The Florence County Extension Service offered a Master Gardener Class, January 25 – April 19, 2010. This was 13 weeks of intensive gardening training.

The objective of the Master Gardener Class is to provide horticultural training for selected home gardeners and in turn they volunteer their time to teach others about gardening. Did you know every plant needs 16 basic elements and can only obtain them when the soil’s pH is at the proper level? Find out what nutrients we were talking about by having your soil tested.

Also in the class we talked about soils, plant growth, weed types, weed control, insects, diseases, chemical pest control, organic pest control, composting, vegetable gardening, fruit gardening, flower gardening and much, much more. Contact your local county extension office for more information.

New Clemson Extension agent Terasa Young does have an important mission, to preserve the natural resources of the Pee Dee region by keeping area waters as clean as possible. Young was hired in April as a Carolina Clear agent working with the Florence/Darlington Stormwater Consortium. Young aims to educate citizens of all ages about the interdependence of water supplies in residential, commercial, and natural settings. Their motto is “We all live downstream”. Everything that goes down a storm drain empties directly into a body of water.

If you would like information on stormwater runoff prevention or other information you can visit the website. www.clemson.edu/carolinaclear or call Terasa Young at 843-661-4800, x-113.
4-H School Holidays = 4-H Activity Days

Florence County agents had found youth needed more opportunities to experience learning that provides hands-on activities. Implementing activities on school holidays provide more opportunities for youth to learn some basic skills and allows agents and volunteers more time to help prepare youth for 4-H events.

Schools holidays were used to introduce and recruit youth to different 4-H activities and programs. Participants in the 4-H School Holidays = 4-H Activity Days had the opportunity to participate in and enjoy days of organized activities coordinated by the 4-H agent, EFNEP Program Assistants, and other Extension Staff members and volunteers. A typical day began around 8:30 am and ended at 5:00 pm. This time span allowed parents to drop off and pickup children at their normal work hours. Each day included a nutrition program and activity where the participants prepared their own lunch. Participants learned how to make and cook pasta and safely use small equipment to prepare meals. Four days of workshops were offered, each day focusing on nutrition, citizenship, health and fitness, and creative crafts. A total of 230 participants over the holiday breaks increased their knowledge in nutrition, made healthy food choices, and developed skills in safe food preparation.

Youth participants not only learned about the subjects at hand, but also how to follow directions and develop patience, decision making, consumer skills, and group interaction. As a result of the programs, 4-H participation has increased in the county and regional contest. State contest participants have also increased. Volunteer support and secured resources also play a major role in the continued success of all youth programs and activities.

Scoop the Poop

When it rains, bacteria found in pet waste is carried by stormwater runoff into storm drains, ditches, and streams that empty into rivers, lakes, and even the ocean. In an effort to encourage proper disposal of pet waste, the Florence/Darlington Storm water Consortium has partnered with the Darlington County and Florence Area Humane Societies to provide educational material and a pet waste bag dispenser to everyone adopting a dog or puppy. Pet waste pollutes our water so please scoop the poop!

2nd Annual Edisto Cattlemen’s Morning

Clemson University hosted two performance bull sales during the year, February and October in Blackville, South Carolina. The bull sale is a forage performance test in which the bulls are fed a high quality diet. With the average cow herd size in South Carolina being around 25 cows, most producers are cattle farming on the side. Clemson bull sales offers a prime opportunity to reach out and education cattle producers on topics that could make their farming operations more efficient and buying the right bull.

The program was coordinated and conducted by the Clemson University Extension Livestock and Forages Team, which includes Lee Van Vlake. The educational portion of the program began in the morning & topics discussed were Bull Management and Bull Health. Those in attendance were invited to view the bulls. Extension agents were on hand to answer any questions from producers regarding bull selection and EPDs. Thirty-six cattle producers from at least two different states were in attendance. From evaluations taken those in attendance expressed their gratitude for Extension offering an educational program in conjunction with the bull sale. Due to the success of the 2nd Annual Edisto Cattlemen’s Morning, there will be another.
Today's agriculture professionals daily face the need for current information regarding crop production, nutrient management, pest management and soil and water relationships. One method of maintaining a high degree of professionalism is to become a Certified Crop Advisor. The CAA program requires its members to receive continuing education credits each year in order to maintain their accreditation, and thus their stature within the agricultural community. CCA’s are required to attend classes and meetings totaling at least 20 hours of certified instruction in the 4 competency areas mentioned above in order to maintain their certification. Currently there are 91 Certified Crop Advisors in South Carolina.

Locating and attending trainings and meetings which offer enough of the correct educational certification hours are a very difficult task for the professional agricultural advisor. Five hours of intensive training in each of the 4 focus areas is required, and busy professionals often were coming up short on hours. This problem had the potential to undermine the integrity of the CCA program in South Carolina.

Calhoun County Charles Davis and I decided to offer the opportunity for CCA’s to get all of their training hours at one time through the development of a three day certification meeting. This would only require the concentrated effort of a three day meeting as opposed to trying to juggle meetings all across the state for an entire year in order to meet the strict CCA requirements.

The training sessions provide a platform for interaction between CCA’s from across the state and across the region, as some out-of-state participants attend. It improves communication between the agriculture professional community and Clemson University, and has been instrumental in opening dialogue between groups that had before been operating independently of each other. More importantly, the training addresses a need that was created with the CCA’s requirement to hold its members to high professional ethical standards. That is the need to have adequate training opportunities in South Carolina to meet the strict certifications standards of the CCA Program.
Rain Barrel Class Helps Fight Stormwater Pollution

On Saturday, August 28th, 16 participants from three counties took part in “Make Your Own Rain Barrel Workshop” at Kalmia Gardens. Sponsored by Carolina Clear (Teresa Young) and the Florence/Darlington Stormwater Consortium, the workshop focused on educating participants about stormwater and the actions individuals can take to minimize its impacts. The completed barrels will be used to collect and store rainwater which can then be used for activities such as watering plants, cleaning vehicles and even washing pets. Kudos to these Pee Dee residents for taking steps to become a solution to stormwater pollution.

Master Gardener Turns Herb Grower

The demands of a family, living in rural Florence County, and the lack of any type of formal horticultural training made it difficult for Sally Haynes to follow her dream of having a business of her own. However, the love of herbs always kept the dream alive. In fact, Sally calls herself an Herbaholic.

Ten years ago Sally was a star student in the Florence County Extension Master Gardener Class. She was very inquisitive, asked many questions, and was very attentive especially when we went on field trips to greenhouses and nursery growers. After Master Gardener Graduation, Sally really became active in the Florence County Master Gardener Association and served three terms as president. She knew that getting her hands dirty by working in gardens, growing plants for the Master Gardener plant sell, and answering gardening questions is how a Master Gardener really learns about plants. Last year Sally built her first greenhouse and started her herb business, Pryme Thyme Herbs and Stuff. Sally has learned a retail herb business is not all growing plants but a complex business. Her children, grandkids and husband love to help her grow herbs. Growing herbs once a hobby now a profitable business and fulfilled life. By the way her customers love the herbs & plants so they return to buy more and more. In fact, Sally is thinking about adding another greenhouse next year.

4-H Green Tomato Project and Contest

Youth in Florence County are among the increased number of young people in the world that lack knowledge and understanding of our food supply and production. Young people need to know and experience gardening in a fun and educational manner.

Florence County 4-H provided educational materials and supplies for the 4-H Green Tomato Project and Contest. Each youth was given the plants, pots, and soil, fertilizer and information sheets on plant care. The project provided the participants with information on the basics of gardening, an understanding of the task involved in food production, and the concept of planting dates and fruit maturity.

The contest ended with an exhibit at the Eastern Carolina Agricultural Fair, which provided prize and awards to the youth.
Goat Management Seminar

The Goat Industry in the Pee Dee Region is growing rapidly. Due to this increase, goat owners are looking for ways to improve their care and stewardship of the land on which they keep their goats. Goat owners are looking for cutting edge programs to increase their knowledge based on different land management practices to improve the quality of their goats. Also, goat owners are interested in programs that offer answers to some of the obstacles they deal with everyday on the farm.

A goat seminar was coordinated and held at the Pee Dee Research and Education Center. This was a one day seminar and the topics include soil sampling/fertility, forages, kidding, herd health, de-worming, reproduction, hoof trimming and FAMACHA. Speakers included Dr. Patty Scharko, Brian Beer, Kevin Campbell and Lee Van Vlake. Goat owners received information about good management practices to ensure optimum performance of their goats and also to be good stewards of the land.

Fifty-two people were in attendance for this seminar. There were goat producers from South Carolina, Georgia, and North Carolina. From the evaluations given to those who participated in this seminar the majority indicated they planned on taking what they learned and implement it back on the farm. Producers expressed they would increase their soil sampling, forages, and management practices associated with goat production. Overall, those in attendance indicated the Goat Management Seminar was an asset to goat producers in the Pee Dee Region. They look forward to upcoming programs.