

AGRICULTURAL NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT (NM)

The local Nutrient Management (NM) program is coordinated by Greg Simpson, a Maryland Nutrient Management Advisor. The NM Advisor conducts farm visits, processes soil, manure, and plant tissue tests and also provides technical support to any farm operator in the county who requests it. Upon gathering information from a farm operation, the advisor provides recommendations for the efficient use of both chemical and organic nutrients. These recommendations are provided to each producer in the form of a "Nutrient Management Plan." The goal of this plan is to maximize crop yields while minimizing nutrient losses into the environment. Upon receiving a plan, farm operators have the information and tools required to remain in compliance with Maryland Nutrient Management regulations. Salary, training, mileage, and program expenses are funded through a grant from the Department of Agriculture.

During 2020, NM plans covering a total of 14,013 acres were completed for 69 individual cooperators covering 453 tracts of land farmed primarily in St. Mary's County. Of these cooperators, a total of 34 participated in the Maryland Cover Crop Program, and 12 had plans prepared for participation in the Maryland Manure Transport Program.

The NM Advisor also assists Ben Beale, the County AG Extension Agent/Educator, in conducting various farm visits and nutrient-related seminars throughout the year.

SNAP-EDUCATION (SNAP-Ed)

In 2020, the program formerly known as Food Supplement Nutrition Education (FSNE), was rebranded as SNAP-Education.

SNAP-Ed offers nutrition education programs to help Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households and those eligible for SNAP. These programs are provided at no cost to support the work of community agencies serving SNAP-eligible individuals and families, such as literacy centers, local food banks, soup kitchens, WIC offices, senior centers, community centers, neighborhood groups, and homeless shelters. Many materials are available in both English and Spanish.

In 2020, the SNAP-Ed program was initially delivered in its traditional format to more than 1200 low-income youth and adults in St. Mary's County. After March, and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, delivery of the program materials shifted to a virtual platform in response to the changing needs of our six partnering SMCPs elementary schools with the goal of continuing to reach as many of those participants as possible. Curricula was distributed to students via their classroom teachers using Google Drive. Some education, including recipe demonstration, was delivered virtually via ZOOM directly from our SNAP-Ed Project Leader to students on their school issued computers.



Carver Elementary School

EXTENSION ADVISORY COUNCIL (EAC)

The St. Mary's EAC is a group of representatives from the county who contribute to the overall program development of the Extension Office in program areas. Members help in identifying problem areas and establish program priorities. Members also maintain adequate fiscal internal control procedures, assist with informing the public about Extension programs, and assist in building support for Extension Programs. We would like to thank our members for 2020: *Wes Cory (President), Weylin Anderson (Vice President), George Baroniak, Delores Magnani, Lisa McCoy, Bubby Norris, Ann Richards, John Richards, Jerry Spence, and Mary Wood.*

UME ST. MARY'S STAFF 2020:

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Christine Allred, Agent Associate, 4-H
Nicole Basenback, Agent Associate, WS
Benjamin Beale, Senior Agent, AG
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4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The 4-H Program provides youth opportunities to gain life skills and knowledge in order to reach their fullest potential as responsible, caring citizens. UME 4-H faculty and staff work directly with adult and teen volunteers to provide programs, guidance, and support for youth clubs and community activities.

St. Mary's County 4-H is proud of our program's quick pivot to a virtual program in 2020 in response to the pandemic. Many of our 10 community clubs were able to hold club meetings via teleconferencing. We formed age-level groups that could meet weekly online to connect and try STEM challenges. Members participated in statewide Virtual Summer Camp and Virtual Activity Clubs. Club leaders met monthly to discuss ways to continue to connect to our members.

In order to exhibit their 4-H projects, the 4-H program sponsored the 2020 Virtual St. Mary's 4-H Fair with 475 entries by 73 members. Members took pictures of their crops, arts, crafts, baking, sewing, collections, engineering projects, and activities, and they were awarded ribbons by community and volunteer judges. Livestock members photographed themselves showing their animals as well. Ribbons and premiums were provided through the generosity of the St. Mary's Fair Association with a grant from the Maryland Agricultural Fair Board. We are thankful to community members that hosted a virtual auction where 4-H members could safely sell their project animals in conjunction with the Bustin' Out of the Barn show hosted by Flat Iron Farm and Farrell Auction Service.

St. Mary's County 4-H also participates in the "Maryland 4-H Military Clubs" program through a chartered 4-H club and other activities at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, including leadership, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), and fine arts. The amazing leaders continued their activities through virtual meetings and dropping off materials at members' homes to keep their military-connected youth active and engaged.

2020 Program Highlights include:

- Opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills through club officer training (in person) and public speaking contests (online).
- Workshops providing youth virtual learning opportunities in 4-H project areas such as animal science (e.g. livestock and poultry), STEM, public speaking, and leadership.
- Safely conducted 4 in-person Air Rifle practices and established the new St. Mary's 4-H Shooting Stars project club for youth participating in shooting sports.
- Engaged 377 children in short-term, special-interest, and 4-H clubs and activities.
- 4-H members entered 473 exhibits, including 129 livestock project animals, into the St. Mary's 4-H Virtual Fair;
- Over 750 hours of service was provided by 89 certified adult 4-H volunteers through in person activities January - March and then online activities April through December.
- Clubs provided 27 community service projects including donations and card-writing.



Above Photos - 2020 Virtual St. Mary's 4-H Fair project submissions

St. Mary's County Annual Report 2020

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AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS (AgFs)

St. Mary's County is home to a variety of agricultural enterprises, including tobacco, row crops, vegetables, greenhouse and nursery crops, as well as hay and livestock. University of Maryland Extension strives to provide the practical tools and information that farmers need to maintain profitable and sustainable operations. Using non-biased, research-based information and the network of extension agents and specialists throughout the state, farmers and those seeking alternative crops have direct access to the latest technology, marketing, and production information to improve their operations.

2020 Program Highlights:

- Following the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, outreach programs were conducted through direct grower consultations via farm visits, email or telephone calls. The AgFs program, in collaboration with other local agencies, worked directly with farmers to keep their agricultural operations open and functioning.
- During the pandemic, Extension office agricultural staff were deemed essential, allowing critical communication channels to remain open with the farm community. The St. Mary's office distributed hard copy mailings of St. Mary's County farm newsletter focused on COVID-19 updates, as well as monthly updates in the Fruit and Vegetable Newsletter and the Agronomy newsletter.
- The AgFs program conducted over 350 farm consultations at the request of producers, focused on solving a variety of production issues, such as insect, weed, disease, fertility or cultural techniques. On average, 500 fact sheets, bulletins, or written recommendations are distributed to agricultural producers each year. The estimated average annual economic activity (\$ saved or \$ earned) from individual field teaching events is \$1,439,000.
- Eight applied field research trials were conducted in collaboration with farmers across the county during the last year to address current production issues. Field trials include watermelon grafting trial (3 farm locations), evaluating anaerobic soil treatment in vegetable high tunnels (2 locations), herbicide resistant palmer amaranth weed control in field crops, small fruit (blackberry, raspberry, and blueberry) variety trials, and tomato grafting trial in high-tunnels. The program is a partner on grant funded projects totaling \$321,504.
- Assist farmers transitioning to other enterprises including vegetable, cut flower, MD 609 and MD Broadleaf tobacco, greenhouse, nursery, forage and grape production.
- The AgFs program conducted various workshops and conferences including the Southern Maryland Vegetable Conference, Southern Maryland Crops Conference, Hay and Pasture Conference, Integrated Weed Management Workshops, and Grape Growers Workshop. Where possible, traditional in-person classes were re-formatted to virtual platforms. In 2020, the program taught 72 sessions reaching 2304 participants.



Soybean trial in Mechanicsville, MD

MASTER GARDENER (MG)

The Master Gardener program mission is to train and support volunteer horticultural educators who put their knowledge to work for the citizens of St. Mary's County. They pass along safe, effective, and research-based sustainable practices to county residents through "Ask a Master Gardener" plant clinics, "Bay-Wise" site visits, St. Mary's County community events, public presentations, and various other venues within the county. Certification is maintained through advanced training and continued volunteer service. The program is supported by a part-time Master Gardener Coordinator. In 2020, the Master Gardener Program consisted of 70 active volunteers and 25 interns, who performed 1,215 hours of volunteer service in St. Mary's County. 2020 was a year unlike any other. We successfully pivoted our programming to virtual and distance learning formats in ways that had never been done before. Collectively, between virtual plant clinics, public presentations, recordings, and public school related activities, Master Gardeners have interacted with approximately 1,850 residents of St. Mary's County in 2020.

A few of the many projects undertaken by the St. Mary's County Master Gardeners during 2020 included:

- Facilitated 2 "Virtual Ask a Master Gardener" Plant Clinics virtually with the St. Mary's County library during the growing season to encourage environmentally sound horticultural practices.
- Provided garden maintenance to 18 garden entrance signs at county parks, as well as historic and native garden beds at the Sotterley Plantation, St. Mary's City, and Elms Environmental Center.
- Assisted in the detection and prevention of devastating invasive pests, including the Spotted Lanternfly and Emerald Ash Borer.
- Maintained the St. Mary's County Agricultural Service Center entrance gardens.
- Participated in the first ever virtual Leonardtown Earth Day Festival.
- Created a Facebook page to help reach more people.
- Completed our basic training class online with 100% retention. Participated in the first ever totally virtual basic training class in the fall.



Master Gardener's Deck Flowers

WATERSHED PROTECTION AND RESTORATION PROGRAM (WPRP)

The Watershed Protection and Restoration Program is administered through the University of Maryland Extension – Sea Grant Extension Program through the work of the regional faculty (F) member and local educator (E). These individuals provide programming in watershed management and restoration, watershed and environmental sciences education, and aquaculture within the Southern Maryland.

In 2020, the Watershed Program hosted three virtual workshops on the topics of: Rain Barrel 101, Backyard Composting, and Septic Smart Homeownership. Over 142 people participated. The Watershed Program also provided residential site visits to help solve stormwater flooding concerns, and assisted with a successful \$5,000 grant for a local environmental project. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Backyard Buffer program that offer free tree seedlings to homeowners, in collaboration with Maryland Department of Natural Resources, was cancelled.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES (FCS)

In 2020, Erin Jewell rolled with the punches and continued offering nutrition education, food safety, and wellness programs through virtual or teleconference platforms. The following are highlights of some of these events.

- **Mindful Eating & Intuitive Eating** – Early in 2020, Erin offered innovative programming which removes the focus from dieting and weight loss and instead teaches individuals to allow hunger, fullness, and satisfaction cues to dictate when and how much to eat, to find enjoyable movement, and to respect one's body and health.
- **Midday Pick Me Up** – In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Family and Consumer Sciences Educators, Beverly Jackey and Erin Jewell, offered an upbeat "mock radio talk show" (hosted via teleconference) titled Midday Pick Me Up. The educators recognized many communities were being bombarded with messages and resources surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, they chose to focus on nutrition, food safety, and mindfulness topics that were relevant to current times but did not dwell on the virus itself or pandemic-specific terminology and messaging. Participants called in to learn about the eight topics and participated in the discussion.
- **Dining with Diabetes (DWD)**– This four-week nutrition focused program series taught skills needed to identify and understand important information about managing and preventing prediabetes and type 2 diabetes. Those at-risk or currently diagnosed with type 2 diabetes or pre-diabetes, caregivers of those diagnosed, or those who wanted to learn more about managing and preventing the onset of the disease learned about diabetes basics, meal planning tactics to promote health, how to prepare diabetic friendly recipes, and goal setting.
- **Capture the Flavor: Herbs and Spices** – This virtual program educated participants on the health benefits, culinary uses, history, food safety, and storage practices for herbs and spices.
- **Grow It, Eat It, Preserve It (Freezing and Drying)** – These two virtual food safety programs provided communities with basic food safety practices for freezing and drying foods.
- **Fresh Conversations** – Adults 50 years or older joined the online conversation to learn from each other, discuss current nutrition and health topics, and discover new ways to be active. Older adults in the tri-county area participated in this eight session, bi-monthly online series.

Southern Maryland Environmental Stewardship Webinar Series

Join us Tuesday's in June at 6pm!

June 16 Rain Barrel 101
This session will focus on the practical uses for rain barrels and how they reduce the impact of runoff on our local waterways and benefit homeowners. Participants will learn how to maintain and install a rain barrel, and have the opportunity to purchase a discounted rain barrel at a later date TBD.

June 23 Backyard Composting
Learn how to turn food and yard waste into a valuable resource for your garden that's free! Compost improves soil health and water retention, and provides nutrients for plants. Backyard composting is beneficial because it reduces the amount of materials that are put in landfills.

June 30 Septic Smart
Septic tank issues can cause big problems for you, your wallet, and your community. Learn about best practices for maintaining your septic system.

For more information and to register visit <https://go.umd.edu/StewardshipWebinars2020>

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Webinar recordings are available on our website and YouTube



This Shrimp and Veggie Pasta Salad is an example of a recipe featured in the DWD series.