



Making a Difference

2015 – 2016

Horticulture Program Focus Team

Extension Master Gardener Volunteers Enhance Horticulture Programming

Grand Challenges

K-State Research and Extension: providing education you can trust to help people, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.

Ward Upham
State Extension Master Gardener Coordinator
785-210-5458
wupham@ksu.edu



Kansas State University
Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service
K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Situation

The demand for horticulture information often exceeds the ability of an individual K-State Research and Extension agent to meet clientele needs.

What We Did

The Extension Master Gardener Program provides in-depth horticulture training in exchange for volunteer time. Training includes, but is not limited to, the following 11 curriculum areas:

- Plant Growth/Development
- Soil/Water/Fertilizer
- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Turfgrass
- Flowers
- Diseases
- Insects
- Landscape Maintenance
- Pesticide Use and Safety
- Woody and Grassy Ornamentals

Trained Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs) provide information in a number of activities: response lines, demonstration gardens, garden shows, public presentations, garden tours, community events, and vegetable research trials.

Each county tailors its activities to specific local needs. Not all EMG programs incorporate all the activities mentioned above in their program — many include additional programs. The key to a successful program is adequate training and an atmosphere that encourages volunteering.

Outcomes

Extension Master Gardeners are required to donate a minimum of 40 hours during their first year. After that, EMGs must continue to donate time to retain their Master Gardener status. Exceeding the requirements, EMGs averaged more than 80 hours each in 2015.

During 2015, 1,203 EMGs donated more than 96,000 hours for a total value of \$2 million.

Success Story

The Wyandotte County EMGs and Turner Community Garden have been instrumental in teaching youth about gardening and eating healthy. As part of the summer youth program, the children from Turner Rec (ages 5 to 10) visited the garden each Wednesday morning. The children were excited to be there, and the guinea fowl were excited to see them. One girl said when leaving the garden “thank you for having us to your garden. I had so much fun.”

The children began working in the garden during spring break this year, collecting soil samples to send to K-State. Over the course of the summer, the children performed different activities in the garden — planting, weeding, watering, harvesting, composting, and insect identification. They planted sweet potatoes, peppers, melons, beans, cotton, and flowers for the bees. The kids enjoyed getting their hands in the soil to plant and most of all watering. In addition to traditional gardening, the children were introduced to hoop house gardening. Hoop houses allow for a cooler growing environment with fewer pests, which increases the production or harvest.

As part of the garden experience, the children were encouraged to eat fresh produce from the garden. On one occasion, Janet had harvested and washed carrots from the youth-raised beds that the kids had planted during spring break camp. Most of the children thought the carrots were delicious and asked for more to eat.