

Notes From the President

BY BRYAN FLUECH

Hi everyone.

I hope this newest edition of the GA ANREP newsletter finds you and your loved ones safe and enjoying the summer so far. I cannot quite say things have returned to “normal” whatever that term means anymore, but it has been refreshing to hear more about in-person programming happening around the state.

Despite the many challenges brought forth by the pandemic, I have also found that it has presented many opportunities for those of us in the natural resources extension profession. I have yet to meet a natural resources agent who has not seen an increased demand for their services over the past year whether it involved helping homeowners identify the numerous plants and wildlife they “discovered” in their backyard during quarantine or working with businesses and communities to promote responsible stewardship practices as demands for nature-based activities have increased. These types of activities are certainly not new to those of us who have been in Extension for a while, but their resurgence speaks to the value and need for the work we do every day.

I would also argue that now, more than ever, a strong statewide natural resources extension network is needed to help us continue navigating and adapting to the multitude of changes we face as extension professionals. While our annual meeting planned for September 29 and 30th will be virtual and not in-person, I still look forward to hearing from our colleagues around the state and learning about their successes and challenges over the past year. Personally, I find this to be one of the most valuable aspect of being part of GA ANREP. I hope you will be able to join us. Thank you for all your hard work, and keep up the great job!



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**2021
GA ANREP
Annual
Meeting**

**HAVE YOU
REGISTERED?!**

*September 29th -30th
9AM-12PM EST*

Don't forget that registration for the 2021 GA ANREP Annual Meeting is open! The meeting is scheduled from 9AM-12PM September 29th and 30th.

To View a DRAFT Agenda and Register visit: <https://tinyurl.com/hwb6v627>.

As a reminder, the event will be a virtual meeting. There is no charge, but registration is required. It is also only open to the GA ANREP membership.

A Zoom link will be sent to participants the week of the meeting.

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS!

Let us know what programming you have been working on in the past year!

Its a great way to share with the rest of the network.

Abstracts are due Friday, July 23rd by 5PM.

To Submit an Abstract,
Visit: <https://tinyurl.com/9.74t8kr4>.

Questions about your Abstracts?

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The Georgia Green Landscape Stewards Program

BY JESSICA WARREN



The University of Georgia Extension has created a statewide sustainable landscape certification program. The Georgia Green Landscape Stewards Program launched March 15th. The program was created by Jessica Warren, Camden County Extension Coordinator and Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent, and Martin Wunderly, Northeast Area Water Agent, utilizing funds from a mini-grant from the University of Georgia Center for Urban Agriculture.

The program is self-paced and contains ten educational components: Composting at Home, Encouraging Biodiversity at Home, Invasive Plants in the Home Landscape, Mulching in the Landscape, Protecting Water Quality, Stormwater Management, Water Conservation, Welcoming Wildlife, Welcoming Pollinators to Your Landscape, and Native Plants and Low Maintenance Landscapes.

Participants can watch live webinars on the components hosted April-June of 2021, view videos of the presentations on the website <https://site.extension.uga.edu/georgiagreen/> or YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjkCDmTmH-wuKUvcFrK-erw>, or view pdfs of the presentations on the website.

After reviewing the educational components citizens can fill out a certification metric. If their landscape practices create a score of 70 or more they achieve status as a Georgia Green Landscape. Certification and an electronic or printed certificate are free, and if desired participants can purchase a colorful yard sign to designate their status.

All resources for the program are also available for UGA Extension agents to utilize in their local programs through a password protected tab on the website. Warren and Wunderly are working with new partners to continue adding new content to the program, and a statewide advisory team has been formed to help oversee and guide the program.

The program's goals are to inspire and educate citizens of Georgia about more sustainable landscaping practices, increase habitat for wildlife and pollinators through connectivity of natural areas and corridors, decrease stormwater runoff and non-point source pollution, increase soil health, water quality and biodiversity in Georgia, protect and conserve natural resources, and save citizens time, money and labor through working with – not against – nature. For more information please visit the website at <https://site.extension.uga.edu/georgiagreen/> or reach out to us at georgiagreen@uga.edu.



Henry County Get Out and Grow Initiative

BY FRANK HANCOCK

The Henry County Extension in coordination with the Henry County Master Gardeners has installed 80 garden beds. Sixty-one are pollinator beds and 19 are vegetable beds.

In January 2021, while brainstorming ways to provide our volunteers a safe project during the pandemic, we devised a plan. A local entrepreneur under the name of Perry's Lazy Crazy Garden was working on a three foot by twelve-foot biodegradable garden bed. We envisioned using this bed to install garden plots at schools, libraries, and senior centers. These beds can be installed in less than thirty minutes with minimal help.



Volunteers monitoring pollinators at Locust Grove High School in June.

We started making calls to develop a list of candidates. The list grew quickly. The Henry County Farm Bureau in unison with the Clayton County Farm Bureau provided funding for the first twenty beds. The first bed was installed on February 25, 2021, and the remainder during the months of March thru June.

We enlisted the assistance of Dr. Bodie Pennisi UGA Horticulturist to get a good pollinator mix and she agreed to provide the seed if we could get the pollinator bed recipients to assist in some pollinator research. We welcomed the opportunity.

As the funding depleted the Georgia Association of Conservation Districts contribute funding to get us up to forty and later, we received a mini grant from UGA. In addition, Scotts Miracle Grow donated two pallets of garden soil.

The program is going strong, the flowers are blooming the insects are being monitored and the vegetable beds are producing.

The objectives of this project are as follows:

1. To get people outside and active during time of pandemic
2. To provide volunteer opportunities for the Master Gardeners
3. To provide healthy food for those growing vegetables
4. To increase pollinator populations by providing pollinator friendly gardens
5. To assist with pollinator/plant research

For more information contact Frank: fhancock@co.henry.ga.us

COVID-Response Grant Supports New Marine Debris Outreach Program Involving Shrimpers

BY BRYAN FLUECH

The COVID-19 pandemic in Georgia, as with much of the nation, has had unrepresented economic impacts on local communities and businesses. This holds true for many commercial shrimpers who were affected by disruptions in the seafood supply chain. Fortunately, the state's fishing industries has received several million dollars in CARES Act funding to help supplement these losses, but not all have been eligible to receive this support.

Using funds from a National Sea Grant COVID-19 Response Grant, UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant is helping to further support shrimpers by utilizing their net sewing skills for a pilot marine debris outreach project. The new initiative called Trawl2Trash pays shrimpers \$20 for each 20-inch by 24-inch marine debris bag they sew from old shrimp nets that are no longer being used. In turn, marine extension agents and educators will distribute the recycled bags to boaters, kayakers, beach goers and anglers to help promote the collection of debris they encounter while in the environment.

While the project's bag distribution phase is just beginning, eight shrimpers to date have earned a total of \$12,000 helping Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant sew 600 bags. One of the shrimpers, who is also the instructor for McIntosh County Academy's new commercial fishing pathway class, has involved his students in sewing bags as well to help them improve their net sewing skills. Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant plans to distribute the bags to users through clean up events and outreach programs over the next several months. Recipients who use the bags are encouraged to promote their uses on social media with the #trawl2trash.

If you are interested in receiving a free bag, email Associate Marine Extension Director Bryan Fluech at fluech@uga.edu



Above: two commercial shrimpers from Darien, GA make marine debris bags from old shrimp nets.

Below: The Trawl2Trash bags are great for collecting trash while out on the kayak!



Georgia 4-H Summer Campers Learn about Plant Biotechnology

BY KASEY BOZEMAN

Plants are the key to a healthy and sustainable food system. In addition to providing oxygen, plants supply 90% of human calorie intake and 80% of human protein intake. Animal products are the remainder of these intakes; it is important to note that animals must derive their nutrition from plants (Chawla, 2009). As the world population continues to expand, there is a critical need to address food supply concerns. Kalia (2018) explains that plant biotechnology “encompasses a multitude of scientific tools and techniques for screening and genetic manipulation of plants to develop beneficial or useful plant/plant products.” Plant breeding and biotechnology assist in the developing of new varieties and traits, leading to higher-yielding crops and food with improved nutrition, taste, and storage life.

While 4-H is certainly rooted in agriculture production, there are no curriculum sets offered by National 4-H Council related to plant breeding and biotechnology. Furthermore, while traditional in-school science education teaches biology and genetic content to youth, it is estimated very few formal science programs teach plant biotechnology to students before college.

Georgia 4-H was awarded funding by National 4-H Council to create a series of lesson plans about plant biotechnology. The lessons introduce the 4-H participants to basic plant biotechnology information, allow them to engage in activities related to applying plant biotechnology content, gauge their knowledge through formative assessments and reflection questions, and be exposed to a variety of careers related to plant biotechnology.

To ensure high-quality, interactive, and fun lessons, Georgia 4-H piloted three of the activities during 4-H Summer Camp offered at Rock Eagle 4-H Center. Each cabin was provided a STEM kit with lesson plans and resources for youth to engage in three activities: (a) designer plant genetics, (b) engineering a greenhouse, and (c) mustard mania board game. “These are great lessons for any time, but It’s always a plus when outstanding curriculum can meet a very practical need,” said Georgia 4-H camping specialist Charlie Wurst. “COVID restrictions made us restructure our plans for rainy day activities, and it was great to have top-notch programming available to our leaders in each of our 45 cabins in the event inclement weather disrupted the regular camp schedule.”

Program evaluation results will not be reviewed and analyzed until after the camping season concludes, but 4-H adult leaders have responded positively to the materials. One 4-H leader commented before camp, “Thank you! I really appreciate this resource. These activities are much better than what I have in my bag right now for camp. I thought of a few things but they are not as in-depth with learning objectives.” While another leader shared, “the STEM kits were great! At first I was a little reluctant because I didn’t want them to feel like they were doing school work, but the activities were so much fun that the kids asked to do one every day! I look forward to using the resources with my county program.”



Students at Rock Eagle 4-H Center helped pilot test new educational activities focused on plant biotechnology.

Forsyth County Master Naturalists Launch New Bat Awareness Project

BY HEATHER KOLICH

Putting the “lost year” behind them, on June 5, 2021, 20 Forsyth County Master Naturalist Extension Volunteers celebrated 10 years of serving the county with citizen science and natural resource outreach projects. During the picnic gathering, MNEVs also celebrated the launch of a new project, Increasing Community Awareness of the Benefits of Bats, by assembling two of three bat houses that are components of the program.

With encouragement from Forsyth County Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent Heather Kolich, 2018 Master Naturalist training program graduate Larry Alvord dove into researching bat monitoring projects suitable to the urban/suburban environment of the county and with the potential for educational outreach and public involvement. Using bat house installations in public parks in Athens as inspiration, Alvord developed a project proposal with several layers of activities aimed at raising awareness of the environmental benefits of bats, the challenges bats face from habitat loss, and identifying and evaluating bat house designs and features that contribute to successful occupation by bats.

In April 2020, the project received a \$1,500 mini grant from the UGA Center for Urban Agriculture.

“We were all really excited by this project,” wrote CUA mini grant committee chair Dan Suiter. “A bat education program is needed now like never before.”

The project faced implementation hurdles related to negative attitudes about bats and the association of bats with COVID-19; in Spring 2021, however, Forsyth County Extension found a willing collaborator in the Georgia DNR Buford Trout Hatchery. Located in Forsyth County, the hatchery actively promotes wildlife observation and welcomed the addition of bat houses, Master Naturalist data collection, and MNEV-led educational outreach.

Although bat house installation was delayed, educational outreach is underway. Alvord and his wife Laurie, a retired teacher and also a Forsyth County MNEV, taught our youngest Extension clients, the Cloverbuds, all about bats during their April meeting. These 1st-3rd graders were bat fans.

“When they threw out words like ‘echolocation’ and ‘nocturnal,’ I knew I needed to take the lesson up a notch,” Laurie said.

Ultimately, the Benefits of Bats project will encourage home and business owners to support and protect bat populations by adding bat houses to their property. Future program plans include working with high school students in engineering, design, and fabrication career pathways and challenging them to design and build a better bat house.



MNEV Larry Alvord guides future Master Naturalist trainee Nancy Avery in assembling a bat house for the Benefits of Bats citizen science and community education program.

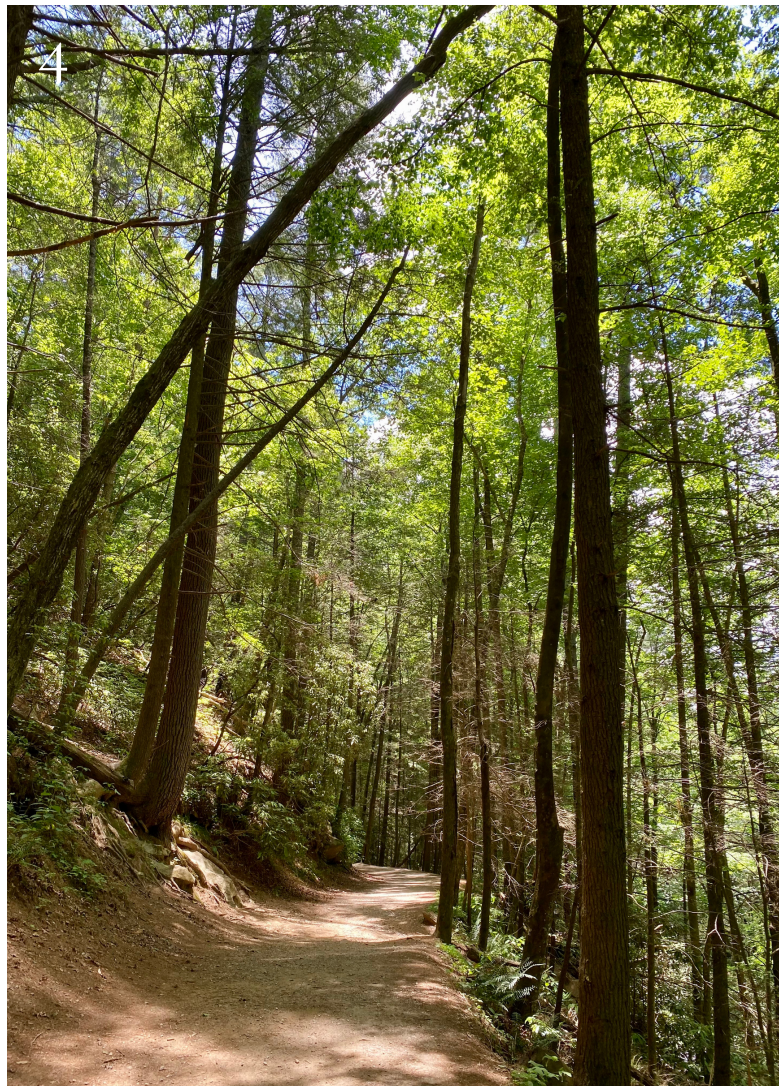


Forsyth County MNEV Laurie Alvord teaches young 4-H'ers about bats during the April 2021 Cloverbuds meeting



MNEV Larry Alvord prepares bat house for assembly during the June 5, 2021 Forsyth County MNEV 10th Anniversary celebration.

Summertime Views in Georgia!



1. Okefenokee NWR, 2. Saint Simons Island, 3. Dicks Creek Waterfall,
4. Chattahoochee National Forest, 5. Paulks Pasture WMA