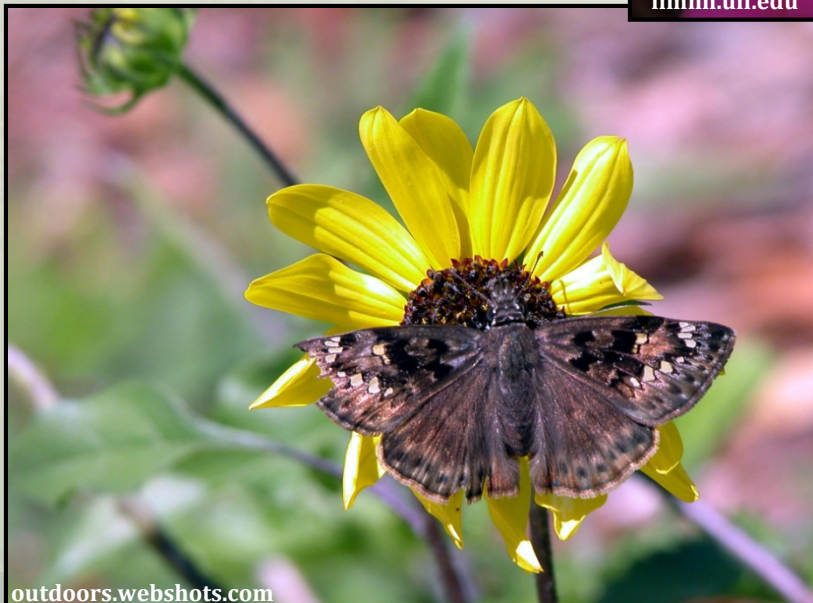
- ✿ Let a few sunny areas in your yard go wild
- ✿ Include native grasses and wildflowers
- ✿ Provide flowering plants throughout the months
- ✿ Mow meadow areas only at the end of butterfly season
- ✿ Provide a puddle area for butterflies...they cannot drink from open water
- ✿ Learn which species occur in your area and select **both** nectar and host plants that attract the butterflies
- ✿ Most important...refrain from using insecticides and herbicides in your habitat

Remember...every caterpillar you make in your butterfly garden becomes either a new moth or butterfly, or a source of food for a hungry bird!

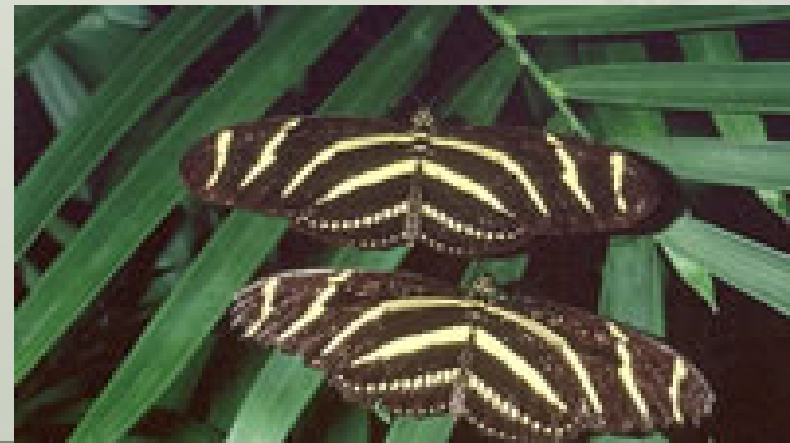
Woody Plants Ranked By Ability to Support Butterflies and Moths

- ✿ **Oak: 534 Species Supported**
- ✿ **Cherry: 456 Species Supported**
- ✿ **Maple: 285 Species Supported**
- ✿ **Elm: 213 Species Supported**
- ✿ **Pine: 203 Species Supported**
- ✿ **Hickory: 200 Species Supported**
- ✿ **Ash: 150 Species Supported**

Oaks are host plants for these butterflies and moths:



Passion Flower Vine



Frogfruit



Shirley Denton, May 2000

© Shirley Denton



Phaon Crescent

© Marian Mendez

Climbing Astor



Yaupon Holly



© Shirley Denton



Henry's Elfin

©BobMoul

Red Bay

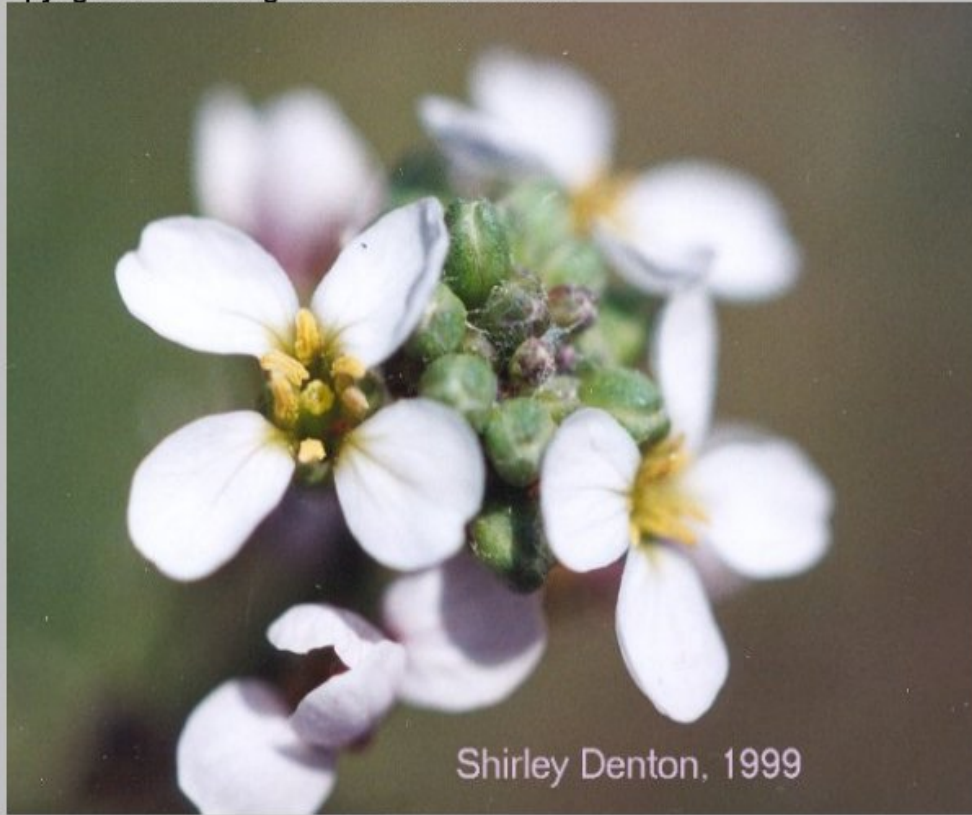


Palamedes Swallowtail



Sea Rocket

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Shirley Denton, 1999

Great Southern White



Hercules' Club



© Shirley Denton

Giant Swallowtail



Toadflax



Common Buckeye



Inviting Herps in Your Yard



To improve the herp habitat in your yard:

- ✿ Leave leaf litter under trees, scrubs and in the garden
- ✿ Provide native ground cover, grasses and wildflowers
- ✿ Leave stumps, rotting logs or stones where possible
- ✿ Brush piles and wood piles can provide valuable shelter and basking spots
- ✿ Wooden rail or slat fences also provide perches for lizards to bask, catch insects and set up territories
- ✿ Try to discourage cats from using the yard

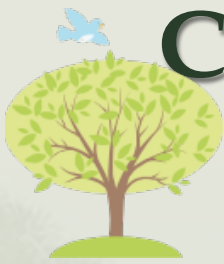




A Bit About Bats



- * A single Brown Bat can catch 600 mosquitoes in a
- * Bats are the only mammal that can truly fly
- * Bats have excellent eyesight and have echolocation to find their way around in the dark
- * Bats mate in the Fall and generally have one pup the following Spring
- * Bats prefer to dwell in places that are warm, dry and protected from disturbances
- * In designing a bat house, keep in mind that bats generally prefer large, tall houses with long crevices and keep it as draft-free as possible
- * Two common species of **bats that may occupy your bat house** are **Evening Bats** (*Nyciticeius humeralis*) and the **Brazilian Free-tail Bat** (*Tadarida brasiliensis cynocephala*).



Certification Programs for Florida's Backyard Habitats



- **Florida Backyard Landscapes for Wildlife**

The certification (and yard sign) offered by the [Florida Backyard Landscapes for Wildlife](#) program is free. The only requirement is that you have 10 square yards that you rent or own and that can be landscaped for wildlife.

- **Florida Yards and Neighborhoods**

The [Florida Yards and Neighborhoods](#) program offers certification using a point system that awards points for wildlife- and eco-friendly landscaping and practices, such as the efficient use of water, mulching, and protecting seawalls.

- **National Wildlife Federation**

To apply for NWF [Backyard Wildlife Habitat Certification](#) submit an application online or via mail with a \$15 processing fee. Yard signs are available for \$20 each. There is no minimum size, even small balconies are eligible. The NWF has a [gallery](#) of certified habitats in Florida.

The NWF also offers certification of schoolyards and community areas. Community areas are certified when they accumulate a certain amount of points based on their population. The certification of home habitats adds to the community's total points. Check [NWF: Community Wildlife Sites](#) to see if your community is certified or registered (i.e, working on it).

References

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- * “Bat Houses,” by Sarah and Bill Kern
- * “Use of Bats to Enhance Insect Pest Control”, by Rachael Freeman Long
- * www.oregonexplorer.info
- * Florida Native Plant Society, <http://www.fnps.org/plants>
- * University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences