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### MESSAGE FROM THE FANREP PRESIDENT!

Greetings. I am honored to be writing to you as your FANREP President. I wish everyone a happy and healthful New Year! It felt appropriate to include a photo of me on one of my first Facebook Live programs after the coronavirus pandemic began to impact our work! We have come a long way individually and collectively since last March! I am proud of how agents have both: 1. Plodded on with work as usual and found ways to make it happen and 2. Stepped back, reassessed needs, and developed new programs with novel delivery methods to address issue-based needs.

Please continue with your great programming! Don't forget about the FANREP Teams Channel as an alternative to the FANREP Listserv if you want to ask questions, brainstorm, and get advice from your colleagues!

I am happy to report we have had several productive Board of Directors meetings. We will be moving forward with changing our financial institution

from the corporate Wells Fargo, to something smaller and more community-based. I will be holding a meeting with the 5 District Directors so that they can share best practices with each other and create an outline for future District Directors. As a reminder, the call for rewards is out and you have just a short few days to enter your submissions. Remember, you all do great work! We want submissions for every category! Finally, I am proud to be assisting Dr. Mukhtar in planning the natural resources segments of the 2021 May UF/IFAS Symposium (virtual). Please be sure that you all have your calendars marked for May 3-7. More information [here](#).

Libby Carnahan,  
President



# A Webinar Series Addresses Extension Professionals' Capacity to Face a Pandemic

In March 2020, Florida Extension professionals were wondering what was going to happen to their work as the reality of a pandemic took hold. By April, nearly all Extension professionals and staff were mostly, if not entirely, working from home. Anxieties were running high, agents were struggling to focus on work—children were home attending virtual school, partners were also working from home, Internet services were stretched beyond capacity, sofas and kitchens suddenly became home offices and classrooms, the politics of the pandemic permeated every form of media, and people were worried that they or someone they loved would contract the virus.



**93%**

said the webinars helped them feel more connected. n=132

A team of UF/IFAS Extension Community Resource Development (CRD) agents developed a weekly one-hour lunchtime webinar series titled *Chew on This* to provide a place for Extension professionals to gather and share their experiences—professional and personal—while also learning and building skills to deliver programs virtually. The series began as a weekly program on April 15, then transitioned to monthly in June and concluded on August 12.



Knowledge Gain

**98%**

n=199

Using the Zoom platform, each webinar consisted of a short educational lesson in the beginning and ended with discussion time. The first webinar focused on strategies for working from home; subsequent topics were selected based on the concerns that were expressed during the discussion time and by participant recommendations. Participants learned about planning for economic setbacks; building effective teams and partnerships; navigating burnout and using coping strategies; creating resiliency in program planning and assessments; reaching diverse audiences; and developing skills for constructive dialogue on difficult issues.

A total of 10 sessions were delivered to 323 participants. The most well-attended session was the *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* session (n=90), which was held just two weeks after the killing of George Floyd on May 25. Participants were evaluated at the end of each webinar by answering questions via Zoom's polling feature. Ninety-nine percent of the participants said they would implement one or more of the strategies or skills learned; 98% increased knowledge, and 64% formed a new collaboration.

Ninety-three percent said the webinars helped them feel more connected with other Extension professionals. Initially, participants feared that their supervisors would assume they were not being productive at home, so they felt like they had to “over produce”, but as the series progressed, those fears were replaced with optimism. Participants began to accept that the “new normal” was going to exist in a virtual world for the foreseeable future, and we had to adapt to survive. The comments below reflect the evolution in participants' attitudes as creativity and innovation replaced anxiety and stress.



Will you employ one or more of the strategies learned?

**99%**

n=177

- I put more pressure on myself now that I'm working from home. I feel like if I'm not producing X number of items a day, I am not proving my worth. It's crazy!
- This gives me the opportunity to change and do things differently.
- Our county wants stories about our economic impact.
- I appreciate you are willing to tackle the difficult topics and share how to approach them.
- I agree...be willing to be vulnerable. It's hard, but it leads to greater understanding
- Thank you all very much, this is a much-needed meeting. Really couldn't have been a memo.

The webinars provided a space for Extension professionals to share their feelings while learning new strategies and building skills for developing and implementing virtual Extension programs. Participants connected with each other amidst the social isolation and built new relationships with colleagues statewide. This webinar series demonstrated that as community development professionals, we can also serve our internal audiences—our Extension community—by building the capacity and resilience to face challenging issues.

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# Professional Development while Protecting Water Quality

Walter Chavez attended the *Fertilizing Effectively in Sandy Florida Soils* webinar on September 9, 2020 via Zoom. After the workshop, he emailed Tina McIntyre, Florida-Friendly Landscaping (FFL) Agent and mentioned that he and his boss needed to get the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) Limited Urban Fertilizer License. The process of obtaining a fertilizer license can be confusing because applicants first need to obtain the Green Industries Best Management Practices (GIBMP) certificate from the University of Florida IFAS. They were wondering if they could do the course and test online and if so, where could they find it. Tina reached out by emailing him the GIBMP manuals in English and Spanish, and a link to the online course portal on the state (FFL) page. Three days later, Walter received his GIBMP certificate from the FFL office and emailed Tina to thank her and show her the certificate! He said "Good Morning, I'm very happy I passed this certificate. Thanks for your help!" Tina then forwarded him the brochure that explains how to pay for and receive the FDACS Fertilizer License. Walter and hopefully his boss will now be charged with maintaining their license and possibly returning to get education and CEUs from UF/IFAS Extension for years to come. They will be professionals that know how to properly apply fertilizer and protect the waterbodies of Florida!

Walter is one of over 1000 residents or landscape professionals that have attended the *Fertilizing Effectively in Sandy Florida Soils* between November 2019 and November 2020 either in person or virtually through Zoom. Feedback from these

workshops is regularly positive and, among professionals can lead to further education. For attending, they receive 2 Continued Educational Units (CEUs), which can help them maintain their license with the state, a very important aspect of running their business. In 2020, over 520 CEUs have been issued to professional participants in the class. Additionally, since this class has been predominantly funded by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, we have been able to bring it to residents and professionals alike for free. Most classes that offer CEUs charge to receive them, so this class has also brought savings to the professionals that were able to attend. Most importantly, it showcases Seminole County as a leader in the protections of water quality. The program has been recognized by our own County Commissioners and has proudly been the recipient of state and national awards.



Program Assistant, Terrence Fullerton, gives away free bags of fertilizer for a *Fertilizing Effectively in Sandy Florida Soils* class that took place before covid. Fertilizer was appropriate for plants and surrounding waterbodies and continued to be safely distributed even during the pandemic to encourage attendance in the virtual classes.

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# Collaboration Is Key

In 2018, I invited a local city arborist, Susan, to a newly formed Urban Forestry Committee I started based on feedback from my advisory committee. Susan was feeling isolated and unsupported in her role at the city, so she was excited when the invitation came to her inbox. At the first meeting, staff from around Pinellas County working on urban forestry gathered around a large table and shared their struggles, successes and lessons learned. It was at this meeting Susan's outlook on her job completely changed, and she felt empowered and supported to make a difference in her community.

Susan kept in touch with members of the Urban Forestry Committee and learned about various opportunities for her city. She was ambitious and eager to learn. As a member of the Project Learning Tree (PLT) Steering Committee, I extended an invitation to the Urban Forestry Committee to attend PLT's annual conference. The conference was planned around their newly revised "Urban Forests: A Supplement to Florida's Project Learning Tree" curriculum. Susan was quick to register, and her network grew and expanded as a result of her participation in this conference. Now she had a new goal: to earn the Growth Award from Tree City USA.

This award recognizes environmental improvement and a higher level of tree care in the community as evidenced by additions or significant improvements in existing tree programs within the year.



Participants and facilitators of a Project Learning Tree Workshop sponsored by City of Tarpon Springs. NOTE: Image was taken prior to COVID-19 pandemic. Image by Shannon Brewer

As part of the Growth Award, Susan focused on enhancing public education about urban trees. She accomplished this through dedicating funds from a significant code enforcement violation to sponsor Project Learning Tree workshops in her area and collaborating on a new, 4-H Teens for Trees program which I planned and taught.

Since 2019, the City of Tarpon Springs has sponsored over \$2,000 worth of Project Learning Tree curriculum to put in the hands of 74 educators in Pinellas County. This curriculum is only distributed to educators who participate in a six-hour workshop to be trained on how to use the curriculum with students. On average, over half of workshop participants will use or implement the curriculum with their students. Having Susan to direct the city's funds to be used in this way has indirectly reached hundreds of students with environmental education. In 2019, Susan was awarded "Partner of the Year" by Florida Project Learning Tree for her dedication to the program. Then, in summer 2020, the City of Tarpon Springs was honored with the Tree City USA Growth Award on behalf of Susan's efforts.

If every city had an arborist like Susan, Florida residents would be better educated about the value of urban forests. I encourage you to see how you can partner with city staff in your county. To find out more about Susan's role with the City of Tarpon Springs, visit: <https://www.ctsfl.us/building-development-department/tree-and-site-information/>



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# Gardening in the Panhandle LIVE! 2020

On March 28, 2020, Florida Governor DeSantis issued an Executive Order to be “Safer at Home” effective April 3, 2020. This directive limited activities outside the home to essential personnel in an effort to slow the spread of the 2019 novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Extension Agents scrambled to postpone or cancel events and transition to working remotely for what we hoped would be a few weeks before resuming regular in-person activities. During this phase of the pandemic Horticulture Agents were receiving a high volume of calls, emails, and social media inquiries from stakeholders. We were also lacking the assistance of Master Gardener Volunteers who usually assist homeowners with many of these issues. As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded during the spring of 2020, UF/IFAS Extension Agents were unable to perform in-person educational programs and needed an innovative way to reach clientele.



Inspired by Agents in south Florida offering “Ask an Agent Anything” online seminars, the Northwest District Horticulture Program Implementation Team collaborated to create a similar program for our region focused on landscape and garden topics. Our team already had a well-established educational blog, e-newsletter (4,226 subscribers), and Facebook page (1,888 followers) called Gardening in the Panhandle. We targeted this audience as our primary clientele base and decided to use Zoom Webinar and Facebook Live as the delivery methods. Live webinars were scheduled for an hour each, twice a month on Thursdays at noon from late May through mid-November. Each episode had a predetermined gardening topic to be addressed by a panel of 3-4 Extension Agents and/or Specialists and a host moderator. Zoom users were invited to submit questions during pre-registration and all attendees could ask questions during the webinar using chat boxes on

both platforms. In order to allow the panelists and host to focus on educational content and audience engagement we enlisted agents to be “behind the scenes” moderators managing the chats and providing links to reference materials supporting the panelists’ answers. Marketing efforts to invite participation included a static updated blogpost, Facebook Events, Twitter, email reminders, newspaper articles, and local television interviews.

In 2020, 13 episodes of Gardening in the Panhandle LIVE! were attended by 871 live viewers. Facebook videos received 1,316 post engagements and recorded 33,444 minutes viewed. YouTube videos have logged 850 views as of November 23, 2020. Follow up

survey participation was completed at a rate of 22% (191/871). 97% (186/191) Respondents reported knowledge gain in at least one Florida-Friendly Landscaping Principle. 88% (168/191) Respondents reported a plan to adopt at least one Florida-Friendly Landscaping Principle as a result of participation in the program. The team plans to resume webinars in 2021 with new topics and invited guest speakers. By pooling our expertise and offering an interactive program for stakeholders, we were able to alleviate some of the repetitive questions we were all handling individually and reconnect with citizens. As a result, the NW District Horticulture Team applied technology skills in order to continue stakeholder engagement under difficult circumstances.

YouTube Playlist with the episodes is here <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhgoAzWbtRXImdFE8Jdt0jsAOd-XldNCd>

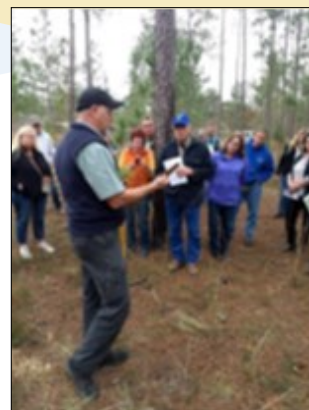


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# Florida Land Steward Program Successes in 2020

Despite the monumental challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Florida Land Steward Program reached 784 landowners, foresters, and natural resource professionals directly with three in-person workshops early in the year, and two series of webinars in the summer-fall 2020. These landowners and professionals collectively own and/or manage over 761,470 acres across Florida. Seventy-nine percent of those completing event evaluations gained new skills and/or information about managing their forests and natural resources. Ninety-five percent indicate that they will put the information covered to use on their land or as a part of their job. Thirty-seven percent reported that they had made positive changes to their land management practices based on participation



*Longleaf Pine Workshop in Marion County in January 2020*

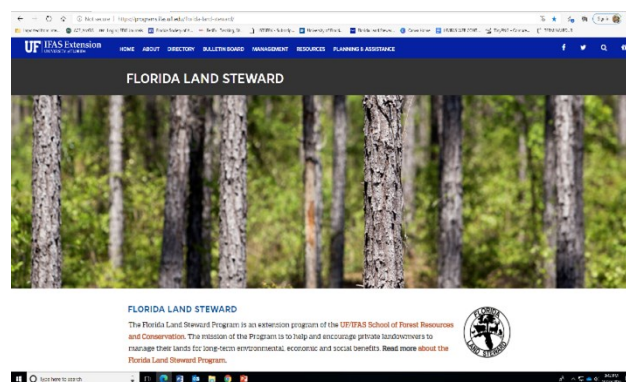


*Florida Land Steward Short Course Webinar Series in October-November 2020*

in one or more Florida Land Steward, Forest Stewardship, or Tree Farm events; on a total of 59,208 acres, collectively. A total of 192 partner/volunteer hours were leveraged in planning and conducting this year's events.

The program reached 6,859 landowners and professionals with the Florida Land Steward newsletter and 3,323 landowners and professionals receive regular email updates. Our list of contacts reached with these resources continues to grow every week.

More time in the office was a big chance to move forward with a long overdue update of our website. The new UF Florida Land Steward web site logged 3,000 users and 3,900 sessions, and there were approximately 349,000 hits counted on the old site files (most forwarded to the new site) this year. There were an additional approximately 80,000 hits on the Florida Land Steward Partnership web site. We have 1,075 followers and 1,022 likes on our Florida Land Steward Facebook page.



The new Florida Land Steward Program Website



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# Community Garden Educational Series Grows Gardeners

Community gardens are becoming increasingly important. Members are interested in gardening activities and educational programs that increase community involvement, foster pride, self-esteem, and confidence, reduce stress, and promote healthier communities. A five-part community garden educational series was developed and delivered in the Fall of 2019 and Winter 2020. The Tampa Water Department and the Tampa Bay Community Garden Coalition partnered with the UF/IFAS Extension Hillsborough County and the Community Gardens Regional Specialist Agent on the community garden series.

Forty-two community garden members, Master Gardener Volunteers and residents participated in the series. Topics included how to start a community garden, soils, watering, seasonality, square-foot gardening, compost, vermi-compost, mulch, pest and disease management and tools. Guest speakers representing Extension and the Tampa Water Department taught educational programs. Attendees toured the Plant



Garden beds at Plant City CG. Photo by Susan Webb



Plant City Community Garden. Photo by Susan Webb

## City Commons

Community Garden as part of the sessions. The most significant knowledge increases were in the areas of: vermicomposting 100% (n=30), useful plant supports and tools 100% (n=27), using seeds and transplants 100% (n=21), Central Florida planting dates 97% (n=35) and composting 97% (n=30). Series participants plan to implement the knowledge gained in: growing methods (raised beds, containers) 100% (n=39), micro irrigation 100% (n=29), fertilizing 100% (n=29), disease management 100% (n=29), integrated pest management 100% (n=29), useful plant supports and tools 100% (n=29), using seeds and transplants 100% (n=23, and soil composition and additives 95% (n=36).

Extension works closely with community gardens and gardeners throughout the State of Florida. This community gardening educational series may be replicated in other counties. Proceeds from the training were donated to the Tampa Bay Community Garden Coalition. Bringing community members together can increase resource sharing, a sense of belonging and benefits the greater good for the Tampa Bay area.



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# In the Know

## FANREP Travel Scholarship Reminder

The next round of FANREP travel scholarships is open, and the deadline is March 15. The maximum scholarship funding is \$300 with one award per year per awardee. Scholarship application forms and information are available online at <https://anrep.ifas.ufl.edu/Scholarship.shtml>.

Please note that if you are granted funds for travel, you will be required to write up a brief summary of your experience for the next FANREP newsletter following your event. Award recipient will be required to submit a report to the FANREP Board after conference. Should a scholarship be paid in advance and the recipient cannot attend the conference, the scholarship must be reimbursed to FANREP within 30 days



Organizers are working on next steps to make the ANREP 2021 Virtual Conference an engaging and fun event for our community:

- Oral presentations, ignite sessions, and workshops
- Interactive poster session
- Networking and connection with colleagues across the country
- Regional gatherings
- Initiative meetings

And more!

Please note, Initiative Meetings are being planned for Thursday, May 27th as post-conference gatherings. This schedule is similar to past meetings at in-person ANREP conferences.

Check the **conference website** <https://www.anrep2020.org/> for updates as they become available.

The Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP) will be hosting their annual Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD) conference <https://www.jcep.org/> from April 12-13<sup>th</sup> this year. Early Bird registration (\$100) for this national, virtual conference opened February 1<sup>st</sup> and runs to early April. Don't miss out on this excellent opportunity to learn from colleagues from around the nation.

