Common Ground: Why Should University Faculty Partner with Virginia Cooperative Extension?

Extension Agents

- Extension agents **identify** the complex needs and issues of people in the local community and explore potential solutions with university faculty.

  **Benefit:** Educational resources, research-based programs, and program impact

University Faculty

- Extension specialists and agents **partner** with university faculty to develop research-based resources and programs that create behavior change.

  **Benefit:** Scholarly research, publications, and outreach

Benefits to All

- Valuable opportunities to use applied research to affect complex issues
- Enhanced grant proposal and scholarly publication opportunities
- The ability to multiply the breadth and depth of scholarly research for all partners (scholarly research that impacts more people)
- A potential to create change and produce powerful social and economic impacts

Extension specialists **bring** other university faculty and agents together to identify potential projects, programs, and/or curricula that produce the greatest social and economic impact.

  **Benefit:** Measurable economic and social impact

Students

- Students **engage** with university faculty and Extension specialists through formal coursework, research projects, study abroad, and internships.

  **Benefits:** Career-ready graduates, hands-on experience, professional development

Extension Specialists

- Extension volunteers expand the outreach of our research-based, educational programs and strengthen our connections to local citizens.

  **Benefit:** Expanded outreach, greater program impact, and leveraged community assets

Volunteers/Stakeholders

- Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, genetic information, marital, family, or veteran status, or any other basis protected by law.

Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

Produced by Communications and Marketing, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2013

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VT/0513/VCE-129

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Nothing is more impactful than university faculty using the tripartite mission of discovery, learning, and outreach to impact people and their communities. University and Extension faculty, volunteers, associations, and students have wonderful opportunities to partner through applied research projects and educational programs that foster positive changes in the lives of Virginians. Let’s work together for the benefit of everyone!

Developed in collaboration with CALS associate deans and Karen Roth Gehrt, assistant director, planning, accountability and impact communications.
Here’s an example of how Horticulture partnerships benefit everyone involved…

Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program

Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners are volunteers dedicated to working with the community to encourage and promote environmentally sound horticulture practices through sustainable landscape management educational programs. Extension Master Gardeners work under the supervision of local Extension agents to deliver research-based information to the community.

Dave Close

“The Extension Master Gardener education programs focus on concepts related to sustainable landscape management. Sustainable landscape management is the term used to describe the implementation of landscape practices that promote the responsible use of natural resources in a manner that is environmentally, economically, socially and psychologically sustainable. Covering all of these areas takes an integrated team of researchers and educators.” – Dave Close, consumer horticulture Extension specialist and state Master Gardener coordinator, Virginia Tech

Laurie Fox

“A significant part of sustainable landscape management is storm water management in urban areas. We have conducted a significant number of research and demonstration projects using plant materials and landscape design to manage storm water runoff. Extension Master Gardeners are implementing our research-based recommendations in residential areas by educating homeowners and homeowner associations.”

– Laurie Fox, horticulture Extension specialist, Virginia Tech Hampton Roads Agriculture Research and Extension Center, Virginia Beach

Susan Day

“Our research on improving tree establishment and subsequent tree health in urban settings is applicable to all consumers as well as landscape contractors, urban foresters, developers, and many other land management professionals. Working together with Extension specialists and agents ensures that our research results are widely and rapidly distributed to those who can use this information to develop and maintain healthier, more sustainable landscapes. Similarly, feedback from agents and specialists help us to develop research programs that address high priority issues in the local communities and throughout the commonwealth.” – Susan Day, assistant professor, urban forestry/horticulture, Virginia Tech

Karen Carter

“Our Extension Master Gardener community educational programs are based on research results and recommendations from our Extension specialists and the research faculty at the Agricultural Research and Extension Centers and on campus. The good science behind our programs and the training and resources developed by our faculty give us the credibility and knowledge we need to educate and motivate our Extension Master Gardener volunteers to promote sustainable landscape management through their educational programs and activities in their local communities.”

– Karen Carter, horticulture agent and unit coordinator, Henrico County

Frank Reilly

“In today's politically charged world, words like ‘sustainable’ can be polarizing. Thankfully, the programs that Extension promotes have the credibility of science-based research, so the best yard-care techniques are best for the yard, and sustainable. The public can take any message it wants home from an interaction with a Extension Master Gardener. As it happens the best way to have a great lawn for example also happens to be the best way to have a lawn that is easy to maintain, and is kind to the environment.”

– Frank Reilly, Extension Master Gardener volunteer, Prince William County

Developed in collaboration with Joyce Latimer, horticulture Extension specialist, and Karen Roth Gehrt, assistant director, planning, accountability and impact communications