



Maricopa County Cooperative Extension

IMPROVING LIVES, COMMUNITIES,
AND THE ECONOMY

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45



Accessibility in Social Media

Cné Serrano, MCCE SNAP-Ed Graphic Artist and Social Media Coordinator

While social media is a fun way to engage with the community from the online world, there are people who struggle with social media because of certain preferences or visual disabilities they face. Oftentimes, screen readers are used to not only read to the users, but also describe emojis and photos on the page. There are several measures we can take to ensure we are inclusive in our social media posts and messages across many platforms especially when screen readers are being used.

Emojis: Much of the time, screen readers are not programmed to decipher tone or emojis. Using an excessive amount of emojis could be annoying as screen readers tend to explain what each emoji is. [This video](#) is an example of what users who rely on screen readers hear on their end. Although emojis add personality and voice to the caption of our posts, an excessive amount could be turning some of our community members off to posts from us, and in the future, they might skip them altogether.

Assistance with Image Description: Like previously mentioned, various social media platforms like the three major ones (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) offer an “alt text” or “photo description” option that can be used to describe the images and photos being used and can be read by a screen reader. For example, if a photo is posted of children wearing chef’s hats and cooking spaghetti, the user’s phone could easily let them know what is on their screen. Photo descriptions also allow those with photosensitivity issues, like epilepsy, to still enjoy online content in a safe way even though most users turn off auto-play for videos and GIFs or disable images altogether. However, with a detailed description the user can choose if they would like to experience it or not. The more descriptive the better, but long-winded explanations can be bothersome, so using our best judgement is important!

Hashtags: Additionally, we should commit to #CapitalizingOurHashtags! When the hashtag is #behealthyaz, for example, the assistive tech tries to pronounce it as one word, whereas if it is capitalized to #BeHealthyAZ it can differentiate the three words in that hashtag and read them accurately for the user. Capitalization also makes it easier for people with reading comprehension issues to accurately read the hashtags as well.

If the commitment is made to take these steps to be more accessible, social media can be more inclusive and enjoyed by more people in our communities.

If you have any questions about the above information, please reach out to me: cneserrano@arizona.edu

Advanced Smartscape: Plant Materials

Kirti Mathura, Program Coordinator Smartscape



We completed our **Summer/Fall Smartscape** course in early August. This basic course covers a comprehensive range of topics and is the foundation for all of our Advanced Smartscape courses.

Some graduates, as well as those from previous Smartscape courses, expanded their knowledge of over 200 appropriate desert-adapted water-efficient plants for use in our local landscapes. With developing water conditions, we felt it important to equip those working in the landscape industry with a selection of plants that can keep our landscapes vibrant while realizing increased water efficiency. Participants discovered alluring alternatives to high-water-use plants, and information useful in educating those hesitant to make changes moving away from higher water consumption.

After launching the new course last year, we modified it with an additional class to ensure that we can cover sufficient information to help people correctly identify plants and match them to specific conditions and needs of individual landscapes.

Master Gardener Volunteers help with all the Smartscape courses.

Those who assist with our advanced courses are truly vital to keeping the flow of materials and activities running smoothly.

We are preparing for the Spanish version of this course to begin in January 2023.

For more information:

visit the [Smartscape website](https://www.smartscape.org) or contact [Kirti Mathura](#)





Project CENTRL Class 31 completed their third and fourth seminars in September and August traveling to Show Low and Cd. Obregon, Sonora Mexico. Feedback from learning about the Natural Resource economy in Show Low included: "After our rangeland presentation and tour I have a greater appreciation and understanding for rangeland. Before I would drive by and look out not knowing how rangeland was worked. After this session I feel like I have a good understanding for what is going on out there." For the Mexico trip, 81% of the participants said their views of Mexico changed because of this trip, sharing things like: "It was interesting to see how advanced Mexico is in some industries and hearing about the struggles helped me realize that we are not that different." and "My views changed in that I learned of how much better Mexico is in technology (Irrigation system) and how they excel in growing vegetables. My views changed in that Mexico wants the same we want here in the US....safety, jobs, health. I learned they live for hope and faith every day. I learned that as a US we are a country of privilege."



Additional Opportunities

Additional opportunities for anyone interested to meet Class 31 and learn more about CENTRL will be: January 26, 2023 dinner at the Holiday Inn, Yuma. February 3-4 at the Grand Canyon and February 22 dinner at the Holiday Inn Express Downtown Phoenix. Registration available soon at www.centrl.org/events

Applications for CENTRL Class 32 will be due Wednesday 3/15/23 and available soon at www.centrl.org/apply

Food Safety Training & Certification for Maricopa County Cooperative Extension

Number of MCCE staff recently attended the State Food Safety Training. It was a day-long presentations, followed by the state exam for Food Safety Manager. Many of participants in this training took the exam, and all are now having their State Food Manager Certification. Topics covered were food purchase and storage, temperature control from storage to table, sanitation, maintenance, allergens, and food born illnesses. This training was a great opportunity that gave us the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to keep customers safe by overseeing the safe storage, preparation, and service of food in the kitchen. That will come handy when dealing and preparing food at the commercial kitchen at MCCE.

The training was fabulously conducted by Aimee Novak and Bree Daugherty of the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Food Safety and Health Education Program. They also facilitated the examination of the Food Safety Manager Certification.



Master Gardener Volunteers at MCCE share their gardening know-how with Medical Students

Rebecca Senior, Assistant in Extension, Ornamental Horticulture

In the month of October, Master Gardeners pitched in to help a group of Medical Culinary Elective students learn how to grow herbs and vegetables and gave several garden tours to show just how it can be done in a community. This complemented the students' month-long training in food as medicine. In a recent UArizona News article, **Dr. Farshad Fani Marvasti** highlighted the need for more nutritional education for medical students.

"Although diet is the No. 1 factor for preventable disease and death, medical students in the U.S. only receive about 20 hours of nutrition education", said Dr. Farshad Fani Marvasti, a practicing physician and director of public health, prevention and health promotion in the UArizona College of Medicine – Phoenix.

To read the full article from UArizona News (the central news website for the University of Arizona) click [here](#).

The collaborative grant funded project between Dr. Marvasti, and UArizona associate professor **Melanie Hingle**, a nutrition scientist, public health researcher and registered dietitian nutritionist in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, aims to support community health by growing foods for a healthy body. An undeniable bonus to the many health affirming benefits the joy of gardening delivers is the community it creates.

Dr. Marvasti reached out to Maricopa County Cooperative Extension for help in growing healthy produce and herbs to complement the new cooking skills the medical students would learn from local chefs during the daily classes.

Master Gardener **Pam Perry** presented an outside hands-on class where the students planted a lettuce bowl to take and grow at home.



A hands-on herb potting project and tour of the lovely herb garden maintained by AHA was enjoyed by all.

UArizona's **Rebecca Senior** arranged three garden tours in the Valley so the students could see several models they could use to support and promote gardening for community health in their medical career.



Master Gardener **Greg Brownell** introduced the students to a school garden concept at Martin Luther King elementary school which his not-for-profit supports. Then he took them on a chef's garden tour at The Farm at South Mountain where an outdoor cooking oven produces delicious food.



Greg Brownell's son-in-law, **Chef Dustin** at The Farm at South Mountain shared his knowledge and an amazing citrus sorbet.

Sowan Thai toured the students through the innovative community garden at Spaces of Opportunity <https://www.spacesofopportunity.org/> check out their Farmers Market. The last community garden, Mesa Urban Garden, MUG, is a smaller but mightily supportive place where citizens of Mesa can rent a raised bed garden space.

At the end of the month-long adventure, it was clear the medical students were enthusiastic about their developing careers and the new health affirming possibilities they could provide to the communities wherever they land. As they left the last garden in Mesa, Rebecca shared these parting words, "Now you have partners in any state where you find yourself working, possibly a clinic with a small plot of open soil. Find that states Cooperative Extension Master Gardener volunteers and they will teach your patients about gardening and the joy of eating something they grew."

As the Culinary Medicine program continues, we look forward to Master Gardener volunteers sharing their gardening knowledge with the next group of medical students.

Urban Horticulture Program

Master Gardener Fall Festival & Plant Sale

Michael Chamberland

Assistant Agent, ANR/ Urban Horticulture



The 2022 Master Gardener Fall Festival saw a crowd of over 730 attendees walk through the gates at Metro Tech High School. Seventy-five Master Gardener volunteers contributed to organizing the event, including setup and staffing the Fall Festival. Volunteers and program staff recruited and managed outdoor vendors of plants and other garden items featuring a range of locally-made products at the sale.

The Master Gardener Program was represented at the Arizona State Fair for the first time. We covered 18 of the 22 days that the Fair ran, during late September to late October. Forty-eight volunteers provided information and answers for 849 attendees who visited the Master Gardener booth.

Highlights from the Field Crops IPM and Urban Ag/Beginner and Small-Scale Farmer Programs

Dr. Ayman Mostafa, Associate Area Agent, ANR / Field Crops IPM

The Field Crops and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program has two new Arizona Cooperative Extension peer-reviewed publications. The first is discussing effects of the application of balanced phosphorus and potassium fertilizers on alfalfa yield and yield components, <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az2003-2022.pdf>. The second article is dealing with some of the Program's early research on sugarcane aphids, *Melanaphis sacchari* In sorghum, <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az2005-2022.pdf>.

Both articles are providing local, research-based information that will guide our clientele in the decision making of managing the nutrients in alfalfa and control sugarcane aphid in sorghum.



We had two recent field days that entered their 12th consecutive year. On November 9, 2022, we hosted the **12th Central Arizona Farmer Field Day** at the Maricopa Agricultural Center where we showed the results of many trials conducted by the Arizona Cooperative Extension Agriculture Team members, as well as an update on the status of Arizona Cooperative Extension from Dr. Ed Martin.

The other one was the **Late Season Field Day** held at the site of the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Cotton Variety trials at A Tumbling T Ranches in Goodyear on November 22, 2022.

Both events were very-well attended with our clientele (growers, pest control advisors, industry representatives, and government representatives). They were great opportunities for our clientele to get “up close and personal” with the amazing research that Extension personnel are performing.

Highlights from the Urban Ag Production, Beginner and Small-Scale Farmer Program

In order to increase our capacity to provide the needed educational, applied research and outreach to our clientele, the Program just hired new Assistant in Extension, Colleen Hanley, and Program Coordinator, Antonio Ugarte. Both came with great experiences and training that fit our program. They hit the ground running with full engagement of our clientele and activities. Here're short biographies of Colleen and Antonio:



Colleen Hanley

Colleen holds BAs in Environmental Studies and Psychology from the University of Vermont and an MA in Nutrition and Food Studies from New York University. She blends her academic training with her background working on small-scale, diversified vegetable farms to inform her work in agriculture. Her prior research has focused on urban agriculture, organic agriculture, and beef cattle ranching in the West with a focus on Arizona. She is passionate about supporting new, beginning, and small-scale farmers, food justice, small business development, land access, and farmland preservation. In her new role, Colleen will serve as Assistant in Extension to the Urban Agriculture Production Program at Maricopa County Cooperative Extension and looks forward to collaborating with farmers, community-based organizations, and other key

stakeholders to build a robust support system for Arizona's beginning, small-scale, and urban farmers with a focus on underserved producers.



Antonio Ugarte

Antonio holds a BS in Agriculture and Environmental Education with an emphasis in Applied Biological Systems Technology from the University of California, Davis. He has experience with outreach, collaborating with underrepresented communities in the Sacramento region, mentoring high school students who are in pursuit of higher education. He combines his personal passion for educational outreach with

agricultural education to provide resources and services to under-resourced populations, and further support new/beginning farmers with small-scale urban agriculture. In his new role with our team, Antonio will serve as a Community Outreach Professional, and as the Farm Manager of our Maricopa Cooperative Extension on-site demonstration farm! He is excited to collaborate with farmers and our community-based organizations to further support Arizona's urban agriculture.

4-H - Outreach With A Telescope

Emilio Martinez, Discovery 4-H

One night, I helped with a fancy, high-powered telescope to get a great view of Saturn and Jupiter. They looked so clear and detailed. It was cool to think about how far away they were but, we could see them so clearly! I could even see the famous “red storm” on Jupiter and its stripes. It was a really great night, but why was I able to do this for free? Did my parents have friends in the right places? Is there a cool stargazing place near my house that I snuck into, or was I a part of an amazing 4-H program that required me to complete some community outreach? No, no, and yes!



I was part of the National 4-H Mission Command Team this summer. One of the criteria for everyone going to space camp in Florida was to complete some outreach to at least 50 people about space. How is a 14-year-old supposed to get ahold of that many people (and get them to pay attention)? Easy, by going to a place where there is a good flow of people to educate. That’s why I went to one of the very last Flashlight Nights at the Desert Botanical Garden (DBG). This is an educational event about our desert with multiple stations including scorpions and other desert creatures, mesquite tree sap painting, a super high-quality Orion telescope where information about the night sky is given out, and many others.



At the telescope, I partnered with Andrea Bailey from DBG, who seemed to be somewhat of a space and stargazing expert! The people would line up for the telescope and I would have them look up at the constellations and use the Night Sky app, to discover what was visible that night and what they’d be able to see in the telescope. I entertained and educated everyone in line to keep everyone happy. It was a great night because Saturn was out for a while, then Jupiter! You could see the rings around Saturn and Jupiter’s moons. We got to see Jupiter in surprisingly good detail that night!

It was a busy night at the garden and we reached almost 300 people. It was fun because everyone seemed really interested in learning more about space.

I met people from all around Phoenix and partnered with Andrea and the DBG. 4-H helps us members, aged 5-18, to “Learn by doing” and share what we learn about our projects. In my case, just a fun opportunity to share the night sky!



Turfgrass Science

Pest Management and Pesticide Safety for Golf and Landscape Maintenance Personnel Seminars

This year, The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Turfgrass Program will offer two dates and locations:

December 8th at Sun City West and **December 9th at Mesa**

Both events will feature presentations by experts on various aspects of turf and landscape pest management and pesticide safety. Six AZ Dept. of Ag. ESD (Ag.),

PMD (OPM) and GCSAA CEUs will be applied for.

Click the Sun City [flyer](#) for more information. Register [here](#)!

Click the Mesa [flyer](#) for more information. Register [here](#)!



Associate Director's Cut

Dr. Ayman Mostafa

The temperatures are getting lower, and days are getting shorter, as we just concluded the Thanksgiving holiday and counting days to Christmas, holiday season and new year. Our Maricopa County Cooperative

Extension faculty and staff are going full steam with their excellent work to serve our communities. Multiple programs were involved in training efforts for culinary medicine students from the UA College of Medicine to teach them about producing and handling food. Many of our MCCE team joined the State Food Safety Training on October 21st. Several took the Food Safety Manager exam afterward, and all who took the exam passed! It was great experience and opportunity to know more about the handling and safety of food.

The Smartscape program finished the Summer/Fall Smartscape course in early August, and preparing for the Spanish version of this course to begin in January 2023. 75 of our Master Gardener volunteers contributed to the organization of the 2022 Master Gardener Fall Festival that hosted a crowd of over 730 attendees walk through the gates at Metro Tech High School. The turfgrass program is hosting two Pest Management and Pesticide Safety for Golf and Landscape Maintenance seminars on December 8 and 9 at Sun City West and Mesa, respectively.

I enjoyed reading the 4-H articles about Rancho de Canelo camp activities and the experience of using telescope visit for outreach activities, and the Snap-Ed article Program about accessibility in social media. These readings showed the multitude of fun, innovation, science and engagements in both program activities. The search and screen committee for a new 4-H and Youth Development Agent in our office is screening candidates. The progress of the search will be updated so that all our stakeholders will be able to participate in the process and ensure that we will bring the best possible 4-H and Youth Development Agent to ensure that the Program will grow vigorously into the future.

The Urban Ag Production, Small-Scale and Beginning Farmer Program just hired new talents as Assistant in Extension and Program Coordinator. The Field Crops IPM Program concluded the year with The Central Arizona Farmer Field Day and the Late Season Field Day, both run for the 12th successive year, bringing new, science-based and timely information to the record attendees.

Please stop by and see what's new at the office. As always, thanks to everyone for their continued support of Maricopa County Cooperative Extension!

I want to personally wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season, and Joyful New Year. Our next newsletter will be January 2023!

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