Aiken County Master Gardeners
Suzanne Holmes, Horticulture Agent (ret.)

Master Gardeners in Aiken County contributed over 4,000 volunteer hours to Clemson Extension Master Gardener endeavors during Fiscal Year 2009-2010. Eighty Aiken County Master Gardeners travelled over 23,000 miles to deliver Clemson Extension programs to over 6,700 people. Master Gardeners were invited speakers for local churches, civic groups, garden clubs, senior centers, and schools.

Aiken County Master Gardeners provided services and programs unique to Aiken County.

- There is an ongoing Junior Master Gardener (JMG) program at East Aiken Elementary School.
- Master Gardeners were present at the Aiken County farmers market during the spring and summer months where they identified weeds, diagnosed plant problems, and provided general horticultural information to homeowners via a “Meet a Master Gardener” booth.
- Master Gardeners designed, installed, and maintained the landscape at the Historical Museum (Banksia). They also provide plant material and labor to Banksia.
- The Ag Garden, located at the Aiken County Extension Office, was designed, installed, and is maintained by Master Gardeners.
- For a fee, homeowners can have Clemson Extension Master Gardeners make a home visit to help with lawn and garden questions via the “Rent a Master Gardener” program. Master Gardeners provide a written report to the homeowner detailing their findings and offer suggestions on improving the landscape. Proceeds help fund a scholarship endowment at Clemson University.
- “Lunchbox Series” is a monthly Master Gardener led educational lecture on different horticulture-related subjects that is open to the public.

4-H is Growing in Aiken County
Connie Lake, Area 4-H Agent

During the 2010 year, 4-H in Aiken County has begun to grow. New clubs in the Beach Island Community and a horse club have been started. The following is information on the Aiken County 4-H Club and club highlights:

- Devonwood 4-H Horse Club began in the spring. They meet at Devonwood Stables under the guidance of Wendy Garrett, 4-H volunteer. Youth interested in joining the Devonwood 4-H Club should contact Mrs. Garrett at 803-270-7626.
- Beach Island 4-H Community Club is a new group lead by Casey and Michelle McDermott. This young group does a variety of projects and activities. For more information about this club, contact the McDermott’s at (803) 867-9200.
- Aiken County Homeschool 4-H Club is led by Vickie Boyd. They meet monthly during the school year at the Aiken County library. Each month, they explore a new project. For more information about the club, contact Mrs. Boyd at (803) 652-3821.
- Upcoming Clubs:
  - Sewing Club for all ages- Contact Mary Sauther
  - Community 4-H Club – This club is just beginning. Contact Lori at (803) 827-1231 for more details.

Mission Statement
The mission of the Cooperative Extension Service is to provide sound, scientifically based information to South Carolinians and help them use that information to improve the quality of their lives.
Livestock & Forages

Kevin Campbell
Area Livestock Agent

This year was a very tough year for forage producers. The weather started out very cold and then became warm and wet (a very good thing). When the weather dried off it got very dry and army-worm moths migrated in just as the chinch bugs were starting to proliferate. The rest of the summer was spent battling armyworms and chinchbugs. Some producers sprayed 8 times to attempt to control the voracious eaters, others simply lost an entire stand of hay or pasture. To combat these pests a fact sheet was assembled and distributed to Cattle producers, small ruminant producers, haymakers and horse owners. 500 of these fact sheets were distributed and 219 farm visits were made to identify the pests and discuss control methods.

In an attempt to show producers how to grow high quality, drought tolerant forages, we have teamed up with the University of Georgia to plant demonstration plots of alfalfa that was developed at Athens GA (Bulldog 805) as well as switchgrass, gamma grass, Auburn University’s Sand Mountain Bahiagrass, ball clover, crimson clover, arrowleaf clover, and chickling vetch. All totaled there were over $5000 dollars in seed planted for demonstration plots. By incorporating the high quality legumes into an existing stand of grass, producers will save approximately $50/acre in nitrogen fertilizer and see an increase in animal performance due to the increased palatability of the plants the animals are eating. Research has show animal gains increase by 40% when the legumes are incorporated in pastures and conception rates of cows increases due to their improved body condition. These demonstration plots will be used at Cattlemen’s Field Days, Sheep & Goat Field Days and Forage Field Days.

While growing the proper forages on the proper sight is crucial for livestock producers, managing those forages is equally important. Clemson University offered the Grass Masters program to area livestock producers to learn the basics of forage production and management. The program is a four night series that covers two topics per night. The producers leave with several reference resources as well as the knowledge to select and manage forages that are appropriate for their livestock enterprise. To date, 180 producers have successfully completed the course. 98% of the participants responded to the survey after the program and said it was “very educational”.

Aiken County EFNEP

Blond Simmons
EFNEP Volunteer Coordinator

EFNEP worked with a total of 83 families in the adult program, 12% white females, 4% white males, 55% black females, 8% black males, 52% Hispanic females and 7% Hispanic males, of which there were significant changes in their preparing and handling of food.

328 Youth were involved in 4-H EFNEP and 34 volunteers.

EFNEP also worked in partnership with the Aiken County Public Schools to deliver SNAP-ED teaching them to recognize and to eat fresh fruits and vegetables.

NAES had a total of 157 students and 9 teachers, Freedman 17 students and 2 teachers.

The adults at two parenting centers total 35 with three teachers.

Family & Community Leaders

Connie Lake
Area FCL Agent

The 34 members of the Aiken Family and Community Leaders are involved in four different clubs in the county. They include the Schofield, Sunshine, Wagener and Windsor Clubs. Each club holds 9 or more educational meetings each year where they have leader-lead programs on nutrition, safety, health, and environment.

This year, the members from across the state worked on project entitled, “Taking It Off”, which is about weight loss.

Locally, clubs and members have donated books to the library.
Teaching Landowners How to Optimize Tree Growth Through Proven Thinning Techniques
Three CRP Tracts in Clarendon County

Beth Richardson, Area Forestry Agent

Forestry is the number one industry in South Carolina adding dollars to the average wage earners income. Ergo, it is the forest landowners of South Carolina that are providing the bulk of the wood going to the forest industry mills, whether it be pulpwood, sawtimber or poles.

Many forest landowners have only one harvest in a lifetime; thus, they have not been interested in managing their woodlands. However, some landowners look at growing trees as an investment that is important to diversifying their portfolio.

One of the most important forest management tools is thinning the trees so that the remaining good trees can grow larger. Over the years, as the bobtail trucks fell into the past and with mechanized logging, thinning trees has been reduced to a simple pass of taking out every third row.

Through the research of Ralph Amateis, VPI, has proven that taking out every third row and nothing else does not promote diameter growth. When looking at a volume chart, there is more volume in a 14-inch diameter one-log tree than in a 10-inch diameter tree with three 16 foot logs. Thus, growing diameter is very important.

The first Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) trees were thinned in 1999 at ages 10 and 11 years old. At first, it was thought that trees that small could not be commercially thinned. However, with the event of whole tree chipping, several stands in Clarendon County were the first CRP stands to be thinned in the United States.

These stands had to have a thinning between ages 10 to 13 so that they would be eligible to stay in the CRP program. A company out of Georgetown, SC, Low Country Forest Products, began thinning the stands in January, 1999. The stands were thinned every 5th row and most of the bad trees were taken out in between the 5th row, down to a basal area of about 50 square feet. All of the CRP tracts were planted with SCFC non-genetically improved seedlings.

After the initial thinning, the landowners agreed to have their trees managed for timber production. Ergo, when the average tree total crown ratio began hitting 35%, they were thinned again in 2006.

The stands were thinned so that all of the smaller diameter wood was taken out as well as all trees that would not make a sawtimber tree. Over all the tracts cut, there were only 3 loads of chip-n-saw cut with the Plowden Tract not having enough chip-n-saw to make 1/3 of a load.

By the time the stands grew another 3 years, it was clear that all of them needed another thinning, thus, a 3rd thinning was planned.

At age 21, the tracts were thinned for the 3rd time and nothing but sawtimber or potential sawtimber was left in the stands. Absolutely no pulpwood trees remain.

The tree is growing 6 years per inch, thus, every 6 years, it is growing 2 inches. The rings show that the tree was slowing down before the second thinning.

In summary, these demonstrations are to show landowners how to get the best growth response by using good silvicultural thinning practices proven through research that optimizes the growth on the very best trees. These thinning methods are yielding an internal rate of return (IRR) up to 22%. All of this can be accomplish with no genetically improved seedlings and no forest fertilization. However, all stands had an herbicide release at ages 21 through 23.
Horse Creek 319 Water Quality Grant Receives Extension

Suzanne Holmes, Horticulture Agent (ret.)

The Horse Creek 319 Water Quality Grant was used to repair failed septic systems in the Horse Creek Watershed. During analysis of the survey, it was discovered that there was an illicit discharge into a pond that emptied into Horse Creek. This pond then discharged water into Langley Pond, a recreational facility used by swimmers. Five houses in the neighborhood that had septic systems located in a flood plain had the potential of failing.

Clemson Extension, the City of North Augusta, DHEC, Aiken County, Valley Public Service Authority, and Aiken County PSA came up with a solution and also provided funds and engineering efforts to cost share a sewer line which was approved by EPA. Valley Public Service Authority was awarded the subcontract to put in the sewer line which amounted to $30,000. The Authority also contributed cost share in the amount of $1,400. A lot of the success of the "Langley Project" is a result of willingness to work with the other constituents and also the commitment to alleviate the pollution with minimal costs to the landowners. The tap-on fee was waived for these homeowners. Aiken County also made contributions to the "Langley Project". Aiken Public Service Authority did the preliminary drawings, site visits, and surveys which amounted to a cost share of $1,656. Aiken County Stormwater Division coordinated the efforts in inspecting the "hotspots" from the infrared survey and discovered the illicit discharge. This contributed to the cost share in the amount of $2,660. Aiken County Department of Engineering paid the $9,950 cost of the engineering firm to draw the design. Internal engineering costs were $4,210. The Clemson staff coordinated the efforts and wrote the extension to the grant.

The five houses are now on a sewer line due to the supportive efforts of this group. A six-month extension was given on the Horse Creek 319 grant so the sewer line could be constructed. DHEC awarded $48,000 to the grant which included $29,000 in septic system repairs making it possible to repair 35 more septic systems.