

**2011**

# Environmental and Alternative Crop Horticulture



*Horticulture: A part of Nebraska's economic structure...*

**H**orticulture plays a part in Nebraska's economic structure, through commercial production of fruit and vegetable crops, landscape and floriculture plants, and commercial horticulture professionals, such as arborists, landscapers and lawn care companies. Whether the question is the best herbicide to control broadleaf weeds in a four-week old sod planting, or how to manage Fusarium wilt in a 40-acre watermelon field, each group has unique educational needs and relies on research-based information available from their local UNL Extension office.

*"Making us aware of food safety issues. Excellent resources for preparing a comprehensive farm food safety plan."*

- 2011 GAPs training participant

Crop	Number of Farms		Sales	
	2007	2002	2007	2002
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes	344	261	\$63,840,000	\$58,337,000
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod	371	355	\$41,215,000	\$34,259,000
Fruits, tree nuts, and berries	253	158	\$2,594,000	\$1,375,000
Cut Christmas trees and short rotation woody crops	71	84	\$ 592,000	\$ 797,000

*2002, 2007 USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service Reports*

*In 2011, 133 fruit and vegetable growers statewide increased their knowledge of good agricultural practices and used these practices in their production operations enabling them to maintain or improve produce safety by preventing contamination with microbial pathogens.*



By using better landscape design and management practices, green space managers reduced pesticide and fertilizer inputs and used less labor while improving Nebraska landscapes, protecting both human health and the natural environment.

## The use of environmental and economically sustainable green space practices have increased

“The one thing I remember is being prepared for scale on euonymus. Used dormant oil spray at correct time...*not too soon or too late.*”

**The use of environmental and economically sustainable greenspace practices have increased** as a result of Extension programs teaching best management practices to over 1400 green industry professionals statewide.

- **Nebraska Green Expo**
- **Turfgrass Field Day**
- **Commercial Landscape Management Clinics**
- **Plant & Pest Diagnostic Clinic**
- **Private consultations**

Through the Hort Update newsletter, green industry professionals make changes to their landscape management practices, including seasonal insect and disease control, so that natural resources are protected from fertilizer and pesticide runoff. The newsletter is delivered twice monthly from April through September, and monthly during the winter, to a listserv of 948 subscribers.



*An evaluation of readers of the Horticulture Update newsletter (n=51) was completed this summer. Respondents included professionals in nursery/garden center; lawn & landscape maintenance; landscape design & installation; greenhouse, field ornamental, sod, tree, shrub, and vegetable growers; and horticulture education.*

- 71% of green industry professionals indicate that timely problem identification was the greatest benefit they derived from Hort Update newsletters. One reader comments, “The one thing I remember is being prepared for scale on euonymus. Used dormant oil spray at correct time...*not too soon or too late.*”
- 86% increased their use of lawn & landscape best management practices that improved overall plant health, such as better watering and mulching of new trees.
- 65% expanded their use of integrated pest management techniques, such as better timing of pre-emergent herbicide applications.

**R**esource efficient landscape practices are being used as a result of Backyard Farmer reaching over 21,000 households per week. This popular television program is a joint effort by UNL Extension and NET television, celebrating it's 60<sup>th</sup> year on the air in 2012.

It has become a very popular destination on YouTube with over 650,000 views of BYF educational videos since 2007.

Backyard Farmer was consistently in the top ten podcasts viewed in the iTunes U science category, and was frequently the most downloaded program in that category.

It was featured numerous times on the front page of the Apple store as "new and noteworthy."

- **Celebrating 60 years in 2012**
- **650,000 YouTube Views**
- **"New and Noteworthy" - Apple Store**
- **Top Ten Podcasts viewed in iTunes U science category**
- **Most downloaded program in iTunes U science category**



In the southeast district, 349 Master Gardener volunteers extended the reach of UNL Extension, reaching over 32, 272 people in 2011



"The public value of environmental horticulture programming includes protecting human health by minimizing pesticide applications, reducing landscape water usage, utilizing landscape waste instead of sending it to a landfill, and creating healthy, long-lived green spaces with all of the human benefits they provide."

**The Backyard Farmer is produced by NET.  
Agronomy Horticulture Department leads the effort.  
The program reaches over 21,000 households per week.**

**The Backyard Farmer website is a central location for all horticulture-related Extension information:**

**<http://byf.unl.edu>**



# Acreege Programming

Strong growth of acreage developments in the urban/rural interface areas of Nebraska's expanding population centers is producing an ever-growing audience interested in a wide range of issues associated with "rural" living, including traditional home, family and nutrition topics, windbreak establishment, landscape & pasture management, wildlife habitat, wildlife damage control,

**The goal of the acreage team is to help acreage owners increase their knowledge of the rural environment, enabling them to make more environmentally sensitive decisions.**

**A**creage properties are better managed and natural resources protected through use of the Acreage Insights website, <http://acreage.unl.edu>, with timely email information received by a listserv of over 1300 acreage owners, and an average of 3,350 page views per week in 2011.

An evaluation of web users (n=68) was completed this summer.

- 87% either adopted new acreage management practices that better protect the environment, such as refining their pesticide usage to minimize chemical applications, or continued to use good acreage management practices that were reinforced through the newsletter and web site.
- 82% adopted new practices that saved them money, such as reducing the use of their sprinkler system and allowing grass to go dormant decreasing their water bill, or continued to use good acreage management practices that were reinforced through the newsletter and web site. One acreage owner comments, *"By learning to rotate pasture use I have saved money on reseeding, herbicides and fertilizers. Managing our pasture space effectively... results in soil conservation."*

The public value of acreage programming includes protecting surface and ground water quality by preventing soil erosion and minimizing pesticide applications, protecting human health through proper maintenance of private wells and septic systems, reducing energy requirements for heating and cooling, conserving diversity of native plants, insects and wildlife."

## Contact Information:

Sarah Browning, Extension Educator—Horticulture  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln  
Email: [sbrowning2@unl.edu](mailto:sbrowning2@unl.edu)  
Phone: 1-402-441-7180

