



Allegan County 2021 Annual Report

Message From District Director

Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) brings the science, programs and resources of Michigan's land grant university to organizations, communities and individuals throughout the state. Our out-reach and engagement is built on a local basis, thanks to our county partnerships and more than 600 faculty and staff in offices across all 83 counties. Historically, most of our relationships have been maintained through in-person meetings and programs. Over the last few years, we have built up the breadth and quality of our website at extension.msu.edu, which now averages 1.25 million visitors per month. In 2021, we expanded our capacity to provide high-quality virtual education.



Working from home with the tools and support needed to help them succeed in a remote environment, MSUE program staff have continued to assist farmers through the growing season, elected officials and decision makers, parents, families and youth by meeting with them on virtual platforms through online meetings and webinars. With the work they have accomplished over the last months, staff have reported that they have learned that:

- Programs that are produced for a live audience and recorded allow more people to view the meetings in a time convenient for them;
- We are reaching audiences that would not be able to attend our programs in the past because of time, travel and disability;
- We are reaching local, regional, state, national and global audiences
- We are able to share our expertise, ideas and best practices more efficiently across the state;
- A digital divide still exists, not all programs work in an on-line format, and nothing will replace our local, face to face, relationship-based work.

In the end, I believe the experience in on-line program development and investment in capacity will not only augment but strengthen our face-to-face work. Our programs will have greater reach than ever before and MSUE will be a leader in virtual education. Please contact me for more information and thank you for your continued support!

Erin Moore, District Director

Allegan Staff:

Jan Brinn

Youth Development Educator
269-673-0370 Ext. 2555
brinn@msu.edu

Dian Liepe

4-H Program Coordinator
269-673-0370 Ext. 2557
liepe@msu.edu

Erin Moore

District 7 Director
269-673-0370 Ext. 2553
mooree16@msu.edu

Rebecca Simonds

Office Manager
269-673-0370
simondsr@msu.edu

Mike Staton

Soybean Educator
269-673-0370 Ext. 2562
staton@msu.edu

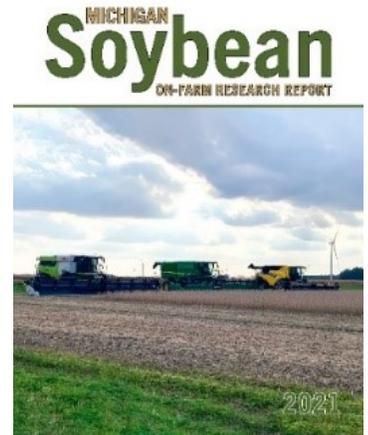
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2021 On-Farm Soybean Trials

Soybeans are raised by approximately 245 farmers on 42,000 acres in Allegan County. Mike Staton, MSUE soybean educator, conducted educational programs and research trials in 2021 that will help these producers be more profitable. Due to COVID-19, all winter educational programs, including the soybean on-farm research update that has been held in Hamilton for the previous six years, were conducted virtually. The virtual version of the on-farm research update reached more than 200 producers across the state. A follow-up survey found that 84% implemented the new information and 27 producers actually increased income by \$5.40 per acre on 25,340 acres generating a total financial impact of \$137,150 in 2021 alone. An in-person tour of the MSU Soybean Variety Performance Trial in Wayland was safely conducted on September 21. Nearly fifty producers and agronomists participated in the program and were able to visually compare all the varieties. Variety selection is one of the most important decisions producers make as it can increase yield by 5 to 10 bushels per acre. Allegan soybean producers also actively participated in the Michigan Soybean On-Farm Research Program. However, due to the adverse weather conditions that occurred in Allegan County in 2021 (early-season drought, excessive rain in June, lack of rain in August and early September and weather-related harvest delays), only four of the six trials were harvested and three of these were published in a 32-page research report that was mailed to more than 11,000 soybean producers across the state.



Ornamental Horticulture

Summer 2021 Michigan Christmas Tree Association Meeting

The Ornamental Horticulture Team scheduled an in-person tour of three tree farms in Southwest Michigan. The team covered emerging and key disease issues, along with best management practices. Participants, which included 18 Allegan residents, learned about creating an effect website that will attract potential customers to their farm, and how to create easy arrangements using Christmas greens.

Winter Christmas Tree Association Recharging for Success

MSUE partnered with the Michigan Christmas Tree Association to host their spring “Recharging for Success” all-day Virtual Meeting on March 15, 2021. The topics were sustainable production, using drones in production, emerging pest problems, phytotoxicity, and breakout sessions for choose-n-cut or wholesale growers. From Allegan, 10 participants attended.

Michigan Seedling Growers Annual Meeting

MSUE worked with the Michigan Seedling Growers Association to host their annual meeting. Participants received an update on the invasive species prevention – specifically, the detection of Balsam Woolly Adelgid. Additionally, the conference covered transplanting and herbicide trial research, the growing season weather review and the current status of Michigan Forests.

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Consumer Horticulture

In 2021, 162 Allegan residents took classes and accessed resources from the MSU Extension Consumer Horticulture team. These classes help equip residents with knowledge and training they need to implement environmentally responsible gardening practices. Through continued education, knowledge sharing and creation of more livable communities, the MSU Extension Consumer Horticulture program continues to make the Great Lakes State one of the most diversely beautiful states in the country. Below are examples of classes accessed by Allegan residents:

- Basic Home Hydroponics
- Smart Gardening with Vegetables
- Interactive Pruning Workshops
- Tree Fruit Pruning
- Backyard Fruti 101
- Let's Learn about Invasive Plants
- Adding Flair to your garden with Ground Cover
- Unravelling Pesticide Use in the Home Garden
- Controlling Invasive Plants in Landscaping
- Integrated Wildlife Damage Management



MSU Extension Cabin Fever Conversations

Does gardening programming come to halt all winter long? Absolutely not! It may have been snowing outside, but with Cabin Fever Conversations, participants can start dreaming and scheming for time spent with our plant friends. Starting in February 2021 and lasting for ten weeks, Allegan participants joined to learn about gardening and to connect with other gardening enthusiasts from around the state. This series was so popular that it will be repeated for a third year in a row!

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Health and Nutrition

Stress Less with Mindfulness & Stress Less Coffee Hour

As we all continued to adjust and manage our mental health over the last year, Allegan County residents found resources that incorporated weekly Stress Less with Mindfulness and Stress Less Coffee Hour. These virtual experiences provided strategies for maintaining health during challenging times. In 2021, Allegan County Residents attended 31 different program (43 participants).

RELAX Series

In addition, our RELAX Series focused on Alternatives to Anger with a weekly series. With participation from community members, there is certain to be a ripple effect into our community that ensures a positive impact. MSU Extension is very proud to have offered mindfulness and anger management training to Allegan County residents during 2021 as Covid-19 continues to put a strain on people's lives and mental health wellbeing. In 2021, Allegan County Residents attended 17 different program (32 participants).

Financial Literacy

MSU Extension partnered with the Allegan County Human Resources Department to conduct a webinar entitled "Tips to Build and Protect Your Credit." The webinar which was offered to Allegan County employees addressed credit myths, explained the importance of credit reports, demystified credit scores and provided strategies to build and protect your credit.

Government and Community Vitality

Effective Leadership In Challenging Times

Dionardo Pizaña, Eric Walcott, and Erin Moore facilitated a dialogue for Allegan County departmental leadership on "Effective Leadership in Challenging Times" incorporating a DEI lens and sharing work being done by other local governments in Michigan. This facilitation is ongoing and new sessions are being planned for 2022.

Tribal Land Management & Planning Professionals Lunch Network

The GCV Land Use Team facilitated monthly networking/learning lunches for land management and planning professionals who work for the 12 federally-recognized tribes in Michigan. The lunches are a blend of personal and professional sharing of experiences, projects, ideas and policies. Almost half of the participants were Allegan County residents.

Building Strong Sovereign Nations Teen Fellowship Program

This was a Monthly Teen Fellowship Meetings- this month hosted a special guest, Illianna Bush to speak about Indigenous youth activism. The fellows also discussed a new curriculum project. This program began October 2020 as a youth component to the larger BSSN team. They met regularly to build camaraderie, share stories and create a public service/education project. The first cohort of the program ended October 2021. A quarter of the participants were Allegan County residents.



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Allegan 4-H Competitions

As always, our 4-H community rose and met the challenges of 2021 with the same dedication and spirit as reflected in previous years of participation. The beef committee, once again did a great job getting financial support for the annual beef show and enough volunteer help to create an excellent learning opportunity for the youth. Also in 2021, the 4-H Horse Leaders planned a series of Speed shows due to interest in Gymkhana Classes. Other shows that took place in 2021 were the Horsemaster Pleasure, the Horsemaster Gymkhana Clinic, Small Livestock Clinic, Swine Carcass Live and Hanging Contest, 5-Day Horse Clinic, Meat Rabbit Contest and the Goat and Lamb Carcass Contest. Despite the adjustments made during another year impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Allegan County proceeded with many learning opportunities for youth.

Reflections from Dian Liepe

It has been an unprecedented 2 years. But I believe we will be just fine. Just as the world changes, 4-H is changing. The focus is the same, developing youth potential. The skills that 4-H teaches will NEVER be outdated. Public speaking, self-confidence, responsibility, caring, dependability to name a few. When I interview 4-H leaders I ask if they were ever in 4-H. My next question is "What are your most memorable experiences?" It never fails, the responses are very similar in what the experience meant to them, making friendships and helping them to become the person they are today.



Allegan County 4-H Awards Show

In November, Allegan County 4-H hosted their annual awards show to honor the outstanding volunteers, leaders and youth that make 4-H a success in Allegan County. 4-H Teen Leader of the Year went to Steven Smith pictured below with 4-H Council President Don Berens. Also receiving Teen Leader of the Year was Kaylee Horton, who was unable to attend. Dian Liepe and Don Berens congratulate Kendra VanOrder and Nora Balgoyen-Williams as they are the 4-H Leaders of the Year!



BY THE NUMBERS:

1,169 Allegan County residents participated in MSUE programming.

MSUE Allegan County hosted 53 programs.

Statewide, 1,986 Michiganders participated in Allegan County based programming.

MSUE Experts answered 84 questions submitted to our Ask An Expert from Allegan County residents.

Nearly 400 Allegan youth are members of at least one of the 25 Allegan MSUE 4-H youth clubs.

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