

College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources

EXTENSION ²⁰²³



Answers You Can Trust.

UConn | EXTENSION



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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At the University of Connecticut, we are proud to be among the nation's 100-plus land-grant colleges and universities. In addition to the cutting-edge research conducted by our faculty and the transformative education provided to our students, this designation means we have another pivotal mission – extension engagement. Through UConn Extension's open and inclusive programs, Connecticut residents of all ages from all communities benefit from the state's flagship university. From

rural farms to urban centers, UConn Extension delivers learning opportunities that address public needs, transfer knowledge, and improve lives.

No matter which of Connecticut's 169 towns and cities you call home, UConn Extension educators and volunteers will be there to provide invaluable educational opportunities, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to evolving alongside the people and communities we serve.



Amy Harder, Associate Dean for Extension

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Associate Dean Amy Harder

UConn Extension is everywhere: in libraries, public gardens, farms, schools, greenhouses, community centers, and nine Extension Centers located throughout the state. It's never hard to connect with your local UConn Extension professionals. We help Connecticut's communities improve their health and wellness, natural resource conservation, affordable and safe food systems, agricultural sustainability, recovery from natural disasters,

and positive youth development. Our commitment is to engage every day with you in the places you live, work, and play. In this issue of Highlights, we share some of the ways we have been hard at work over the past year doing our part to make Connecticut better. We extend our gratitude to so many of you who support us as volunteers, as advocates, and as donors. Together, we anticipate another year of continued success.

BY THE NUMBERS

EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS

Our award-winning professionals have years of experience working to solve problems and enhance the wellbeing of our state residents (and beyond) where they live, work, and learn. We engage directly with communities, families, and businesses on food and nutrition, agriculture, business development, recreation and climate change initiatives as we co-create solutions which meet their needs.

139 PUBLICATIONS (JOURNAL ARTICLES, BULLETINS, FACT SHEETS)

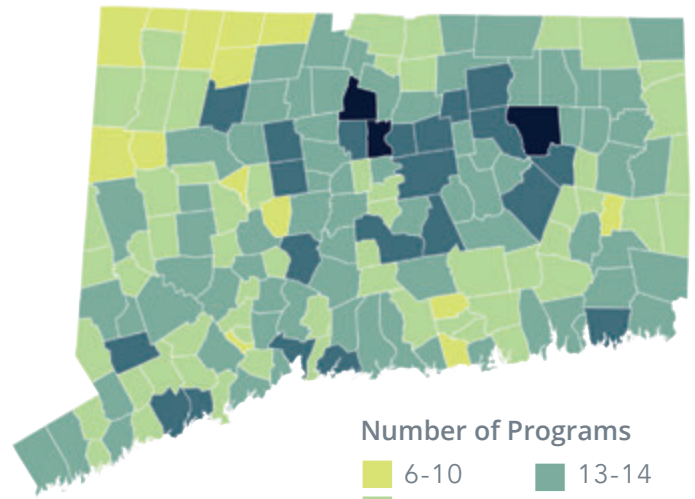
32 AWARDS & HONORS RECEIVED (STATE, NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL)



427

ACTIVE EXTENSION PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT CONNECTICUT

ACTIVE PROGRAMS

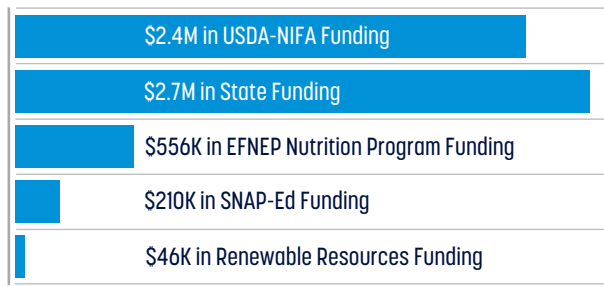


Number of Programs

- 6-10
- 11-12
- 13-14
- 15-16
- 17-22

EXTENSION FUNDING

UConn Extension leverages federal and state funding to serve our statewide communities.



\$24.4M

IN ACTIVE GRANTS AND CONTRACTS



288,832

EDUCATIONAL CONTACTS IN 427
EXTENSION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



18,974

HOURS OF
INSTRUCTION



54

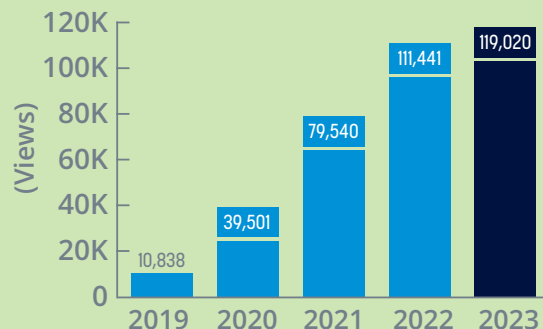
SERVICES TO
AGENCIES &
INSTITUTIONS



1,875

ONLINE COURSE/
CERTIFICATE
PARTICIPANTS

EXTENSION VIDEOS VIEWED ONLINE



VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers share their knowledge and experience through Extension and expand our capacity to deliver programs in every city and town in Connecticut.

While some of our volunteers have worked with our programs for years or decades, we also offer short-term volunteer opportunities that augment the work Extension does.

\$5.4M



VALUE OF 172,374
VOLUNTEER HOURS

172,374 TOTAL NUMBER IN
VOLUNTEER HOURS

5,531 VOLUNTEERS ACROSS
ALL PROGRAMS

4,415 4-H VOLUNTEERS

702 MASTER GARDENER
VOLUNTEERS



PROFILE: ZUZANNA ROGOWSKI

“It was the opportunity of a lifetime and showed me that my career path is one I will enjoy.”

UConn 4-H

Exploring Agricultural Biotech Careers

A decision to join an agriculture and biotechnology program offered by UConn 4-H became a catalyst for Zuzanna Rogowski, opening the door to new opportunities and potential careers. It all started when the Middletown High School junior learned about the 4-H program through her high school's agriscience program. "I was convinced that I wanted to go into biotech and medical school," Rogowski says. "When I found out about the 4-H agricultural biotech program, I thought it was a good way to determine if it would be a good career for me."

Now, she says she feels she has more options and is also considering teaching the biotech class for a high school agriscience program as her future career. Jen Cushman, associate extension educator and state 4-H program leader, created the new initiative, Advancing 4-H Youth Careers in Food and Agriculture via Biotechnology and STEM, with team members from UConn and New Mexico State University. Youth join agricultural biotechnology clubs that offer experiential learning. A biotechnology instructor leads the clubs and coordinates presentations



Rogowski (center) at the Ignite conference. (Contributed photos)


from scientists, field trips to UConn laboratories, and content creation for developing a biotechnology game.

"The program helps youth build knowledge and career awareness as they learn about how biotechnology supports crops through climate resilience, gene editing technology, and basic lab techniques," says Cushman. "Youth members discuss and learn about the evolving field of agricultural biotechnology and what scientists worldwide are studying."

The program is built on the 4-H fundamentals of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. "I've learned about the opportunities I have and what I can do in the future," Rogowski says. "We spoke to UConn professors and met students. The connections the club has to the different workforce areas are my favorite part. The presentations from professionals showed how many options there are."

Rogowski gained leadership and experiential learning opportunities through UConn 4-H. She presented her ideas to the teams from New Mexico State University and UConn in March 2023 and continues her program involvement. She also received a scholarship from the 4-H biotechnology and agriculture program to attend Ignite by 4-H, a national conference in Washington D.C. in March of 2023.

The first cohort of youth in the agricultural biotechnology clubs are entering their second year in the program. Youth interested in joining the biotech clubs or playing the game can visit s.uconn.edu/biotech.

Article by Stacey Stearns. Read the full article at s.uconn.edu/zuzanna. 

UConn Master Gardeners

Cultivating Education and Food Security

A dedicated group of Master Gardener volunteers is lovingly cultivating an organic Demonstration Vegetable Garden at the Fairfield County Extension Center in Bethel. It is a beautiful oasis teeming with butterflies and pollinators every summer as volunteers harvest vegetables and donate them to area food pantries. The bountiful harvests include fresh herbs and annual flowers. The Master Gardeners collaborate with Extension's food and nutrition programs to provide recipients with nutritious recipes in Spanish and English specific to the harvested produce. Among the area organizations who benefit from the annual donations are the Brookfield Food Pantry, Faith Food Pantry in Newtown, Daily Bread in Danbury, and the Bethel Food Pantry; rotating throughout the season to share the annual 1,000-pounds plus of bounty.

A group of Master Gardener interns started the 3,000 square foot garden in 2013 to assist food insecure clients, educate the public about Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques, and best garden practices. More Master Gardeners join the group each year and add to the garden's infrastructure. It now




has numerous raised beds, an irrigation system, tunnels to protect brassica crops from cabbageworms, and a blueberry enclosure to keep birds out.

Andrea Sarnik, an Advanced Master Gardener, began working in the garden in 2018 and joined Barbara Stauder as a project co-captain in 2020. Andrea explains, "The garden's primary mission is to serve as an educational tool. It does that in many ways. The garden itself is a showcase of varieties of vegetables, fruit, herbs, and flowers. We

receive many visitors on Saturdays when we open the garden during the Farmers' Market. Visitors get ideas on things they might try and answers to gardening questions from the Master Gardener volunteers. The garden is marked with signs identifying the crops, companion planting, and integrated pest management information."

A small rain garden display sits alongside the equipment shed and a rain barrel system catches water from its roof. A three-bin compost system is also nearby. Everyone benefits from this educational garden, and new interns join the group each year as they pursue their Master Gardener certification.

"Master Gardener interns obtain a broad array of information from the more senior Master Gardeners and even the seasoned gardeners continue to learn as they encounter issues and exchange information," Andrea adds. The enthusiastic group weighs their harvests and tracks their crops with spreadsheets, noting weather and pest issues. The garden's success and impact grows each season. 

Article by Sandi Wilson



BECOME A MASTER GARDENER

The UConn Extension Master Gardener Program is an educational outreach program started in 1978 and consists of horticulture training and an outreach component that focuses on the community at large. Master Gardeners are enthusiastic, willing to learn and share their knowledge and training with others. [Learn more at mastergardener.uconn.edu](https://mastergardener.uconn.edu).



NEW AND BEGINNING FARMERS

The Leaders of Color in Conservation (LOCC) training program is coordinated by UConn Extension and partners to help leaders with knowledge and resources to serve their communities. [Learn more at s.uconn.edu/leading.](https://s.uconn.edu/leading)

Production Agriculture

Supporting Connecticut Agriculture and Farmers

Connecticut agriculture is integral in providing products that offer food security and environmental benefits. UConn Extension offers in-person and virtual programs for vegetable, fruit, greenhouse, nursery and landscape, dairy, turfgrass, livestock, aquaculture, and specialty crops, among others. We develop programming and resources based on needs assessments from the respective groups. Here are a few examples of that work.

Many farmers had climate-related challenges in 2023. A deep freeze in February and late May frost damaged fruit and other crops statewide, causing \$8.4 million in losses. Evan Lentz, extension educator in fruit crops, worked with the Connecticut Commissioner of Agriculture Bryan Hurlburt on an agricultural disaster declaration at the end of May to open the availability of low-interest U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency emergency loans for eligible producers.

Vegetable producers were particularly hard hit by flooding in July with an estimated \$21 million in damage and lost crops. Shuresh Ghimire, extension educator in vegetable crops, noted that the extreme weather timing was



Yoko and Alex of Assawaga Farm in Putnam participate in various Extension programs.

especially detrimental, and is working with farmers to prevent and mitigate future losses. "As weather-related disasters are increasingly impacting farmers lately, more have adopted climate-adaptation strategies to minimize the negative impact," he says. For example, his work with plastic mulch and raised beds is helping moderate soil moisture and avoid water-logging conditions in the root zone.

Farmers of color often lack opportunities and face barriers to institutional knowledge typically available to white farmers. Approximately 96% of U.S. farmers are white. Therefore, new and beginning farmer support includes

the Leaders of Color in Conservation training program that provided professional development for people of color to serve as leaders in conservation for their communities. "Our overall goal was to support farmers of color in our state by connecting them with state and federal expertise and funding to help conserve their natural resources. To do this, we trained eight people of color to serve as front-line technical advisors who were then able to directly reach 14 historically underserved farmers," says Jiff Martin, extension educator in sustainable food systems.

Martin partnered with E&G Community Builders, led by Elizabeth Guerra and Héctor "Freedom" Gerardo, to co-lead the Leaders of Color in Conservation grant from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Innovation Grants Program. Many of the participants were also farmers themselves.

Extension programs continue strengthening and supporting agriculture and farmers in Connecticut. Efforts are ongoing as we work collaboratively with farmers to ensure a vibrant and sustainable agricultural industry and food supply for consumers. 

Extension Around the State

Supporting Our Infrastructure

UConn Extension is part of the nationwide Cooperative Extension System that connects the public with the research and resources of land-grant universities. We are comprised of faculty and staff with Extension appointments across the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources' (CAHNR) nine departments.

Extension's local presence is led by the Department of Extension, which works collaboratively with other departments in CAHNR to deliver programs and research statewide. Extension educators within the Department of Extension are based at eight Extension Centers located throughout the state and at UConn Avery Point (home to Connecticut Sea Grant). The administrative offices for UConn Extension and the Department of Extension are at the Storrs campus. In addition, Extension programs are held at the Bartlett Arboretum in Stamford and the 4-H Education Center at Auerfarm in Bloomfield.

These statewide locations offer residents, municipalities, organizations, and businesses nearby access to the university and its resources. UConn Extension offers place-based solutions and each



of the eight centers houses 4-H youth development and Master Gardener offices. Other programs are also based in each location, for example, the Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) works with municipalities statewide and is based at the Middlesex County Extension Center in Haddam.

Highlighting Our Middlesex Office

Our community-based locations help us identify and address critical issues facing residents, businesses, and municipalities. For example, the Land Use Academy, one of CLEAR's programs, is in the Middlesex office and provides practical education for local land use decision makers in

Connecticut. The program focuses on the fundamental knowledge and skills needed to serve effectively on a local land use commission. CLEAR partners with the Connecticut Bar Association and Connecticut Office of Policy and Management on this initiative.

Connecticut's bounty of natural and physical amenities—greenways, multi-use paths, parks, and forested areas are some of the state's greatest assets for encouraging physical activity. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) estimates that there are over 2,000 miles of multi-use trails within the Connecticut State Parks and Forests alone, and over 3,000 miles including those not in their system. The Connecticut Trail Census, the Connecticut Trail Finder, and Active Living (PATHS) are three UConn Extension programs supporting the state's trail systems, and offices for these are also in Haddam.

UConn Extension is committed to our community-based locations because we live, work, and play here too, and is investing in our infrastructure and invite your support investing in our infrastructure while we continue building the future of Connecticut. 

Give Now at s.uconn.edu/communities



STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

Extension programs are available to all statewide audiences, regardless of their location. Our professionals work statewide to address critical issues identified by residents, municipalities, and businesses.

[Learn more at s.uconn.edu/extension.](https://s.uconn.edu/extension)

UConn Extension provides answers you can trust.

Imagine four different situations occurring on the same day. A community organization needs help empowering parents with leadership and personal development skills. An agricultural producer is facing extreme weather events and needs help minimizing crop loss. A municipality has competing land use demands and must make planning decisions. A group of youth are interested in robotics and need a supportive environment and mentor to develop their skills.

UConn Extension is developing tailored strategies with the impacted groups in each situation. We provide answers you can trust.

The Cooperative Extension System is a nationwide network, established in 1914, that provides non-credit learning to the public. Extension is part of the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources at UConn and shares scientific knowledge and information, working with audiences to address their needs and concerns.

UConn Extension positively impacts all 169 municipalities in Connecticut, with programs and services in each. Our network of professionals is further expanded by volunteers, partner organizations, and donors who support Extension's programs.

Your support helps us leverage federal and state funding to serve more residents, advance programs into new

communities, and help participants achieve better outcomes. We appreciate all our present and past donors who help make Extension successful.

All donations to our new fund, Reaching Communities with UConn Extension, directly increase our capacity to deliver high-quality programs. The additional financial support helps Extension professionals focus on teaching and implementing their programs.

Visit s.uconn.edu/communities to support Extension's statewide communities with programs related to health and wellness, agriculture, horticulture, natural resources, and positive youth development.

“

Thank you very much... thought the seminar was VERY helpful and answered several questions I had pertaining to site walk visits.”

Land Use Academy program participant



“Using all I’ve learned ... helps me to be healthier and it’s a great contribution to my everyday lifestyle” EFNEP participant

“Within 4-H, I have been able to grow into a version of myself where I can confidently take charge when needed and see myself as a leader, but at the same time I’ve developed my ability to work well with others in any situation.” Youth member

“I really enjoyed the hands-on diagnosis session. Seeing the same disease on different species is so helpful.”

Participant in a Greenhouse Integrated Pest Management workshop

“This partnership provides the support our agency needs to move in the direction of adequate planning and management of public recreational access balanced with natural resource protection.”

Kimberly Bradley (CT Trails and Greenways Coordinator) referring to the partnership between UConn Extension, CLEAR, and CT DEEP Trails and Greenways Program.



STATEWIDE OFFICES AND CENTERS

Extension, with its headquarters on the Storrs campus, has offices and centers throughout the state to better serve our communities.

UConn Storrs Campus

extension@uconn.edu
cahnr.uconn.edu/extension
860-486-3581

Soil Nutrient Analysis Lab

soiltest@uconn.edu
s.uconn.edu/soil
860-486-4274

Home and Garden Education Center

ladybug@uconn.edu
s.uconn.edu/homegarden
1-877-486-6271

Plant Diagnostic Lab

plant.lab.uconn.edu
860-486-6271

Connecticut Sea Grant

seagrant.uconn.edu
860-405-9127

UConn State 4-H Office

s.uconn.edu/4-H
1-888-FOURHCT

4-H Education Center at Auerfarm

auerfarm.org
860-242-7144

Lower Fairfield Master Gardeners at the Bartlett Arboretum

mastergardener@bartlettarboretum.org
203-322-6971

Fairfield County

fairfield@uconn.edu
203-207-8440

Hartford County

hartford@uconn.edu
860-409-9050

Litchfield County

litchfield@uconn.edu
860-626-6240

Middlesex County

middlesex@uconn.edu
860-345-4511

New Haven County

newhaven@uconn.edu
203-407-3161

New London County

newlondon@uconn.edu
860-887-1608

Tolland County

tolland@uconn.edu
860-875-3331

Windham County

windham@uconn.edu
860-774-9600

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For more information, visit us at

S.UCONN.EDU/EXTENSION

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