



CAMERON COUNTY

EXTENSION

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TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

OCTOBER 2013 — JANUARY 2014

Cameron County Extension Programs

Improving Lives.

Improving Texas.

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating



Urban Horticulture

Agent: Jennifer Herrera

2013 Master Gardener Class

Graduation



In Cameron County, the Master Gardeners reached over 1000 adults and over 1200 youth. The Master Gardeners is a volunteer service program that is supported by utilizing trained volunteers to provide sustainability, economic viability, and sound horticultural principles to residents of Cameron County.

2013 Texas Master Gardener State Conference

For the first time in the Rio Grande Valley the Cameron County Master Gardener's along with Hidalgo County Master Gardener's hosted the 2013 Texas Master Gardener Association Conference. The Conference was held from October 17-19, 2013. A total of 350 Master Gardeners from Texas, out of state and local residents attended the three day conference. The Cameron County Master Gardeners developed educational tours that highlighted Cameron County's horticulture treasures for the 2013 Texas Master Gardener Conference.



This year 17 Master Gardener Interns graduated and became certified Texas Master Gardeners. The Master Gardener course consisted of 75 hours of instructional training and education and a minimum on 50 volunteer service hours in Cameron County. In Cameron County, the Master Gardener interns and Master Gardener's volunteers contributed 2746 service hours equating to \$60796.44 savings to the county in volunteer service in horticulture programming. The 2013 Master Gardener class graduated on November 6 at the Historic Alonso Building in Brownsville.

2013 Texas Master Gardener State Conference Tours

Citrus Greening disease continues to threaten the citrus industry in the Rio Grande valley. The Cameron County Master Gardeners are collaborating with USDA-APHIS on releasing biological control to decrease the number of Asian Citrus Psyllids. Recent data seem to indicate that the rising number of released wasps is having a positive effect.



Webpage: <http://txmg.org/cameron> or

Facebook : [Cameron County Master Gardeners](#)



Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program

Agent: Beatriz R. Loya

Four Nutrition Education Assistants instruct Adult classes and 2 Nutrition Education Associates instruct Youth classes throughout Cameron County. During the months of October, November, December, and January, the EFNEP Adult program conducted a total of **275** classes were conducted with graduated **665** Adult participants from the EFNEP Adult Program. As well, **350** classes were conducted and **5,592** Youth participants graduating from the EFNEP Youth Program.

Volunteers contribute to the EFNEP program with in-kind donations (hours, food donation, class usage, and copies). During the months of October thru January, volunteers donated their time, efforts, and food donations to equal **\$6,281.26**.

Parents taking the EFNEP Adult program receive many incentive items such as booklets, measuring cups, re-usable grocery lists, food thermometers, calendars, and certificates. This ensures that they are able to keep good references at home that they use later. Below is a validation of the success of the outcome of the EFNEP Program:

“In the nutrition program that they gave us in school I learned to know the nutritional value of the food, on how to prepare it, and how to combine them. Also, I learned the risks that back food can do to us like flour, sugar, salt, and the fats of meat. I learned how to eat healthy and the quantity of food that I should eat. In the nutrition program I learned how to go shopping for only important and necessary groceries. I also learned how to defrost meat and not to leave food on frying pans or saucepans because the food can get full of bacteria and get us sick. Also eating healthy can help us prevent diseases like diabetes, obesity, cancer, cholesterol, high blood pressure, and many others. In conclusion I want to thank the nutrition classes because they helped us learn how to eat healthy, so we can help our families live a long and healthy life.” - Gloria Ramirez, parent at Vermillion Elementary at Brownsville ISD.



Photos (Right Top to Middle) below depict EFNEP Adult classes at Harlingen ISD, Brownsville ISD (Left Bottom to Right) EFNEP Office, Harlingen Housing, Brownsville ISD, La Feria ISD, and San Benito ISD.

Coastal & Marine Resources

Agent: Tony Reisinger



Testing Bycatch Reduction Devices, BRDs, proved a challenge this fall when tropical storm Karen sent large swells combined with a strong norther to the shrimp grounds in the Gulf



Sharks follow shrimp boats to feed on bycatch and anything else that goes overboard. Shrimping is the most dangerous commercial fishing activity, losing 5.5 lives annually to falling overboard.



Invasive venomous lionfish are becoming more prevalent in the Gulf and are now found offshore Cameron County. This specimen has lost its stripes and most of it's toxic fin tissue due to washing in a shrimp net. Eight lionfish were caught in shrimp nets during 50 days of Bycatch Reduction Device (BRD) testing and may prove

By the beginning of 2014 the Cameron County shrimp fleet numbered 165 vessels, which produced 13 million lb. of shrimp in 2013 valued at \$70 million (up over \$20 million since last year) with a statewide economic impact of \$210 million. Fuel prices have moderated and shrimp prices have climbed due to problems with shrimp farming in Asia. A disease called early mortality syndrome has caused declines in Asian shrimp production, and demand for shrimp remains high worldwide.

Our vessel owners still face a plethora of problems from over regulation to finding crews to work on the vessels. Most depend on foreign H2B Visa workers to crew their boats, as Americans do not like to spend long arduous hours working in that dangerous environment. Commercial fishing is considered the second most dangerous occupation in the U.S. after logging and Gulf of Mexico shrimping has the highest death rate in the commercial fishing sector with most deaths attributed to falling overboard, 55 men lost in the last 10 years.

Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs) used on shrimp trawls to reduce fish bycatch need improvement. The most common BRD employed by our fleet loses an average of 10% of the nets' shrimp catch. With our production of \$70 million last year, that represents a \$7 million loss to the Cameron County fleet in dockside value! Sea Grant fisheries specialist Gary Graham and I were awarded an \$86,000 grant from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration to show proof of concept on new BRD designs. We tested five new BRDs for 50 days on a commercial shrimp vessel from September to November and are currently analyzing the data. To qualify for proof of concept, a device has to reduce fish bycatch at least 30% and have less than 10% shrimp loss to be considered for testing for future certification.

Our shrimpers are beginning to catch the invasive Indo-Pacific native black tiger shrimp after a brief respite in late 2013, and more have been taken off Texas. We have collected 51 tigers caught by the Cameron County shrimp fleet and these exotics are being genetically tested to determine their origin. The impact of these invasive shrimp are having on our native shrimp population is yet undetermined, but total landings in Cameron County have been down by around 2 million pounds the last two years. We still do not know if the tigers are competing for food and habitat with our native shrimp.

Another extremely dangerous exotic introduction into our offshore area is the lionfish, also of Indo-Pacific origin like the tiger shrimp. Lionfish have been documented offshore of Cameron and Willacy Counties on artificial reefs. Once on a reef they become a dominant species, outcompeting others because they have no predators. They have the potential to displace our most popular offshore species, red snapper, which provides an important sport and commercial fishery off Cameron County. They are not caught by hook and line, have to be taken with a spear and are excellent table fare. The lionfish has long venomous spines that can cause paralysis if you are punctured by one. We have conducted trainings, teaching our shrimpers to identify lionfish in case they encounter one as bycatch from a shrimp net, yet none have ever been reported caught and we have no records of injuries to shrimp vessel crews from lionfish spines. However, during our BRD testing this fall in the Gulf, we caught 8 lionfish in our nets in 50 days! We wonder how shrimpers have avoided puncture wounds with over 1000 vessels fishing the Gulf. The only explanation we can think of is the lionfish lose the tissue covering their spines while being washed around in the net. That tissue contains the dangerous venom and if the toxic tissue is gone, a puncture will be much less serious. We are going to put flyers out to make crews aware of this potential danger.

The director of Texas Sea Grant, Dr. Pamela Plotkin just procured a \$99 thousand grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Graham and I are co-investigators for training shrimpers to correctly install Turtle Excluder Devices, TEDs, Gulf-wide, from Texas to Florida. Sea turtle mortality in the Gulf is limited to 13% and each TED violation adds to the mortality total. If the 13% is reached we could see area closures to shrimp fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. Therefore if we can train fishermen to correctly install and maintain TEDs in their nets, reducing violations, we can prevent or reduce any negative consequences. We have already conducted trainings for our Cameron County fleet.

Aquaculture in Cameron County in 2013 produced .8 million lb. of shrimp valued at \$2.5 million with an economic impact of \$7.5 million in Cameron County and the State. Production acreage was 333 acres and it is expected to triple next year with around 1000 acres on the Arroyo Colorado, which have been purchased by a large company to produce algae.

Our Rio Grande Texas Master Naturalist Chapter currently has 160 members. We presently are completing two ten week certification courses, and field trips, for 57 interns. **In 2013 our Master Naturalists contributed 19,151 volunteer hours to community service projects, valued at \$424,003 directly reaching 10,224 people in outreach and education events!**

Our Texas Coastal Naturalist Chapter has 106 members. The Coastal Naturalists are a first responder volunteer base to the UTPA Coastal Studies Lab and Sea Turtle Inc., responding to harmful algal blooms, cold stun sea turtle events, and live marine mammal strandings. They also monitor sea turtle nesting activity and help care for sea turtles at the facility. We have added an educational component to qualifying as a Texas Coastal Naturalist. This is one of Cameron County's most popular programs. They were tested with a sea turtle cold stun event in December 2013, helping save 125 green sea turtles from drowning in the Lower Laguna Madre.



An enthusiastic Master Naturalist intern, Geri Smith (front) and Brigette Goza, senior program coordinator and Coastal Naturalist cosponsor at the UTPA Coastal Studies Lab Display 2 of 125 revived green sea turtles saved from a December 2013 cold stun event



*Extension Volunteer
Recognition Event*



*Governors Award for
Environmental Stewardship
in Agriculture*



*Irrigation Water Conservation
Irrigation Surge Flow Workshop*



*Grain Sorghum Result Research
Demonstration Harvesting*



Agriculture & Natural Resources

Agent: Dr. Enrique Perez

Extension Volunteer Recognition of Volunteers and Interpretation of Programs

Cameron County Extension volunteers and Extension partners were recognition for their contribution and support to all program areas (Agriculture, Family Consumers Sciences, 4-H and Youth Development, Horticulture, Coastal & Marine Resources, and EFNEP) at the San Benito Annex Building meeting room. County Commissioner Dan Sanchez addressed more than 60 Extension volunteers on the subject; "Importance of Getting Involve in the Community by Volunteering". The main highlight of the event was the recognition of all volunteers for their individual program contributions. Extension volunteers awarded a certificate, accompanied by County Commissioners Dan Sanchez to each volunteer. In closing, County Commissioner Sanchez thanked every volunteer service and significant contributions and support to all program county wide.

Soil Campaign for Agriculture Producers Awarded Governors Award

The Cameron County Extension Agriculture program kicked off the Soil Campaign to assist Cameron County agriculture producers obtain free soil analysis from the Texas A&M Soil and Water Lab. More than 10,000 acres of agricultural fields have participated in this program. The purpose of the Soil Campaign is to assist agriculture producers reduce their input of nutrients (fertilizer) in their agriculture fields. Soil analysis promotes nutrient management which reduces the flow of nutrients into water tributaries such as the Arroyo Colorado and the Rio Grande Valley. This program was awarded State recognition from Governor Rick Perry. This recognition was during the Annual Texas Environmental Quality Commission Convention in Austin, Texas. Governor Rick Perry awarded Dr. Enrique Perez, Cameron County Extension Agent-Agriculture with a special recognition for his contribution to Environmental Stewardship through the Soil Campaign.

Agriculture Producers Attend Water Conservation-Surge Flow Irrigation Workshop

Agriculture producers participated in a water conservation-surge flow workshop. Agriculture producers learned about surge flow irrigation technology. Dr. Juan Enciso Extension Irrigation Specialist presented information on the advantages on water savings and labor when implementing a surge flow irrigation system in row crops. Cameron County agriculture producers had the opportunity to experience a hands on activity with the surge flow irrigation system. An agriculture grant by the Texas Water Institute provided an opportunity for area agriculture producers secure financial support in the purchase of a surge flow irrigation meter.

Annual Cotton and Grain Conference

More than 150 agriculture producers participated at the Annual Cotton and Grain Conference in January. This is the largest educational event held every year. Agriculture producers learned about current agriculture research conducted in Cameron County, such as new cotton and sorghum performance (yields, plant development). Also participants received information on current market outlook (local, national and international) as presented by State Extension Economist. Agriculture producers look toward this event every year as they increase their knowledge on current technology, new crop hybrids, and market crop trends.

Pesticide Safety Training's for County Agriculture Producers-Quarterly Training's

The training's are made available to individuals interested in obtaining a Private Applicator License for use of State restricted pesticides from the Texas Department of Agriculture. A Private Applicator License is used for the purchase of State restricted pesticides for farm use.

Family & Consumer Sciences

Agent: Lilian Mezquida



Friend to Friend Programs



From January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2013, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service conducted multiple programs in Cameron County utilizing the *Friend to Friend* program. The purpose is to encourage women to get regular mammograms and Pap tests for the early detection of breast and cervical cancer, when the disease is most curable.

- The County Extension Agent, regional cancer prevention specialist, and patient navigators plan and implement a *Friend to Friend* event. Women attending are given the opportunity to sign a commitment card to obtain a mammogram and/or Pap test within the next year and the option to complete a help request form for assistance in obtaining screening services.

Impact of the Program

- *Friend to Friend* was implemented in 42 Texas counties in 2013.
- 141 women attended the *Friend to Friend* events on October 4, 2013 at the Browne Park Social Service Center in Brownsville, Texas, and on October 30, 2013 at the Los Indios Community Center in the city of Los Indios, Texas.
- A total of \$8,723.24 has been paid for both mammogram screenings, Pap Screenings, and diagnostics through CPRIT funds.
- 14 Women were referred to other available sources for Breast and Cervical screenings and diagnostics.



Get the Facts-BLT Programs



BLT

Get the Facts, a three-lesson series on the Nutrition Facts food label, was developed by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service nutrition specialists to enhance participant skills necessary for positive dietary behavior change. The skills-building series focused on comparing serving size, fat and sodium information when selecting food choices. These three items were specifically selected as they relate to obesity, heart disease and hypertension. The evaluation of knowledge and intent to change behavior among *Get the Facts* participants was accomplished thru the use of pre/post/follow-up survey instruments. *Get the Facts* participants could opt out of the evaluation process if desired. Nonetheless, 103 *Get the Facts* pre/post survey sets, of which 102 included the follow-up survey, were received from Cameron County. Many participants reported increased label reading during the time the series was taught.



4-H & Youth Development



Agents: Marco Ponce & Roxanna Salinas



The Texas A&M Extension Service and Cooperative Extension Program has been working continuously on youth development in Cameron County. Our successes have reached over 5,000 youth. This includes 4-H membership, special interest/short-term programs, and school enrichment programs.

Cameron County 4-H County Council members conducted our annual Christmas Holiday Help community service project at the San Benito Housing Authority. Cameron County 4-H members and adult volunteers donated well over 100 toys for youth who live in this community. 4-H Council members then personally delivered the toys to the center and spent two hours there conducted fun games for the more than 100 youth who participated. Participants took part in a series of games and activities and were awarded prizes at the conclusion of each activity.



Cameron County 4-H members participated in annual Thanksgiving Holiday Help community service project. This service project is a collaborative effort in which the Cameron County Farm Bureau donates \$200.00 towards the purchase of 10 turkeys and fixings, and Cameron County 4-H members donate non-perishable canned food items to go to families that are part of the Harlingen I.S.D. Parental Involvement center. 4-H members then personally deliver the turkeys and food items to the center the day before Thanksgiving where the families are there to personally receive the items.



Agents from Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy Counties conducted a Rio Grande Valley Showmanship Academy in which over 140 youth and adults participated in this event. Discussion topics included showmanship and grooming of cattle, sheep, goats, swine, and rabbits. Speakers also gave live demonstrations on clipping and grooming each of the species that were discussing during this program. All participants then took part in a Quality Counts session which educates participants in raising their animals in a manner which will provide a safe and quality food product for the consumer. Participants were also treated to a luncheon and then several door prizes were given out throughout the days events.



4-H and Youth Development Agents have been working on outreach to schools, and community centers to educate students and teachers on 4-H and curriculum. Agents recently conducted an all day program at Port Isabel Junior High where we introduced and began conducting the Welcome to the Real World Curriculum. This curriculum educates youth by putting them in a real world scenario with a career and then real life expenses so that they can see just how much it costs for every day necessities. Agents then were able to enroll over 75 students in a newly formed 4-H club where they have plans to compete in our county photography contest and explore additional project areas.



Cameron County 4-H members took part in a statewide wide community service project called One Day 4-H. 4-H members and adult volunteers donated over 180 canned food items during this community service project. 4-H members and adult volunteers then delivered the canned food items to the Loave's and Fishes homeless shelter in Harlingen. This center provides a nice place to stay for the homeless as well as providing a warm meal to those who are hungry.



Upcoming Activities 2014

Extension Educational Programs

Tip Of Texas Meeting	Feb. 3, 2014	Master Gardener Class	Mar. 12, 2014
Parenting Connections Program	Feb. 3, 10, 24, 2014	Diabetes Class	Mar. 13, 2014
CEP Youth Advisory Board	Feb. 4, 2014	Master Gardener Asso. Meeting	Mar. 13, 2014
State Peer Review Career Ladder-College Station	Feb. 4-6, 2014	Rio Grande Beef Asso. Program for Ranchers	Mar. 12-16, 2014
Master Gardener Exec. Meeting	Feb. 6, 2014	Establishment of Cotton Research Demonstrations	Mar. 17-21, 2014
Establishment of Corn Research Demonstration	Feb. 10-17, 2014	Rio Grande International Beef/Range Program	Mar. 14, 2014
Pesticide Safety Training	Feb 11, 2014	4-H Council & Managers Meeting	Mar. 24, 2014
RGVC TX Master Naturalist Class	Feb. 5, 12, 19, 26, 2014	Vet Science Meeting	Mar. 24, 2014
RGVC TX Master Naturalist Board & General Meeting	Feb. 11, 2014	Cameron County Roundup	April 1, 2014
Master Gardener Class	Feb. 12, 2014	Master Gardener Exec. Meeting	April 3, 2014
Master Gardener Asso. Meeting	Feb. 13, 2014	Master Gardener Plant Sale	April 5, 2014
Diabetes Class	Feb. 13, 20, 27, 2014	Tip of Texas Meeting	April 7, 2014
Establishment of Grain Sorghum Research Demo	Feb. 17– 25, 2014	Parenting Connections Program	April 7, 14, 21, 2014
Cameron County Fashion Show	Feb. 18, 2014	Master Naturalist Board & General Meeting	April 8, 2014
Continuing Education Program for Ag Producer-Pesticide Safety	Feb. 20, 2014	Master Gardener Class	April 9, 2014
Master Gardener Jam Class	Feb. 21, 2014	RGVC TX Master Naturalist Class	April 9, 16, 23, 30, 2014
Vet Science Meeting	Feb. 24, 2014	Master Gardener Asso. Meeting	April 10, 2014
4-H Council & Managers Meeting	Feb. 24, 2014	D12 4-H Livestock Judging	April 12, 2014
Bull Gain Testing	Feb. 25 & 26, 2014	Range Symposium for Ag. Producers	April 16, 2014
Citrus Greening Program	Feb. 27, 2014	Turn Row Field Day for Ag. Producers	April 22-25, 2014
Agricultural Regional Program Director County Row Crop Evaluations in Field Sites	Feb. 27-28, 2014	D12 4-H Shooting Sports	April 26, 2014
Tip OF Texas Meeting	Mar. 3, 2014	4-H Council & Managers Meeting	April 28, 2014
RGVC TX Master Naturalist Exec& Board Meeting	Mar. 11, 2014	Vet Science Meeting	April 28, 2014
Master Gardener Exec. Meeting	Mar. 6, 2014	Private Applicator Training for Ag. Producers	May 6, 2014
RGVC TX Master Naturalist Class	Mar. 5,12,19,26,2014	State Agronomist Field Evaluations in Field Sites	May 13, 2014
		Grain Sorghum, Corn Research Demo. Field Day	May 19-23, 2014

Visit our Webpage at <http://cameron.agrilife.org> or

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