

Healthy Georgia Connections

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EXTENSION FEATURE

The future of agricultural work: starring Generation Z

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Generation Z, made up of those born between 1995 and 2010, is the first generation to be considered true digital natives. Born at a time when personalized technology was already integrated into mainstream society, these individuals more than likely do not remember a time without email, cell phones or the internet.

Foodies in their own right, members of Gen Z are not only concerned with buying unique and healthy food, they also care about how their food is grown and the ethics of the company they bought it from. Gen Z workers are expected to be inclusive, purpose-driven, tech-savvy and pragmatic, lending themselves to favor agricultural careers that provide solutions to food system and farming operation problems.

As the largest generation ever, Gen Z is estimated to be 24.5% of the U.S. population and makes up approximately 24% of the global workforce. Future projections state that one in two Gen Z'ers are expected to be college educated (as compared to one in four millennials). Because they came of age during a time of economic uncertainty — the Great Recession — many Generation Z'ers are searching for employer stability and financial security. They are expected to stay with the same job longer than their millennial elders, but they also want to know how they can advance within the company and ultimately make a difference.

Gen Z workers incorporate technology into their everyday



living and are comfortable working in a variety of platforms and settings. From their perspective, work can get done from their device when they are at home, at the office or at a local coffee shop and at any time of day or night. Generation Z values dialogue to unpack differences, setting themselves up to be the most inclusive generation yet. They tend to search for individual truths and seek to define and redefine their identity as new information is presented to them. Matters of social justice are important to this generation that believes in human rights and equality for all people.

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES**Water testing and education program and resources for private well owners in Georgia***Uttam Saha, program coordinator, UGA Agricultural and Environmental Services Laboratories*

Municipal and county governments ensure the safety of public water supplies, but the safety of drinking water for private wells is the responsibility of the owners. About 95% of rural Georgians rely on around 681,000 private wells for their domestic water needs, including drinking water.

UGA Extension has played a significant role in ensuring that private well owners have safe drinking water in rural and suburban areas. In many instances, private well owners lack the knowledge or experience to protect and maintain their drinking water wells.

The primary goal of UGA Extension's well water safety program is to educate private well owners about properly maintaining water wells to ensure safe drinking water for their families. Regular water testing is a fundamental component of this program. Various water tests are

conducted by the Agricultural and Environmental Services Lab and samples can be submitted through county Extension offices (see aesl.ces.uga.edu/FeeSchedule/).

If test results reveal that water is unsuitable for drinking due to any kind of contamination, the source of contamination is traced and corrected, and water treatment strategies are recommended. As more homeowners test their water, evaluate the test results with UGA Extension agents and water specialists, and take remedial measures to correct any water quality problems, the quality of their water meets and exceeds the benchmarks set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Besides regular face-to-face or telephone consultations and organizing educational events for well owners, UGA Extension has developed a large library of educational materials and tools to effectively deliver the program:

- Water quality bulletins and circulars: aesl.ces.uga.edu/publications/watercirc
- An online tool for drinking water interpretation and recommendations: aesl.ces.uga.edu/water/recommendations
- A water testing database mapping program for summarizing household water quality trends at the county level: aesl.ces.uga.edu/DataTransfer/WaterMap2.asp
- A water testing database mapping program for summarizing the trend of emerging contaminants arsenic, lead, uranium and radon, in household waters: aesl.ces.uga.edu/water/map

Overall, the impact of this program is enormous. It protects the health of 1.8 million Georgians from the harmful effects of waterborne contaminants and prevents the contamination of the state's valuable ground water resources due to improper use of private wells.

FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES**Take advantage of the growing season with food preservation***Elizabeth Andress, professor and Extension specialist, Department of Foods and Nutrition*

Seasonal crops are in full abundance in gardens, farmers markets and grocery stores, and there are more to come in the next few months. There are a few main preservation methods that can extend this bounty for enjoyment later in the year.

Freezing freshly harvested, quality produce can keep many characteristics of the raw food, although almost all vegetables should receive a short blanch with heat before packaging. Blanching times and methods can be found in Extension publications and online at nchfp.uga.edu/how/freeze/blanching.html. When freezing foods, be sure to use proper packaging to protect flavor, color, moisture content and nutritional value from the dry air conditions of the home freezer.

Containers should not allow air to move in and out of them, either through closures and seals or through the container material itself. They should also be easy to seal and leakproof and crack-resistant at low temperatures. Use plastic bags, wraps and boxes intended for freezer storage and not general food storage purposes. Rigid plastic or glass containers can be used for liquids, while freezer bags and wraps are more suitable for dry-pack products that contain little or no liquid.

Vacuum packaging machines have been a great technological advance for retaining quality in frozen foods. Vacuum packaging removes air from inside a package that can lead to drying, oxidation and off-flavors, even at freezer temperatures. However, this packaging style is recommended for dry foods or wet foods partially frozen before packaging. Read the manufacturer's directions carefully when using a vacuum-packaging machine for wet foods, as many machines will be ruined if moisture is drawn out of food up into the appliance. There are also ways to minimize air trapped in other types of packaging, an important factor to control in all freezing.

Home canning involves preservation by heat with a vacuum seal on the container, which is usually a glass jar. Canning can be a less expensive way of storing food than freezing, but more time and energy are spent to prepare and process the foods. Canning some foods can be difficult for beginners, and it requires preserving foods using specific methods that keep the food safe when stored at room temperatures.

Home canning takes more specialized equipment and specific jar types than freezing. With many fruits and vegetables, there are procedures for either a raw pack or hot pack, but some can only be canned with a hot-pack option. It is important to know that the safety of a canning process is dependent on following research-based procedures for preparing the food, filling the jars, following the step-by-step management of processing the food in a recommended canner, properly cooling the canner if it is a pressure canner, and cooling the jars.

Canning is also a way of preserving specialties like salsas, pickles, relishes, jams and preserves for long-term storage. These need to be preserved and processed using tested recipes safe for canning. While people like to show creativity

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4-H YOUTH**Georgia 4-H names Dean's Award scholarship winners**

Cris deRevere, 4-H public relations coordinator, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

The 4-H Dean's Awards provide Georgia 4-H'ers the chance to showcase their cumulative talent, hard work and commitment to their communities. The awards are intensely competitive and are among the highest honors Georgia 4-H members can earn.

A Dean's Award is presented every year in each of the following five main 4-H project areas: agricultural and environmental sciences (including STEM); civic engagement and citizenship; family and consumer sciences; communications and the arts; and leadership. First place winners receive Master 4-H'er status and a \$500 scholarship.



Competitors submit a cumulative portfolio, much like a resume, highlighting their accomplishments from throughout their 4-H career. The portfolios are judged by project area experts, and high-scoring submissions are invited to participate in a separately judged interview session. This year, the finalist interview sessions were conducted in a virtual setting, giving youth the chance to gain interview skills and experience with online conferencing.

Congratulations to the finalists who interviewed virtually and to our five newest 2020 Dean's Awards recipients:**Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (and STEM)**

- 1st place – Lydia Connell, Tift County
- 2nd place – Kennedy Deveaux, Cobb County
- 3rd place – Neely McCommons, Oconee County

William "Bill" Edwards 4-H Dean's Award for Communications and the Arts

- 1st place – Allen Brooks, Houston County
- 2nd place – Parker Varnadoe, Madison County
- 3rd place – Arham Shah, Emanuel County

Civic Engagement and Citizenship

- 1st place – Juliette McKinley, Paulding County
- 2nd place – Ben Tellano, Hart County
- 3rd place – Drew Cribbs, Morgan County

Family and Consumer Sciences

- 1st place – Shazia Alam, Sumter County
- 2nd place – Madison Brown, Elbert County
- 3rd place – Lizzy Thompson, Grady County

James Harris 4-H Dean's Award for Leadership

- 1st place – Aromal Saji, Gwinnett County
- 2nd place – Gracie Grimes, Candler County
- 3rd place – Logan Bush, Laurens County

Food preservation, continued from page 3

through these kinds of condiments and sauces, there is only so much creativity that can safely be incorporated into home food preservation unless you are able to freeze your recipe instead of can it.

Food drying is also a great way to preserve produce. In Georgia and the Southeast, our humid climate makes using an electric dehydrator the best way of doing this. This method involves investing in specialized equipment and paying attention to food safety concerns with some foods.

Drying is not an option for all home-preserved foods, either because of the quality that results or food safety concerns.

Research-based procedures for canning, freezing and dehydrating foods can be found in UGA's "[So Easy to Preserve](#)" and at the [National Center for Home Food Preservation](#). There is also a youth curriculum for hands-on experiences available through the website and a for-sale book for teaching young children basic food preservation, "[Preserve It and Serve It](#)."

Generation Z, continued from page 1

More than 79% of Gen Z participants in a recent study said that they would stop buying brands that they considered homophobic and would tell others not to buy them as well. This data also transferred to brands that are considered racist or macho. Members of Gen Z want to believe in the mission of the brand that they buy from in every interaction they have with it and, more often than not, they rely on peers to gain information on which brands to trust. Face-to-face communication is important for this generation, whose members enjoy the value of personal relationships they know cannot be offered in the same way through social media.

The field of agriculture is a vibrant opportunity for members of Gen Z to become involved by solving problems such as issues regarding food access, lack of understanding from the public about where food comes from, or farmer profitability. Gen Z can play an active role in transitioning traditional farming practices to innovative technologies and look for ways to ensure economic prosperity and stability in the agriculture enterprise.

There is no doubt that Gen Z agriculturalists will be inclusive in their practices and continue to define the enterprise as they learn and gather new information about the world around them. Women will most assuredly continue to play a leading role in this agenda if current trends continue, as the numbers of women-owned agricultural operations have risen steadily overall in recent years.

EXTENSION PUBLICATIONS

The Intersection of Mosquito Management and Pollinator Protection: <https://t.uga.edu/971>

LOOKING TO BUY LOCAL?
Let Us Connect You!



AG PRODUCTS CONNECTION

In collaboration with Georgia Grown and other industry partners, UGA Extension is using its network of county offices to connect agricultural producers with consumers looking for fresh, Georgia-grown products. Visit t.uga.edu/508 for more.



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***Our purpose:** We translate the science of everyday living for farmers, families and communities to foster a healthy and prosperous Georgia.*