COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE

Programs, People & Educational Resources

WWW.ACES.EDU
WWW.ALABAMABEGINNINGFARMER.COM
THE PROGRAM EMPHASIZES ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP, BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, AND ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF COMMUNITIES ACROSS ALABAMA.

The Commercial Horticulture Program provides research-based information to nurseries, landscape companies and sod producers, and fruit and vegetable growers with conventional or organic production systems. This is done through regional meetings, advanced workshops, grower conferences and exhibitions, field demonstrations, monthly webinars, and Facebook Live events such as Q&A Friday and Virtual Farm Tours started during the COVID-19 pandemic to improve accessibility of information for all Alabamians. A number of traditional handbooks and digital media are also available for producers and landscape personnel. The commercial horticulture team offers the Farming Basics certification program for small retailers and plant, soil, and pest diagnostic services for new or beginning farmers. Producers are strongly encouraged to download the Farming Basics mobile app for connecting with the team.
**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 strongly encouraged to complete the Farming Basics online course and the Farming Basics mobile app as they become familiar with farming issues and require on-farm services. Beginning farmers can learn more by reading “Where to Start: A Basic Program Resource Guide for Beginning Farmers” on aces.edu.

**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 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

- Farming Basics mobile app for crop and IPM information, connecting to REAs, videos, social media channels, and more.
- Farming Basics online course
- Commercial horticulture monthly webinars, Q&A Fridays, virtual farm tours via Facebook
- Alabama IPM Communicator/Beginning Farmer e-newsletter
- Print and digital books: Southeastern U.S. Vegetable Production Handbook, High Tunnel Crop Production Handbook for Beginners, IPM slide chart
- Alabama Extension Commercial Horticulture Facebook page
- Alabama Vegetable IPM Facebook page
- YouTube videos on Beginning Farmer playlist
- Social media events such as monthly webinar series, Q&A Fridays, and Alabama Virtual Farm Tours on Commercial Horticulture Extension channel on Facebook

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