

FFA Students Excel in Horticulture with UD Extension Help on a State and National Level

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RELEVANCE

Delaware's horticulture industry members identified:

Labor shortages



Lack of **awareness** in younger generations



National FFA

Organization offers opportunities

FFA teachers expressed a need for additional **education**

and where **industry** members help **train** students



RESPONSE

Training and connections met the needs of both Delaware's FFA teachers and horticulture industry members.

Delaware Nursery and Landscape Association (DNLA) **discussed the needs** of the schools and local owners looking for **future employees** suggested by UD Cooperative Extension.



DNLA **invited** the winning FFA high school landscape team to their Summer Expo Event.



training for middle and high school FFA teams competing in the landscape competitions at the **state level**.

RESULTS

UD Cooperative Extension's **support** of both organizations (DNLA and FFA) **improved** engagement opportunities for all.

Recognition at the UD-DNLA Summer Expo supports **student success** at the **state level** and provides **education** and interaction with potential employers.



Teachers and team members are able to solicit industry for **financial support** for the annual **training** and **travel** to the national skills event.



They also now **help train** Delaware teachers and students.

More middle and high school teams **enter** the statewide **Nursery and Landscape** career development event and have **improved** their skills.



Discussions are taking place on implementing a new FFA career event curriculum in Delaware to allow students to compete in the **National Turfgrass Science Invitational**.



I wanted to reach out with a thank you for your support this fall in preparing our students for success. Our team ranked 15th in the nation and earned a Silver rating. One student placed individually in the top 30 and earned a Gold rating! We could not have done this without your industry mentorship and support."

RELEVANCE

Delaware's horticulture industry members identified labor shortages as a critical issue hindering their ability to meet customer demands and business success. A lack of awareness of career opportunities among younger generations contributes to this problem. The National FFA Organization offers opportunities for students to learn about and compete in events exposing them to careers in this field. Delaware FFA teachers expressed a need for additional education and training to prepare themselves and their students to be effective in these events. This initiative aims to bolster Delaware's FFA program to make Delaware students competitive with students in other states, where industry members help train students to increase competitiveness at the national level and sponsor travel expenses.

RESPONSE

Training and connections met the needs of both Delaware's FFA teachers and horticulture industry members. UD Cooperative Extension's horticulture team suggested Delaware Nursery and Landscape Association (DNLA) invite agriscience teachers to a board meeting to discuss the needs of the schools and local owners looking for future employees. This conversation resulted in DNLA inviting the winning high school landscape team to their Summer Expo Event. Since 2018, students attend for free. In 2022, Extension horticulture team members and industry representatives began providing training for middle and high school FFA teams competing in the landscape competitions at the state level. This win-win arrangement gave teachers and students the opportunity to test their current knowledge and enhance skills for statewide and national events.

RESULTS

UD Cooperative Extension's support of both organizations improved engagement opportunities for all. Recognition at the UD-DNLA Summer Expo supports student success at the state level and provides education and interaction with potential employers. Teachers and team members are able to solicit industry for financial support for the annual training and travel to the national skills event. These representatives have increased their financial support for teams traveling to the national event. They also now help train Delaware teachers and students. More middle and high school teams enter the statewide Nursery and Landscape career development event. Delaware teams competing at the national level have improved their skills.

One FFA teacher shared, "I wanted to reach out with a thank you for your support this fall in preparing our students for success. Our team ranked 15th in the nation and earned a Silver rating. One student placed individually in the top 30 and earned a Gold rating! We could not have done this without your industry mentorship and support. Thank you again for everything. I look forward to working with you all again in the future!"

Discussions are taking place on implementing a new FFA career event curriculum in Delaware to allow students to compete in the National Turfgrass Science Invitational, a National FFA Endorsed Activity held at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) and Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) annual conferences.

PUBLIC VALUE STATEMENT

UD Extension's expertise and industry connections facilitate partnerships that create a pathway of success for Delaware's FFA students and the state's horticulture industry.