



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
EXTENSION

SOUTHERN UPDATE



GIFT GARDEN

GROWING ILLINOIS FOOD TOGETHER

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Preparing Your GIFT

Steve Wagoner

Excitement is building as we plan and prepare GIFT Gardens in our new Southern Region Strategic Initiative. Help is needed from everyone to accomplish the goal of initiating "one or more youth-led, adult assisted food production program ... in every county in 2010."

Now that spring is here, counties should consider these tasks to prepare their GIFT Garden:

- Identify and recruit project partners, adult volunteers, and youth.
- Train youth and adult volunteers.
- Select space for the garden.
- Test soil, make adjustments, and begin garden bed preparations.
- Develop a garden plan, establish roles, and assign work.
- Buy seeds.
- Clean, prepare soil, or build and fill beds.
- Spread mulch.
- Buy seedlings.
- Plant and water.

This list is flexible, fluid, and varies depending on your local situation. You might already have a community garden

project and want to transition it to be youth-led and adult assisted; or, maybe you are starting a new one. Either way, strategically choose your project partners, adult volunteers, and youth.

Project partners and adult volunteers in a youth-led, adult-assisted GIFT Garden should embrace the concept of young people truly leading the planning and development of the garden. If potential GIFT Garden partners and adult volunteers don't support *youth leadership*, they may not be the best fit for this new initiative. Partners and volunteers should also bring resources that complement what you need for success.

Youth recruitment can satisfy many potential goals like youth leadership development, youth learning about food production, youth learning through service, and youth and adults working together. Identify your local youth development goals, and then find the best people to help with recruitment!

Your newly named Southern Illinois GIFT Garden Project Coordinators are LaDean Scheurer, Steve Wagoner, and Elizabeth Wahle.



Southern Region Shows Support at Robin Orr Day

Robin Orr was recognized at the state capitol on Friday, March 19, as the first recipient of the annual Robin A. Orr Community Partner Award. The award was in conjunction with the Illinois Nutrition Council's March Nutrition Month recognition. Four other Illinoisans received the Robin A. Orr Community Partner Award that day, and one of those recipients was from a Saline County school.

In addition, Governor Quinn proclaimed March 19 as Robin Orr Day in honor of her service to nutrition education for our most vulnerable families in the state.

About 40 staff members, including several retirees, from the region were on hand for the awards ceremony. While there, staff members had the opportunity to tour the capitol building and visit legislators.

Thanks go to Carol Schlitt for organizing the trip for our region, and appreciation to Susan Hayden, Steve Wagoner, and Pam Jacobs for assisting with lunch.



Calendar Items

State Director's Telenet
April 9

County Director Meeting
April 13, 9:30 a.m.
Regional Office

Extension Week
April 18 – 24

Regional Meeting
April 27 (tentative)

Regional Retreat
May 25–26

Marketing items for Extension Week are on the Southern Region Intranet, <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/regions/srd>. Follow the *Extension Week* link to view the available materials.

Personnel Update

- Michelle Bisel is the new visiting youth development educator in the southernmost counties. She started work on March 16 and is housed at the Johnson County Office. Previously, Michelle worked as an academic hourly for the AJMPU unit for about a year, with responsibility in community and economic development programming. She also served as the southern five liaison for Connect SI. She has a master's degree in economics from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Her bachelor's degree from Colorado Christian University is in business administration. Welcome Michelle!
- Judy Bingman, FNP and 4-H community worker in the Hamilton/Wayne/White unit, accepted the visiting youth educator SPIN position for the East Central Region. She is now based in Jasper County. We wish Judy the best in her new position.



Acknowledge the achievements and involvement of your volunteers ...
brought to you by thoughts we generated at the FISH Market Place.