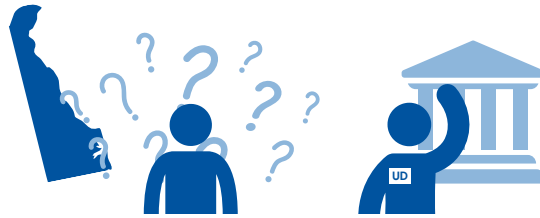


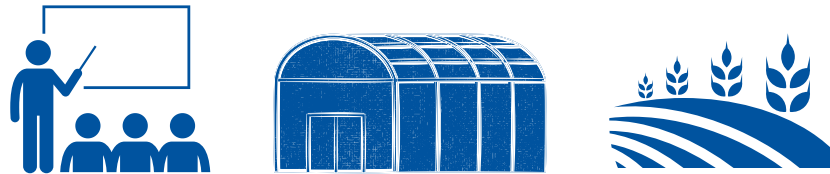
Beginning Farmer Training Program gives new farmers confidence to get started

RELEVANCE



Citizens interested in starting a small-scale farm in Delaware often seek guidance and training from Cooperative Extension.

RESPONSE



A **Beginning Farmers Training Program (BFTP)** cohort met for **nine sessions** in the classroom, at the greenhouse and on the farm.

RESULTS

24 
farmers participated
in this cohort, with

~11 
participants
per session

A majority of participants reported "significant knowledge gain" in the areas of



soil basics,



small-scale irrigation,



variety selection,



integrated pest (insect and disease) management.



business planning,



weed identification and management,

Participants reported they would:



Consider a greenhouse instead of a traditional farm.



Work on a business plan they were not planning to do before.



Explore potential urban options for land to grow on.



Ask for help when the need arises.

RELEVANCE

Citizens interested in starting a small-scale farm in Delaware often seek guidance and training from their local Cooperative Extension service.

RESPONSE

A team of Extension Specialists and Agents worked together to organize the Beginning Farmers Training Program (BFTP) for beginning fruit and vegetable growers in Delaware. This cohort of beginning farmers met for a total of nine classroom, greenhouse and on-farm sessions from September to November. The last session featured a panel with representatives from Delaware Farm Bureau, New Castle Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency and the New Castle County Farmers Market Program. Participants had access to all program materials, discussions, and session recordings online.

RESULTS

Twenty-four farmers registered to participate in the Beginning Farmer Training Program, which saw an average of eleven participants per session. A post-program survey revealed that an overwhelming majority of these participants reported "significant knowledge gain" in each topic area: soil basics, variety selection, business planning, weed identification and management, small-scale irrigation, and integrated pest (insect and disease) management.

Participants shared that they most appreciated:

- Exploring the different sciences involved in farming.
- Networking with a diverse group of beginning farmers.
- Meeting many established growers and professionals in the industry.
- Learning about the support and assistance available to farmers.
- The amount of information offered for the price of the program (\$75).

As a result of the Program, participants reported they would:

- Consider a greenhouse instead of a traditional farm.
- Work on a business plan they were not planning to do before.
- Explore potential urban options for land to grow on.
- Ask for help when the need arises.

Based on the survey and additional discussion with the 2022 cohort, we plan to organize additional training opportunities for these participants in 2023. One outspoken participant told us: "I really enjoyed this program and would recommend it to anyone who is interested!"

RECOGNITION

UD Cooperative Extension Agents, specialists and faculty involved in the training.

PUBLIC VALUE STATEMENT

Individuals desiring to develop a small-scale farm business need training. UD Extension's Beginning Farmers Training Program helps these new farmers achieve the necessary skills and knowledge to confidently begin their small farm business. This creates more local food options and sustainable agriculture in communities in Delaware.