

**WHAT YOU
 NEED TO
 KNOW . . .**

- Of the 78 million gardening households that have a lawn, garden or grow plants in containers, more than half (54%) grew vegetables in 2013.¹
- 1 in 5 U.S. households can their own food, and many of those households can vegetables.²
- Residents in San Antonio can have up to three domestic fowl in the yard.³

¹ 2013 October Gardening Trends Research Report, Garden Writers Association Foundation

² www.foodsafety.gov. Home Canning: Keep Your Family Safe!

³ Regulating the Care and Control of Animals <http://www.sanantonio.gov/>

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Expo Gives Attendees a Taste of Self-Reliance

Over 400 people attended the Backyard Basics Expo held in September at the James Madison High School Agriscience Magnet Program facility in San Antonio.

The Expo, presented by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Public Radio, featured a sampling of educational classes related to the production, preparation, and preservation of homemade and homegrown foods. Two dozen educational sessions were presented by AgriLife Extension personnel from Bexar and surrounding counties.



“People are becoming more interested in knowing where their food comes from, and many are interested in producing and preparing their own to ensure the freshness and quality of the foods they serve to their family,” said Dr. Connie Sheppard, AgriLife Extension agent for family and consumer sciences for Bexar County. “This expo provided a good sampling of Backyard Basics programs so attendees could become aware of the initiative and see what interested them.”

Instruction and hands-on demonstrations included making soft cheeses; using herbs; pickling; making jerky and sausage; vegetable gardening; growing fruits; water-bath and pressure canning; composting; hydroponics; aquaponics; drip irrigation; rainwater harvesting; laying hens, rabbits and bees; and building a rain barrel, chicken coop and raised-bed garden.

Edwin Marty, Executive Director of E.A.T. — South, based in Montgomery, Alabama, and co-author of *Breaking through Concrete: Building an Urban Farm Revival*, was the Expo’s keynote speaker. Marty spoke about “urban farming” and its positive effect on revitalizing communities.

“I brought both my father and my son, Chris, to participate in the Expo. I wanted Chris to attend so we could both get to know something about how to grow our own food. I grew up in Iowa; some of my early memories were of my family’s farm, which was sold before we came to Texas.”

Amanda Fernandez
 Expo Participant

For information on Backyard Basics programs, go to <http://backyardbasics.tamu.edu>.

Beekeeping —A \$15-\$20 Billion Economic Value

While commercial beekeeping is estimated to add from \$15 to \$20 billion in economic value to agriculture each year, the total number of managed honey bee colonies has decreased from 5 million in the 1940s to only 2.5 million today. If losses continue at the current level, the cost of honey bee pollination services would rise and increased costs would be

passed in higher food prices.

To increase awareness of the agricultural importance of honey bees and encourage the establishment of

managed beehives, Molly Keck, AgriLife

Extension Program Specialist-Integrated Pest Management, has developed a Beekeeping Basics Program. In 2013, this program, presented in cooperation with Bexar County Master Gardeners and local Texas beekeepers, reached 176 individuals.

“The course covered the basics of bees and beekeeping, including biology, laws and regulations, and diseases and viruses affecting bees,” said Keck.

According to Keck, it costs about \$1,000 to set up the first beehive, including cost of the hive, bees and the necessary clothing, tools and bee medications, and feed.

Program surveys show that 45 of the participants have now established honeybee hives and 72 percent anticipate starting their own beehive in 2014.



‘Boot Camp’ for Aspiring Agribusiness Owners

A recent workshop for military veterans, sponsored by the Texas AgrAbility program and USDA Risk Management, was attended by 11 people. It provided veterans with in-depth training into the operations, marketing, and financial aspects of a business.

Program presenter Greg Clary, Executive Director for the Texas Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, provided participants with information and direction on how to develop a business plan.

Participants’ agribusiness interests included cow/calf operations, hay baling and developing a hay feeder for

cattle, raising goats for meat, aquaponics, and urban farming.

“The program was very beneficial for getting started in a business,” said Carl Clifton, Army (Ret.), who wants to start an herb and vegetable “growing box” company. “I got some really good information, tools, and insights into what I would need.”

Assisting veterans and wounded warriors is a focus of Texas AgrAbility, an AgriLife Extension program which provides services to producers to remain independent in spite of a disability or chronic health condition, according to AgrAbility Project Director Rick Peterson.

“I applaud the Texas AgrAbility program for empowering our nation’s heroes to choose agriculture as a way of life and as an economic pursuit. In the Legislature, we constantly seek ways to help our disabled veterans achieve economic security. The skills taught by AgrAbility translate that goal into reality.”

State Senator Leticia Van de Putte
Chair, Veteran Affairs & Military
Installations Committee

For Upcoming 2014 Workshops

<http://txagrability.tamu.edu>

The 'Sole' of Christmas Giving

Elementary, middle, and high school students from Title 1 schools in the Edgewood Independent School District received an early Christmas present, thanks to the Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension Program, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and Edgewood ISD.

Fifty-six pairs of new tennis shoes, donated by AgriLife Extension, Prairie View A&M College of Agriculture and Human Sciences, the Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension Program 4-H and Youth Development advisory committee, Bexar County Master Gardeners and area 4-H clubs, were distributed to students from the Edgewood ISD on Dec. 19. More than 200 students and family members assembled for the free shoe giveaway. Many gift cards for purchasing new shoes were also donated by the Edgewood District Alumni Association and the Compadres for Scholarships program.

"Many students in the Edgewood ISD are in need of new shoes and these donated tennis shoes will be a useful and practical early Christmas gift for those students," said Desiree Rucker, Prairie



View A&M Cooperative Extension Program 4-H and youth development agent for Bexar County. "Extension promotes physical activity as a means of improving health and well-being, so providing tennis shoes was a true 'rubber meets the road' incentive for getting more young people to exercise."

Dinner Tonight! Healthy Cooking School A Huge Success

As part of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's statewide effort to promote at-home family dining, a Dinner Tonight! Healthy Cooking School was held in September with over 200 people attending. The program focused on menu planning, as well as how to prepare quick, easy, and nutritious recipes for family mealtime.

Celebrity chefs Susan Johnson of Don Strange Ranch and Richard Ojeda of Black Tie Affairs Catering, Inc., demonstrated how to cook easy main dishes, and participants had a fun time tasting all the dishes.

Dinner Tonight! recipes are available free of charge through weekly video webcasts. Families can sign up to receive weekly emails announcing new recipes by calling 210/467-6575 or emailing Dr. Connie Sheppard at c-sheppard@tamu.edu. There are currently more than 200 video webcasts of easy-to-prepare, nutritious recipes available at <http://healthyliving.tamu.edu> under the Dinner Tonight! tab.

The school was presented by AgriLife Extension, Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension Program, and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program.

Meet the Staff: Jared Beaver



Jared Beaver began October 1, 2013, in the newly-created position of Program Coordinator for Water and Natural Resources for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service of Bexar County. His position is a joint appointment of AgriLife Extension, Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources/Texas Water Research Institute and Bexar County.

Beaver attended Wake Forest University where he earned his bachelor's degree in biological sciences in 2008. He earned his master's degree in wildlife and fisheries sciences from the University of Tennessee in 2011. He is currently pursuing his doctorate at Texas

A&M University in College Station. A critical function of this position is to work with partners, such as the San Antonio Water System and San Antonio River Authority, in collectively promoting urban water conservation efforts.

A Message from the County Extension Director

This year marks the 100-year anniversary of the signing of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, which officially created the national Cooperative Extension System of land-grant colleges throughout the U.S. When land-grant colleges opened their doors, they revolutionized higher education in America, making it possible for average citizens to get a practical education that would help them improve their lives and livelihoods. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service continues to carry out the land-grant university mission of teaching, research, Extension and service for residents of Texas, bringing practical, objective, research-based knowledge to Texans through programs and activities that protect our environment, enrich our youth, grow our economy and improve our health. While Extension's methods have become more advanced, the basic principle is the same as it was a century ago—to educate and enlighten Texans.

- Lupe Landeros

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

Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY

- 1,8,15,22 4-H Public Speaking Workshop
- 6-23 San Antonio Livestock Show & Rodeo
- 11 Vet Science Training
- 15 Growing a Successful Spring Vegetable Garden Program
- 16 4-H Texas Tea Program—Girl Scouts of Southwest
4-H Entomology Team Practice
- 18 It's All About Satsuma Mandarin Oranges Workshop
- 21 Health & Wellness Train-the-Trainer Workshop
- 22 Growing a Successful Spring Vegetable Garden—The Garden
Spring Youth Gardens Educators Training—Region 20
- 24 Insect EXPO, Southwestern Branch Entomological Society of America
- 28 Health & Wellness Train-the-Trainer Workshop

MARCH

- 2 4-H Entomology Team Practice
- 13 4-H Consumer Decision Making Workshop
- 17 Take a Stand Program
- 18 Let's Get Ready for Spring Vegetable Gardening Workshop
- 21-22 Beekeeping Basics Workshop & Field Trip
- 23 4-H Entomology Collection Contest
- 25 Leadership Advisory Board Meeting
- 30 4-H Entomology Team Practice

**TEXAS A&M
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 **PRAIRIE VIEW
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