

Youth Horticulture Education Connects Kids with Nature

The Situation

The need to connect youth with horticulture and nature in general is increasing. There is a growing body of research indicating that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development and for the physical and emotional health of children and adults.

Today, kids are regularly becoming aware of the global threats to the environment, but their physical contact and intimacy with nature is still fading.

What We Did

Kansas horticulture agents focused attention on youth horticulture education in 2018. This focus included hands on learning and engagement with nature through live beneficial insect releases, community garden youth mentoring, 4-H horticulture projects, 4-H horticulture judging, plant science school enrichment programs, library reading programs, Junior Master Gardeners, plant to plate programs, pollinator programs, and more.

Outcomes

Youth horticulture education programming has resulted in increased physical contact with nature for youth all across Kansas. In 2018 over 10,000 students and youth across Kansas physically interacted with nature through youth horticulture outreach programs in which K-State Research and Extension was a primary collaborator.

Success Story

Plant to plate is an outreach program for preschoolers through high school age youth about horticulture and nutrition. The youth learn about the relationship between growing plants and eating healthy plant foods – nutrition starts with foods derived from fruits, vegetables, and grains. Plant needs are explained and vegetables and fruits displayed to learn the parts of a plant and their function. The youth find that the same things that help grow healthy plants are fundamental for their own growth. Interactive games are utilized and youth enjoy healthy snacks that reinforce the lesson. Plant to plate empowers youth to make healthful food choices and to understand where their food comes from.



A K-State Research and Extension Master Gardener volunteer leads a green lacewing larva release with students at the Salina Public Library.