COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE

Programs, People & Educational Resources

WWW.ACES.EDU
WWW.ALABAMABEGINNINGFARMER.COM
Beginning Farmer Training

**Major Objectives:** Train beginning farmers in crop production and plant protection methods, food safety, and marketing practices via regional Extension meetings, conferences, and field events organized in cooperation with nonprofit agencies and mentor farmers. Producers are encouraged to complete the Farming Basics Online course and use other resources from Alabama Extension.

Commercial Turfgrass Production & Management

**Major Objectives:** Provide best management practices for commercial turfgrass production and insect pest, disease, and weed management.

Alabama Fruit & Vegetable Growers Annual Conference

**Major Objectives:** This is an annual conference that provides an excellent opportunity for all specialty crop producers to learn about farming technologies and networking with peers and industry personnel. This event is presented in collaboration with the Alabama Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and the Alabama Farmers Federation.

Food Safety Regulation & Market Access

**Major Objectives:** Market demands and regulatory requirements for food safety training are significant challenges facing Alabama produce growers. The Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule (FSMA PSR) went into effect in January 2016. This law requires that a representative from each farm attend a Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) or equivalent training course provided by Alabama Extension.

Green Industry Support (Alabama Green Industry Center, Inc.)

**Major Objectives:** Provide professional training to turf and landscaping industry personnel on pesticide use and license, Worker protection standards and appropriate turf and garden best management practices.

Fruit Crop Production

**Major Objectives:** Increase production and marketing opportunities for fruit crops; increase awareness of new cultivars and orchard management techniques among growers. New projects focusing on improved strawberry and peach production methods are under way.
Commercial Nursery & Greenhouse Crop Production

**Major Objectives:** Support the growing commercial greenhouse and nursery industry statewide. The project provides hands-on training and resource materials for promoting best management practices to benefit producers.

Protected Agriculture (High Tunnel & Net House Vegetable Production)

**Major Objectives:** Train new producers intensively in field production of high-value crops in high tunnel and other protected structures. A training curriculum for producers is available as a reference. Rapid pest alert to all producers is provided via the Alabama IPM Communicator e-newsletter and websites along with on-farm support.

Conventional Vegetable IPM

**Major Objectives:** Increase the adoption of integrated pest management practices (IPM) for vegetable disease and insect management for a healthier environment; educate small agriculture retailers through participation in the Certified Horticultural Retailer Initiative; and develop new publications and promotional materials.

Best Management Practices to Enhance Economic, Environmental, and Community Sustainability

**Major Objectives:** Increase the use of best management practices within commercial horticulture industries, concentrating on optimization of proper cultivar selection to enhance economic, environmental, and community sustainability.

Nutrient Management

**Major Objectives:** Publicize and reinforce specific statewide and regional recommendations to maximize yield potential while providing for economical use of fertilizers for commercial vegetable crops.

Organic Vegetable IPM

**Major Objectives:** Create awareness of organic vegetable production techniques among small producers and increase adoption of organic pest management practices. The project also aims to support producers seeking organic certification for their farms.
**Pesticide Safety Education Program**

**Major Objectives:** Improve public health and environmental quality and the safety of pesticide applicators, the community, and their families; educate and encourage farmers, industry, government, natural resource managers, and the public to adopt economically and environmentally sound pest and pesticide management practices.

**Soil Health & Quality Recommendations**

**Major Objectives:** Develop tools to evaluate soil health and quality; help producers learn the benefits of improving crop productivity by evaluating their soil quality.

**Sustainable Horticultural Crop Production Reactive Activities**

**Major Objectives:** Provide research-based answers to production-related issues in commercial horticulture. Provide diagnostic support services to all clientele via emails and phone calls in response to queries; provide timely pest alerts and recommendations; provide on-farm support to beginning and experienced farmers.

**Farm & Agribusiness Management**

**Major Objectives:** Provide farmers and agribusinesses with the most effective, up-to-date skills to build sustainable, profitable business operations. Areas include marketing, enterprise budgets, taxes, financial management, and enterprise analysis.

Team Resources available at Alabamabeginningfarmer.com

- Extension publications
- Farming Basics Online Course (https://aces.catalog.auburn.edu/courses/acesfarmingbasics01)
- Farming Basics mobile app
- Beginning Farmer monthly webinars (archived)
- Alabama IPM Communicator e-newsletter
- YouTube videos on Fresh from the Field (https://www.youtube.com/user/acesfieldvideo)

Not all programs are offered in every county.
The Commercial Horticulture Program provides research-based information to nurseries, landscape companies, and fruit and vegetable growers with conventional or organic production systems. This is done through regional meetings, advanced workshops, webinars, exhibitions, and field events. A number of traditional handbooks and digital media are also available for producers and landscape personnel. The commercial horticulture team offers a certification program for small retailers and plant, soil, and pest diagnostic services for new or beginning farmers.

The program emphasizes environmental stewardship, best management practices, and economic viability of communities across Alabama.
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### Regional Extension Agents (REA) & County Extension Coordinators (CEC)

**Alabama Extension Team Leader County Subsets**

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