Gardening Edutainment: Can It Bridge the Gap Between Florida’s Residents and Tourists
to Create a More Sustainable Florida?

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Abstract
University of Florida Extension is using entertainment-education, or edutainment, to expand integral Extension efforts. Edutainment utilizes a variety of media to incorporate educational messages within an entertaining format. Most previous edutainment programming has been health education for developing countries, but we are using this accessible format to reach residents and tourists in our unique state with an important environmental education message.

In 2005, 85.8 million people, including 5.8 million international travelers, visited Florida. Landscaping, or gardening, provides the bridge between tourism and agriculture – the two largest industries in Florida. Many tourists visit Florida because of the natural beauty of the state, which includes its landscaping and gardens. This type of tourism, known as eco-tourism, provides visitors with an opportunity to see Florida’s springs, swamps, palm trees, and alligators. But UF would like to help make tourism in the state more sustainable.

Sustainable tourism aims to minimize environmental and cultural damage, optimize visitor satisfaction, and maximize long-term economic growth for the region. Florida’s natural resources are increasingly taxed by residents and tourists, and the responsible management of water, wildlife habitat, and energy become more important every year. There are several concerns for Florida’s future: much of the state suffers from regular water shortages; poor water quality is an exponentially growing issue; and exotic pests (insects, diseases, plants, and animals) pose significant threats to natural areas, home gardens, and commercial landscapes.

Many Floridians inadvertently contribute to these problems, because they don’t realize the impact their landscape management practices have on the environment. Florida-friendly landscape practices help ensure that we can continue to enjoy Florida’s natural beauty and wealth. Although Florida-friendly is the term commonly used here to mean environmentally responsible
landscape practices, these same practices are actually applicable at an international level. These practices address water quality and quantity concerns by educating about plant placement, fertilization, and irrigation. Much of the world are also affected by these same issues.

To address these concerns, UF recently developed a daily one-minute radio program for NPR and other interested stations. In a short, fun format, Gardening in a Minute shows educate listeners on sustainability issues related to water, plants, pests, wildlife, and quality of life; each show explores a different home gardening or lawn care topic. Along with the radio program, an integrated marketing communication (IMC) approach was implemented to reach a broader audience. An interactive Web site allows program listeners and other site visitors to have hands-on learning experiences.

Each show provides a minimum of four potential contacts with the listener. The first is the radio broadcast of the show. At the end of the show, listeners are directed to their county Extension offices for more region-specific information and to the show Web site, where they can listen again. A third point of contact is the links to associated Extension publications that appear next to the archived show on the Web site. Finally, through our ask-the-expert feature on the Web site, listeners may e-mail questions to a university faculty member who will personally answer questions.

Gardening in a Minute is currently being broadcast in 19 counties in Florida, but due to the tourist nature of the state, we assume a much larger audience is being reached. The show and its IMC approach contribute to a more sustainable Florida by creating audience awareness in sustainable landscape management practices through radio and the Internet. Regardless of where someone lives, every listener will gain valuable information that is applicable in their community and environment.

**Keywords:** Radio, gardening, sustainable, mass media, tourism, Florida