

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

The Situation

Gardening provides families with nutrient dense fruits and vegetables and beautiful flowers. Gardening is also beneficial to our physical health and wellbeing, and spending time in nature relieves stress. With food insecurity concerns, higher prices at grocery stores, and more national emphasis on mental health, more and more Kansans have a new interest in gardening. With this growing number of gardeners comes a need for relevant, timely, research-based, and unbiased horticulture information. Pulling together the Horticulture Program Focus Team's wide range of expertise, the K-State Garden Hour has allowed us to effectively share this knowledge across the state of Kansas, reaching over 24,886 gardeners in 2020 and 2021.

What We Did

The K-State Garden Hour has been a collaborative effort of the entire Horticulture PFT. Our team undertakes all aspects of each webinar, including scheduling timely topics, creating graphics, marketing, delivering presentations, and creating evaluation instruments. Team members also rotate hosting and moderating each webinar. This team effort has become a unique way for participants to learn about diverse aspects of gardening, while also hearing from a wide variety of experts from across Kansas, each with the opportunity to share their passion for gardening.

Outcomes

From January to October 2022 the K-State Garden Hour recorded over 11,747 total participants. Our live attendance reached over 5,660 people, and 6,087 people watched the recorded presentations. Our highest attended webinar was on Indoor Seed Starting, with 932 live participants. We had Kansans participate from at least 96 of 105 counties. Our webinars also brought participants from 39 US states, the District of Columbia, 4 continents, and 8 international countries.

We have extensively gathered evaluation data from our participants, and documented an impact on each of the five grand challenges established by K-State Research and Extension that every Kansan faces. Our educational efforts have focused on addressing these challenges to help better our state, country, and world in the following ways:

- **Global Food Systems:** 63% of participants reported improved human nutrition by having increased availability and access to fresh produce as a result of the webinar series. This includes 7 out of 10 participants that reported harvesting fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs from their gardens and 6 out of 10 participants that reported consuming or preserving freshly harvested produce they grew with the help of the K-State Garden Hour webinars.

- **Water and Natural Resources**: 70% of the K-State Garden Hour participants reported making five efforts to improve water quality and 66% reported implementing five water conservation practices as a result of the webinar series.
- **Health**: 97% of the K-State Garden Hour participants reported that the webinar series improved their individual physical & emotional health in five categories. 98% of total participants reported being more physically active and 98% of participants experienced more personal optimism through gardening.
- **Community Vitality**: 92% of the K-State Garden Hour participants reported being confident they will be able to garden more successfully next year as a result of participating in the K-State Garden Hour webinars. 78% of the K-State Garden Hour participants reported implementing five pollinator supporting practices in order to increase pollinator habitat as a result of the webinar series.
- **Developing Tomorrow's Leaders**: 9 out of 10 participants reported implementing five science literacy practices as a result of the webinar series. These practices included finding unbiased research-based information, reading and understanding fertilizer/pesticide labels, identifying plant problems, and selecting proper plants for their local environments. In addition, 78% of total participants felt confident in their ability to use the information from these webinars to teach others how to garden more successfully.

Success Story

Comments received from program participants provided further evidence of the impacts of our program:

“This program coincided with my being furloughed without any health insurance for me or my family. For the first time in life I was angry every day (and sad a good chunk of time too). This program was beyond valuable to me. It combined learning a new skill with creating something and time spent in nature, all of which we know are proven to decrease blood pressure, anxiety and depression. Thank you to the volunteers who put their time in for the Webinars. I'd be happy to volunteer my time in the future.”

- 9 out of 10 participants reported decreasing their personal stress levels as a result of watching the K-State Garden Hour webinars, which improved their overall physical and/or emotional health.

“First, thanks for having these programs. My kids started the wildlife project in 4-H as we slowed down during the pandemic's beginning & smelled the flowers. They watch the webinars & we all learn from them. Secondly, thank you for making them web-based. Less travel means we can attend [more frequently] & the recordings mean we can make it work in our schedule.”

- 95% of participants reported increasing their quality of life by expanding their personal awareness and appreciation of the natural environment as a result of the K-State Garden Hour webinars. 72% of participants also reported starting, improving, or continuing to design their garden spaces to attract wildlife.

“Thank you for putting together the Garden Hour and all the resource material that goes with each topic! I have benefited from listening to the many wonderful presenters! Since starting out as a complete novice, I have learned so much in the last 2 years and gained a lot more confidence as a gardener. I especially appreciate the archived videos and resources that I can turn to when I missed a session or need a topic refresh. Keep up the good work, all your efforts are greatly appreciated! Thanks again for making us better gardeners!”

- 99% of participants reported increasing their physical and/or emotional health by celebrating more accomplishments from their gardening as a result of participating in the K-State Garden Hour.

“Oh, such pleasure I get from your webinars! I have a different lunchtime at work now, so this last year plus, I have watched the webinars from the recordings. They are so VERY GOOD, very CALMING (I swear!) and the information is extremely helpful. Please keep providing these webinars as they bring such a wealth of information. Just hearing and seeing the information is definitely more retentive. Bless you all for providing this informative, fun format to gardeners everywhere!”

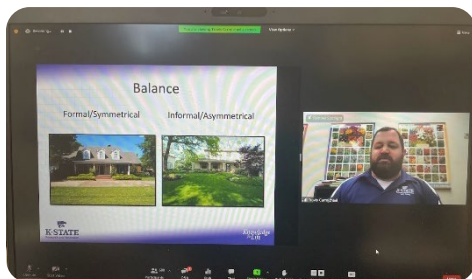
- 9.5 out of 10 participants reported now using unbiased, research based information when dealing with a problem in their gardens as a result of the K-State Garden Hour webinars.

“I love the lunch webinars. I can sit at my desk (during the day) and watch them. Because I live on a farm, when I get home, I never know what the night brings. I almost always get a lunch hour, so I don't miss many (if any) of the webinars. It is great information and they help keep me motivated to stay on top of the weeds and to keep the gardens up (especially in the 90 degree and higher temps)! I absolutely love these webinars and appreciate everyone who takes time to put these on. They are so beneficial and gives me a great break from work on my lunch hour to learn about something I love. Thank you!”

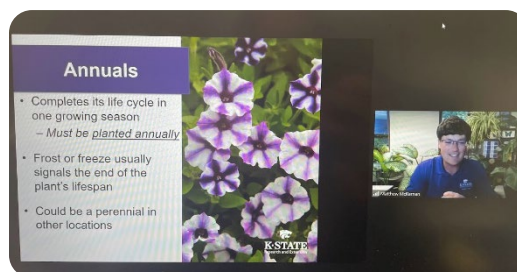
- 76% of participants reported increasing their quality of life by spending more time gardening as a result of the K-State Garden Hour webinars.

“I found all the webinars in which I participated to be well presented, informative and helpful to my gardening efforts. I greatly appreciate having the Garden Hour as a resource for gardening topics, specifically vegetable gardening as it presents the greatest challenge to me.”

- 97% of participants reported increasing their physical and/or emotional health by acquiring new skills. This includes 9 out of 10 participants who reported having improved their ability to identify plants & plant problems (such as insects & diseases).



Travis Carmichael presenting on Landscape Design. This Webinar had 746 live participants on March 2, 2022.



Matthew McKernan presenting on Annual Flower Varieties. This Garden Hour had 580 live participants on May 4, 2022.

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