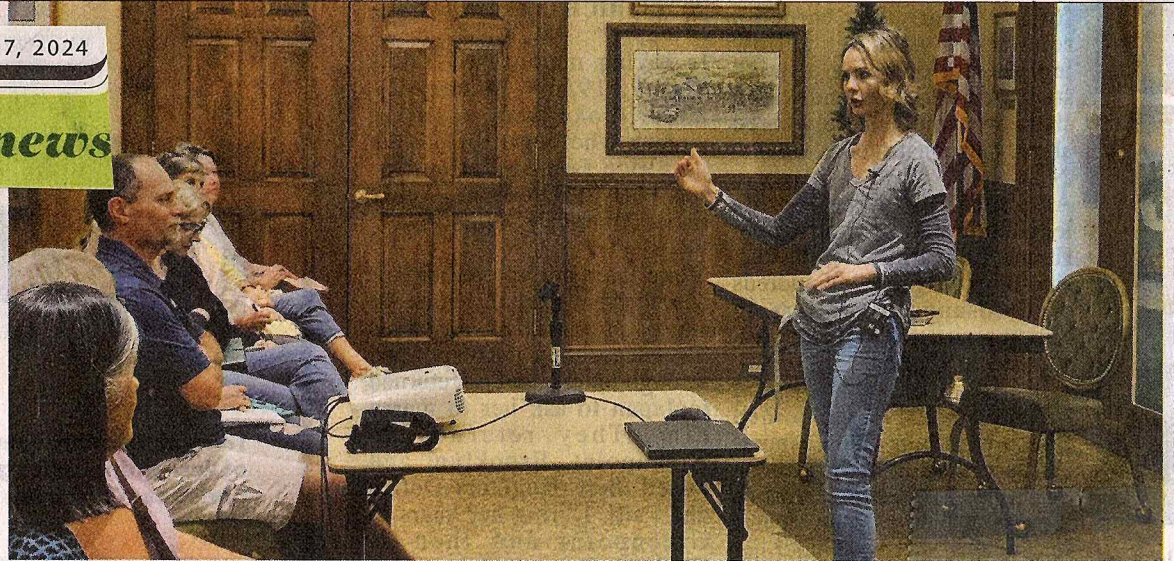


local news

# How many people gardened up North? Several Villagers at Rohan Recreation raised their hands. How many want to garden here, but don't know where to start? The hands went back up.



By **LEAH SCHWARTING**  
Daily Sun Specialty Editor

Those questions, asked by Aubrey Cash, founder of Dirty Dog Organics in Leesburg, helped shape the conversation Friday at the Landscape and Garden Club. Her talk focused on best practices for gardening in the Sunshine State, as well as tips and tricks on how to deal with problems without chemicals.

Dirty Dog Organics, an urban farm about 10 minutes from The Villages, was created because of personal need. Cash was homeschooling her daughters, who are on the Autism spectrum, and wanted to include gardening in their education. Her family also eats organic produce, so it seemed like a good fit.

Dirty Dog Organics grew from there. Its basis is

education, so Cash does a lot of community outreach events.

The Villages is home to many Northern transplants, she said, and Florida is completely different.

"There's just so many things that go into gardening that people don't realize because they don't know," Cash said.

**R**ondi Niles, Landscape and Garden Club chair, agrees. The timing of when to grow vegetables is probably different than it was where people used to live up North, she said.

"So they don't know," said Niles, a Village of Pine Hills resident. "A lot of people still think you can grow tomatoes in the summer here, and that's really not the time frame for it."

Cash's talk on Friday took a dive into some of those differences. For example, Florida's soil is much sandier.

"The problem with Florida soil is it is so sandy and loomy

that when we get rains, and your plants naturally would uptake nutrients at that time, the soil leeches the rainwater too fast," she said. "So the plant doesn't have time to uptake those nutrients into the root system."

Most of Cash's talk was a question and answer session with the club. People who grow herbs and vegetables need someone to answer their specific questions, said Debbie Durant, of the Village of Mallory Square. It's good to get those questions answered by a grower, not just in theory.

"So she was pretty knowledgeable about the drawbacks and how to avoid any of the pests and any of the diseases," Durant said.

**A**drienne Marks, of the Village of St. Johns, asked multiple questions during the meeting, including about specific vegetables such as squash.

"I do container gardening, and I'm interested in learning

more of what I can and cannot do," she said.

**C**ontainer gardening is a way to make the most of your space. It can also be more manageable than traditional methods, and Cash said people can still grow wonderful gardens that way.

"You don't have to grow everything in the world, and it doesn't have to be extensive," she said, "But I think just keeping your hands in the dirt and your face in the sunshine is great for all of us."

The Landscape and Gardening Club meets at 1 p.m. on first Fridays at Rohan Recreation. Visit [eepurl.com/dfUglz](http://eepurl.com/dfUglz) to sign up for more information on future meetings.

Aubrey Cash, founder of Dirty Dog Organics, talks about the best way to handle Florida's unique growing climate with the Landscape and Garden Club on Friday at Rohan Recreation.

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Daily Sun