

Home Horticulture Team Outcomes & Impacts Report 2024

► The Alabama Cooperative Extension System Home Horticulture team supports homeowners with science-based projects about planning, planting, and caring for gardens and plants in indoor and outdoor residential spaces. This team is also supported by the Extension Master Gardeners, who are volunteer educators housed in Alabama counties.

Title: Alabama Smart Yards (ASY)

Project Leader: Sonja Thomas

Institutional Lead: 1862 Extension–AU

Project Objectives: Teach best management practices involved with planning, planting, and caring for plants in residential and community green spaces, indoors and outdoors.

Background/Situation/Issue: Alabama Smart Yards is a statewide program that addresses the critical issues of natural resource conservation and management, environmental sustainability, and climate control. This program teaches and promotes best management practices for individuals and groups in residential landscapes and community properties.

Outputs:

- 13,205 participants in ASY programs (direct contacts).
- 4.5K followers on social media platforms.
- 203 programs offered.
- 15 demonstration gardens maintained throughout state.
- More than 11,800 participants in one-on-one consultations.

Audience Diversity: 203 reported activities; 80% female, 20% male. A total of 11,853 adults with 1,327 youths were served. By race, 47% White and 48% Black with about 5% Asian, American Indian, Alaskan, or more than one race.

Evaluation Techniques: Paper-based and online surveys; website and social media use reports.

Value Statement/Synopsis:

- On average, each participant attended 6.9 programs.
- Participants reported an average cost saving of \$273/program.
- Participants reported an average program value of \$73/program.



Social Media Channels

www.facebook.com/AlabamaSmartYardsAlabamaExtension

www.instagram.com/alabama.smart.yards

Key Web Page

Get Outside with Alabama Smart Yards webinar series: [www.aces.edu/ blog/ topics/lawn-garden/smart-yards-online-series](http://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/lawn-garden/smart-yards-online-series)



Testimonials

"My problem was solved with new techniques and new planting ideas."

"The knowledge I gained was extremely valuable. I understand plant placement, how to use colors, recognize plant diversity, and many more."

"As a novice, everything I heard was helpful"

"New knowledge on my plants, caring for them and replacing as well as a great webinar on emergency management. I can say each webinar adds something to our individual knowledge base and my journal!"

Title: Grow More, Give More (GMGM)

Project Leader: Bethany O'Rear

Institutional Lead: 1862 Extension–AU

Project Objectives: Teach best management practices to home gardeners for productive residential and community food gardens with a philanthropic component to address local food insecurity.

Background/Situation/Issue: The Grow More, Give More gardening program addresses food insecurity by encouraging gardeners to grow extra produce and donate it to local food banks and communities in need. It promotes sustainable gardening practices to maximize harvests while minimizing environmental impact. The program also fosters community engagement by connecting gardeners with volunteer opportunities and educational resources and offers solutions for horticultural issues.

Outputs:

- 14,004 participants reached (videos, trainings, one-on-one contacts).
- 4.5K social media followers.
- 3,400 downloads of the mobile app SOW, A Planting Companion.
- 138 workshops and other training events.
- 15 demonstration and teaching gardens.
- 15 pop-up gardens.

Audience Diversity: 138 reported activities with 6,544 in-state participants including 1,589 youths. Participants were 68% female, 33% male; 76% White, 18% Black, and less than 5% each American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, and other races.

Collaborators: Through Extension agents and a volunteer network of Extension Master Gardeners with available local resources, GMGM provides the support and knowledge home gardeners and communities need to grow and manage successful food crops. As a philanthropic program, GMGM also provides increased social awareness and energizes volunteers and communities.

Value Statement/Synopsis:

- Participants reported an average program value of \$73/event.
- Participants reported an average cost savings from learned techniques of \$50/program.
- \$45,408 of fresh produce donated, based on an average fresh produce retail of \$1.85.
- 22,704 total pounds of food donations.
- 3,784 families received fresh produce donations.
- 4,113 transplants grown and donated by Master Gardeners valued at \$1,185.



Key Web Page

Grow More Give More: www.aces.edu/go/growmore

Video

www.aces.edu/blog/topics/lawn-garden/grow-more-videos



Grant Acknowledgment: Alabama RC&D

Testimonials

"Ideas on more cost-effective ways and methods to produce and market crops."

"I learned new techniques and knowledge on a variety of topics that I was able to teach others in my family."

"I'm learning to save and regrow from seeds; this is a cost-effective method. Free seeds are everywhere."

Title: Extension Master Gardener (EMG) Volunteer Training and Management

Project Leader: Kerry Smith

Institutional Lead: 1862 Extension–AU

Project Objectives: Recruit, train, and retain a core group of volunteers to support Extension Home Horticulture programs and the land grant mission through volunteer led outreach and education.

Co-Leaders/Collaborators: Extension Master Gardeners, Extension Agents, Agriculture, Plant Pathology, Home Horticulture Regional Extension Agent (REA) Instructors, County Extension Directors, Specialists, Non-Home Horticulture Extension Agents, Professional Instructors, and Speakers

Background/Situation/Issue: The Extension Master Gardener Program is a nationwide program. In Alabama, it addresses critical issues for natural resource conservation and management, environmental sustainability, and climate control. This program trains a core group of volunteers in environmental sciences and horticulture to support Extension agents in providing education and outreach to home gardeners and noncommercial community groups on gardening, the environment, and Extension programs.

Outputs:

- Multiple counties participated in online training.
- 20 in-person training locations.
- 11 Home Horticulture Extension agent program leaders.
- 3 County Extension Director (CED) program leaders.
- 1,782 reporting EMG and EMG intern volunteers.
- 140 teaching gardens.

Outcomes:

- \$119,981 monetary, produce, and plant donations
- 1.9 million public reach.
- 19,127 total pounds of produce donated. A value of \$38,254.
- 7,380 transplants grown and donated by Master Gardeners.

Audience Diversity: 113 reported activities with 5,602 in-state participants; 71% female, 29% male; 62% White and 20% Black.

Evaluation Techniques: Surveys, helpline recommendations and follow-ups, satisfied customers.

Return on Investment: 14:1 (\$14 for each Extension dollar invested).



Social Media Channels

Alabama Master Gardener Helpline on Facebook and Instagram:

www.facebook.com/AlabamaMasterGardenerHelpline

www.instagram.com/alabama.mg.helpline

Key Web Page

Become an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer: www.aces.edu/blog/topics/lawn-garden/become-an-alabama-extension-master-gardener-volunteer

Testimonials

"Extension Master Gardener has been therapy for me. It's pulled me into a new place and kept me going. I'm happier with this program in my life."

"It's not that you take the intern class, do the volunteer work, and emerge as 'Mr. or Ms. World Gardener,' but you really are part of something that makes the community better, makes you stronger and more hopeful, and something that is actually bigger than yourself."

Title: From the Ground Up! Podcast

Project Leader: Brian Brown

Institutional Lead: 1862 Extension–AU

Project Objectives: Alabama Extension’s From the Ground Up! podcast brings the expertise of home horticulture, gardens, and home pests agents to you. In these podcast episodes, the team covers a variety of topics that better homes, gardens, and communities.

Background/Situation/Issue: Extension Agents, Home Horticulture Regional Extension Agents (REAs) Dani Carroll, Mallory Kelley, Bethany O’Rear, Jack LeCroy

Outputs in 2024:

- 4 released podcasts.
- 78 subscribers.
- 1.3K plays.
- 81 engaged listeners.
- 1,300 website clicks.

Topics Covered in 2024:

- Alabama Drought Reach
- School and Community Gardens
- Plant Propagation
- Plant Problems Diagnosis

Audience Diversity: Average listener is from Alabama with 3% from surrounding states.

**Key Web Page**

www.aces.edu/blog/series/from-the-ground-up

Testimonials

“Just finished the Podcast series. So much information! I particularly like that I can listen while driving. The tips and tricks with tomatoes is particularly helpful. Thanks for plugging becoming a Master Gardener. Much thanks; looking forward to future posts.”

“I really enjoy listening to the podcasts. I feel as though I’m sitting at my kitchen table sharing these ‘conversations’ with my neighbors! The podcasts also help me see the plants differently—like humans, they too can be injured and suffer from incorrect care. The podcasts are informative, pleasant and time well-spent.”

“What a great service! I particularly enjoyed the episode on pollinators. I knew how vital they are to our environment but the information about creating an environment for them was so helpful. As an example, planting shrubs close to flowering plants for shelter for the pollinators is something I hadn’t really thought about.”

Title: Private Pesticide Applicator Training Program

Project Leader: Sonja Thomas

Institutional Lead: 1862 Extension–AU

Project Objectives: Private applicator training is for individuals who want to apply pesticides to an agricultural commodity on land privately owned either by them or their employers.

Co-Leaders/Collaborators: Agronomic Crops, Home Horticulture, Poultry, Aquatic, Commercial Horticulture, Forestry and Wildlife Regional Extension Agents.

Background/Situation/Issue: Safe use of pesticides benefits humans, animals, and plants. By offering this program to applicators, Extension is ensuring that our producers understand the importance of proper calibration, use of personal protective equipment, and how to read and comprehend the pesticide label, thereby increasing application efficacy and environmental stewardship. This program also expands workforce development by offering licensing renewal events, Agricultural Plant Pest Control and Demonstration and Research continuing education points along with new applicator training.

Outputs:

- 67 counties offered private applicator exams.
- 57 face-to-face trainings offered.
- 1,182 total participants.

Outcomes:

- 982 applicators certified.
- 202 received continuing education points.
- 367 online participants.
- \$156,355 was the overall calculated value of trainings offered in 2024.

Audience Diversity: Foresters, farmers, nursery owners, sod farmers, and other agricultural commodity producers; 59 reported activities with 1,182 in-state participants; 34% female, 66% male; 58% White, 19% Black, and less than 3% each American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, and other races.

Evaluation Techniques: Surveys and follow-ups.



Social Media Channels

[www.facebook.com/
AlabamaPesticideSafetyEducationProgram](https://www.facebook.com/AlabamaPesticideSafetyEducationProgram)

Key Web Page

[www.aces.edu/blog/category/farming/
pesticides](https://www.aces.edu/blog/category/farming/pesticides)



Title: Urban Green

Project Leader: Karnita Garner

Institutional Lead: 1890 Extension–AAMU

Project Objectives: Provide urban residents with sustainable practices to manage landscaping, urban gardening, and home pests.

Co-Leaders/Collaborators: Urban Home Horticulture Extension Agents Allyson Shabel, Roosevelt Robinson, Marcus Garner, Hayes Jackson, Bronson Lubresky, Joel Potter, and Professional Instructors and Speakers.

Background/Situation/Issue: Urban Green is a statewide program that delivers research-based information on modern agricultural and landscaping practices. In response to challenges, such as limited access to fresh produce and sustainable land use in urban areas, the program promotes informed decision-making and the adoption of urban green best management practices (BMPs), such as growing local fruits and vegetables through container gardening, edible landscaping, and raised bed gardening.

Outputs:

- 12,300 total participants in Urban Green programs (direct contacts).
- 200 in-person, hybrid and virtual programs offered via Urban Green.
- 12 teaching and demonstration gardens.
- Urban Green Facebook reach of 2,920 for content posts, 24,962 online page views, and an estimated 1,052 video views.
- Back 2 Basics webinars streamed live via Zoom and Facebook.
- 4,214 minutes of Back 2 Basics video views, 191 one-minute views, and 62 live views.

Audience Diversity: 200 reported activities with 12,300 participants; 58% female, 42% male; 72% adult, 28% youth. By race, 61% White and 37% Black with about 2% Asian, American Indian, Alaskan, or more than one race.

Evaluation Techniques: Polls, paper-based and digital surveys, follow-up phone calls, website and social media use reports

Value Statement/Synopsis:

- 85% of new participants planned to implement something learned.
- 51% of participants felt the recommended BMPs would save them money.
- 54% of our clients implemented a cost-saving practice learned during a previous Urban Green program.

Return on Investment: 25:1. A well-kept home garden helps lower food costs by providing fresh produce directly from your backyard.



Social Media Channels

<https://www.facebook.com/AlabamaExtensionAAMU/>

Key Web Page

Master the fundamentals with Urban Green's Back 2 Basics Wednesdays Webinar Series: <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/lawn-garden-urban/urban-green-back-2-basics-wednesdays-webinar-series/>.



Grant Acknowledgment: USDA-NIFA

Testimonials

"I learned how to build a raised bed. I learned why healthy soil is important. I learned so much more, too."

"Great information, but we need to do more pruning, LOL."

"I didn't know that lawns can also be helpful!"

"This was really cool, thank you guys!!"

"Great information!! I love the creativity."

"Wonderful presentation! Thanks for promoting the 3 Rs!"

"Everything! I loved Everything, especially the new ideas for small space gardening, worm farming, and making the raised beds."



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