Gardening in the Panhandle: LIVE!
A Lesson in Harnessing Teamwork and Technology to Better Reach Clientele


¹University of Florida, IFAS (UF/IFAS) Calhoun County Extension, 20816 Central Ave. E, Blountstown, FL
²UF/IFAS Bay County Extension, 2728 E 14th St., Panama City, FL
³UF/IFAS Walton County Extension, 732 N 9th St., Defuniak Springs, FL
⁴UF/IFAS Gulf County Extension, Wewahitchka, FL
⁵UF/IFAS Escambia County Extension, 3740 Steffani Rd., Cantonment, FL
⁶UF/IFAS Okaloosa County Extension, 3098 Airport Rd., Crestview, FL
⁷UF/IFAS Santa Rosa County Extension, 6263 Dogwood Dr., Milton, FL
⁸UF/IFAS Washington County Extension, 1424 Jackson Ave., Ste. A, Chipley, FL
⁹UF/IFAS Jefferson County Extension, 2729 W Washington St., Monticello, FL
¹⁰UF/IFAS Leon County Extension, 615 Paul Russell Rd., Tallahassee, FL
¹¹UF/IFAS Wakulla County Extension, 84 Cedar Ave., Crawfordville, FL
¹²Entomology and Nematology Department, UF/IFAS, Gainesville, FL
¹³North Florida Research and Education Center, UF/IFAS, 155 Research Rd., Quincy, FL
¹⁴Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, FL
¹⁵Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS, Gainesville, FL
¹⁶Mid-Florida REC–Apopka, UF/IFAS, Apopka, FL

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded in 2020, University of Florida/IFAS (UF/IFAS) Extension Agents were unable to perform traditional in-person educational programs and needed an innovative way to reach residential horticulture clientele. Inspired by Agents in south Florida offering “Ask an Agent Anything” online seminars, but wanting to focus more on specific, timely topics, the Northwest District Horticulture Program Implementation Team (PIT) collaborated to create a similar program series called Gardening in the Panhandle LIVE! Each session covered a seasonally relevant topic with knowledgeable panelists based on their individual specialties. The series was broadcast using both Zoom Webinar videoconferencing technology and Facebook Live to capture the largest possible audience. To comply with ADA guidelines for hearing disabled clientele, episode recordings were edited with closed captioning for YouTube. Delivering each episode required a team of 7–9 agents in the following roles: 3–4 panelists; an episode “host”; a Zoom technician; and several “behind the scenes” moderators. While the episode’s host and panelists were answering questions, the moderators were adding resource links to chats, answering pop-up questions, and filtering and forwarding potential on-air questions to the emcee. The innovative collaboration created 13 episodes and engaged a total of 871 live viewers in 2020 on various social media platforms. 22% of participants (191/871) answered follow up surveys. 97% (186/191) of respondents reported knowledge gain in at least one Florida-Friendly Landscaping Principle. 88% (168/191) of respondents reported a plan to adopt at least one Florida-Friendly Landscaping Principle as a result of participating in the program.

*Corresponding author. Email: d.leonard@ufl.edu