University of Georgia Cooperative Extension is working hard for its constituents. The following are examples of Extension’s impact in the county over the past year.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Peach production is big in Peach County, but diseases shorten orchard longevity on replant sites. We are working with personnel from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and UGA Extension specialists to help develop the use of a resistant rootstock. Efforts have been made at the USDA Fruit and Tree Nut Research Laboratory in Byron, Georgia, to develop rootstock that resists several diseases. The use of this rootstock has been minimal due to propagation techniques currently being employed by nurseries.

We decided to begin using tissue-culture seedlings to make the process more user-friendly to tree nurseries and to be more efficient in our production of a commercially acceptable tree. Over the past two growing seasons, we planted approximately 7,000 tissue-culture seedlings in early spring at Fort Valley State University and at a local nursery just outside of Fort Valley, Georgia. Seedlings were budded in midsummer and the trees were evaluated in the fall.

By the second season, we had improved techniques enough to say that this is a viable system and we also demonstrated that peach nursery stock could be produced right here in the peach-growing region of Georgia. By using this rootstock, growers should be able to add years of life to an orchard and, in turn, be more profitable in the future.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Peach County 4-H’ers are active and involved in numerous programs that enhance their life skills, and one of the most impactful is the Teen Leader Certification Program. This is a daylong training developed for middle- and high-school-aged 4-H’ers who want to learn more about becoming a stronger leader. Training classes are focused on the qualities of a strong leader, conflict management, how to work with younger ages, the roles and responsibilities of a Teen Leader and ways to engage younger 4-H’ers.

Leadership skills are an integral part of a well-rounded young adult. The Peach County 4-H Club provides many opportunities for youth to serve in leadership roles and to help younger youth. Teen Leaders are often part of county, district and state 4-H activities. They are called upon to provide additional assistance and support the 4-H staff, ensure youth are maximizing their involvement with 4-H events and act as ambassadors to promote 4-H. Certified Teen Leaders are called upon to teach workshops at 4-H events such as Junior Conference, Fall Forum, summer camp and county day camps. They also assist county, district and state staff with leading and mentoring others at competitions like Project Achievement. Research has shown that youth serving in leadership roles gain experience in conflict management, decision-making, teamwork and confidence-building.

Peach County 4-H has 11 youths who have completed the certification program and are highly active in leading events across the county, district and state. In 2018, eight of the youth led programs that helped prepare fourth-through sixth-graders for Project Achievement, 10 served as leaders in county-based events, two served as Teen Leaders at summer camp, four were selected to teach at statewide 4-H events, and one was selected to serve the state of Georgia as a Healthy Living Ambassador and attended the National 4-H Healthy Living Summit. These Peach County 4-H’ers are passionate about serving others and it shows in their dedication to 4-H, their community and building leadership.
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Goods and services related to Georgia’s agriculture and natural resources affect each of the state’s communities every day. Agriculture is Georgia’s largest industry, and its direct and indirect economic impact totals $73.7 billion. More than 392,400 Georgia jobs are directly involved in commodity or food- and fiber-related industries.

UGA Extension faculty and staff play a key role in the success of this industry by sharing university-based research for Georgians to use on the farm and at home. Recommendations in areas including soil fertility, pest management, plant and crop varieties, water quality, and herd health and management focus on maximizing production and profits while minimizing environmental impacts.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension agents also provide homeowners and communities with information on lawn care, landscaping, gardening and water conservation through a variety of workshops. Some agents also work with schools on projects like community gardens and farm-to-school programs. Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteers give thousands of hours of service to their communities by answering questions in county offices and creating educational opportunities.

4-H Youth Development

As the youth development program of UGA Extension, 4-H is also part of a national network. Georgia 4-H reaches more than 170,000 fourth- through 12th-grade students across the state and helps students develop the knowledge, life skills and attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society. This mission is fulfilled through hands-on learning experiences in agricultural and environmental awareness, leadership, communication skills, citizenship, energy conservation, health, and food and nutrition.

Georgia 4-H’ers are well-known for sharing their knowledge and volunteering throughout their communities. At the school and county levels, students participate in club meetings organized by 4-H Youth Development Extension agents. At the state level, students participate in competitions, summer camps and conferences. Some 4-H competitions and events are also offered at the regional and national levels.

Research indicates that, as a result of participating in 4-H, members are more engaged in their academic studies, less likely to be involved in risky behavior, and more likely to graduate from high school and continue their education.

Family & Consumer Sciences

Family and Consumer Sciences Extension specialists, agents and staff assist in addressing real-life issues faced by Georgians of all ages. They provide programs and the latest information on obesity, chronic disease, food and financial insecurity, family stresses, unhealthy housing, food safety and preservation, nutrition and more.

To help promote the positive development and safety of preschool, school-aged and adolescent youth, UGA Extension offers resources for parents, caregivers and others. Extension professionals in this program area lead consumer economics trainings and programs such as ServSafe®, Relationship Smarts, and PRIDE, a parent and teen driving education course.

Extension also promotes healthy lifestyles through statewide programs. Walk Georgia is a virtual, fitness-tracking resource that encourages physical fitness and healthy lifestyles to better the lives of Georgians. Other health programs managed by UGA include the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed). These classes teach families how to stretch their food dollars, eat healthier meals and snacks, and reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses.

Learn more at:
extension.uga.edu

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