

## DEVELOPMENT OF ADVANCED WATER EXTENSION PROGRAMS FOR MGVS

*Lorna Bravo*<sup>1</sup>, *Kimberly Moore*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Florida IFAS, Broward, FL, USA

<sup>2</sup>University of Florida FLREC, Broward, FL, USA

Educating governments, homeowners, and the public on the tangible benefits of water conservation principles under the UF/IFAS Extension Water Conservation Roadmap is essential for the Urban Horticulture agent. Training and certification of Master Gardener Volunteers (MGV) as change agents is critical when educating homeowners on water conservation. This study evaluated the addition of "water" focused programs to MGV programs. The Broward County Extension urban horticulture agent added three urban water-focused programs to current MGV trainees. The first was the rain barrel program, followed by the Hydro-Kit program and the Water Ambassador program. We used different measures of success for each program. The rain barrel program was successful, with half of the students adopting a rain barrel as a new water management method. The hydro-kit was successful, with students actively engaged with a personal hydro-kit to grow hydroponic lettuce. The water ambassador program tried to tie all elements together and successfully had participants become Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Certified Professional (FFLCP), and Green Industries Best Management Practice (GI-BMP) certified. Ideally, we would like students to start with a rain barrel, then a hydro-kit followed by a water ambassador. However, only four students followed this sequence, leading to some repetition in each program. In the future, we need to stress the importance of taking these programs in series. There is vast potential to improve water conservation in urban communities by empowering MGV with advanced water knowledge.

**PRESENTER BIO:** Lorna is currently serving as the new UF/IFAS Extension Broward County Director / Urban Horticulture Agent. Lorna is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at the University of Florida under the department of Environmental Horticulture, where she researches water conservation in the built environment.