

Hands-on Training through the University of Florida Living Extension IPM Field Laboratory

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INTRODUCTION

A 330-acre farm at the Suwannee Valley Agricultural Extension Center was developed into a "Living Extension IPM Field Laboratory" to provide a hands-on, whole farm approach to teaching Integrated Pest Management (IPM). A 25 member, multi-disciplinary team of UF faculty and associated stakeholders planned and implemented the Living IPM Laboratory. The team secured a three year Extension IPM grant from USDA, NIFA and leveraged an additional \$110,000 in the first two years.



OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

The demonstration farm reduced the use of insecticides by 50% in year one due to a dramatic increase in the number of beneficial and predatory insects and vertebrate predators. Approximately 300 people were trained in 2012. There was a 68% knowledge gain of IPM principles. **Conclusion:** Clientele evaluations indicated that 81% were adopting at least three IPM strategies.



EDUCATIONAL METHODS

The field laboratory improvements include: maintaining plantings to attract beneficial organisms and provide year round habitats, demonstrating trap crop strategies, providing structures like bat houses, bird houses, snags and brush piles. Banker plant systems, routine scouting and data reporting and development of educational kiosks, reduction of pesticides were also utilized. Training workshops were taught to County Agents, clientele (farmers and homeowners) and partners.



OBJECTIVE

To improve the adoption of IPM practices on farms/landscapes with variable size ranges and diverse crops by clientele by transforming an existing farm into a field laboratory model to train clientele outside of the classroom and building a sustainable education infrastructure for information delivery.



RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to get the whole farm staff to buy into this concept. Experiential learning opportunities of on-farm laboratories are an effective method of training clientele to improve the adoption of IPM practices on farms/landscapes.