

Making A Difference

HARRIS COUNTY
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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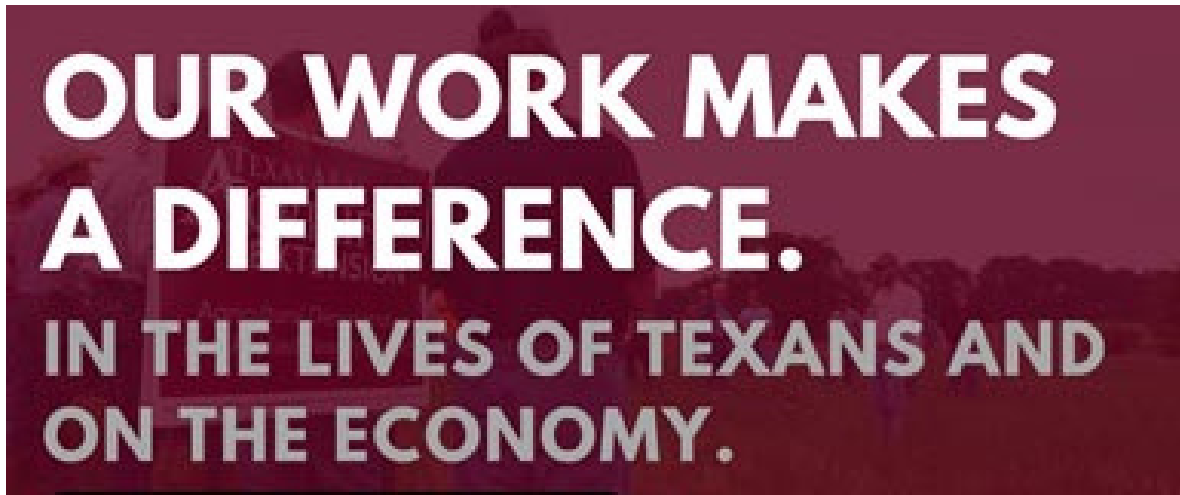
TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION





Extension Education in Harris County

Howdy and Welcome to Harris County!



MISSION STATEMENT:

“Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service works daily to make Texas better by providing innovative solutions at the intersection of agriculture, natural resources, youth, and health, thereby improving the well-being of individuals, families, businesses, and communities through education and service.”

VISION STATEMENT:

“Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will be the leader in providing science-based information and solutions in agriculture and health to every Texan.”

SHARED VALUES:

“We value People, Programs, and Partnerships.”

LET'S TALK:
A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Service - Harris County

It is my pleasure to share with you the third quarter edition of our Making a Difference magazine. It's always refreshing to reflect on our achievements in the past few months and make adjustments on how to further improve our future programs as an organization. COVID-19 has changed the way we deliver our services across our communities. It has been difficult in some ways and yet has allowed us to reach out to even more program partners to strengthen our outreach.

For example, we helped introduce youth and families to new healthy nutrition options and innovative STEM projects. We expanded our summer activities to a virtual platform to provide an experience for multiple sites, while delivering supplies and equipment to their facilities for them to participate.

On behalf of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service team, we thank you for your continued support of our educational programs as a volunteer, speaker, collaborator, and advocate. We hope you enjoy learning more about Extension programs and the great work led by our educators.

Respectfully,

David D. Wright
County Extension Director – Harris County
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

A background photograph showing a group of children sitting on a paved surface in a circle. They are engaged in a craft activity, possibly making small planters or containers. Some children are wearing face masks. In the background, there is a playground with blue and red equipment and trees.

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Harris County Youth



LEARN GROW EAT & GO!

by Jaden Kelly, Harris
County 4-H Imagine
Science Program
Coordinator

The Learn Grow Eat & Go! (LGE) program developed by the Texas Junior Master Gardener team combines the best of Extension education with fun activities to give young people an out-of-classroom experience where they learn by doing.

This summer, LGE was implemented at six Boys & Girls Clubs across Harris County with 373 students participating in the program. Students were able to explore plant science, horticulture, nutrition, and the importance of active living through hands-on learning practices. From food demos and fresh veggie tastings to establishing their own community garden, this research-based program allowed youth across Greater Houston to gain a greater understanding of gardening and their health.



Thanks to the hard work of Harris County 4-H, Better Living for Texans, Harris County Master Gardeners, and Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Houston, hundreds of youths in our area were able to benefit from this excellent program.

Harris County 4-H



Civic Adventure Day



BY ZACHARY GIBLIN, HARRIS COUNTY URBAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENT

Harris County 4-H began the 2021-22 4-H year with Club manager trainings, program trainings, and promoting 4-H to Precinct 4 residents at the Precinct 4 Civic Adventure Day! Thank you to Commissioner Cagle and Precinct 4 for having Harris County 4-H attend and speak with families on what 4-H has to offer. The 4-H Department spoke with families about our Robotics, Food and Nutrition, Livestock, Leadership, and Sewing programs that are offered through Harris County 4-H.



Public Speaking Camp

BY MISHA CHAKRABORTY, HARRIS COUNTY 4-H PROGRAM ASSISTANT

Thirty homeschool and public school students (grades 4 to 8) participated in Public Speaking Camp this August. They learned about public speaking and presentation skills. The camps received a lot of positive feedback from both parents and students.

Exchange of ideas is the backbone of any society.

Communication enables us to motivate, influence, and connect. Public speaking is the most intimidating area identified by the students. The 4-H curriculum was used to structure the content. We are grateful to Total Plant Management Group for sponsoring the prizes and awards for students. Students presented their work after completing a 6-hour session. The students are joining 4-H clubs. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Harris County 4-H and Youth Development Unit is excited to be able to offer this opportunity to the community.





BY STEVEN FREDERICK, HARRIS COUNTY 4-H PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

Harris County 4-H members have spent countless hours preparing for the State Fair of Texas Livestock Show in Dallas, Texas. The historic Fair runs from September 24th – October 17th.

Harris County 4-H is well represented with twenty-seven livestock families participating. We also have one junior/senior livestock judging team and one agricultural product identification team competing in the youth 4-H contest. We wish the best of luck to all of our 4-H families.



State Fair of Texas - Agricultural Product Identification Team

Heritage 4-H Members: Justin Reaves, Laura Reaves, Emma McMillian, Ryan Smee



State Fair of Texas - Agricultural Product Identification Team

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Humble 4-H Junior Livestock Judging Team took 8th place out of 80 teams at the State Fair of Texas, as well as 1st place in Swine. Team members include: Ashlyn Stadelbacher, Dawson Sherrouse, Kaylee Knowles, Reid Irmiter. Senior Livestock Individual - Spring Branch 4-H: Christian Cavazos

Harris County 4-H



Heart O' Texas Fair & Rodeo - Agricultural Product Identification Team

Highlands 4-H and Heritage 4-H Team Members: Jolene Beamer, Makenna Land, Ryan Smee, Brianna Sonnier

Family & Community Health



During the pandemic, many individuals have taken up gardening and are left not knowing what to do with their harvest. As part of the Harris County Lifescaping Series, Agent Davis worked with Meredith Cryer-Walker County FCH Agent, Flora Williams-Brazos County FCH Agent and Tonya Poncik- Lee County FCH Agent to offer a canning workshop.

Participants learned when to use the hot water bath method vs. the pressure canner. They enjoyed cutting onions, peppers, tomatoes all while meeting new friends and learning new skills. Everyone left with the homemade salsa and jalapeno jelly that was demonstrated during the day using the water bath method

CANNING WORKSHOP

by Sonja Davis,
Harris County Family &
Community Health Agent





WALK N TALK

by Better Living For Texans Agents Lora Jorgensen & Kristina Brown

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Harris County Better Living for Texans Agents Lora Jorgensen & Kristina Brown rolled out a fun physical activity series for seniors at the Carverdale Community Center of Houston in Summer, 2021. "Walk N Talk" is an 8-week long physical activity series for adults that focuses on how to build the habit of regular physical activity into your daily routine. Each 1-hour session highlighted a different type of physical activity, emphasizing the importance of strength, endurance, balance, and flexibility. During each session, participants engaged in a physical activity for approximately 20 minutes and received a short nutrition lesson emphasizing the importance of proper hydration. Example of the physical activities the group engaged in include breathing and stretching exercises, beach ball volleyball, resistance bands, and exercise bingo. There were approximately 25 attendees at each session, and a total of 17 graduates from the series.



Better Living for Texans programs are funded by the USDA's SNAP education and Food & Nutrition Service, and are designed to be delivered to SNAP-eligible audiences. BLT has great research-based programs on nutrition, physical activity and gardening! If you are interested in hosting a program at your site, please contact the Harris County AgriLife Extension office.



USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental
Nutrition Assistance Program — SNAP.

POPULAR DIETS FOR WEIGHT LOSS

by Amanda Krippel, Harris County
Family & Community Health Agent

The pandemic has sure had it's wealth of diets come and go but in Harris County at Glazier Senior Center 18 individuals attended "Popular Diets for Weight Loss " conducted by FCH Agent Amanda Krippel. This presentation focused on popular low-carb diets including Keto and Paleo and also The 4 WHAT'S (What's Allowed?, What's Not Allowed?, What does research say? and What should I do if I want to try this?). This presentation was to focus on and pay more attention to the types of carbohydrates in addition to the amount we consume. All participants went home with a better understanding of low-carb diets and resource information sheets to help them make carbohydrates choices at home.

KETO
PALEO
LOW
CARB



Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Convention

BY SHANNON DIETZ, HARRIS COUNTY AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES AGENT

Shannon Dietz, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Harris County Agent for Ag and Natural Resources, attended the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Convention in Fort Worth, Texas along with the National Cattleman's Beef Association meeting in Nashville, Tennessee this past summer. These two outstanding educational events provided an opportunity to meet representatives in various fields of the ag and cattle industries as well as gain valuable education on the changing agriculture industry.

While attending both events, Shannon met with industry leaders, agricultural sales representatives, educators, and ranchers to gain knowledge to bring back to the residents of Harris County.

One of the highlights was attending Cattleman's College classes. These classes focused on updated industry and market outlooks for cattle ranchers along with long range weather forecasts to help with planting schedules and how the weather around the world affects climate change and the weather patterns we experience here in SE Texas. Other classes focused on feeding and nutrition, carcass evaluation, consumer driven products and field and forage information.

The National Cattleman's Beef Association meeting will be held in Houston this coming year, February 1-3 at the George R Brown Convention Center. For more information, feel free to contact me and I will be glad to answer any questions you may have about this educational opportunity. Email Shannon.Dietz@ag.tamu.edu





Awards Won at Annual Meeting

BY SHANNON DIETZ, HARRIS COUNTY AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES AGENT

Harris County Ag & Natural Resources Agent, Shannon Dietz along with Harris County Horticulture Agent, Paul Winski, attended the Texas County Ag Agents Association Annual Meeting July 19-22, 2021. The meeting was held in San Antonio and in attendance were county agents from across the state of Texas along with administration from the state office in College Station and various regions. This annual professional development event focuses on education, research, and sharing ideas and programs that have become best practices for replication by county agents. During the three-day event, educational tours were held sharing information and research on urban horticulture practices, marine science and fisheries, cattle feed lot practices, and a tour of the King Ranch.

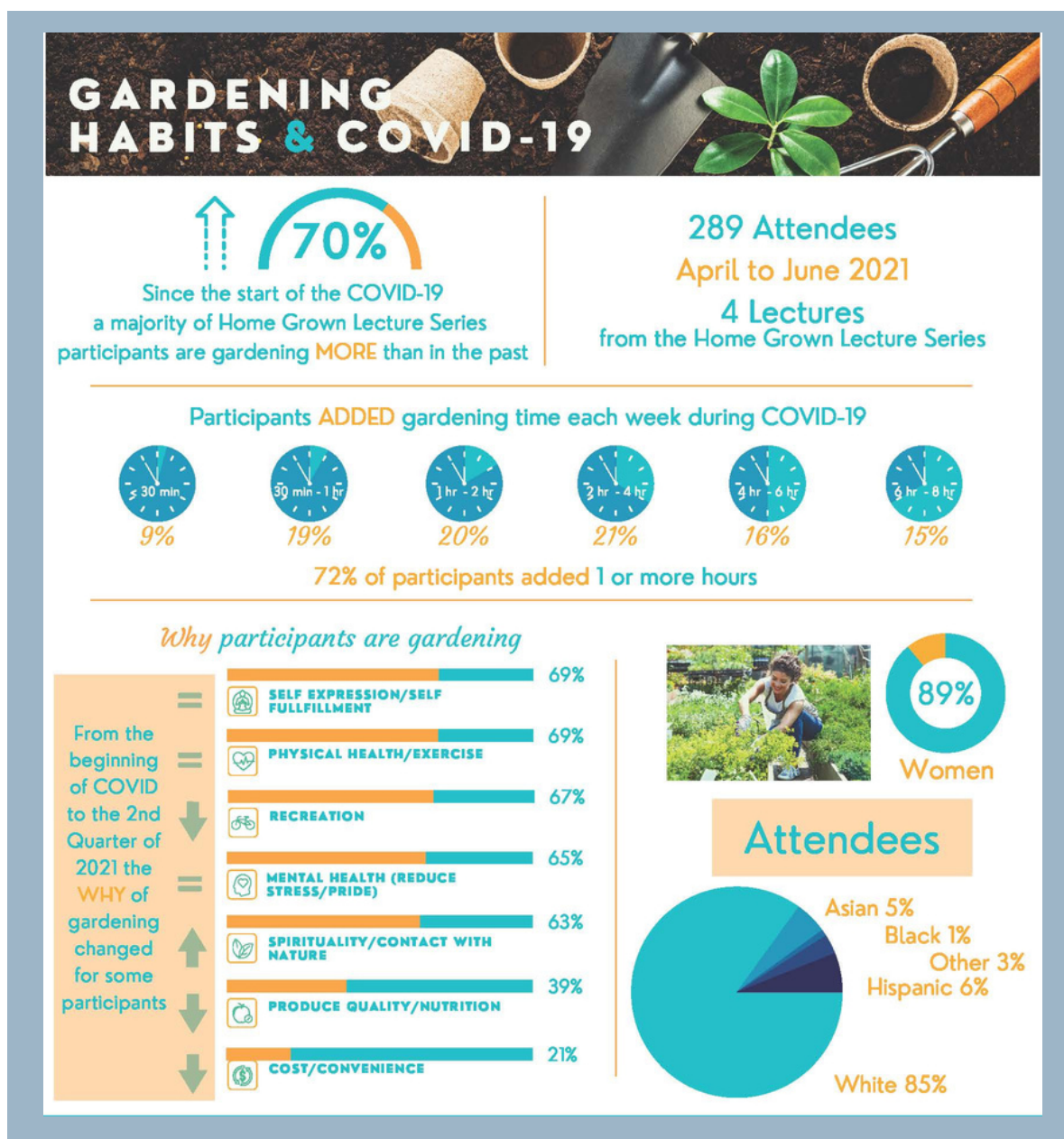
In addition, there were several opportunities for fellowship, networking, and great BBQ. Agents had the opportunity to participate in the live and silent auction benefiting scholarship funds for youth advancing their education in the field of agriculture. One of the highlights of the event is the awards banquet. This year, both Shannon Dietz and Paul Winski were recognized for their accomplishments on the state level. Paul Winski received the Outstanding Horticulture Agent for the State of Texas along with first place in several communication categories. Shannon Dietz received the early career achievement award. In the picture (left to right) are Paul Winski, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service - Harris County Director, David Wright and Shannon Dietz.

Changes in Gardening Habits During the COVID-19 Pandemic

by Paul Winski, Harris County Horticulture Agent

Many things have changed due to the pandemic, some for the good and others maybe not so good. But the time spent gardening has increased and is a positive outcome from this event. The ANR Unit initiated the Home Grown Series in May 2020 as a response to the work from home order and the stoppage in face-to-face educational programs. During that time, many of the greenhouse and nursery growers along with retail garden centers were reporting increased sales of green goods since people were working from home and spending more time gardening. Our team took this opportunity to determine how much time people were spending in their gardens and what was motivating them to garden.

The infographic covers the first 6 months of 2021 survey results from our participants. The key takeaway: 66% of the participants are gardening at least 1 hour more than in the past; and they are gardening for holistic reasons such as: recreation, physical health, and self-fulfillment. We will continue to survey our attendees through the end of 2021 to see if these trends continue.



HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS



Each grade planted a vegetable



Extension Master Gardeners Complete Gardening Grant at Local School

by Brandi Keller, Harris County Horticulture Agent

In August of 2021, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension – Harris County in conjunction with the Harris County Master Gardeners concluded a year-long U.S.D.A. grant project of \$4,000 at a Title 1 Elementary School in the Spring Branch ISD. Project G.R.E.E.N. (Growing Roots for Education, Environment and Nutrition) grants were established to support private and public schools in addressing food desert areas by improving or establishing gardens for seasonal fruits and vegetables.

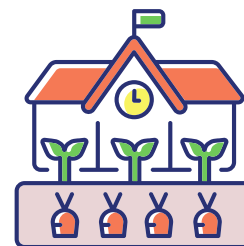
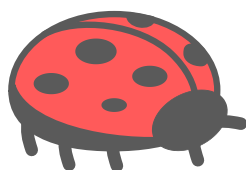
Three main objectives were completed. 1) A low-volume irrigation systems was installed to the 320 square feet of vegetable beds to conserve water, reduce maintenance, and serve as an example to students. 2) Students were provided a learning experience by planting, caring for, harvesting, and taking home vegetables. 3) Two large arbors were constructed and installed to improve pollinator habitat for the 684 square foot of raised beds.

Master Gardeners adapted to Covid-19 restrictions after the September 1st, 2020 grant start by supplying videos and educational material to the teachers for garden instruction. At the start of 2021, volunteers were allowed back into the garden for the first time that school year. Volunteers were able to assist students in planting for the spring, but shortly afterwards, prepped the garden for the February freeze. Luckily, preparations protected the five vegetable beds, but extensive cleanup was required to the rest of the pollinator gardens.

Many thanks to Master Gardener, Deb Stutsman, who led this project with an average of 8 volunteers (Master Gardeners and non-Master Gardeners) that totaled over 300 service hours.

Student Impact:

- 307 students from K-5th grade planted, maintained, and harvested spring vegetables.
- 219 pounds of green beans, carrots, onions, peppers, cherry tomatoes, and lettuce were shared between students and taken home to share with their families.
- All 432 students in the school (K-5th) watched a video prepared by a Master Gardener illustrating equipment, operation, and benefits of a low-volume irrigation system.
- 200 K-2nd students were shown a video on pollinators in the garden then completed an in-garden pollinator activity, upon completion, gifted them with a ladybug to release in the garden.



Master Gardeners Educating Youth with 4-H

BY BRANDI KELLER, HARRIS COUNTY HORTICULTURE AGENT

Harris County Master Gardeners have been partnering with other departments within the Harris County Extension office to provide gardening outreach to youth. This includes 4-H, Better Living for Texans (BLT) and the Imagine Science Grant working with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Houston, YMCA of Greater Houston, and Girls Inc.

- Master Gardeners started off the quarter working with Jaden Kelly, the Imagine Science Coordinator. They created activities, with supplies, to be passed along to 300 youth while Covid restrictions continued. Activities included mini-greenhouses (recycled water bottle with succulent), butterfly feeders, and pinecone birdfeeders.
- 4-H Assistant, Misha Chakraborty, was awarded a Harris County Education Department grant to work with 10 high-school students for a week. For two days Master Gardeners provided hands-on activities and lectures on soil management, plant science, and ferns. This included a tour of the Master Gardener demonstration garden, Genoa Friendship Gardens, where they interacted with various stages of butterflies, vegetables, and greenhouse seedlings. The County Extension Agent then talked about careers in horticulture. The rest of the week, the 10 students learned about space science, water conservation, healthy lifestyle practices, and careers in media with a visit to Space Center Houston.
- Master Gardener volunteers assisted Better Living for Texans (BLT) agents at two schools where they reached 82 youth delivering the Learn, Grow, Eat & Go! (LGEG) curriculum by planting herbs with students. This was in partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Houston.
- The fall semester of the Cylinder Gardening program had 30 schools all around Harris County register, totaling almost 3,000 students. This program is offered by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and the Harris County Master Gardeners. Participants in the program learn to grow vegetables from seed to harvest in one semester. The program is great for school-age children and can be used in the classroom, afterschool programs, or other groups. Many thanks to the Master Gardeners for the donations made in seeds, fertilizer, and cylinders.



The Home Grown Podcast!

The Home Grown podcast is presented by the Agriculture & Natural Resources (ANR) Unit of the Harris County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office. The series provides information on urban agriculture / horticulture / gardening and ag literacy. The program focuses on topics that are relevant to the urban gardener.

Episode #1

In Episode 1 we'll be talking to the Harris County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agents: Paul Winski, Brandi Keller and Shannon Dietz.

Episode #2

A visit with Bill Barr - mentor, friend and plant propagator/plantsman extraordinaire.

Episode #3

In this episode, Brandi Keller visits with Harris County Master Gardener, William Isbell.

Episode #4

In this episode, Shannon talks with Janna Roberson, the executive director of Urban Harvest in Houston, TX.

Episode #5

In this episode, Paul talks with Robert Grove, the general manager of the greenhouse operation at the Brookwood Community in Brookshire, Texas.

Episode #6

In this episode, Brandi visits with Diana Foss, Urban Biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife. Aligning with National Bat Week, Diana talks about our local bats, the Waugh Street Bridge colony, and how they are friends to agriculture by consuming pests.

How do you access the podcast?

Click on the image below or go to <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1791415>. You can also search "Home Grown" where ever you find your podcasts.



Harris County
Extension Agents
Horticulture
Paul Winski
Brandi Keller
Ag/Natural Resources
Shannon Dietz

UPCOMING EVENTS

Click on listings for more information.

"Seas the Day" Senior Program
November 10 @ 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
Prairie View A&M University
Northwest Houston Center
9449 Grant Rd, Houston, TX 77070
Call 713-274-0968 for free registration.

Home Grown Lecture Series –
Rainwater Harvesting
November 19 @ 10:00 am - 11:00 pm
Online/Microsoft Teams
[Click to Register Here](#)

Home Grown Lecture Series – So You
Want To Be A Rancher?
December 2 @ 10:00 am - 11:00 am
Online/Microsoft Teams
[Click to Register Here](#)

Home Grown Lecture Series – Making
Holiday Plants Last
December 16 @ 10:00 am - 11:00 am
Online/Microsoft Teams
[Click to Register Here](#)

Harris County Vegetative Management
Conference
Friday, January 14
Baytown Community Center
2407 Market Street, Baytown, Tx 77520
[Check Harris.AgriLife.org for more](#)
[details soon.](#)

Harris County Vegetative
Management Conference
Wednesday, January 19
Mangum Howell Community Center
2500 Frick Road, Houston, Tx 77038
[Check Harris.AgriLife.org for more](#)
[details soon.](#)

We provide programs, tools, and resources -local & statewide- that teach people how to improve agriculture and food production, advance health practices, protect the environment, strengthen our communities, and enrich youth.

IN COOPERATION WITH ...

Lina Hidalgo,

Rodney Ellis,

Adrian Garcia,

Tom S. Ramsey,

R. Jack Cagle,

Harris County Judge

Commissioner, Precinct 1

Commissioner, Precinct 2

Commissioner, Precinct 3

Commissioner, Precinct 4

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TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



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