

## Extending Knowledge – Changing Lives

### Urban Agriculture in Delaware

*UD Cooperative Extension Professionals and Master Gardener Volunteer Educators train communities to grow fresh, local foods*

#### ISSUE

The face of agriculture is changing, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Urban agriculture is one of the latest movements to challenge the traditional view of farming. From cultivating rooftop gardens and aquaponics centers in old warehouses to growing crops on abandoned properties, urban agriculture benefits communities: by creating closer neighborhood ties, reducing crime, providing education and job training opportunities and increasing the availability of healthy food for low-income residents. (USDA, Know your Farmer, Know your Food). New Castle County has an ongoing need to improve urban communities' access to education and training and to help them grow fresh, local foods.

#### RESPONSE

Extension professionals and Master Gardener Volunteer Educators partnered to conduct over 20 workshops and presentations in the Extension Office and in the community, reaching nearly 400 gardeners and urban farmers in New Castle County. Additionally, efforts included 1) providing technical assistance to urban growing initiatives throughout the county; 2) designing, planting and maintaining a vegetable-and-fruit teaching garden at the Extension office with easy-to-grow yet diverse crops and 3) developing new and current resources for gardeners and farmers. Master Gardeners focused on interpretive signage, publicity for the garden, and hosting various teachers, youth groups, gardeners and farmers on tours of the garden. The garden harvested and donated over 1,000 pounds of produce to the Food Bank of Delaware. UD Cooperative Extension also participated in community events and staffed resource tables to provide outreach and education focused on food production. By participating in 12 community events—such as Delaware Agriculture Week and Ag Day (sponsored by UD College of Agriculture and Natural Resources), community meetings, farmers markets and festivals—Extension professionals reached nearly 1,500 clientele on topics such as garden checklists, gardening in raised beds and containers, crop selection and management, and identification and management of vegetable garden pests.

#### IMPACT

Program evaluation indicated that participants were willing to apply the following after attending a workshop or presentation: soil test and considered soil health, composting, container and raised bed gardening, growing new vegetable crops and trying new integrated techniques for pest control, including use of beneficial insects. Our work in Urban Agriculture also requires strong community partnerships. This year's projects and partnerships included continued work with the Delaware Center for Horticulture, the Delaware Urban Farm and Food Coalition, the Delaware Department of Agriculture, New Castle County and several schools including William Penn High School.