

OBJECTIVE A-16 – YOUTH HORTICULTURE

Youth will increase their knowledge of plants, insects, and the environment while learning new gardening skills through participation in 4-H, school, and special interest classes, and activities.

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The number of farmers in the United States has declined dramatically during the past fifteen years. The 2002 Census of Agriculture indicates that less than 2% of the population is involved in production agriculture. Further, the national average age for a farmer is 55 years. Because of this there are fewer opportunities for youth to be involved in agriculture or to learn about plants and their importance to the local economy and to the environment. Also, our society is becoming more urban providing fewer opportunities for youth to be involved in gardening or in vegetable or ornamental production. Many youth are attracted to the sciences and out-doors, and therefore provide a willing audience for educational programming related to plants and the environment.

SITUATION STATEMENT

There are 24,274 youth enrolled in the Public Schools of Robeson County, approximately 2,000 enrolled in private schools, and approximately 2,800 being taught by their parents in home school environments. The Robeson County Extension Advisory Committee, the Urban Horticulture Specialized Committee and the Robeson County Master Gardeners have identified youth as a priority for horticulture educational programming by the Robeson County Extension staff.

Many youth involved in the traditional 4-H program have expressed an interest in horticultural related activities and projects. Members of the Robeson Master Gardeners have expressed a desire to work with youth and to coordinate horticulture related learning opportunities for youth either in the classroom or while school is not in session. Parents of home-schooled youth frequently request assistance and educational information about horticulture topics from Extension in order to teach their children about plants and the environment. All of this indicates the demand for horticulture programming targeting the young people of this county, and for the development of special groups such as Junior Master Gardeners, horticulture special interest clubs, or horticulture judging teams.

Organized efforts to provide intensive horticulture training to youth will provide opportunities for students to learn how to grow and sell fruits and vegetables. From this experience, some will further their education in horticulture related disciplines and will pursue careers in agriculture related fields. Those youth who do not pursue agricultural related professions will at least take with them some skills that will last a lifetime. They will be able to successfully grow fresh fruits and vegetables for their families, and possibly to generate additional income for their family budgets.

TARGET AUDIENCES

- All youth ages 6 - 19
- Horticulture Club
- Junior Master Gardeners
- Master Gardeners
- Parents of home school children

Vocational Agriculture teachers
Agribusinessmen
Public and private school teachers

TEACHING POINTS

How to properly plant vegetable gardens and fruit trees
Importance of soil sampling, liming, and proper fertilization
Pruning techniques
Variety selection
Water management and irrigation
Integrated Pest Management
Pest identification and management
Importance of beneficial insects
Importance of honeybees
Marketing techniques and strategies

PROGRAM DELIVERY STRATEGIES

Develop and maintain Junior Master Gardener Club(s)
Develop and provide leadership to horticulture judging team
Student developed and maintained vegetable garden demonstrations
Classes to teach how to recognize and control pests of fruits and vegetables
Classes on the proper display of fruits and vegetables
Newsletters
News releases
News article
E-mail
Internet and Homepages

EVALUATION STRATEGIES

Pre and post test of students involved with planned activities
Attendance rolls at planned activities
Surveys of youth involved in planned programs and activities
Document number of youth enrolled in planned activities
Document income received by students from sale of products produced

PROGRAMMING RESOURCES

NCCES specialist
Educational bulletins and publications
Videos on various subject matter
Vocational Agriculture teachers
Agents from other counties
NCDCA Regional Agronomist
Agribusinessmen
Internet
Intranet