



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
EXTENSION

SOUTHERN UPDATE



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Tropical Agriculture is Focus of Study Tour

Last February, ten Illinois members of the National Association of County Agriculture Agents (NACAA) traveled to Puerto Rico to learn about and experience agriculture in a tropical location. Representing the Southern Region were Dennis Epplin, Mike Plumer, Robert Bellm, and Ed Billingsley.

The trip included three types of tours: Historic, Natural Resources, and Crop Production.

The Historic Tour included visits to Castillo San Felipe del Morro, part of a massive defensive system built by the Spaniards in Old San Juan. The group also visited Castillo San Cristobal, also known as "St. Christopher Castle." It is built on San Cristobal hill and is the largest Spanish fortification in the New World.

The Natural Resources Tour showcased El Yunque National Forest, a rain forest that is part of the U.S. national forest system. The group also visited Guanica Dry Forest Reserve. These dry forests grow in areas receiving less than 1000 mm of rain annually.

The Crop Production Tour focused on multi-season farms with production, breeding, research, and seed increase capabilities.

The study group visited the Illinois Crop Improvement Association, Inc. winter farm facility at Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico, where they were able to inspect equipment and view various crop nurseries. The study group also toured the Pioneer Hi-Bred Research Farm Tour near Salinas, Puerto Rico. At this facility, one can find research trials being prepped, planted, pollinated, or harvested all at the same time on any given work day. The Monsanto Seed Research Station, located about 15 miles east of Ponce, Puerto Rico, gave group members a chance to see a facility in which up to three generations of corn and soybeans can be grown in one calendar year so that new traits can be introduced to existing genetic lines in these crops.

The group also visited the University of Puerto Rico Agricultural Diagnostic Clinic, Juana Diaz, and the Agricultural Experiment Station at Lajas.

Funding for the study tour was provided by the NACAA. Dennis Epplin served as the study tour group leader.



Calendar Items

County Director Meeting
May 18
Southern Regional Office

Marketing Committee Telenet
May 19

All Staff Meeting
May 25
Cedarhurst Center
Mt. Vernon

Regional Advisory Committee
June 8
Southern Regional Office

Ewing Field Day
June 10
9 A.M.

New Master Gardeners Graduate

Forty-five individuals from throughout the region completed the 2010 Master Gardener training—18 students were in the Vienna class, and 27 were in the Edwardsville cluster class.

The training included the topics of botany, plant pathology, turf, herbs, roses, insects, soils, landscape design, composting, fruits, vegetables, and herbaceous ornamentals.

The Edwardsville class also included a tour of Creekside Gardens in Collinsville and the Villa Marie Winery in Maryville.

Graduation was held on April 8 at the Johnson County Extension Office and on April 20 at the Monroe County Extension Office.

The new Master Gardeners are busy in their respective counties: Helping with home horticulture questions; manning information booths at garden shows; helping youth with GIFT gardens; organizing Garden Tours; beautifying community parks; and conducting educational programs.



Help a co-worker set up for a training or unload supplies from a vehicle following a program ... *brought to you by thoughts we generated at the FISH Market Place.*