

# GEORGIA



2023 Annual Conference

Accepted Abstracts

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## Oral Presentations

Georgia 4-H Pollinator & Wildlife Ambassador Programs

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The Georgia 4-H Ambassador Program began in 2005 as a way to train high school 4-H youth to become experts in different topics and then educate their communities about their new information. Over the years, nearly 1,000 young people have served as 4-H Ambassadors. As a way to enhance programming efforts, Georgia 4-H began a Pollinator Ambassador program in 2020 and a Wildlife Ambassador program in 2021. This presentation will share about the importance of the program, the youth training weekend and ongoing support throughout the year, and the impact youth have on their communities by completing learning and sharing activities throughout the year.

Showing off Native Plants

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Native plants are getting more attention than ever but there is a long way to go towards filling in knowledge gaps for the homeowner and landscaper. The almost 10,000 ft<sup>2</sup> area surrounding the Athens-Clarke County Extension office is being developed into a 100% native landscape - a demonstration space for how native plants can be used in our Georgia Landscapes. The space is used to showcase attractive native options that could be used to fill specific niches. There are plants which have good fall color, evergreen hedging plants, drought-tolerant plants and edible plants, to name a few categories that are represented. Once all of the signage has been completed, the public will be able to access detailed information about any plant that they see, through a QR code located on plant labels. In addition to the education offered to those who are looking to find out more about using native plants, the existence of the garden engages people who have never considered native plants and their benefits.

## Preparing for Emergencies within Extension: Process and Best Practices

Maria Bowie, [mbowie@uga.edu](mailto:mbowie@uga.edu)

In 2021, UGA Extension received a USDA NIFA Smith-Lever Grant to address emergency preparedness and develop a new approach referred to as small teams. Members of these teams, organized by Extension district, represent ANR, FCS, and 4-H program areas and all regions of the state. They have received specialized training in Community Emergency Response Training (CERT), property heirs, food/water safety, household cleanup after a flood, Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs), and the use of drones to help conduct crop damage assessments. While much progress has been made over the past two years, recent emergencies have demonstrated that additional training and planning protocols are required to fully engage local, district, and state faculty and staff in Extension's response efforts. In addition, the National Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) Conference is being held September 26 - 29, 2023, in Savannah. Plans include an Avian Influenza training exercise, a tour of the Georgia Port Authority, a field study to visit the living oyster shoreline, and an excursion on UGA Marine Extension's SeaDawg as part of this professional development opportunity. Funding has been submitted in support of Extension's enhanced emergency preparedness efforts, and we encourage you to get involved in the conversation locally and at large. This session will provide a brief overview of our small teams' approach and who currently serves on these teams, an example COOP, details about the EDEN Conference, and strategies for working effectively with key partner agencies including the Georgia Department of Agriculture and the Georgia Emergency Management Agency.

## A Next Gen Seafood Industry: Framing a Career-Development Program for those Earning a Living off the Water

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Historically, the commercial, recreational, and subsistence harvest of shrimp, blue crab, oyster, and a variety of finfish from flounder to snapper has played prominent roles in shaping the economic and cultural fabric of coastal communities in Georgia (GA), and South (SC) and North Carolina (NC). Increasingly concerning is that a younger generation of fishermen is not entering or remaining in the commercial fishing and seafood industry. South Atlantic Sea Grant programs have responded to these "Graying of the Fleet" concerns through various measures; offering networking and skill-building training for young/new fishermen, developing a commercial fishing career pathway program for local high school students, and assisting local not-for-profit fishing associations build their capacity to better serve their industries. Sea Grant has also increased training and technical assistance for their shellfish aquaculture industries as clam and oyster aquaculture proves to be a promising supplement or alternative to commercial fisheries professions in the region. Despite these initial efforts, a more comprehensive strategic framework that actively incorporates feedback from the region's industries is needed to be sustainable for the next generation working in these sectors. This presentation will provide an overview of the process that UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant lead in collaboration with SC and NC Sea Grant to engage industry stakeholders in the creation of a planning framework for commercial fishing and aquaculture career development programming in the south Atlantic region.

## **Poster Presentations**

### Four Years of the Great Georgia Pollinator Census

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The Great Georgia Pollinator Census began in 2019 as a statewide effort to document our pollinator populations while educating our communities on the importance of pollinators and creating sustainable pollinator habitat. Since the beginning of the project, over 2,000 sustainable pollinator gardens have been established and over 20,000 pollinator counts have been submitted. Schools across the state use the project as a no-cost STEM initiative, educating students on the importance of pollinating insects. In 2022, South Carolina joined our efforts and starting in 2023 North Carolina is joining us making the project The Great Southeast Pollinator Census.

### Georgia Clean Day in the Mountains

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Many farmers have a back shelf in their barn or shed that holds old pesticides and have no plan for use or disposal. Pesticide disposal is a challenge for many agricultural producers. The availability of proper disposal sites within a reasonable driving distance is very low. To assist with this difficulty the Georgia Department of Agriculture hosts a pesticide disposal program to allow individuals and organizations commercially involved in agriculture an opportunity to properly dispose of pesticides free of charge. Oftentimes, this program is located in Middle or South Georgia. In recent years this program has not been held as often due to funding shortages and COVID-19. The Union and Towns ANR Extension Agent hosted a program that collected pesticides for disposal, and then drove the collected pesticides to Perry, GA for disposal at the Georgia Department of Agriculture Georgia Clean Day, free of charge to farmers. Producers from Union and adjacent counties participated. This pesticide disposal program extended the reach of the Georgia Department of

Agriculture Georgia Clean Day to north Georgia and western North Carolina. The pesticides disposed of totaled over 1,100 pounds. The savings created by this program to producers was over \$3,700. There is also intrinsic value in disposing of pesticides that could become hazardous waste to soil and water.

### 4-H Outdoor Challenge: Encouraging Families to Explore Nature

Josie Davis, [josief@uga.edu](mailto:josief@uga.edu)

On average, Americans spend approximately 90 percent of their time indoors. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, this can have adverse effects on health. Currently, there is mounting evidence that interacting with nature provides measurable positive impacts to people, both physically and mentally. To address this concern and provide more outdoor opportunities, Paulding County 4-H designed the 4-H Outdoor Challenge which encourages 4-H families to dedicate a weekend to exploring nature. In total, 22 family groups, an estimated 59 people, registered for the first 4-H Outdoor Challenge and pledged 293 outdoor hours. When asked, 94% of participants stated that they "agree" or "strongly agree" that the 4-H Outdoor Challenge motivated them or their family group to spend time outdoors that weekend. 29% of participants stated that they had tried a new outdoor activity during the 4-H Outdoor Challenge and 48% confirmed that they are typically outdoors for less than three hours a weekend. The 4-H Outdoor Challenge was a success and received positive feedback. The Besso family from Paulding County stated that "we normally don't stay outdoors as long as we did this weekend. Having this challenge really helped the kids stay motivated to be outdoors."

### Georgia 4-H Wildlife Ambassadors

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Georgia is one of the most biologically diverse states in the nation, ranking 2nd in amphibian species, 3rd in freshwater fish species, 7th in reptile species, and 7th in vascular plant species. Recognizing the need for more people to become certified in the national Project WILD curricula, the state Project WILD Steering Committee explored the possibility of training passionate youth in the certification program. In 2021, Georgia DNR and Georgia 4-H partnered together to offer the first-of-its-kind 4-H Wildlife Ambassador program, where high school youth completed the 6-hour Project WILD educator certification. Youth returned to their local communities and used the Project WILD resources to teach programming throughout the year.

### Georgia 4-H Pollinator Ambassadors

Kasey Bozeman, Becky Griffin, and Laura Mirarchi, [kaseyb@uga.edu](mailto:kaseyb@uga.edu), [beckygri@uga.edu](mailto:beckygri@uga.edu), and [Laura.Mirarchi@uga.edu](mailto:Laura.Mirarchi@uga.edu)

Over the last several decades, the decline in pollinator species can be attributed to many causes; pests and pathogens, chemical exposure, loss of species and genetic diversity, changing climate, and habitat loss, degradation, and/or fragmentation. Because humans depend on plants and pollinators for food supply and healthy ecosystems, a balance must be maintained to sustain life on earth. A growing body of research suggests that youth-adult partnerships are among the most effective ways to educate communities about important issues. Georgia 4-H began a Pollinator Ambassador program for high school youth. These 4-H'ers were trained using research-based information presented by entomologists and environmental educators. Ambassadors then led community awareness and education activities in their communities throughout the year; exhibits at festivals, activities at libraries, garden planting events, classes, and workshops.

### Water Stewardship Choices on Georgia Green Landscapes

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The Georgia Green Landscape Stewards Program provides a self-guided educational and certification program opportunity for residents and small businesses interested in sustainable landscape practices. Education component topics explain sustainable actions that can be implemented for attaining Georgia Green Landscape status, and include water quality protection, water conservation, and stormwater management. Participant's action choices have point values and are recorded when submitting the certification application. A minimum of 70 points, out of 200, are required. Water stewardship actions were analyzed after 130 participants in 36 different counties certified their landscape. On average, water quality (59%) and water conservation (54%) actions were implemented by participants more than stormwater management actions (34%). Water related topic areas received lower attention from participants than action items in 7 other topic areas (Native Plants and Low Maintenance Landscapes 92%, Encouraging Biodiversity 86%, Welcoming Wildlife 85%, Mulch 81%, Welcoming Pollinators 81%, Invasive Plants 69%, and Composting at Home 67%). A variety of factors may affect participant choices. Preliminary survey data show three leading explanations for unspecified action choices are: item cost, lack of space in landscape, and certification point requirements already met. Reasons for choosing specific sustainable actions will need further investigation through additional surveys of the Georgia Green Landscape Stewards participants.

Confidence is Key: Female Forest Landowners' Confidence, Intent, and Connection to Land in Georgia

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The gender makeup of landowners in Georgia is changing, as more women become landowners. Private family forest landowners account for 60% of all forest landholdings in Georgia. Within this group, female forest landowners (FFLs) have more than doubled since 2006 from 11% to 24%, and this pattern is expected to continue to grow. Many FFLs acquire their land by inheritance and frequently do not have as much formal training or experience in land management as their male counterparts. Extension professionals can assist by listening to FFL's perspective on their educational needs and tailoring education efforts to meet those needs. Female forest landowners are then empowered to achieve their land management goals while promoting healthy and sustainable land management practices. This project involved developing and evaluating Women in Forestry workshops to educate and encourage capacity building, social-networking, and peer-to-peer learning for FFLs. Specific research objectives questions were (1) Where do FFLs have lowest and highest confidence in different land management activities? (2) Do workshops increase FFLs confidence in different land management techniques surveyed? (3) What are FFLs lowest and highest intent with their land? Overall, 30 participants from six workshops were evaluated. Female forest landowners were least confident (1) and had the lowest intent (3) with using and producing non-timber forest products, while they were most confident (1) with using management techniques to increase timber production. Their highest intent was to connect with other FFLs (3). Workshops increased FFLs confidences in all surveyed land management techniques except one, estate planning.

Sharing the Knowledge: Annual Master Gardener Symposium in Henry County, GA

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The State of Georgia has many Master Gardeners who continually need continuing education opportunities to improve their skills. With the many developments and the complexities of horticultural science, the need for Master Gardener Extension Volunteers is essential. In partnership with the Henry County Master Gardeners, UGA Extension Henry County has planned and implemented four Henry County Fall Gardening Symposiums since 2018. The program was also open to the public; some participants were not Master Gardener Extension Volunteers. Each program has had four presenters who discussed native plants, pollinators, winter gardening, gardens in small spaces, and others. A total of 177 people have participated in the program since its inception. It also had a silent auction and several vendors. A post-program evaluation of the qualities and information presented by each speaker was given to the attendees. Of those who responded, on a scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five the highest, the average was 4.75. Several of the participants commented, "All of the speakers were interesting. Their presentations were educational, and I have new ideas that I plan to implement in my garden. Thank you for this opportunity", and "This program has been amazing. I have learned much about the type of plants that can make a difference in improving the appearance of my landscape. Many new ideas to think about for my situation", and "learned much today that I found helpful and will use it."