



Green Industries Best Management Practices Training

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Horticulture agents from the four west-central Florida counties of Citrus, Hernando, Pasco and Sumter collaborated to offer training on the five different modules of the day-long Green Industries Best Management Practices. Collaborative training sessions were intended as an innovative way to: 1) increase learning and enhance the quality of the trainings for those in attendance; 2) increase the number of participants and trainings offered in the four-county region; and 3) raise awareness of the importance of state-mandated Green Industries Best Management Practices certification trainings.

The Green Industries Best Management Practices (GI-BMP) workshops teach industry professionals about the various activities they conduct each day that can affect water quality. Agents involved in these trainings also marketed the classes to professionals in each of the four counties, as well as their county. This expanded the reach to an audience that is generally not well recognized by professional associations and who might otherwise not be made aware of the classes, new legislation, or continuing educational opportunities. Agents teach subjects in their area of expertise which aids the audience in gaining knowledge and encouraging meaningful adoption of recommended practices. Instructors typically include a participatory activity (Fig. 1) to help reinforce concepts, which is helpful to the students. Proactivity helps the agents as well, since fellow agents also learned new skills by observing the teaching techniques employed. This model has expanded to include additional counties and is employed to this day.

Results

In one year, 237 program participants responded to a survey reporting an increased satisfaction in learning from multiple instructors and varied teaching styles. Eighty-five percent (n=201) successfully became certified by passing the post-training exam.



Fig. 1 A training for at-risk high school students expressing an interest in a profession in horticulture created an artificial run-off and leaching experiment during the team-taught Green Industries Best Management Practices Training.

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Fig. 2. Team member shares information about fertilizers and their potential to become water pollutants. Practical exercises on calculating area coverage and fertilizer rates helped reinforce concept with these industry representatives.

Conclusions

With five different trainers (two counties had multiple certified instructors), participants benefitted from a variety of informative delivery styles and from new instructors for each segment (Fig. 2). Agents also learned new content and teaching methods from

their colleagues increasing their own knowledge and providing professional development to pass on to constituents. In addition, each host county benefitted from many qualified trainers and an expanded audience based on marketing from neighboring counties.