

What we do & Why it matters

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

UNIT 1: JO DAVIESS, STEPHENSON AND WINNEBAGO COUNTIES

GRANT MCCARTY (Extension Educator, Local Foods and Small Farms)

Grant McCarty works with commercial and backyard growers and producers by providing resources in fruit and vegetable production. His area of expertise includes soils management, hops production, organic/sustainable crop production, alternative crops, and general fruit and vegetable production. He further assists stakeholders within the local food system in helping them to expand their operation, adopt new practices, and/or better manage their current production.

JAY SOLOMON (Extension Educator, Energy and Environmental Stewardship)

Jay Solomon addresses indoor air quality, energy management, and water quality issues impacting commercial agriculture and residences. His expertise encompasses residential radon and moisture management, statewide delivery of livestock manure and facility management programs, and management of a smart meter/ smart grid grant funded state program. Solomon brings an engineering perspective to help individuals and communities find healthy, economical solutions to challenging issues.

UNIT 2: BOONE, DEKALB AND OGLE COUNTIES

PEGGY S. DOTY (Extension Educator, Energy and Environmental Stewardship)

Peggy Doty uses research-based information to create accessible and relevant environmental programs for people and their communities. Her emphasis is on human wildlife interactions and the need to recreate wildlife habitat in order to preserve the natural food chain. She collaborates with local agencies to offer environmental education for youth, Master Naturalists, and the public.

UNIT 4: CARROLL, LEE AND WHITESIDE COUNTIES

BRUCE BLACK (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Bruce Black teaches youth and adults to produce fresh food through gardening to feed their families. He also aids community members and small businesses by teaching home horticulture techniques, such as plant propagation, and helping them identify plant issues throughout the growing seasons.

UNIT 5: DUPAGE, KANE AND KENDALL COUNTIES

RICHARD HETSCHER (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Richard Hentschel uses university-based applied research and disseminates in practical terms through mass media, Extension programming and the volunteer Master Gardener program to address clientele concerns and challenges in a variety of horticultural topics. Richard's work targets reducing the use of unnecessary pesticides, improving home and community food production, and integrated pest management strategies in the landscape.

UNIT 6: COOK COUNTY

ZACK GRANT (Extension Educator, Local Food and Small Farms)

Zack Grant educates, consults, and provides technical assistance in small scale, intensive and urban agriculture food production systems in the Chicago region and beyond. With growing interest in urban agriculture from both community food system and entrepreneurial perspectives, Zack plays a critical role in disseminating much needed production, financial, and systems-based information to urban agriculture practitioners through a variety of digital platforms and experiential training. He provides expertise in season extension/year-round production systems, organic/bio-intensive production systems, financial/business planning for small farms, food safety, and post-harvest management.

WHAT WE DO & WHY IT MATTERS, CONT'D

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

GEMINI BHALSOD (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Gemini Bhalsod works on a team with extension educators in Cook County and statewide to disseminate research-based horticultural information to the public and stakeholders. She provides leadership and training for the North Cook Suburban Master Gardeners who then engage the public by volunteering their time at gardens and special events in Cook County. Horticultural education is vital to creating a community that is invested in environmental stewardship.

UNIT 7: HENRY, MERCER, ROCK ISLAND AND STARK COUNTIES

MARTHA SMITH (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Martha Smith connects research horticulture to commercial green industry professionals and general consumers, with an emphasis on integrated pest management strategies. She offers commercial and consumer trainings, individual consultation, and plant pest diagnosis. She seeks to engaging people from all walks of life in growing and appreciating b plants to increase their time spent in nature benefit their overall health and well-being.

UNIT 9: GRUNDY, KANKAKEE AND WILL COUNTIES

JAMES THEURI (Extension Educator, Local Foods and Small Farms)

James Theuri provides leadership in local food systems and small farm programs in Grundy, Kankakee and Will Counties. With an integrated pest management background, he teaches and facilitates a variety of ag-related topics. It is his goal to provide efficient agricultural methods, increased food production, and achieve best market opportunities for our farming community.

UNIT 10: HENDERSON, KNOX, MCDONOUGH AND WARREN COUNTIES

CHRIS ENROTH (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Chris Enroth addresses local challenges and supports green and ag industry professionals by providing research-based information in the fields of horticulture, ecology, and design. In support of Extension's mission, he trains and oversees the local Master Gardener and Master Naturalist volunteers of nearly 100 strong. Over the past 5 years, these volunteers have donated 22,395 hours of service back to their community, which equates to a \$503,888 value.

UNIT 11: FULTON, MASON, PEORIA AND TAZEWELL COUNTIES

RHONDA FERREE (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Rhonda Ferree inspires citizens in local communities to grow their own food and improve their home landscapes. High quality, impactful programs teach homeowners how to create energy-efficient landscapes using sustainable practices that increase property values and help the environment. Rhonda maintains ILRiverHort Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and blog social media sites to provide cutting edge, science-based information that educates and interacts with local citizens where they live and work.

JASON HAUPT (Extension Educator, Energy and Environmental Stewardship)

Jason Haupt teaches communities how to create and maintain healthy environments that improve water quality, wildlife habitat, energy efficiency and air quality, while increasing appreciation for nature and the environment.

UNIT 12: LIVINGSTON, MCLEAN AND WOODFORD COUNTIES

KELLY ALLSUP (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Kelly Allsup works to connect University of Illinois to her local communities by providing education in environmental protection and urban gardening. Her teaching focus is on issues concerning entomological conservation, good integrated pest management practices and invasive insect education, awareness and research. Kelly is committed to addressing a growing need in her area for community gardens to grow vegetables for those who do not have access to garden produce.

BRITTNAY HAAG (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Brittnay Haag educates the community and youth on horticulture and environmental principles. She works with Master Gardeners, local schools and community organizations to connect people with their natural world and contribute to a safe, abundant food supply through fruit and vegetable production.

WHAT WE DO & WHY IT MATTERS, CONT'D

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

BILL DAVISON (Extension Educator, Local Foods and Small Farms)

Bill Davison builds collaborative partnerships that connect farmers, consumers, and researchers to build more resilient local and regional food systems. He combines his practical knowledge of farming and biology with innovative ideas that help build community and promote positive change.

UNIT 13: CHAMPAIGN, FORD, IROQUOIS AND VERMILION COUNTIES

RYAN PANKAU (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Ryan Pankau provides education on all aspects of horticulture, from home gardening and ornamentals to the care of large shade trees. This information is vital to ensure communities are able to establish and maintain healthy plant populations in urban environments.

UNIT 14: ADAMS, BROWN, HANCOCK, PIKE AND SCHUYLER COUNTIES

KARI HOULE (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Kari Houle's main focus is on urban forestry improvement such as tree selection, planting, and proper tree care for both communities and land owners. She helps gardeners and interested individuals learn about positive gardening and environmental impact decisions such as removal of invasive plants and reduction in chemical usage.

UNIT 15: CALHOUN, CASS, GREENE, MORGAN AND SCOTT COUNTIES

DUANE FRIEND (Extension Educator, Energy and Environmental Stewardship)

Duane Friend provides information and educational programs to adult and youth audiences in the areas of soil quality, weather and climate, energy conservation, and disaster preparedness. These programs provide practical solutions for families, farms, and communities. He assists families in creating a household emergency plan, farmers with the implementation of soil management and conservation practices, and local government officials and business owners with energy conservation techniques.

KENNETH JOHNSON (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Kenneth Johnson provides horticulture education on fruit and vegetable production, pest management and beneficial insects. Through his programming efforts, he aims to increase backyard food production and greater appreciation of insects.

UNIT 16: LOGAN, MENARD AND SANGAMON COUNTIES

JENNIFER FISHBURN (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Jennifer Fishburn collaborates with Master Gardener volunteers, Master Naturalist volunteers and local non-profit organizations to share research-based horticultural and environmental information with the public. One such initiative teaches gardeners and landowners the importance of native pollinators to our environment and encourages them to select practices that help pollinators. She also shares vegetable gardening, herb and tree information with home gardeners and volunteers.

UNIT 17: DEWITT, MACON AND PIATT COUNTIES

DOUG GUCKER (Extension Educator, Local Foods and Small Farms)

Doug Gucker improves producer profitability and sustainability through demonstration and programs focused on using appropriate management strategies in all aspects of production. His work demonstrates practices in the areas of farm management, soil health, nutrient management, integrated pest management and grazing.

CANDICE HART (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Candice Hart develops community programs and provides expertise on home horticulture, indoor plants, and greenhouse production topics, helping participants make smart decisions for their home environment and food supply.

UNIT 18: CHRISTIAN, JERSEY, MACOUPIN AND MONTGOMERY COUNTIES

ASHLEY J. BELLE (Extension Educator, Energy and Environmental Stewardship)

Ashley Belle leads programs on generating renewable energy from waste materials and using biological treatment methods to improve water quality. Through recycling and energy conservation education, her programs also encourage Illinois residents to use natural resources wisely and incorporate environmentally sustainable practices into their daily lives.

WHAT WE DO & WHY IT MATTERS, CONT'D

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

UNIT 19: COLES, CUMBERLAND, DOUGLAS, MOULTRIE AND SHELBY COUNTIES

DAVE SHILEY (Extension Educator, Local Foods and Small Farms)

Dave Shiley provides research-based best management practices to fruit and vegetable producers, landowners and homeowners on topics including small acreage management, alternative income opportunities for farms, and natural resource management. His programs are designed to improve economic conditions for farms, reduce environmental impacts, and ensure safe production of fruits and vegetables.

ANDREW HOLSINGER (Extension Educator, Horticulture)

Andrew Holsinger provides horticultural education for novice and experienced gardeners of all ages, including programs designed to meet the needs of residents and organizations, or encourage experimentation with new practices. Andrew offers expertise in pruning techniques, plant identification, tree fruit culture, and using technological methods for teaching.

UNIT 22: MADISON, MONROE AND ST. CLAIR COUNTIES

ELIZABETH WAHLE (Extension Educator, Commercial Agriculture)

Elizabeth Wahle contributes to commercial fruit and vegetable producers' success and sustainability by solving problems through research and education, with an emphasis in commercial fruit, vegetable and horseradish production. Her work includes applied research and demonstration trials on food crop horticulture in southern Illinois and coordinating the Gateway Small Fruit and Vegetable Conference and the Horseradish Growers Conference.

UNIT 23: BOND, CLINTON, JEFFERSON, MARION AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

Laurie George (Extension Educator, Local Foods and Small Farms)

Laurie George works directly with specialty growers to promote research-based educational programs on producing safe, sustainable local food; assists with marketing and promotion with local growers, and helps initiate and develop community production systems, including farmers markets, community, and school gardens. She focuses on working with growers to produce safe food and helps them navigate the new rules and regulations for the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Rule.

UNIT 24: GALLATIN, HAMILTON, HARDIN, POPE, SALINE AND WHITE COUNTIES

Bronwyn Aly (Extension Educator, Local Foods and Small Farms)

Bronwyn Aly provides practical, relevant information to fruit and vegetable growers. Whether she is helping new or beginning farmers start their farming enterprise or lending support to established producers, Bronwyn's goal is to expand their opportunities in production and marketing.

UNIT 26: FRANKLIN, JACKSON, PERRY, RANDOLPH AND WILLIAMSON COUNTIES

Nathan Johanning (Extension Educator, Local Foods and Small Farms)

Nathan Johanning educates local farmers and growers on ways to improve the crops they grow. This increases the profitability of their business and gives the local community more access to options for fresh, local food.

UNIT 27: ALEXANDER, JOHNSON, MASSAC, PULASKI AND UNION COUNTIES

ERIN MEDVECZ (Extension Educator, Energy and Environmental Stewardship)

Erin Medvecz develops and delivers research-based programs to increase awareness of natural area restoration and preservation, impacts of invasive species, and energy conservation. Erin helps others practice stewardship in their everyday lives, creating informed and aware individuals that put knowledge into practice.

STATEWIDE

TALON BECKER (Extension Educator, Commercial Agriculture)

Talon Becker facilitates and performs research investigating several facets of commercial agriculture in the southern Illinois region through collaboration with University of Illinois campus personnel, community colleges, farmers, and agricultural organizations. He works to educate local producers on the latest public research findings pertinent to their operations. The goal of his work is to improve the lives of local farmers and community members by increasing farm productivity and profitability through enhanced soil health and reduced nutrient waste.

WHAT WE DO & WHY IT MATTERS, CONT'D

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

DENNIS BOWMAN (Extension Educator, Commercial Agriculture)

Dennis Bowman translates University research information and resources into relevant answers for the agricultural community. He is a Certified Professional Agronomist and a licensed commercial unmanned aerial system pilot. He specializes in educating producers on the application of new technologies for crop production. His educational efforts and advice allow clientele to make profitable and sustainable decisions.

TERESA L. STECKLER (Extension Educator, Commercial Agriculture)

Theresa Steckler works with beef producers to improve the sustainability and quality of beef and beef production enterprises in Illinois. She engages beef producers to implement data-driven best management practices into their operations. She addresses challenges faced by cattlemen through her research in reproduction and diseases.

RUSSEL HIGGINS (Extension Educator, Commercial Agriculture)

Russ Higgins serves farmers, agriculture organizations, and agri-businesses in northern Illinois. He connects this portion of the state with the University of Illinois, a land-grant institution. His role is to provide education, answers, and options for issues in crop management based upon university research. He facilitates localized agriculture research projects and serves as an intermediary between local farmers and campus researchers. His goal is to represent the University of Illinois, College of ACES, and provide education and resources allowing for the betterment of the agriculture community in northern Illinois.

TRAVIS METEER (Extension Educator, Commercial Agriculture)

Travis Meteer works as a liaison between the University of Illinois and beef cattle producers. He provides unbiased consultation about nutrition, genetics, reproduction, grazing, and marketing in the areas of cow-calf, stocker, and feedlot production. His insight and recommendations assist producers in making decisions that lead to sustainable farms.

JESSA SOULE (Extension Educator, Commercial Agriculture)

Jesse Soule works with local producers in eastern Illinois to improve the productivity and sustainability of commercial agriculture. She collaborates with agricultural organizations and university researchers to provide producers with the information, resources, and support necessary to improve their operations and overcome issues relevant to crop production. In particular, her efforts related to soil health and nutrient management are intended to improve the economic and environmental resiliency of commercial agriculture for generations to come.

PHILLIP ALBERTI (Extension Educator, Commercial Agriculture)

Phillip Alberti provides resources and consultations for commercial row crop producers in NW Illinois, specializing in soil fertility and best management practices. He determines production needs and assists local producers to improve productivity and integrate new practices via impact programming and on-farm visits. As part of the commercial agriculture team, Phillip also assists in the facilitation of region-specific partnerships with University of Illinois faculty and local producers. The goal of his work is to provide producers with options to maximize farm productivity and profitability as well as encouraging the implementation of conservation agriculture practices.

SUZANNE BISSONNETTE (Program Leader and Assistant Dean, Agriculture and Natural Resources)

Suzanne Bissonnette provides leadership for the Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) program and directs the University of Illinois Plant Clinic. She builds partnerships between researchers, extension educators, and external stakeholders and ensures delivery of programs to Illinois stakeholders. These programs support the economic viability of our citizens and the environmental sustainability of our natural and managed landscapes and productive lands in Illinois.