

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Grand Challenges

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- Global Food Systems
- Water
- Health
- Community Vitality
- Developing Tomorrow's Leaders

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Grand Challenge: Global Food Systems, Water, Community Vitality, Health

Title: Extension Master Gardeners in the Community

Why is this issue important?

Just like many other organizations, KSRE – Shawnee County relies on volunteers to maximize our outreach in the community. For horticulture, this falls to the Shawnee County Extension Master Gardeners (SCEMG). For over 35 years, these dedicated volunteers have been providing Shawnee County residents with research-based information to make sound decisions related to their lawn, landscape, or home garden. Upon joining the organization, new members must complete the basic training course, held weekly through the fall, with each class being on a different horticultural topic. Upon completion, the members must complete 6 units of continuing education annually.

How did Extension address this issue?

SCEMG members each donate at least 25 hours through a number of activities in our community. They maintain eight demonstration gardens around the city of Topeka, each focusing on a different type of gardening to inspire community members to select the right plants for the right place. In 2025, two of these eight gardens will find a new home! The return of the Kansas Lawn and Garden Show (pictured right) last February allowed the members to interact directly with community members, as did the bi-monthly booth at the Downtown Farmer's Market over the summer months. Members also helped answer horticulture questions from the community on the annual Response Line. Volunteers were also able to impact youth at Farm to You and at the Topeka Water Festival.



What was the impact?

At the end of October 2024, SCEMG members have donated more than 7,500 hours to Shawnee County and the state of Kansas, valued at over \$252,000. The members have made over 2,600 contacts in the community, greatly expanding the impact the Extension Office has in the county. As a whole, members have received nearly 1,000 continuing education credits, allowing the members to stay up to date on horticulture information and better serve the community. Four hundred questions were answered on the Response Line with 80% of those surveyed used the research-based information at home. We are looking forward to the next year for the program!

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service
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