

OBJECTIVE A-15 – URBAN AND CONSUMER HORTICULTURE

Through the consumer horticulture program, consumers will increase their knowledge and adopt practices concerning proper plant selection, cultural practices, and pest management strategies that maximize plant performance while minimizing inputs, and protect environmental resources.

Missy McLean, Urban Horticulture Agent

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Urban horticulture issues impact virtually all of the adult population of Robeson County. Developing and maintaining attractive landscapes and productive home gardens is a high priority for most citizens. This objective will provide the opportunity for local citizens to become more knowledgeable of how to better manage their landscapes and home gardens through proper fertilization, proper plant selection and proper planting techniques. It will also provide an opportunity for them to learn how to properly identify and effectively manage various lawn, ornamental, garden, and household pests.

SITUATION STATEMENT

Robeson County has an estimated population of over 126,000, and many of these are adults with the need for information and technical assistance related to lawns, gardening, ornamentals and pests. Gardening and landscaping is the number one home improvement project for most citizens in the county.

The most often requested type of information received by this office is horticulture related. Most homeowners have little or no formal training in horticulture or pest management. Many of them seek information related to the identification and management of various pests. Since centipede is the predominate lawn grass used in Robeson County, many people seek information about centipede management and how to handle problems in centipede lawns.

An increasing number of requests are being received for information on how to prevent and manage pest problems such as weeds, insects, and diseases through non-chemical methods. Gardeners are increasingly sensitive to environmental concerns and are requesting information on cultural practices that protect natural resources. Citizens are becoming more interested in information about appropriate fertilizer application and water conservation methods that protect our water supply.

Many clients are seeking information about new or under-utilized plant species/cultivars and how to select plants for a specific location. Numerous new plant cultivars are being introduced into the nursery trade. Another problem is poor choice of location, which results in a plant that is too big and overgrown. This results in problems with tree roots or branches growing into structures or other plants. Residents also need to learn more about new plant availability so that they can have a more diverse landscape.

Due to demands from homeowners, more people are becoming involved in landscaping and lawn maintenance businesses. Many of these individuals have had no horticulture training and are unable to properly provide services other than routine grass mowing and yard cleaning. There is a tremendous need to provide training to these individuals, and to prepare them to provide proper services to their customers.

Technology is changing rapidly and an increasing number of gardeners are seeking information by email and through the Internet. An increasing number

of local citizens are becoming familiar with the Master Gardener program and are requesting training and opportunities to be involved in community projects by volunteering their time and services.

TARGET AUDIENCES

- Homeowners
- Home gardeners
- Landscape maintenance workers
- Nursery and garden center employees
- Lawn care professionals
- Tree trimmers
- Pest control people
- Citizens interested in the Master Gardener program
- Landscapers
- Vocational Agriculture teachers

TEACHING POINTS

- Proper plant selection
- Pest identification and management
- Proper landscape design and maintenance
- Proper planting techniques
- Lawn and ornamental care
- Water conservation

PROGRAM DELIVERY STRATEGIES

- Showcasing Urban Horticulture at the Robeson County Fair.
- Master Gardeners training
- Educational meetings
- Community workshops
- Tours
- Plant clinics
- Educational displays
- Home visits
- News releases
- Newsletters
- Internet and Homepages
- E-mail groups

EVALUATION STRATEGIES

- Pre- and post-knowledge tests
- Follow-up surveys to determine behavioral changes
- Number of requests for cultural information
- Feedback related to information in newsletters and news releases
- Feedback from Robeson County Master Gardeners Association
- Feedback from Urban horticulture Specialized Committee
- Number of hits on Homepages

PROGRAMMING RESOURCES

NCCES Specialists
Agents from other counties
Extension bulletins and publications
NCDA Regional Agronomists
Master Gardener volunteers
Internet
Intranet