



Hort Outreach

Serving Rock Island County

Hort Outreach is a locally created program that utilizes Master Gardener volunteers to teach special lessons on agriculture and horticulture topics. Many of these topics revolve around “horticultural holidays” such as Earth Week Groundhog Day, and May Day. To add agriculture to the lessons, we have seasonal topics such as corn and soybeans in the fall and apples & bees in the spring. Each presentation incorporates a general introduction to the topic and provides a hands-on activity. The lessons have cross discipline approach. For example, the kindergarten lesson works on patterns also. The first grade lesson works on pincher coordination skills. The second grade lesson involves poetry and a character counts lesson on sharing. The lessons are chosen based on local needs and Master Gardener interests. There are two target audiences for Hort Outreach. One is the Master Gardener volunteers who teach the lessons. The other audience is the youth in grades K-5 throughout the county.



Master Gardener volunteers are trained in a “train the trainer” session prior to each presentation. The topics fall within the Horticulture spectrum so Master Gardeners can earn volunteer hours through their presentations. Through training sessions with Master Gardeners we are able to adjust the lessons and activities to ensure the presenters are teaching a uniform lesson and that all presenters are comfortable and knowledgeable about the topic.

Rock Island County has 35 schools that teach grades K-5. Current Agriculture in the Classroom education is hit or miss. The majority of in-classroom education is conducted by teachers who have been through our Summer Agricultural Institute (SAI) or have experience with agriculture where they’re comfortable presenting information on their own. By sending trained, educated volunteers into the classroom we will continue to educate more students about agriculture and its place in their lives.



Hort Outreach currently reaches about 500 youth per topic throughout Rock Island County schools. With the six topics we currently offer, we reach around 120 classrooms and over 3000 students.

This program has secured grant funding from local foundations and businesses to help cover the cost of consumable materials needed for many of the hands-on activities.

Hort Outreach at a Glance

Kindergarten-Groundhog's Day-February

- Number of Master Gardeners: 6
- Number of students reached: 360
- Concepts: Vocabulary & Poetry

First Grade-Corn-October

- Number of Master Gardeners: 10
- Number of students reached: 433
- Concepts: Fine motor skills, Corn plant parts

Second Grade-May Day-May

- Number of Master Gardeners: 8
- Number of students reached: 415
- Concepts: Sharing & Caring

Third Grade-Apples & Insects-March

- Number of Master Gardeners: 7
- Number of students reached: 675
- Concepts: Plant Parts & Pollination

Fourth Grade-Earth Day-April

- Number of Master Gardeners: 10
- Number of students reached: 482
- Concepts: Connections with the Earth

Fifth Grade-Soybeans-November

- Number of Master Gardeners: 12
- Number of students reached: 600
- Concepts: Parts of the Soybean plant & Soy products



Hort Outreach Action Plan

- January—Review Groundhog Day lesson, training program for MG Volunteers, contact schools for presentations, purchase supplies/make copies.
- February—Present Groundhog Day lesson (around February 2) to Kindergarten classrooms. Report short form numbers.
- Early March—Review Apple lesson, training program for MG Volunteers, contact schools for presentations, purchase supplies/make copies.
- Mid-March—Present Apple lesson (this sometimes falls in late March, depending on Spring Break, ISATs and Easter scheduling) to 3rd grade classrooms. Report short form numbers.
- Early April—Review Earth Day lesson, training program for MG Volunteers, contact schools for presentations, purchase supplies/make copies.
- April—Present Earth Day lesson (around April 22) to 4th grade classrooms. Report short form numbers.
- Mid-April—Review “Green” May Day lesson, training program for MG Volunteers, contact schools for presentations, purchase supplies/make copies.
- May—Present “Green” May Day lesson (around May 1) to 2nd grade classrooms. Report short form numbers.
- September—Review corn lesson, training program for MG Volunteers, contact schools for presentations, purchase supplies/make copies.
- October—Present corn lesson (usually around the 2nd week in October, but may vary depending on school schedules) to 1st grade classrooms. Report short form numbers.
- October— Review soybean lesson, training program for MG Volunteers, contact schools for presentations, purchase supplies/make copies.
- November—Present soybean lessons to 5th grade classrooms. Report short form numbers.



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