

K-State Garden Hour Webinar Series Meets Needs at Home and Around the Globe

The Situation

The global pandemic in 2020 sparked new ways of working around the world. The Horticulture Program Focus Team observed the surge in new gardeners that followed stay-at-home orders and subsequent food security concerns. The team had a wide array of expertise and noted that a higher-level program would reach more people than they could individually in their local networks. It was also recognized that each team member had many presentations to deliver to a new, widespread audience via online tools. Our team sought to leverage digital communication resources with our in-house horticulture expertise to reach stakeholders needing to navigate their new world of food gardening. An additional need was the ability to engage with existing stakeholders lacking adequate outlets for gardening interests and activities.

What We Did

The weekly webinar series “The K-State Garden Hour” engaged all members of our team in a variety of roles from being a planner, graphic designer, zoom and Facebook event manager, host, presenter, moderator, email manager, Facebook spam combatant, social media manager, and evaluation. Team members volunteered for each of these roles and took turns weekly sharing responsibilities. The Kansas State University Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources hosted Facebook events for each webinar from a state level. Local units co-hosted the events, expanding the audience statewide. Topics covered the gamut of horticulture and featured both agents and state specialists working in concert to deliver education to the public. The project became a unique way for people to learn about different aspects of gardening, while also hearing from a wide variety of experts in Kansas. Each presenter had the opportunity to share their passion for gardening and how it impacts communities.

Outcomes

Over 8,500 separate registrations were recorded with a total live audience of 4,723 for the 21 presentations. During the second webinar, about tomatoes, capacity was reached with the 500-seat Zoom meeting license with 1,000 registrations. This led to the purchase of a 1,000-seat webinar license. Participants from 18 states and 3 countries logged on to the learning opportunities. Extension evaluation data was gathered, as well as new contacts for future programming. From the evaluations, 81% of participants rated their level of knowledge as very low, low, or average prior to attending the K-State Garden Hour series webinars. After participating in the webinars, 80% of participants rated their level of knowledge as high or very high. In addition, 82% of participants reported that they agreed or strongly agreed they plan to make changes to their gardening practices as a direct result from information learned by participating in the webinars.

Success Story

Email received from program participant:

“Dear KSRE staff, volunteers, I had the best time watching your garden hour on Wednesday! It was so informative, so clear on what is good for our region, and the 1hr format was perfect as we hit all the salient plants, good speaker! I work in a hospital and this was simply the BEST de-stressing yet! I have signed up for your remaining broadcasts. Take care of yourselves, and thank you, again, so very much.”

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