

Advanced Soil and Media Testing Options

Presenter Information

Zachary Grant
Cook County Local Food Systems and Small Farms Educator

Affiliated Content Areas
Local Food Systems and Small Farms

Presenter Biography

Zack is a Local Foods and Small Farms Extension Educator housed in Cook County. He joined Extension in 2015 to focus on urban agriculture production programming for a diverse group of stakeholders. Zack educates, conducts research, and provides technical assistance in small scale intensive and urban ag food production systems in the Chicagoland region and beyond; primarily delivered through a variety of platforms and experiential training, including the Master Urban Farmer Training Program. He is also currently conducting ongoing demonstration and applied research into urban agriculture production at the quarter acre South Suburban Cook Urban Agriculture demonstration and research site known as SoSuCo.

Zack holds a B.S. in Agribusiness-Horticulture from Illinois State University and an M.S in Horticulture from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He has been involved in small scale intensive farming for over 20 years. Most recently, from 2008-2015 he was the manager and director of the Sustainable Student Farm at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, a working intensive vegetable farm laboratory located on the university fruit research farm. He currently resides and owns a 20-acre farm in Kankakee County where he is developing various small farm enterprises.

Presentation Title and Description (descriptions should be about one paragraph)

Advanced Soil and Media Testing Options: A review of testing options for community gardens using soil, pure compost, and other media blends.

Soil testing as a practice has often created confusion and uncertainty when it comes to soil and media management, especially for smaller-scale homeowners and community garden groups. This presentation will cover multiple testing options along a continuum of possibilities. Testing methodologies explored will include traditional soil testing options, saturated media extract /greenhouse media testing, plant tissue, plant petiole sap, and compost testing options. Also, learn about current work being conducted by the University of Illinois Extension to explore alternative testing options for urban growers.

Presentation Format & Schedule: Please select your presentation format:

Workshop Lecture Demonstration Panel Other (describe in proposal)

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All Hands on Deck to Conserve Monarch Butterflies

Presenter Information

Wendy Caldwell (she/her)

Executive Director

Monarch Joint Venture

www.monarchjointventure.org

Presenter Biography

From helping draft the North American Monarch Conservation Plan to coordinating community science, teaching teachers, and supporting monarch research, Wendy has built an extensive background in monarch conservation over the last nearly 15 years. In growing the partnership to over 100 organizations today, Wendy has led the MJV through many transitions as the partnership diversified, staff grew and the organization transitioned from a University program to become a standalone nonprofit.

Growing up on a farm in west central Minnesota, Wendy understands the value of hard work and perseverance. While pursuing degrees in environmental science and entomology at the University of Minnesota, she worked as a program coordinator for several initiatives at the University's Monarch Lab. While she has worked directly on monarch conservation in some capacity since 2007, Wendy also has broader conservation and research experience through positions held with The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, and the Illinois Natural History Survey. She enjoys spending time outdoors with her family doing just about anything - sports, hiking, kayaking, gardening, invasive species removal, bird watching, and more! Wendy's favorite MJV program is Miles for Monarchs, because it combines all of these hobbies - Sign up today!

Presentation Title and Description (descriptions should be about one paragraph)

All hands on deck to conserve monarch butterflies

The Monarch Joint Venture is a network of over 100 organizations across the United States working together to conserve monarch butterflies and their habitats. As a flagship for other pollinators and other conservation benefits, the MJV works to engage people and partners from all backgrounds in habitat conservation, education, and science. Across different land uses from agriculture to rights-of-way to public lands to municipalities, we need all hands on deck to bring monarchs and other pollinators back to sustainable population levels. In this session, we'll discuss how actions taken within your community are contributing to national monarch conservation efforts. We will cover various ways to get involved in monarch conservation in urban areas, from planting pollinator gardens to participating in community science efforts and other community engagement activities

The Monarch Joint Venture is a national partnership of federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, businesses and academic programs working together to conserve the monarch butterfly

migration. The content in this email does not necessarily reflect the positions of all Monarch Joint Venture partners.

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Note: If needed, I can plan for the other time options, it just gets trickier with ensuring I have coverage for someone watching my (young) kids

Building a Community through Conservation: a Panel on Stewardship and Native Plant Gardening

Chicago Community Gardens: Our Challenge to Build and Thrive Conference Proposal

Title: Building Community through Conservation@Home: a panel on stewardship and native plant gardening

Panel Facilitated by: Gemini Bhalsod, Extension Horticulture Educator

Panelists: Valerie Kehoe, Extension Program Coordinator and representatives from 2-3 certified Conservation@Home gardens in Chicago. The representatives will include community, organization, and school gardens.

Session Description: Conservation@Home is an educational and certification program focused on promoting and celebrating the use of conservation-minded gardening practices. By recognizing community and school gardens that meet our criteria of environmentally sound gardening practices in biodiversity, water conservation, and healthy soils, this program helps create more connected landscapes throughout our communities. Community gardens that certify need to utilize informal/formal education tools to engage members. Panelists will present updates and share photos of their gardens, their experience with Conservation@Home for Communities in Chicago, successes and challenges with community building and gardening during COVID, and their tips for growing native plants. There will also be time for Q & A from the audience.

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Learn more about Conservation@Home here:
<https://extension.illinois.edu/cook/conservationhome>

Community Food Navigator: Strengthening Community-led Food Solutions

Presenter Information

Bahati Aimee
Project Manager/Community Steward

Deepa Gupta
Project Director

Wendy Manning
Lead Engagement Strategy / Integration

Presenter Biographies To be presented later

Presentation Title and Description (descriptions should be about one paragraph)
Community Food Navigator: Strengthening community-led food solutions.

Abstract from a much longer piece. Available on request.

This hands-on session is to introduce the project to CCGA members, and demonstrate the digital tools and stewardship methods in development that are designed to support visibility and connection among growers and gardeners.

Staff and a few of the project’s current community stewards and contributors will together share our work and engage attendees about their perspectives and feedback on the value and functionality of the tools as an opportunity to shape their continued development.

The goal of this session is to be a living demonstration of a stewardship model and tools that are designed to benefit Chicago gardeners, who shape and sustain Chicago’s agriculture and food culture and landscape through their efforts in neighborhood engagement, food access, learning, education, and revitalization. This session will help gardeners to connect with the Navigator to shape the first versions of the project’s tools and methods for organizing, stewardship and engagement to ensure they are of use and value to them.

Presentation Format & Schedule: Please select your presentation format: **TBD**

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Greenspace for Whom?

Presenter Information

Paula Acevedo
Co-Director
El Paseo Community Garden

El Paseo Community Garden fosters community and wellness through stewardship, conservation, placemaking, partnerships, programming, and community gardening in the Pilsen neighborhood. The garden is one of many NeighborSpace protected and community managed spaces in Chicago, with over an acre of equitable greenspace maintained by volunteers and donations. Their goal is to empower through nature.

Presenter Biography

Paula and her husband, Antonio, have been the volunteer co-directors of El Paseo Community Garden since 2015. She is responsible for communications, outreach, programming, grant-writing, marketing, and anything else that is needed. She enjoys applying her background in Architecture ('10 UIC Alumna) for place-making and community-driven design. She completed the University of Illinois Extension's Master Urban Farmer Program in 2016 and the Openland's Garden Keepers Program in 2015. In the garden, her driving passion is serving the seniors and children through the creation of projects and programming. She hopes to establish the garden as a sustainable community organization to last beyond their leadership. She serves on the City's River Ecology & Governance Task Force and the Chicago Infrastructure Reuse Network and strives to address the inequities and negative impacts of greenspace and infrastructure improvements, focusing on the proposed 4-mile trail along the BNSF Line and garden. In 2018 she organized a health fair and fall festival, Cosechando Salud, as the co-chair of the Pilsen QOL Health Task Force. The garden has given her a sense of community in Pilsen and has strengthened the connection with her Mexican heritage. When she is not doing garden work, she enjoys craft projects and playtime with her son.

Presentation Title and Description (descriptions should be about one paragraph)

Greenspace for Whom?

Join a discussion about the challenges of creating and maintaining sustainable community-driven green spaces in gentrifying communities. El Paseo Community Garden in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago will be presented as a case study.

Presentation Format & Schedule: Please select your presentation format:

*Presentation and Discussion, maybe a panel if you think anyone is a good fit? Possibly an interactive google jam board as an exercise. That would turn into a workshop. I'm open to suggestions and edits for the description. I will be doing a similar session for the TNOC Festival 3/29

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[Senior Legacy Film Project: "Nuestra Herencia"](#)

El Paseo Community Garden is partnering with ***On the Real Film*** on a legacy film project: "***Nuestra Herencia***" to feature crafted portraits of elder gardeners from the rapidly developing Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago and their unique stories about how the community-managed space connects them to home, family, and healing.

El Paseo Community Garden located in the Pilsen Neighborhood of Chicago is adjacent to senior apartments, which have always been in the forefront of El Paseo's community-driven volunteer work and stewardship. The pandemic has been especially difficult for elders, highlighting the urgency to document and preserve their stories. In a rapidly changing neighborhood, this cultural preservation is vital. As the first phase of our project, a preview was created highlighting four stories captured in the summer of 2021. The full documentary with 6 additional stories is slated to be completed mid-October. The final project will also include digitally mapping the stories, individual participant's monthly spotlights, multiple free community screenings. All content will be available online. This project will serve as a pilot for a larger neighborhood story-telling collection.

How much Lead is There in Chicago's Soils, and What Can We Do About it?

Presenter Information

Andrew Margenot
Assistant Professor
University of Illinois

Affiliated Content Areas
Faculty and Extension Specialist

Presenter Biography

Dr. Margenot addresses the literal foundation of all cropping systems: soils. He is advancing how we monitor and manage soils as natural capital. His research team evaluates how human activities can enhance or compromise soil services to human societies, with an emphasis on food security from urban and rural agroecosystems in the U.S. Midwest and East Africa

Presentation Title and Description (descriptions should be about one paragraph)

How much lead is there in Chicago's soils, and what can we do about it?

This proposal will overview recent University of Illinois research to identify soil lead contamination and risk reduction in Chicago. City-wide soil lead maps will be presented, and recommended steps to identify contamination in your garden discussed. How to reduce the risk of plant absorption of lead and human exposure from soil will be overviewed, presenting evidence from experiments conducted using Chicago soils with varying degrees of lead contamination. By providing recent scientific developments on soil lead contamination and urban agriculture risk specifically in Chicago, this session will prepare individuals with practical knowledge for safe gardening.

Presentation Format & Schedule: Please select your presentation format:

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I am flexible; could do all times

Maximizing Winter Production in Community Gardens

Presenter Information

Michael Repkin, Executive Director
Urban Habitat Chicago

Presenter Biography

Michael is an ecological designer specializing in biological resource recovery and sustainable food production. He led young students in projects that focus on human life support systems and technologies for five years in Chicago and is currently working with students to develop skills for transforming a damaged world. While serving in the Army, his assignments included laboratory positions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. Mr. Repkin is also President of Repkin Biosystems, Inc., a company “dedicated to enabling customers with the tools that are needed to provide human life support utilizing biological processes, and methods that are compatible with living systems”. He is also one of the founders of Urban Habitat Chicago and served for 5 years as President of the Board.

Mr. Repkin invented the method of Building Integrated Food Production (BIFP) and Roof Farm used on several projects, including UHC’s Rooftop Victory Garden at True Nature Foods; others developments include Living Panels, Biological Methods for Removing Heavy Metals from water, URBANROOFFARM, URBANFARMBOX, URBANGREYWELL and Rhizofilter 1.

Presentation Title and Description (descriptions should be about one paragraph)

Maximizing winter production in community gardens

This presentation will include subtopics such as building cold frames, crops which can be planted early in the year and harvested over the winter, winter sowing seeds, use of mulch and green manure for insulation, and more. We have many real examples from our current and completed projects to pull from.

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Urban Community Food Forests, Diverse Species Selection & Engagement Opportunities

Chicago Community Gardens Association 9th Annual Conference
Proposal

Presenter: Trinity Pierce, Stewardship Manager, Chicago Region Trees Initiative

Biography: As the Stewardship Manager for the Chicago Region Trees Initiative, Trinity collaborates with communities to foster awareness of the importance and benefits of trees through hands-on outreach. This outreach in turn fosters action through tree plantings and ongoing tree maintenance in order to build a healthier, more diverse urban forest. Trinity holds a masters degree in Landscape Architecture from the University of Michigan and has a background in history, ecological restoration, and urban green space reconciliation.

Presentation Title: Urban Community Food Forests, Diverse Species Selection, & Engagement Opportunities

Goals of the Presentation:

Showcase different examples of food forests and food forest stewardship

Highlight the importance of diversity in species selection

Share different forms of community engagement

Partnerships - let's build on this conference and plant together! We have food-producing shrubs and trees available!

Benefits to Community Gardeners

Learn and share knowledge about food-producing native, hardy species and the sites where they thrive

Explore different forms of engagement to grow volunteerism and increase community garden and green space access and awareness

Opportunity to partner together to plant food-producing shrubs and trees in fall 2022 and beyond!

Presentation Format & Schedule

Workshop

Any of the Wednesday evening slots are preferable but I can present on the Saturdays if the weekdays are booked.

Using Community Science to Build Urban Habitat for Monarch Butterflies

Presenter Information

Erika Hasle
Conservation Ecologist, Keller Science Action Center

Colleen McVeigh
Urban Conservation Education Specialist

Field Museum
1400 S. DuSable Lake Shore Dr.
Chicago, IL 60605
fieldmuseum.org

Presenter Biographies

Erika Hasle is a Conservation Ecologist with the Field Museum's Keller Science Action Center. Erika brings their background in both ecology and Geographic Information Systems to the Action Center's Chicago Region Conservation Programs. Recent projects include using GIS to support habitat stewardship, in the Kankakee Sands Ecoregion, and conservation planning for monarch butterflies in urban areas. Erika has a B.S. from Roger Williams University and a M. S. in Natural Resources from the University of Michigan.

Erika brings their background in both ecology and geographic information systems to the Keller Science Action Center's Chicago Region Conservation Programs. Their current projects include using GIS to support habitat stewardship, in the Kankakee Sands Ecoregion, and conservation planning for monarch butterflies in urban areas.

Colleen McVeigh leads Youth Conservation Action's instructional capacity building in environmental education through the implementation of professional development workshops and instructional coaching. She ensures that YCA trainings are based on current research and best practices. She is a National Board certified teacher with more than 25 years of experience working with youth, and she holds a B.A. in History from the Lawrence University and a M.A in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus on literacy acquisition from DePaul University. Colleen lives in Chicago, IL and has worked as a teacher and as an independent consultant providing professional development for schools in the Chicago Public School system. Colleen worked in the Chicago Public Schools for 20 years in various classroom settings, including dual language and transitional bilingual. In addition, Colleen has done teaching, coaching and consulting work for DePaul University, University of Chicago, and the Associated Colleges of the Midwest as well as several other private and public organizations.

Colleen is bilingual Spanish/English.

Presentation Title and Description (descriptions should be about one paragraph)

Using Community Science to Build Urban Habitat for Monarch Butterflies

Many people know about the staggering population decline in monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Community science programs can create an important point of engagement for community members from many backgrounds. For the last three years, as part of a Field Museum community science project, amateur scientists throughout the Chicago Region have monitored monarch caterpillars in their urban gardens for the Keller Science Action Center's Monarch Community Science Project. Since 2020 this project has been available in both English and Spanish at bit.ly/monarchmonitors. As part of the monitoring protocol, participants submitted weekly data surveys. We will share the results of those surveys and what they have taught us about important traits of urban gardens that help monarch caterpillars thrive. This talk will describe key insights we have gained during the course of conducting this community science project and how we hope to engage gardeners in the future to make a case for the valuable role urban gardens play in providing pollinator habitat.

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