

# UF/IFAS EXTENSION & ST. JOHNS COUNTY

## WORKING TOGETHER

**April, May, June 2020**

The St. Johns County Board of Commissioners and UF/IFAS Extension work in a cooperative effort to provide relevant programming to citizens throughout the County. Covid-19 shuttered many businesses in our area beginning in April; however, our facility remained open with limited public interaction. Although we were limited in conducting our normal extension programming, Agents adjusted and served our clientele needs during this unusual time. During the second quarter of 2020, Extension Agents and Staff recorded approximately **4,324 contacts** with clientele that included emails, phone calls, office visits and field calls. Agents conducted **53 on-site visits** (Agriculture, Horticulture, Schools, Livestock, and Forages) to assist residents one-on-one in St. Johns County. Below are a few examples of impacts reported by our Agents during this quarter.



- Although many facilities were closed during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter because of COVID-19, the **Hastings Plant Pathology Triage Lab** was open and active. The Commercial Ag Agent triaged the following samples:

» **Disease (Total cases = 24):**

- ▷ Potatoes (22): Brown spot, Early blight, Ringrot, Late blight, Dry rot, Bacterial wilt and Stem canker
- ▷ Artichokes (1): Pectobacterium
- ▷ Squash (1): Powdery mildew

» **Insect pests (Total cases = 10):**

- ▷ Potatoes (2): Aphids, Stink bug larvae
- ▷ Sweet corn (1): Fall armyworms
- ▷ Brussels sprouts (2): Slug damage
- ▷ Artichokes (1): Stink bug larvae
- ▷ Green beans (4): Thrips and Whiteflies

» **Abiotic/Non-pathological issues:**

- ▷ Potatoes (4): Herbicide damage and Growth cracks
- ▷ Corn (1): Water/drought stress
- ▷ Green beans (1): Nitrogen deficiency



- Two-hundred and seventy-nine youth (279) and 18 teachers from two elementary schools and two home school locations participated the **4-H Virtual Embryology Program** led by our Production Agriculture Agent. Although the in-person experience was not available, our team partnered with the University of Nebraska to provide students with a live egg camera, step-by-step YouTube videos and educational materials necessary to learn from this experience.
- Recruited 9 participants for the 2020 **Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV)** Training program, to take place from August to October. The MGV program provides over 50 hours of education and hands-on training to participants who will in turn donate 75 hours of volunteer service to educational gardening programs and projects throughout the county during their first year as MGVS.
- Of the five 4-H seniors who submitted Senior Portfolios for awards trips and continuing education scholarships, four were awarded interviews. Our 4-H Agent met with each of these youth individually to revise their portfolios and prepare them for competition. Candidates will be interviewed at the end of July at the virtual 4-H University.



- Our Family and Consumer Sciences Agent published **22 blogs** on topics such as food preparation, nutrition, stress management, disaster preparedness, hurricane preparedness for older adults and disinfectants.
- Fifty-eight Master Gardener Volunteers participated in **continuing education programs** on topics such as Gardening for Health and Wellness, Growing Microgreens, and Rare and Endangered Species.
- Along with the county forester and Commissioner Smith, the Commercial Ag Agent participated in a discussion panel with the St. Johns Chamber of Commerce on May 15th. The webinar was titled **“COVID-19 and Beyond: Agriculture, Timber and the Environment in St. Johns County”**. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5Yho2RYXj4&t=2384s>
- Sixty-nine (69) participants attended educational programs that were converted from in-person to virtual, coordinated by our Production Agriculture Agent. The programs included “Living on a Few Acres” – Basic Equine Management, “Living on a Few Acres” - Florida Cottage Food Industry Laws, a Pesticide Education Class for continuing education credits and the 2<sup>nd</sup> program of an equine evaluation class co-partnered with the St. Johns County Horse Council. Participants gained knowledge related to livestock management and decision making.
- **Pesticide testing** was paused but resumed on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Seventeen pesticide exams were proctored by the Commercial Ag Agent and Ag Center Staff. Since being allowed to resume pesticide testing, we have increased our testing to four dates per month instead of two, along with adding two additional pesticide testing laptops to provide as many opportunities to our clientele as possible to expedite their testing needs.
- Our **Horticulture Agent partnered with the St. Johns County Parks and Recreation Naturalist** to produced 11 videos for distribution on SJC social media to educate SJC residents on topics of Florida-Friendly Landscaping, including composting and native plant identification, such as saltbush, wax myrtle, Carolina willow, St. Johns wort, coreopsis, Spanish needles, catbriar, and prickly pear cactus, and invasive species such as lantana.
- Our Production Agriculture Agent assisted clientele on **43 production issues** related to beef cattle management, forage production, commercial ag, ponds and horses. During this time, he made 3 on-farm site visits to assist clientele one-on-one.
- **The Commercial Ag Agent has been actively working with the SJC EOC** to distribute PPE to farms in the county. Eight farms have received over 500 masks, provided by the county at no cost to the growers. We have now started dispersing hand sanitizer as well.
- Distributed spring issue of **St. Johns Lawn and Garden Gazette** to over 900 St. Johns County residents to provide programmatic updates and seasonal gardening information. Articles included topics on Master Gardener Volunteer program, Florida-Friendly pest management, spring lawn care, Bartram Trail Library MGv tree planting project, benefits of mulch, and All-American Selection plants.
- Our Production Agriculture Agent completed the **FAA Part 107 test** to become a licensed drone pilot. Plans are underway to incorporate this technology into our programming efforts.

For more information, visit the UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County Website at <http://stjohns.ifas.ufl.edu> or contact us at **904-209-0430**.