

Committed to a Sustainable Future

Connecticut has faced challenges related to sustainable landscapes, food and agriculture, health, and the climate for generations. As problems are solved, new issues arise. UConn Extension educators work in all 169 cities and towns of Connecticut to help solve the problems that our residents, communities, and state face. Connecting people with agriculture, the natural environment, and healthy lifestyles are critical components to a sustainable future. Extension works collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders to find solutions that improve our communities for the next generation.

UConn Extension serves thousands of people just like you every year. Your generous donations help support programming in our critical mission areas. Each number on our annual impact sheet represents a person, plant, animal, field, or community aided by Extension programs and projects. Many are unaware of the impact UConn Extension has on their community and the state. Extension is found in the parent-led equity, diversity, and inclusion committees in the elementary school; the municipal stormwater plan in a city; the nutrition courses offered at a local nonprofit; or the produce available at the local farm. Our work is in every town and city of the state and the broader impacts make Connecticut a better place to live for all of us.

The human, environmental, and agricultural issues that we face change. The needs of our residents change. But our commitment to providing transformational learning experiences to our program participants will not change. We are here to serve you. We are UConn Extension.

We have included examples from three of our programs that highlight the work of Extension and the impact it has on our community. The full articles and information on other programs we offer are available at bit.ly/ExtensionPrograms.

Your support helped us meet new challenges we are all facing due to COVID-19. Visit bit.ly/ExtensionPrograms to make a donation and continue supporting our programs.



Weathering the Storm

Connecticut residents see more frequent and volatile storms each year, and the storm damage is increasing. UConn Extension programs, however, are adapting with the storms.

Dr. Juliana Barrett, an Extension educator with the Connecticut Sea Grant (CTSG) says it all “comes back to listening, and not assuming as the scientists that we have all the answers.” The CTSG is learning from Connecticut residents and municipalities on how we can move forward to better protect our shoreline during detrimental storms, Barrett says.

Barrett works with other scientists at CTSG to develop living shorelines, composed of natural materials such as coir logs, which are biodegradable and help reduce wave velocity and ultimately erosion of the shoreline. Storms are slower and last longer, and these natural buffers create resilient solutions to erosion and flooding, she says. A living sea wall develops when native coastal plants are grown behind the coir logs, with roots anchoring into the soil to increase aggregation and reduce runoff. Although Barrett says she has seen “increasing development along the coast, many people are becoming more aware of the hazards,” and these communities are looking for the educational opportunities that UConn Extension provides to keep them safe.

Another storm-related problem in Connecticut is that the further inland you go, the denser the trees become, making them prone to knocking out power lines and crushing the roofs of homes. After frequent and devastating storm events in 2011, forestry Extension educator Tom Worthley was part of an advisory panel initiating research on tree biomechanics and addressing other roadside forest management issues.



Dr. Juliana Barrett

The result was the creation of the Stormwise program, a collaborative effort between the College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources and the School of Engineering. The project investigates the way trees move in the wind, the likelihood they could fail in some way, and what can be done to better manage our state’s roadside forests and woodlands.

“The 100-foot strip of woods along the roadways haven’t seen much management attention,” Worthley says. Connecticut forests have developed around our power lines, and Worthley says the state needs better and more creative management.

UConn Extension and the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment engages stakeholders as Stormwise moves ahead and helps groups make proper decisions for future management.

Although we can never run from storms, the work UConn Extension does to mitigate storm damage will help Connecticut for decades to come.
— Zachary J. Duda



Responding to COVID and Food Insecurity

One of every nine residents in Connecticut struggled with food insecurity before COVID-19.

For many individuals and families, challenges surrounding food insecurity increased when the pandemic arrived and continued throughout 2020. Our programs are addressing food insecurity and system-wide issues.

UConn Extension provided the infrastructure, innovative ideas, and staff support to organize Operation Community Impact. Our 4-H and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program partnered with dairy processors to secure donations and mobilized our volunteers to distribute the donations to food pantries in 57 towns. The project has served over 10,000 individuals and families to date. Our volunteers moved the equivalent of 10 full-size elephants, or over 130,000 pounds, during the distribution process, and it is an ongoing initiative.

Recipients of the dairy products have expressed their gratitude and shared how much the support means to them. One pantry stated,

“The families that our pantry serves are in significant crisis right now. They are relying on the food pantry for all of their food/meals. The donations make a real impact.”

Vegetable gardening surged in popularity at the beginning of the pandemic. Extension educators collaborated to provide a website with resources for residents interested in growing their own vegetables. Citizens can also submit their questions through several communication channels and receive expert advice from our educators.

“Along with the satisfaction of growing your own fruits and vegetables, gardening gets you outside, in the fresh air and sunshine. You just feel better all-around after working with plants,” said Sarah Bailey, state coordinator for the UConn Extension Master Gardener program. “Even if you just grow some herbs and flowers in containers, you get the benefits.”

Food insecurity is a stressful and ongoing challenge for many Connecticut residents. The negative impacts coronavirus has on food insecurity among Connecticut residents will linger. However, Extension will continue innovating and creating systems to help residents address and overcome food insecurity. — Stacey Stearns

Empowering Individuals and Communities

We all face challenges. Situations outside of personal control intensify those challenges for some. Circumstances including where a person was born, their race, family structure, and socioeconomic status can elevate or hamper individual success. This has a ripple effect on communities and our state.

Extension empowers individuals and communities. We provide diverse voices a platform and help change systems and communities. Our educators share resources from UConn and collaborate on solutions that improve health and economic outcomes for individuals. Classes and workshops offered by Extension teach new skills to participants to help them grow. Empowered individuals lead to empowered communities as they lead initiatives that create lasting change.

Zoraida Velazquez, one of our Extension educators, is answering questions for Bridgeport and residents of surrounding communities each Friday morning on Radio Amor/Radio Love 690 AM. Her nutritional advice and guidance are helping the community improve their health and wellbeing. She is an educator in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (UConn EFNEP). EFNEP helps families learn about healthy eating, shopping on a budget, cooking, and physical activity. The EFNEP team has 11 members working in communities across Connecticut. EFNEP reaches individuals through strategic partnerships with nonprofit organizations.

Our People Empowering People (UConn PEP) program is also empowering individuals and communities to make positive changes. UConn PEP is an innovative personal and family development program with a strong community focus. It builds on the unique strengths and life experiences of the participants. The program emphasizes the connection between individuals and community action.

“Connectivity is the one word I would use to describe UConn PEP,” Rich Mutts, a UConn PEP facilitator from Hamden, says. “The overall theme of the UConn PEP programming is taking people and letting them know they are already leaders. We are pulling a dormant fire and determination out of them. They often feel overlooked as just parents, but they are great leaders.” The community projects that the groups select prove what great leaders they are and empower the participants to continue making a difference in their communities after graduating from the UConn PEP program.

Extension offered over 763 programs and events throughout Connecticut in 2019. UConn PEP and EFNEP are just two of many programs that are empowering individuals and communities. We are here to serve Connecticut and will continue collaborating with partner organizations to address challenges and make our state a better place to live. The future is brighter when all voices contribute to the solutions our communities need. —*Stacey Stearns*



Above: Robin Drago-Provencher and Rich Mutts at a 2017 UConn PEP program. Below: Participants in a Meriden PEP program share their empowerment rocks.



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 Dr. Katharine F. Knowlton
 Dr. Lynn R. Brown and
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 Dr. Michael P. O'Neill and
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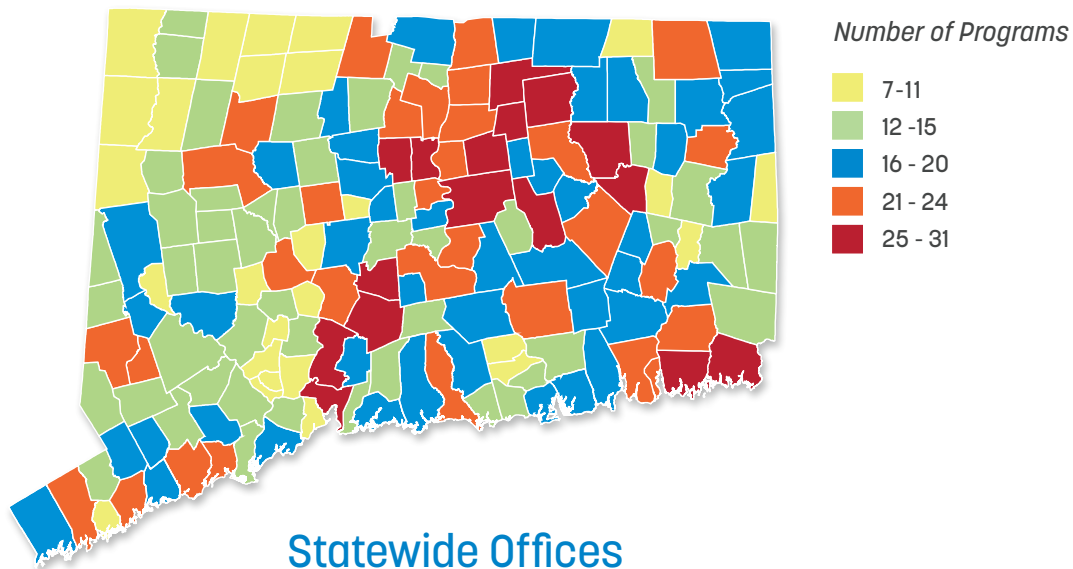
Thank you. Your generous donations help support programming in our critical mission areas for another year.



In Our Communities

Active Extension Programs in Connecticut

There were a total of 2,849 programs provided in Connecticut towns and cities in 2019. That's no fewer than 7 programs in each of the 169 municipalities; some had 31.



Statewide Offices

Extension, with its headquarters on the Storrs campus, has offices throughout the state to better serve our communities.

UConn Storrs Campus
extension@uconn.edu
extension.uconn.edu
 860-486-3581

Soil Nutrient Analysis Lab
soiltest@uconn.edu
soiltest.uconn.edu
 860-486-4274

Home & Garden Education Center
ladybug@uconn.edu
ladybug.uconn.edu
 1-877-486-6271

Plant Diagnostic Lab
plant.lab.uconn.edu
 860-486-6271

UConn State 4-H Office
4-H.uconn.edu
 1-888-FOURHCT

4-H Education Center at Auerfarm
auerfarm.org
 860-242-7144

Connecticut Sea Grant
seagrants.uconn.edu
 860-405-9127

Fairfield County
fairfield@uconn.edu
 203-207-8440

Hartford County
hartford@uconn.edu
 860-409-9050

Litchfield County
litchfield@uconn.edu
 860-626-6240

Middlesex County
middlesex@uconn.edu
 860-345-4511

New Haven County
newhaven@uconn.edu
 203-407-3161

New London County
newlondon@uconn.edu
 860-887-1608

Tolland County
tolland@uconn.edu
 860-875-3331

Windham County
windham@uconn.edu
 860-774-9600