



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
DANE COUNTY

June 2024 Program Report

This summary report highlights just a few of the programs and projects Dane County Extension Educators were working on in June to provide you a sample of the type and breadth of programming offered. Also included are upcoming events. Be sure to check out the impact report on our Horticulture Helpline at the end. If you would like more information on any of our programs, please contact me or visit our [website](#).

Carrie Edgar, Director

Venkata Karri Named Dane County FoodWise Teaching Coordinator



With 15 years of direct experience as a FoodWise Nutrition Educator, Venkata Karri has been named the FoodWise Teaching Coordinator in Dane County. In this role, she will be working closely with the nutrition educators to plan and deliver learner-centered, evidence based nutrition education to eligible Dane County residents. Venkata will be responsible for utilizing relationships and her knowledge of local communities and partners to identify programming opportunities and priorities as well as training and development of nutrition educators to adapt and deliver culturally responsive programs in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

Venkata shared, *"I am excited to use my experience as a FoodWise Nutrition Educator to strengthen existing relationships with partner agencies and support nutrition educators so we as a team can effectively reach diverse audiences in Dane County."*

Venkata holds a Bachelor's Degree in Home Science from India majoring in Nutrition and Child Development and an Associate Degree in Applied Science from Madison College. Venkata is also a board member and a volunteer of Buddha-CEO Quantum Foundation USA, Inc., a non-profit organization whose mission is to spread meditation. During her free time she likes to spend time with her family. She also enjoys reading books, listening & practicing South Indian music, and going on walks. Connect with Venkata at 608-224-3646 or karri.venkata@danecounty.gov.

Agriculture

Alison Pfau, Regional Dairy Educator, served as an instructor for the Leadership Program for Dairy, a 2-day workshop for dairy workers with managerial responsibilities. She presented in Spanish for an audience of Hispanic dairy workers who learned about topics related to milk quality, with a focus on mastitis prevention and milking equipment. Improving milk quality impacts the dairy farm's bottom-line. The Leadership Program equips parlor managers and leaders with the technical knowledge, interpersonal skills, and hands-on experience to inspire teams to reach their full potential and produce high quality milk. The program includes classroom sessions, a farm tour, peer interaction, and real dairy scenarios. Participants learned about valuable insights on how to optimize factors related to producing high quality milk such as cleanliness of the cow's environment, best milking practices, and correct use of milking equipment. Participants understood causes of mastitis and its costs, the risk factors associated with mastitis and how to prevent this condition effectively. An udder dissection demonstrated the anatomy of a cow's udder and highlight the key factors that affect milk quality. Total Reach: 26 Hispanic dairy leaders from 17 dairy farms.

Will Fulwider, Regional Crops & Soils Educator, develops a monthly e-newsletter for farmers and partner organizations that provides timely, research-based updates on growing and farm management practices with a focus on sustainable production and improving profitability. Today's farmers are not often limited by access to information, however interpreting that information and deeming whether or not it is quality or credible can be fraught. The newsletter promotes the work of the Extension specialists and provides farmers with timely updates on research, opportunities to engage in studies themselves, as well as a schedule of upcoming events offered by Extension and partners. Total Reach: 844 recipients. Interested in receiving the e-Newsletter? Send an email to Will at fulwider.william@countyofdane.gov

Community Development

Sharon Lezberg, Community Development Educator, partnered with her colleagues on the development of a public engagement guide for conducting focus groups and community conversations on utility-scale solar development. The guide can be used by Extension Educators in planning public engagement around solar development and is part of a national project. Solar developers are establishing utility-scale developments in rural communities, changing the face of the landscape and affecting the economies and social relationships of these communities. Extension, as part of a national effort, is seeking to develop planning processes to guide communities to be prepared for these developments and to improve their negotiating position. The research team conducted interviews and focus groups of diverse stakeholders in order to understand the situation in one County (Portage). They designed and conducted two community conversations with residents to test one public engagement strategy. They learned that community residents are seeking information about solar developments and that public officials require tools and strategies to be prepared for solar developments. Total Reach: Approximately 90-100 program participants over 2 sessions.

A new report has been released by Extension's Community Food Systems Program: "[A Landscape Assessment of Wisconsin Farm to Food Assistance Initiatives.](#)" This report captures lessons across a range of farm to food assistance initiatives throughout Wisconsin including projects funded by Dane County, the Farm to Foodbank program at Second Harvest of Southern Wisconsin and the Partner Shares program at FairShare CSA Coalition. Themes and recommendations focus on how to improve collective capacity to move more culturally relevant, Wisconsin-grown products to households in need. The research was led by the Community Food Systems Program at UW-Madison Division of Extension and supported by the Medical College of Wisconsin and Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin. The project was funded through Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin. If you have any questions, please contact Cathryn Herlihey, Farm to Institution Specialist, at cherlihey@wisc.edu



Health and Wellbeing

Taylor Seale, Community Youth Development Educator, is creating a guide for local and Tribal health department staff members who requested guidance on engaging youth in their work that mirrors the Youth-Designed Tobacco Prevention Campaigns through UW-Madison Extension and Public Health Madison Dane County. The goal is to support adults in youth-adult partnerships on how to achieve more effective outreach with young people, using the arts and action planning as facilitation tools. This guide will be available widely for local and Tribal health department staff members.

Edwin Huayta Perez, Nutrition Educator, led a series of Strong Bodies strength-training and nutrition lessons for older adults, where participants gain strength and flexibility, learn the importance of physical activity and are aware of how to eat more healthfully to increase their independence with activities of daily living. Total Reach: 3 agencies/30 adults.

Human Development and Relationships

Clare Dahl, Financial Security Educator, taught a workshop for Sharing Active Independent Lives (SAIL) members and the general public at a local library, where participants learned research-based theories and strategies for embracing and preparing for age-related changes so the participants left motivated to take specific actions as well as with reference materials for continued reflection and motivation. Total Reach: 18 participants.

Kula Yang, Family Engagement & Relationships Educator, continues to offer the Making Reading Memories program for parents in the Dane County jail. The parents are video recorded reading storybooks, which are then shared with their children at home. The goal is to reduce the trauma of separation, strengthen family relationships and increase children's exposure to books and reading. Parents who participate enjoy creating the videos for their children and agree that it helps them feel closer to their children. The parents report that focusing on their children during incarceration gives them a sense of connection to their families. Caregivers of the children who receive the videos report that the videos help their children stay connected to the parent in jail. And most children display positive emotions while watching the videos and enjoy receiving the book. The impact of the Making Reading Memories program is important because parent incarceration can have profound impacts on child well-being and the parent-child relationship. The program improves communication and connection between parent and child during incarceration.

Horticulture

Lisa Johnson, Horticulture Educator, taught a session for the general public where they learned about growing raspberries, strawberries and blueberries. Gardeners growing berries for food production need guidance and practical knowledge to maximize success and harvest. Participants in the class learned about variety selection, soil testing and preparation, planting systems, water and fertility, pruning and managing insect and disease issues. 57% of participants expressed a general improvement in knowledge and 100% said they would apply knowledge they gained in class to practices in their home garden. Total Reach: 16 gardeners.

Positive Youth Development

Nadia Alber, 4-H Associate Educator along with the 4-H Ambassadors (teen leaders) offered a 4-H Cloverbud Circus Day for youth (ages 5-7) to explore their sparks as they relate to carnival-type activities. The event provided hands-on activities such as making balloon animals, tie-dying, face painting, juggling scarves, and completing an obstacle course. The young participants were able to develop relationships with supportive older youth, work on team building, and have leadership experiences designed to build a strong sense of belonging. Youth who thrive because of participating in 4-H programs are more likely to be motivated in school and succeed academically, interact with others in a positive ways, set and achieve high personal standards, contribute to their families, communities, and beyond through generosity, and take personal responsibility for themselves and the world around them. Total Reach: 18 5-7 year olds and 9 teens.

Nadia Alber, 4-H Associate Educator, collaborated with the Goodman Community Center to offer a 7-week Chickquest program that covers the life cycle of a chicken for the after school program. This effort was designed to expand access of STEM activities to after school participants at the neighborhood community center. Evaluation of the program by students and staff showed positive results. Kids who participated felt welcome and enjoyed their time participating in ChickQuest. During the evaluation they commented on things they learned, favorite lessons, and continue to talk about the chickens they hatched and cared for. Total Reach: 19 youth participants.

Upcoming Events

[Garden & Landscape Q&A Session](#) – July 22 1-2 pm

[Teaching Children About Emotions](#) – July 23 6-7:15 pm

[Trauma Informed Caregiving: Supporting Children Who Have Experienced Trauma](#) – July 23 and 30 9-11 am

[Badger Crop Connect Webinar: Agronomy Updates](#) – July 24 12:30 pm

[Dane County 4-H Camp – Grades 3-5](#) – July 24-27

[Dane County 4-H Camp – Grades 6-8](#) – July 27-30

[How Ready are Owners for Business Succession and Transition?](#) – July 31 12-1 pm

[Beef and Dairy Production and Management Roadshow](#) – August 1 6-8:30 pm

[Focus on Fathers Series: Fathers Help Children Make Good Choices](#) – August 13 6-7 pm

[Emotion Coaching: Helping Children Manage Strong Feelings](#) – August 15 1-2 pm

[Agronomy and Soils Field Day](#) – August 28 8 am – 12 pm

[Growing and Caring for Plants in Wisconsin: Foundations in Gardening](#) – Sept 8- Dec 7

[Rent Smart](#) – Sept 9-23

Visit our [website](#) to learn more about Extension and other upcoming program opportunities.



Come see us at the Dane County Fair! July 18-21

Where 4-H members share what they have learned
in their 4-H project areas throughout the year!

<https://www.danecountyfair.com/>

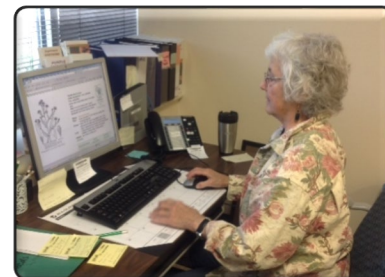


Horticulture Helpline

Responding to Dane County Residents' Landscape and Gardening Questions

Situation: Dane County residents frequently have lawn, landscape and gardening questions that they need help with to increase the success of food production, increase the value and safety of home landscapes, maintain houseplants, and create spaces that support pollinators. Reliable information is needed about a wide spectrum of questions ranging from lawn care to tree selection, pruning and safety concerns, ornamental and native perennial and annual plant care and selection, insect and disease identification, houseplants, vegetable plants, composting, weed and invasive species Identification and management, and more.

Response: UW Extension is a recognized leader in providing unbiased, research-based, locally relevant, and environmentally sound information so the public relies on Extension to provide correct information. Gardening questions come to Extension offices via phone, email, or in-person. Dane County Extension offers a Horticulture Helpline service where the public can send questions via email or phone. While Lisa Johnson, Horticulture Educator answers many questions herself, the Helpline, staffed by trained volunteers is critical to handling the many questions arriving in the office. The number of questions has increased in the past few years with the installment of UW Extension's statewide online "Ask Your Gardening Question" form (<https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/ask-a-gardening-question/>), which has brought the gardening question service to the attention of more residents.



Dane County volunteers comprise one of the largest county-based volunteer plant health advisor programs in the state. The Horticulture Educator, holds a training each fall for new volunteers and 1 to 2 updates during the growing season for the volunteers to continue to upgrade their knowledge and learn about any newly arrived insect pests and diseases.

UW-Madison Division of Extension's Horticulture Program provides research and evidence-based horticulture education, resources, and decision-making tools to home gardeners and commercial horticulture practitioners.

Results: Dane County volunteers and the Horticulture Educator, responded to over 529 questions via email, phone and walk-ins in 2023. Statewide, the total number of garden questions was 2,644 so Dane covered more than 20% of all inquiries. Persons who contacted the Helpline often received answers to more than one query. Responses from the Helpline included diagnoses of insect and disease issues, advice on plant varieties, weed and invasive plant management issues, links and attached fact sheets, referrals to the Horticulture Educator, UW plant, soil or entomology labs, or other agencies.

All users of the service are sent a feedback survey. Replies were received from 126 users in 2023. 88% rated the service as very good or good. And 61% said they would change or adopt new gardening practices as a result of the information they received.

Results included several individuals sharing they refrained from pruning pin oaks until after October 31, prioritizing the preservation of large oak trees. Appropriate pruning and correct tree and shrub care were common themes, with one client choosing to wait until spring to plant a rose bush. Others addressed specific issues such as invasive plants, with actions ranging from digging up Creeping Bellflower to removing identified invasives from native plantings. Overall, the feedback reflects a proactive and informed approach to gardening based on the provided advice.

Most common topics:

- 36% Plant disease
- 24% plant culture
- 18% plant ID
- 18% garden planning
- 15% other
- 13% insects

Feedback from a few users of the Horticulture Helpline:

- "The Helpline volunteer was efficient, caring, and knowledgeable."*
- "The Helpline provided organic and non-toxic options not available other places."*
- "Thanks so much for your detailed email. The plant guide doc is also helpful."*
- "Thank you for your time, resources and explanation."*



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