



Since we are not able to have our monthly speakers at this time, we are striving to provide something of educational and hopefully interesting benefit with each of our monthly emails. This month we present for you the topic of **RAIN**. We have had a lot of it lately here in the Keys, and we gardeners know how important regular rainfall monitoring is to our garden's success. Keeping track of how much rain our gardens get is probably second-nature to you, but let's take a look at how we can use what we already do anyway to help our community:

Community Collaborative Rain Network



CoCoRaHS is a grassroots volunteer network of backyard weather observers of all ages and backgrounds working together to measure and map precipitation in their local communities. It has been done here in the Keys since 2007! By using low-cost measurement tools and learning how to take the measurements accurately, you can help provide the highest quality data for natural resource, education and research applications.

Don't feel any pressure though; it isn't all just you! The real value is in the thousands of volunteers reporting rainfall (or the lack of it). Their cumulative data have been used to issue warnings that could save lives, particularly with the extreme localized storms as we sometimes have in the Keys. The only requirements to join are an enthusiasm for watching and reporting weather conditions and a desire to learn more about how weather can affect and impact our lives.

Basically you would purchase a [specific type of rain gauge](#) appropriate for the project, check it every morning, and record your results on their website. This is a nationwide program, so if you are not local all year long you can still participate just while you are in the Keys (and possibly do it from your home area as well).

Local gardeners and interested community members can help by using the link above to

get more information and to sign up. (Local Master Gardeners are participating in the program via the University of Florida Extension Service through Michelle Mularz.)

This may be a fun way to help map rainfall and do some good. This [CoCoRaHS brochure](#) may help answer your questions. If you are all for it and just want to sign up, here is a direct link to the application: [CoCoRaHS application](#).

I have been amazed at how much precipitation I am actually getting in my yard, and of course that data informs how often I need to water (not at all right now)!

**Be on the Lookout:
Eulophia graminea - Chinese Crown Orchid**



This ground orchid was originally discovered in mulch in south Miami. It spreads rapidly and is now being found frequently in the Keys. You might find it in your mulched beds, though it's been found growing in rock, sand and even bare earth. Plants have large pseudobulbs or smaller ones with numerous attachments, making them harder to eradicate. You must dig the entire area around the plant to remove all of it. It is also said that they are also spreading by seed, so it is best not to plant in a pot as seeds can disperse.

Key West Garden Club

Remove it, bag it and put out with your regular trash. It is NOT to be recycled with yard waste.

For more information and pictures, see the [University of Florida information article](#).

(Credits: Text abridged from Janice Duquesnel (Janice.Duquesnel@dep.state.fl.us). Photos by Patricia Howell (phowell@broward.org).