Loudoun Extension Series: Gardening & Agriculture

Loudoun County Public Library

Children

|

Tweens (10-12)

|

Teens

|

Young Adult

|

Adults

|

Intergenerational

Loudoun Extension Series: Gardening & Agriculture

Sep 6, 2018

Free

Byline
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Loudoun County Public Library (LCPL)’s programming partnership with the Loudoun Office of the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) has thrived for years. The partnership grew out of a very successful collaboration with the Loudoun Master Gardeners, a subset of the VCE Agriculture and Natural Resources Division.

In 2018, LCPL worked closely with VCE to provide an even greater diversity of horticultural, environmental and agriculture-based programs to county residents. These new programs have been marketed to residents in the suburban portion of the county, providing an opportunity for VCE to expand awareness of their portfolio of services countywide, while providing patrons access to highly trained professionals in their field.

Advanced Planning

Successful partnerships between branch staff and Loudoun Master Gardeners have existed for years prior to the 2018 expansion of programs with VCE.

Several months prior to hosting new VCE programs, the Loudoun Extension Agent, the Loudoun VCE Horticulturalist, and the LCPL Division Manager for Programming & Community Engagement met and agreed to program goals. These goals included expanding knowledge of VCE services across the entire county, expanding the

perception of what VCE is and who it serves, and providing residents with trained experts for the agriculture-focused topics offered.

Following the goals meeting, a slate of potential programs was provided to library branch staff, who selected topics most of interest to their patrons, and a program schedule leading out several months was then developed. Topics to be offered included:

- Mom Said No Cows, What About Goats?
- Food Safety for Backyard Chickens
- Healthy Soil, Cleaner Water
- Woods in Your Backyard

At the same time, very successful programs led by Master Gardeners (volunteers who have undergone a substantial training program with VCE) continued throughout the year at LCPL. Recent topics have included:

- Monet's Garden at Giverny, France
- Starting a Spring Vegetable Garden
- Choosing the Right Trees and Shrubs
- In Search of Native Orchids
- Dig it! Gardening Fun for Kids

Marketing

Programs were promoted via LCPL's typical marketing efforts, including:

- Custom-made fliers distributed inside libraries and to VCE and community groups
- Digital displays shown in library branches
- Large posters
- Social media postings from the library that were shared with Facebook groups related to the program topics
- Book displays within branches
- Emails to both library card holders and past participants of related programs

Budgeting

All Loudoun Office of Virginia Cooperative Extension programs with the library are provided free of charge to patrons.

At times, VCE has provided small prizes during their programs, and the LCPL has provided refreshments. In the case of a day-long program where VCE would normally charge a fee to attend, LCPL absorbed the costs of providing lunch to attendees and VCE absorbed the costs of providing written materials and references so that the program could still be provided free to charge.

Day-of-event Activity

VCE/Master Gardener programs are generally low in day-of-event requirements. Presenters provide their own materials and presentations, and usually only require limited AV assistance. Room set-ups are also very standard, so that one library staff person is all that is needed to ensure the program runs successfully.

Program Execution

Programs offered through this important partnership have all been successful.

Master Gardener programs are considered a consistently successful and popular offering within LCPL, attracting upwards of 25 attendees per program. As one patron recently noted, the Master Gardener program at our Rust Library branch "coupled striking visuals with lively commentary on where to find wild orchids in Virginia ... provided interesting facts ... [and] a detailed travelogue highlighting orchids, peak bloom times and rare species, in addition to nearby waterfalls, hot springs and great hikes."

Master Gardener programs for kids at our Sterling Library branch have also been successful. Sterling Adult Services Librarian Kelly Jeon remarked, "The first two years we offered the kids program we were at our old location, so we were able to have a 'growing garden' of sorts with container gardening, and the children really enjoyed being able to contribute to the growth of the 'garden' with basil, peppers, and tomatoes. Our first year at the new branch location brought a different sort of

learning experience but was just as successful because the Master Gardeners did a wonderful job of continuing to connect to kids."

New programs added in 2018 were also very popular. Each targeted a specific agricultural topic through presentations from both regional and state-level experts. The information in our "The Top Ten Reasons to Own Goats, and to NOT Own Goats," program, and on assessing the health of backyard chickens, seemed most popular in our county — where our land is roughly half rural and half suburban, and where educated professionals are looking to expand their knowledge and engagement with the rural community.

Library patron evaluations of programs have been very supportive of these and other Master Gardener/VCE topics. Individuals noted that the programs are "fabulous," "informative" and "awesome," and some programs have helped patrons decide whether to begin raising animals.

It was interesting to note that VCE programs draw attendees not only from areas across the county, but from other counties as well, demonstrating the specialized knowledge that VCE provides through their programs. Evaluations have also demonstrated the support for future topics for other agriculture-focused topics, including birding, pollinating plants, homesteading, horses and beekeeping.

Advice

Partnering with your local cooperative extension office is a win-win for both organizations! Virginia Cooperative Extension has the experts with specialized knowledge and training to provide programs that are both fun and practical, from starting your spring garden to ensuring the health of your backyard chickens. You don't have to own a large parcel of land or live in a rural community to benefit from their resources — give them a call!

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

Document

extensionseries_flyer.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

More Programs

Mar 17, 2018
+ |

Creating a Community Garden with Impact

Audiences:

May 21, 2015
Adults (21 and up)+ | $$$
Image



Get Started Gardening at Your Library

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
Dec 22, 2017
Children (9 and under)+ | $$
Image



Mechanicville Farmers Market & Garden

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational