

Backyard Gardening Series: For General Audience Across Maryland

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EXTENSION

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic gardens became “in Vogue” especially among millennials and consumers who had no previous gardening experience (San Fratello et al., 2022). Americans have turned to gardening as a way to grow their own food, get outside, and take a therapeutic break from the uncertainty and introduced stress that pandemic has brought to their lives. In order to help educate and teach practical gardening skills, without being able to meet in person, University of Maryland Extension Educators generated a virtual series of seven different webinars. This series was geared towards educating new and moderately experienced gardeners. Backyard Gardening, included topic on basic garden planning, composting, fruit and vegetable production, pollinator gardens, herbs and pest management. This curriculum was designed to encompass a wide array of topics to appeal and capture diverse audience of Maryland gardeners.

Goals of this Series

- Introduce new gardening topics to new and moderately experienced Maryland gardeners.
- Access and teach to diverse audiences from across the state of Maryland.
- Expose participants to tools and resources they can use to make better planting, and garden maintenance choices.
- Allow participants to ask specific questions to experts on a specific topic.

Methods and Delivery

- This series was spun off of UME’s Backyard Farming series developed by Maegan Perdue.
- Advertising was conceived via email networks including Master Gardeners Program, as well as Facebook using pages including the Backyard Farming UME page, Home and Gardener Information Center UME and disseminated across the state through he extension network.
- This series was delivered via Zoom with required registration.
- The series ran from January to April in 2021.
- Each topic was offered twice at two live webinars one at 12:00 noon and one at 7:00 PM in order to accommodate a variety of diverse schedules.



Seven webinars were catchy names included in this series

1. Getting started: don't grow too wild, plan before you plant
2. Compost: lets talk dirty
3. Veggie gardening: smells like green spirit
4. Small fruit gardening: it's berry rewarding
5. Pollinator friendly gardening: bee good
6. Herbs: it's about thyme
7. Pest management: if it's bugging you there's a problem

Content

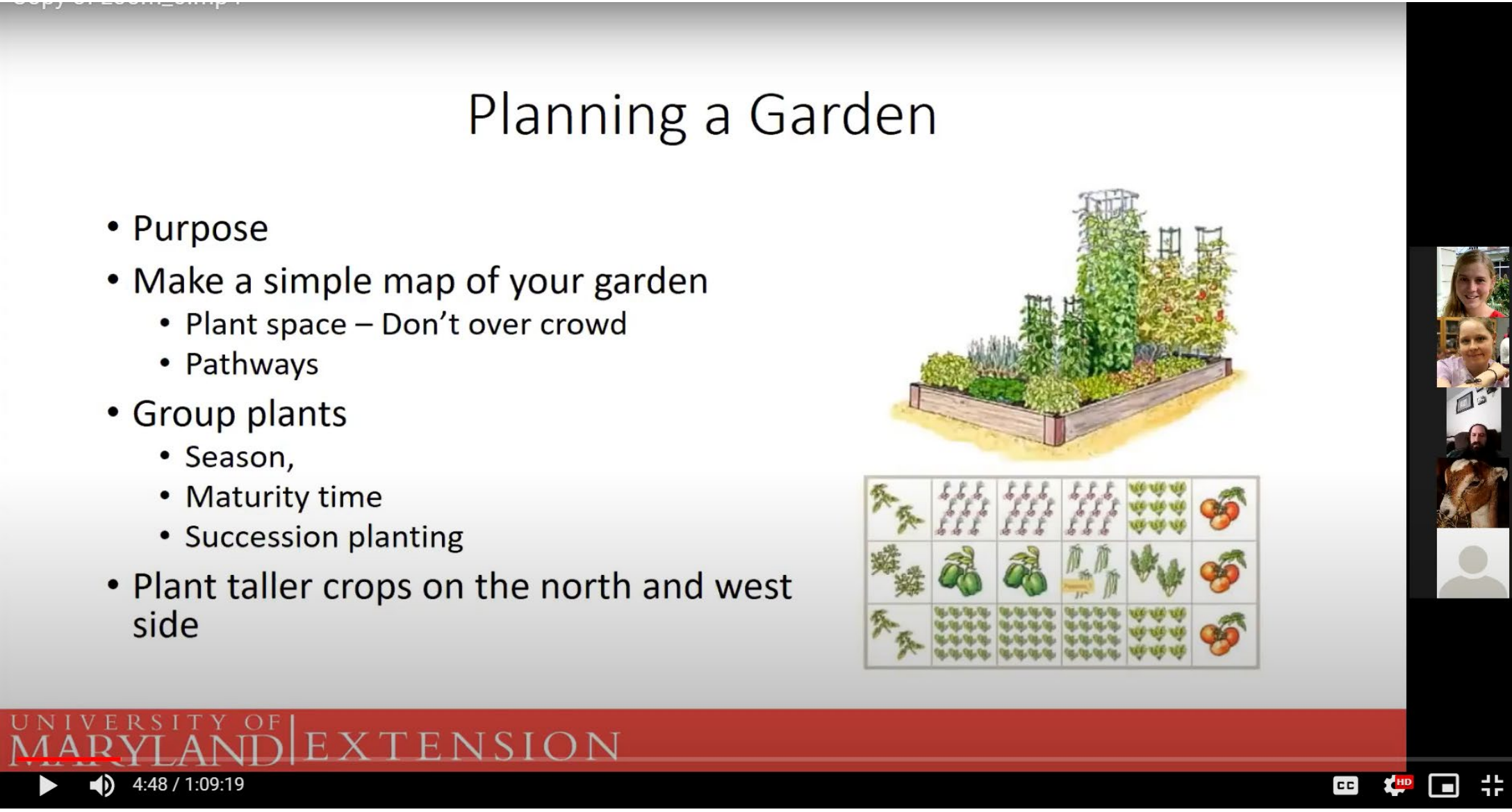


Figure 3) Screenshot from “Getting started: don't grow too wild, plan before you plant.”



Figure 2) Screenshot from “Herbs: it's about thyme” with Cheryl Bush proving an on camera demonstration.”

Original content was designed for each talk in the series. A variety of speakers were selected to present on different topics serval UME agriculture educators (Haley Sater, Emily Zobel, Ginny Rosenkrantz) and one master gardener coordinator (Rachel Rhodes) as well as one UME Family and Consumer Science educator (Cheryl Bush) to present about cooking with herbs (figure 2). The majority of content was delivered lecture style with slides: However, some demonstrations were included. Each talk was scheduled to last for one hour with 50 minutes of content and 10 minutes for questions and answers, although most sessions exceeded this time due to a large volume of questions.

Learning Outcomes and Statewide Impacts

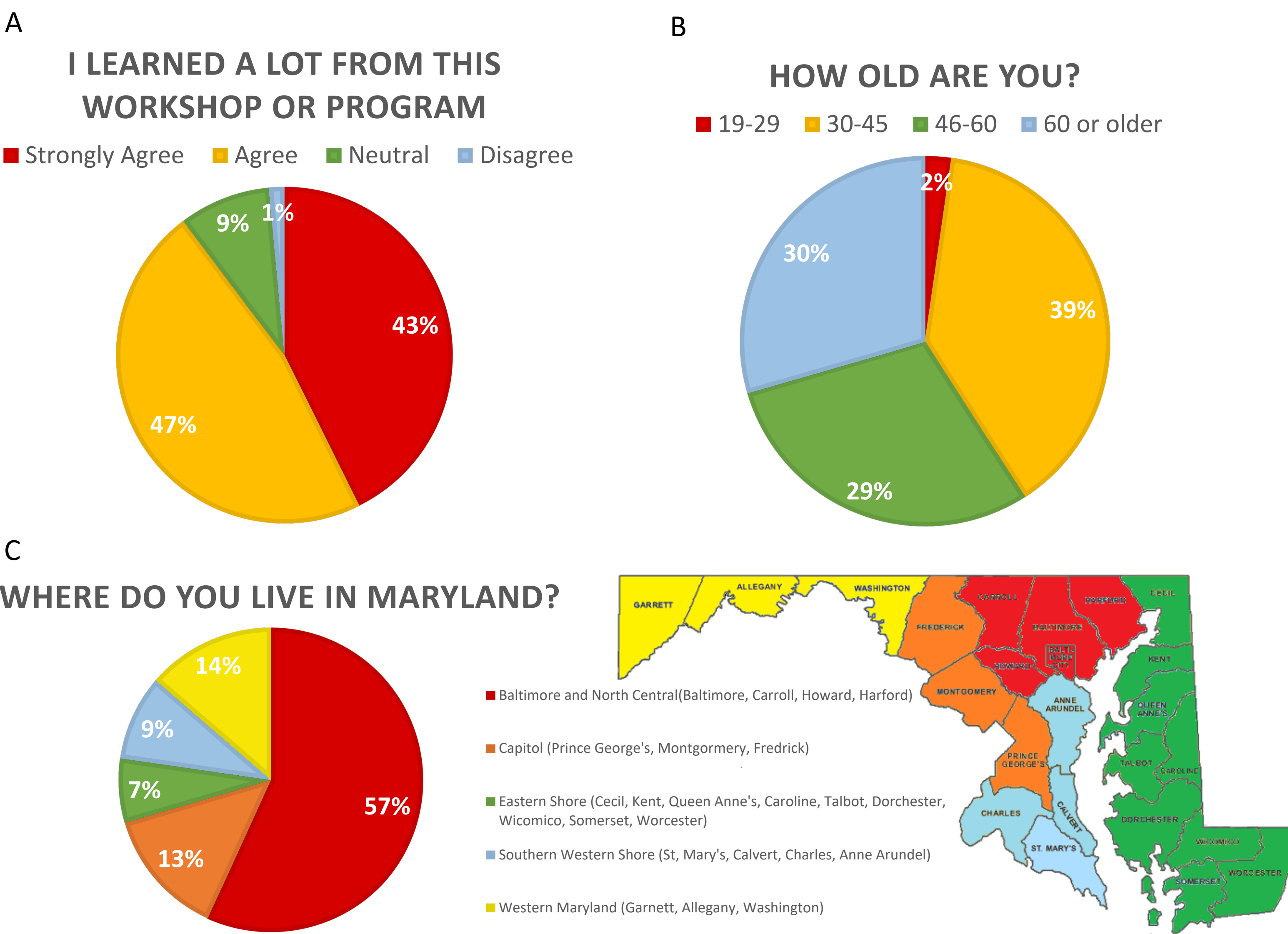


Figure 3) This survey data was conducted after the “Getting started: don't grow too wild, plan before you plant”. 68 participants responded to A, B and 44 responded to C.

Summery

- Received overwhelming positive feedback and multiple topic ideas for future series.
- Statewide reach was accomplished with larger population centers in Maryland accounting for a large portion of attendees.
- Attendees accounted for a wide range of ages.
- 434 participants throughout series, with between 216 – 66 attendees per topic.
- Attendance was highest for the first topics in the series and dropped sequentially as the series went on, although it was not clear whether that was due to pandemic restrictions easing or improved weather during spring months or simply more engaging topics offered earlier in the series.
- Self reported learning outcomes recorded through surveys after “Getting started: don't grow too wild, plan before you plant” indicate that the majority of participants learned at lot from the lecture.
- In 2022, we will introduce new topics as well and dive back into some topics that garnered lot of questions or interest.

Sources

San Fratello, David, et al. "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Gardening in the United States: Postpandemic Expectations." HortTechnology 32.1 (2022): 32-38.

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