



NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION - STATEWIDE IMPACTS

Week Ending 1/16/09

- ◆ Nursery growers in the foothills are growing over 300 species of ornamental plants. Each year new species and cultivars are added to nursery inventories. This practice increases the potential that new and emerging pests may be introduced into the foothills. In 2008, 426 growers and employees attended Integrated Pest Management (IPM) seminars and on-farm scouting programs conducted by NC Cooperative Extension, Caldwell County Center to learn techniques for scouting nursery fields for existing and emerging pest problems. **Of these participants, 118 growers realized a savings of \$1,062,000 on chemical, labor and equipment costs by adopting and implementing IPM on 4,538 acres planted in ornamental plants.** Those participating in the 2008 program have indicated that implementing IPM helped them to produce quality plants by staying on top of potential pest problems.
- ◆ In 2008, NC Cooperative Extension, Watauga County Center, in conjunction with the Watauga County Sanitation Department, and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, combined efforts to conduct bi-annual Pesticide Disposal and Household Hazardous Waste events. Held in June and October, these events are critical to the continued protection of water and land resources within the county. **Through collective efforts, the events received extensive media coverage and resulted in the collection of 1,437 pounds of pesticide materials.** As these events are the only means for area farmers to dispose of unwanted pesticide materials, they serve as an invaluable tool for keeping pesticide materials from entering Watauga County waterways. As our rivers eventually feed multiple waterways throughout North Carolina and Virginia, the impact of protecting High Country water resources has far-reaching effects on the quality of drinking water for millions of residents downstream. In Wayne County, NC Cooperative Extension partnered with Wayne County's solid waste department to conduct a program that allows all local growers to utilize recycling bins located at 4 sites throughout the county. All certified pesticide applicators in the county have been trained on proper recycling techniques. **In 2008, over 3,000 containers were recycled which were not put in the local landfill. The recycling program saved the county \$10,000 in disposal fees and allows the containers to be recycled for future uses.**
- ◆ Based on the inquiries for local food, NC Cooperative Extension in Wake County worked with and supported 2 municipalities, 1 hospital, and 1 area shopping center to help them to start the Farmers Market in their perspective locations. This issue is one that they were aware of and wanted to begin the process of working with local farmers to create a common place to bring these interested groups together. Consumers and farmers alike supported the idea to achieve the goals of keeping farmers on their land, while enabling families to eat healthier, safer, and fresher food. **Of these new markets, 2 of 4 markets are operational; 1 market in the town of Apex and the other at the North Hills Shopping Center, <http://northhillsraleigh.com/farmersmarket/directions.html>. Rex Hospital, located in Cary is still researching the idea and plans to be operational in the spring of 2009.**
- ◆ Fuel costs for local tobacco farmers are rising significantly. NC Cooperative Extension in Wayne County along with NC State University Extension Specialists have research demonstrations in Wayne County and throughout North Carolina, which work with automatic controllers that regulate the fresh air added to the system during tobacco curing. In Wayne County, 100 tobacco growers have been educated on the benefits of the new technology through production meetings, newsletters, and one-on-one conversations. **These controllers will save farmers 15% or 50 gallons in fuel costs or \$800 per barn per year. With an estimated 150 barns equipped with controllers, this will save local farmers \$120,000 in fuel costs, helping to make the crop more profitable.**

- ◆ Person County hog farmers are not contracted with any hog production companies. They are independent producers. Therefore, they do not always have access to the same support as contract growers, but are still required to meet the same level of excellence in production. The welfare of animals during transportation is an increasingly important area, and companies that purchase hogs from local producers require they participate in a program that insures transportation protocol is understood. NC Cooperative Extension agents in Person County attended the training session and then taught the information to local hog producers. By completing this program, producers are still able to sell their animals to the companies, thereby continuing to receive income from the sale of hogs. **This program allows producers to continue to generate \$875,000 in annual income.**
- ◆ Tobacco is very important to Wayne County, generating over \$22 million on 9,500 acres. Tobacco transplants are grown in greenhouses before being transplanted to the field. Greenhouse production is very important because the entire crop is confined within a small area. Disease pressure is a significant threat and could reduce the number of usable transplants. NC Cooperative Extension provides programs that educate farmers on disease management. Programs aim to prevent disease through proper sanitation and ventilation. Once diseases are confirmed, we educate growers on effective control measures. Following Extension's strategies has saved local growers by providing more usable plants in the greenhouse. If growers did not utilize our strategies, they would have to purchase plants which are \$35 per 1,000. **Local growers have indicated that our programs have saved 10% of their usable plants or a savings of over \$500,000.**
- ◆ Fifty-six percent of North Carolinians are overweight, resulting in annual medical costs of \$1,533 per person. NC Cooperative Extension's *Eat Smart Move More Weigh Less* weight management program emphasizes healthy eating practices with routine physical activity for long-term weight management and decreases the risk for chronic disease. Two 10-week classes were offered to Martin County employees as an initiative to start a county employee wellness program; 25 of 37 participants attended at least 8 of the classes. **A total of 270 pounds was lost.** As a result of these classes, these participants indicate healthy eating and permanent lifestyle changes are being made to reduce their risks of chronic disease. **With these lifestyle changes and improved health, it is estimated that each participant could save an average of \$100 per physician visit as well as saving Martin County \$56 per employee in medical claims.**
- ◆ A local, commercial vegetable grower was experiencing losses of newly transplanted pepper and tomato plants. Within 2 hours of receiving the call from the grower, NC Cooperative Extension in Wilkes County emailed digital images of the plants to the Plant Disease Clinic at NC State University. The next day, the grower was able to replant the fields, based upon the diagnosis and recommendations from the Plant Disease Clinic. **The grower stated that the quick reaction by Extension saved him over \$4,000 in potential lost revenue.**
- ◆ Local farmers in Wayne County are struggling to profit from their tobacco crop because of high labor costs. NC Cooperative Extension has promoted the use of loading systems to reduce labor costs by 50%, and educated growers on the savings through face-to-face contacts and production meetings. As a result of this program, 50 tobacco farmers have invested in loading systems that has reduced their labor force by an average of 6 workers. **If the average worker works 500 hours per season with an hourly cost of \$13 including housing, a farmer can save nearly \$40,000 per year. The program has increased the local farm economy by \$1.9 million allowing farmers to be more profitable.**
- ◆ Consumers within downtown Fayetteville and local farmers were interested in establishing a farmers market. NC Cooperative Extension in cooperation with the City of Fayetteville and local farmers conducted a four-week test market during the month of September 2007. The market was open one day per week. Five farmers sold their farm products during this test period. Approximately \$2,500 worth of fruits and vegetables were sold during this test. The market continued in 2008. Seven producers participated in the market on a regular basis. **Approximately \$35,000 worth of fruits and vegetables were sold at the Fayetteville Farmers Market in 2008.**

- ◆ Child care centers and daycares are now focusing on outdoor environments for young children. NC Cooperative Extension, Green County Center collaborated with the Greene County Health Department to help Discovery Land Daycare start a gardening project at their center. **A grant in the amount of \$1,200 which was written by the health promotions educator was secured through the Health and Wellness Fund.** Teachers and children built the three garden boxes and planted vegetables, fruits, and herbs. Fresh produce was picked and used for their food supply. **Results showed that children and teachers ate more fruits and vegetables because they could pick them fresh from the garden and children learned more about how fruits, vegetables and herbs grow.**
- ◆ In New Hanover County, the Ability Garden program director is implementing several fundraising initiatives. On-line donation is the fastest growing method of giving today. A benefit of our new CES Enhancement Fund is a secure on-line donation site that has been heavily marketed to our supporters. This secure donation site has been linked to the Cooperative Extension webpage as well as the New Hanover County government webpage. The 2008 Angel Campaign, which is mailed to approximately 2,000 people, prominently featured the on-line donation site and how to access it from the CES website. Donations have begun to post through this application. **The Angel mailing resulted in \$1,750 in donations in the first week.** A Guardian Angel Sponsorship program, launched in December, targets larger donors. Broad community financial support leverages increased financing from corporations and foundations. **A sustainable Ability Garden program supports critical quality-of-life needs of over 900 individuals annually (4,500 service hours), valued at \$112,500.**
- ◆ With the economy in such a poor state, and input costs reaching an all time high, livestock farmers are facing slimmer profit margins than ever before. Realizing this, NC Cooperative Extension in Scotland County has been working with area cattle farmers to improve their cattle-marketing program. Over the course of a year, two beef cattle producers have been working closely with Cooperative Extension to change their cattle marketing efforts and increase their profit margins. They were able to improve their operations on several fronts. This included not only increasing their calf weights at market time, but also improving their marketing methods. **As a result of implementing these skills, the farmers were able to increase their gross cattle sales by over \$5,000.**
- ◆ In 2008, Burke County created an Entrepreneurship Task Force for the county. Working with this committee, the NC Cooperative Extension staff in Burke County stepped up to the plate offering a variety of entrepreneurial training opportunities, from a youth day camp to starting an agriculture-based business. **One youth participating with her father attended several trainings and decided to start their own business of boarding and training horses. With the skills and knowledge gained through Cooperative Extension, they developed their own marketing video and linked it to their website to help market their business.**
- ◆ A small blueberry farm operator, located in Newton Grove, was struggling with plant sales. He is located on a major highway, but did not have much luck with attracting customers. He attended a sign marketing class conducted by NC Cooperative Extension in Johnston County. At this class, he created a logo for his business, and a large colorful sign. The sign was placed on a post by the highway to advertise blueberry plants were for sale. **The farmer sold all of his blueberry plants within a few months.** Another agent stopped by the farmer's operation to ask him who made the sign, and the farmer had to convince the agent that he did. The agent said that it looked professionally done. **The farmer told the agent that none of this would have been possible without him having taken the sign marketing class.**