

The South West Florida Small Farmers Network (SWFSFN) Spawns Multicounty Workshop Seminars

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The South West Florida Small Farmers Network (SWFSFN), a regional collaborative effort facilitated by the respective Agricultural/ Natural Resource Extension educators of three counties (Collier, Lee and Sarasota) has identified through surveys of participants at on-farm meetings the need for Extension educational programs. The objective of these seminars was for program participants to learn and adapt farming techniques that emphasize Best Management Practices (BMP) for home and market gardens and small farm enterprises. County specific urban and small farm seminars by each of the agents focused on topics ranging from animal nutrition and management, organic farm management, land management, pesticide use and safe handling. Topics of the seminars were reinforced with visits to local and urban small farms. Recent economic trends have increased program attendance and the popularity small farm business development, community and market gardening and entrepreneurial development topics. All county seminars' post program surveys reveal a high percentage adoption of small farm, community, market and personal garden practices discussed in these seminars.



Collier County

On consecutive Tuesday evenings in 2010, the Extension office offered two (3 week) series of educational programs entitled **Urban Enterprise farming**-featuring entrepreneurial business topics for the small acreage landowner interested in small scale production and **Crop Production**- featuring fruit and vegetable production principles and general garden techniques for the home gardener and urban farmer.



Lee County

In 2009 and 2010, the Lee County Extension Office offered three (4 week) series of educational workshops entitled Urban Farming 101. The aim of the series is to offer guidance to first time farmers on project implementation, production and marketing techniques required for operating a successful urban farm, especially where income generation or supplementation is an objective of the business.



Sarasota County

Market gardening is the commercial production of vegetables, fruits, flowers, and other plants, on a scale larger than a home garden, yet small enough that many of the principles of gardening can be applied, and is often oriented toward local markets, such as farmers markets. This series of 8 classes will cover different aspects of the scope, startup and operation of a market garden business

