

# Extension service puts Michigan State resources to work for you

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**M**ichigan State University Extension (MSUE) was created in the early 20th century to deliver science-based information generated by Michigan State University (MSU) faculty to residents in every county in Michigan with the goal of helping them improve their lives. Today, MSUE continues to work with the same mission: to put MSU and its resources to work in areas that matter to Michigan.

The role of the MSUE Oakland County office in Pontiac is to understand local issues, challenges and opportunities in the County and its unique communities and work in partnership with other local organizations and agencies to plan and implement relevant educational programming. MSUE Oakland County provides programming in 5 main areas: Gardening; Land Use; Natural Resources; Nutrition, Health and Wellness; and Youth Development.

MSUE offers a variety of garden education programs and diagnostic services. The Plant and Pest Hotline/Diagnostic Clinic offers residents expert advice and educational resources on all aspects of yard and garden care. Contact the Plant & Pest Hotline (248-858-0902) next time you have a question. Staff offers non-biased research-based solutions for your pest problems at our Diagnostic Clinic. Year-round soil testing services are also offered.

For those interested in learning and volunteering, MSUE also offers the Michigan Master Gardener Volunteer Program, a horticulture education and volunteer leader training program. This 13-week program is geared toward individuals with an interest in plants, a personal commitment to volunteerism and an enthusiasm for sharing knowledge with others. Topics covered include native plants, plant science, soils/composting,

water quality, invasive plants, vegetable and flower culture, lawn care, household pests, backyard fruit, woody ornamentals, indoor plants, propagation, diagnostics/plant health care and volunteering. There is also a Junior Master Gardener Program for youth!

A number of upcoming gardening workshops will be offered this Spring, including Growing Vegetables Organically (March 19 & 26); Curb Appeal (April 16); Garden Design 1-2-3 (April 30, May 7, 14, & 21; 9); and Basic Lawn Care (May 12).

Educational programs in the area of Land Use help planning boards and commissions, as well as all residents, understand legal and ethical considerations when making decisions. Well informed decisions are most likely to result in economic development, low impact on the environment and a high quality of life for local residents. The Citizen Planner workshops and trainings are offered in Oakland County and on-line to those interested in learning more about land use decisions in their community.

MSUE also provides learning experiences about natural resources in Oakland County. We offer a variety of resources, educational workshops, and volunteer programs on topics such as natural resource and ecosystem management, conservation and environmental stewardship, and environmentally-friendly landscaping.

The Michigan Conservation Stewards Program provides a unique opportunity for learning and volunteering. This 10-week volunteer training and leadership program is designed for individuals who are interested in conservation and ecosystem management, outdoor recreation, natural areas, and current conservation issues. The series of classes, led by experts in various fields of conservation and natural resources, includes lectures, interactive learning and field experiences.

A new educational initiative offered this year focuses on natural shoreline landscapes on



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inland lakes. Several workshops offered by the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership of which MSUE is a partner, will focus on the multiple benefits that natural shorelines provide to Oakland County's over 1,400 inland lakes. These educational sessions aim to educate property owners about natural shorelines and technologies that benefit lake ecosystems, including natural shoreline landscaping and bioengineered erosion control techniques that can enhance and restore inland lake ecosystems while maintaining aesthetically pleasing lake access and enjoyment. A workshop is scheduled for May 24th at the MSU Tollgate Education Center in Novi.

In the area of Nutrition, Health and Wellness, MSU Extension-Oakland staff engages individuals and groups in fun learning experiences to convey information about the advantages of a healthy diet and

physical activity, handling and preparing food to ensure safety, budgeting to get the most nutritional bang for their buck, planning menus and even preserving food in their own kitchen. Monthly newsletters are published to increase knowledge and awareness related to food issues and the latest research. MSUE Food Safety staff operates a consumer phone hotline (248-858-0904) for individuals who have questions about food safety, food preservation and nutrition. Educational programs are available to groups, including a food preservation correspondence course. In partnership with the Oakland County Health Department's Women Infant and Children (WIC) office, MSUE also promotes breastfeeding among food stamp eligible WIC mothers during an infant's first year of life. English and Spanish speaking staff offers mothers with the education, support and the

encouragement they need to successfully breastfeed.

MSUE provides 4-H programming focused around academic success, leadership and civic engagement, career and workforce preparation, and capacity building for youth skill development. Programs are offered to young people ages 5-19 through clubs, after/school activities, leadership institutes, field experiences, and international exchanges and are designed to help kids do better in school, learn to help others, feel more capable and be responsible. Staff also works in communities to help adults understand their roles in creating environments that value young people and facilitate the development of the assets they need to be happy, healthy, successful adults, including leadership, citizenship and life skills.

One innovative 4-H project that gives inner-city and suburban youths a chance to learn

about gardening, food and nutrition, food safety, cooking, sustainability, entrepreneurship, teamwork, business and marketing skills and more is the Youth Gardens and Farm Stand Project. Several 4-H club youth and Master Gardeners in Pontiac and Novi use sustainable "hoop houses" to enable four-season gardening, working side-by-side to design and plant gardens, maintain the fruits and vegetables as they grow through the season, and then harvest, market, and sell their produce at farm stands.

Educational offerings are offered throughout the year in locations across Oakland County. For more information on these and other MSUE programs in Oakland County or how you can get involved, contact (248) 858-0880. Visit us on the web often at [www.oakgov.com/msu](http://www.oakgov.com/msu). To learn about MSUE in other counties, visit [www.msue.msu.edu](http://www.msue.msu.edu).