

Making a Difference in Bexar County

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW . . .

- The West Nile Virus can infect humans, birds, mosquitoes, horses, and some other animals.
- Symptoms of severe infection include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis.
- Fewer than one percent of those bitten by infected mosquitoes become severely ill.

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West Nile Virus — Protect Your Family

According to the Texas Department of State Health Services as of October 15, 2012, throughout Texas there has been a total of 1,634 West Nile cases in humans; 74 have resulted in death. In Bexar County, there has been a total of 19 West Nile cases in humans with 1 resulting in death.

To educate residents on this disease and how it is spread, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Bexar County presented five educational programs during August and September.

More than 721 Bexar County residents in total attended these programs, all of which were presented by Molly Keck, AgriLife Extension board certified entomologist and Integrated Pest Management Program Specialist.

“Instances of West Nile are on the increase in Bexar County, and it is important that residents learn more about how the disease is spread so they may better protect themselves and their families,” Keck said. “There was also some misinformation out there about mosquitoes and the disease, so we felt we needed to address that as well.”

During the programs, Keck addressed mosquito biology, prevention and management, and presented essential information on the West Nile Virus and its mosquito vector, as well as how to protect against it.

Keck also posted additional information on her entomology blog, www.bexarento.blogspot.com.

For residents statewide, the Texas Extension Disaster Education Network (Texas EDEN) also made available a number of publications and materials on mosquitoes, mosquito control and the West Nile Virus on its website, <http://texashelp.org>.

Texas EDEN, part of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, is a collaborative educational network dedicated to informing Texas residents about disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.



Restaurateurs, Chefs Participate in Farm Tour

On Sept. 25, the AgriLife Extension office again teamed up with the Texas Department of Agriculture to present a day-long Chefs Farm Tour. The purpose of the tour was to introduce local restaurant



owners, managers, and chefs involved in food service to local agricultural producers and their products.

This was the eighth year the two agencies

joined forces to present the tour, which this year had 14 participants representing area restaurants, including Biga on the Banks and the restaurants of the Westin Riverwalk and Hyatt Hill Country resorts.

“This tour is important for our local farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers,” said Dr. Connie Sheppard, County Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences and a tour leader. “It gives them a chance to show their operations and gives restaurateurs and chefs a first-hand look at the type and quality of food products they provide.”

Sheppard added that buying local agricultural products also helped ensure maximum freshness and peak nutrient levels, while reducing the additional cost and carbon footprint of long-distance transportation.

The tour took participants to several farms and businesses throughout south Texas to see local agricultural products such as tilapia, cattle, goats, pecans, quail and poultry.

Home Food Preservation Making a Comeback

Dr. Connie Sheppard, County Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences, held three canning and food preservation workshops during late August and the first half of September. The workshops were attended by a total of 65 people.



“There’s a growing back-to-basics trend with consumers wanting to do more things themselves and to reconnect with nature and simpler times,”

Sheppard said. “In particular, there’s an increasing interest in canning and food

preservation because people are more concerned about what they’re eating and want to be sure their food is fresh and safe.”

Sheppard’s canning and food preservation workshops incorporate hands-on demonstrations and in-depth instruction on safe food preparation and equipment set-up for proper preservation.

Check out the new webpage:
<http://backyardbasics.tamu.edu>

- Food preservation
- Home gardening
- Raising poultry in your backyard
- Outdoor cooking
- Constructing a home rain barrel

Fall School Garden Teacher Training

The Fall School Garden Teacher Training, held on Sept. 15, provided instruction to more than 70 kindergarten through high-school level teachers throughout the county.

“The purpose of the training was to show teachers the



educational possibilities of a youth garden at their school and how to either begin or maintain a school garden,” said Natalie Cervantes, Youth Gardens Coordinator.

Cervantes said teachers enjoy incorporating lessons on math, science, and horticulture into youth gardening projects, and students learn life skills like teamwork and responsibility in addition to classroom subjects.

About 80 Bexar County schools are currently involved in the Youth Gardens Program which reaches more than 5,300 students, ages 5 to 18, throughout the county.

4-H₂O Water Camp

Did you know it takes 2.6 gallons of water to make a single sheet of paper, 16.5 gallons to produce one 12 oz. can of soda and 1,800 gallons to manufacture one pair of blue jeans? These were some of the facts 23 youths, ages 7 – 13, learned about water during the AgriLife Extension’s 4-H₂O Water Camp held July 31-Aug. 2.

Camp attendees were taught about the water cycle, water pollution, water conservation, aquatic insects, watershed management, and more through field trips and classroom instruction.

“We wanted to show the young people just how vital a natural resource water is and for them to be amazed at how much water we use — both directly and

indirectly — and apply that knowledge in their everyday lives,” said Marti Mardis, Extension Program Assistant for the 4-H₂O Program. “The youth also learned basic steps to conserve water and to remind their parents to do the same.”

Camp activities included a trip to the San Antonio Water System to see how water travels from the aquifer to the home, then is treated and returned to SAWS for further use.



Meet the Staff: Natalie Cervantes



Natalie Cervantes is the Youth Gardens Coordinator for Bexar County. Cervantes has a bachelor’s of science degree in entomology from Texas A&M University, and is an experienced graphic designer. Natalie has worked with USDA-APHIS as an entomological survey technician and with AgriLife Extension in Bexar County as a Research Assistant for the Camp Bullis Fire Ant Project. In her current role, Cervantes works with county youth on programs related to gardening and horticulture and water conservation, as well as programs that supplement and enrich classroom science objectives.

A Message from the County Extension Director

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In 1862, President Lincoln signed into law the Morrill Act, which made possible the creation of land-grant universities and, subsequently, their educational outreach to those with little or no access to formal university instruction. Today, the mission of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is the same as it has always been — to provide proven, practical, high-quality information, instruction and technical assistance to residents of Texas for making their lives better, healthier and more productive. As demographics and technology have changed, so has our educational outreach. However, the need for practical, helpful knowledge to keep up with life's challenges — be they in a rural or urban environment — has continued to grow, making AgriLife Extension as relevant today as it was 150 years ago.



Calendar of Events

November 2012

- 1 4-H Entomology Training
- 3 Bexar County 4-H Food Show & Food Challenge
- 5 Backyard Basics — Growing Berries & More
- 6 4-H Vet Science Project Training
- 8 Major 4-H Stock Shoe Entry Workshop
- 8-10 San Antonio International Farm & Ranch Show
- 9 "Train the Trainer" Wellness Event
- 10 Pre-Service Training for Childcare Providers
- 13-15 Kids, Kows, & More
- 14 Backyard Basics — Keeping Your Hens Healthy & Happy (Intermediate Level)
- 17 Children's Garden Vegetable Show
Bexar County 4-H Horse Show
- 20 Feral Hog Community of Practice
- 28 Peterson's Poinsettias Tour
- 29 International Spinach Conference

December 2012

- 4 Backyard Basics — Growing Herbs As Easy As 1-2-3
- 5 Last Minute Gifts from the Kitchen
- 6 Licensed Private Applicator Training & Testing
- 8 Rain Barrel Workshop
- 14 Structural CEU Courses for Pest Control Operators
- 18 Feral Hog Community of Practice

For more information about these and other events, please call 210-467-6575 or visit our website: <http://bexar-tx.tamu.edu>.

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Cooperative Extension Program

CONTACT US

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Bexar County Office
3355 Cherry Ridge St., Suite 212
San Antonio, TX 78230
TEL: 210-467-6575
FAX: 210-930-1753

E-mail: bexar-tx@tamu.edu
Web: <http://bexar-tx.tamu.edu>

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