



Team Members:

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Educational Objectives:

South Carolina is one of the fastest-growing states in the Country. As South Carolina is experiencing an increase in development and urban sprawl that comes with the population influx, there is a need to create more wildlife-friendly landscapes. Backyard Wildlife Habitat by Clemson Extension introduced homeowners to the basic needs of wildlife. It provided recommendations to make their backyards more wildlife-friendly, regardless of the size of their yards.

The Objectives of Backyard Wildlife Habitat:

- Identify methods homeowners could use to make their backyards more wildlife-friendly by incorporating food, shelter, water, and space into their landscapes
- Provide homeowners with a free resource that is nonbiased and research-based that teaches homeowners about wildlife and their needs
- Demonstrate and install a backyard wildlife habitat garden in a public area that features plants and wildlife-enhancement items that can easily be replicated

Program Activities:

Online Short Course: Clemson Extension partnered with Clemson Online to develop a free, on-demand, self-paced short course where participants go through a series of online modules that cover: (1) the basic needs of wildlife, (2) food requirements for wildlife and native plant recommendations, (3) shelter requirements for wildlife and ways to incorporate them, (4) water requirements for wildlife, (5) and space requirements for wildlife and how these elements all work together. Each module had a resource section that provided participants with additional reading materials. The Online Course was intentionally set up to be free, self-paced, and had very specific learning objectives. The total recorded content for the short course was 1 hour. Participants can enroll in the

course by visiting this link: <https://cpe.clemson.edu/browse/extension/courses/backyard-wildlife-habitat>

Demonstration Garden: A demonstration garden was installed at the South Carolina Botanical Garden (SCBG) in Clemson, South Carolina, that features native plants that are beneficial to wildlife and other wildlife-enhancement items such as nesting boxes, Mason bee houses, and bird baths. The garden features educational signage that discusses the practices implemented in the garden and connects visitors to online resources. In addition, a time-lapse video of the installation process was recorded that demonstrated proper planting techniques, spacing, and placement and showed how the garden progressed throughout the year.

Lecture Series: The Clemson Extension TEACH Center hosted a Native Plant Lecture Series, where the sessions featured talks from Extension Agents, Specialists, Associates, and other professionals about native plants, pollinators, and making backyards more wildlife-friendly.

Resource Material: Clemson Extension is seen as one of the most trustworthy government organizations in South Carolina and the Southeast. Each module was developed utilizing research-based information and had educational resources and additional reading material for each module. There is much information on native plants and wildlife; however, housing it in one place was essential for this program's success and effectiveness.

Teaching Methods:

Backyard Wildlife Habitat is taught primarily through online and in-person lectures and informational videos.

Topics included:

- Basic Needs of Wildlife
- Food for Wildlife & Native Plants
- Water for Wildlife
- Shelter/Cover for Wildlife
- Space for Wildlife

Online lectures were short 10–15-minute presentations. Although online, the lectures encourage participants to be active in their backyards. For example, one lecture asks participants to conduct a wildlife resource inventory of their yard.

In-person lectures dove deeper into one particular focus area and directed participants to take the online course. When applicable, hands-on activities were featured during these lectures.

Results:

Many partnerships and collaborations were formed due to the Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program. These partners include the SCBG, Clemson Online, SC Master Naturalist, SC Master Gardener, Carolina Yards by Clemson Extension, Native Plants to the People, Roots and Shoots Nursery, and Seamon Whiteside.

The Backyard Wildlife Habitat Short Course has been the fastest-growing on-demand online program that Clemson Extension and Clemson Online have offered to date. This course also fulfilled a need for content material, which was currently lacking on the Clemson Extension Natural Resources Program Team, which tends to focus on larger landowners.

- 558 participants from South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia have gone through the online course.
- The Wildlife Habitat Garden is located near the SCBG's Visitors Center, which sees, on average, 350,000 people a year.
- 84% of participants indicated they intend to adopt wildlife-friendly practices in their backyards in the future.
- One hundred twenty people attended the Native Plant Lecture Series. 100% of participants who attended the presentation specifically about backyard wildlife habitat indicated that they intend to incorporate practices learned into their backyards.

Impact Statement:

Since its inception, the Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program has engaged over 566 participants across South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, offering them a user-friendly platform to learn how to integrate wildlife-friendly practices into their landscapes. The program has also generated valuable partnerships with organizations like South Carolina Master Naturalist, the South Carolina Botanical Gardens, and Clemson Online, expanding its reach and impact.

The demonstration garden at the South Carolina Botanical Garden further enhances the program's visibility, with approximately 350,000 visitors annually able to experience firsthand the value of native plants and wildlife-enhancement techniques. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with 84% of survey respondents indicating their intent to implement the practices they learned. The program's success is further reflected in the 100% increase in participants' understanding of wildlife needs, along with 100% of participants indicating they increased their knowledge of practical methods to turn their backyards into wildlife habitats. Participants also received high quiz scores, averaging 98% on the post-course assessment associated with the course.

The Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program is not only educating the public but also actively transforming backyards into sustainable habitats for wildlife, fostering a deeper connection between people and nature while contributing to the preservation of South Carolina's natural resources amidst rapid development.

Evaluation:

A post-course assessment was provided to all participants utilizing the testing feature in Canvas, which is where the Backyard Wildlife Habitat Course is housed. A Qualtrics evaluation was provided at the end of the Online Course. Post-evaluations were also provided in the Lecture Series for each session. The positive feedback from the course also offered insight into the need for and desire to create additional free online-based learning opportunities about targeted topics in the wildlife and natural resources fields.

Testimonials from Backyard Wildlife Habitat:

This is an excellent course for new homeowners, new gardeners and people new to the area. The information flows easily from one module to the next and is not overwhelming in content. Thank you!

Clear, concise presentation. Gives homeowners the basic tools to begin making whatever area they have into a wildlife-friendly zone

I have already purchased and installed a Bug Hotel! I will follow through with building a backyard pond with a 20-gallon pot and native plants.

I especially appreciate the suggestions for how to make small yards and small spaces beneficial and that it's important to look at the larger context. I had not previously recognized that the development's stormwater pond across the street from me could work in conjunction with my yard to benefit wildlife.

It was well done, fun and engaging. Informative, visually engaging and easy to follow.