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## **Southeast Master Gardeners Use Distance Learning Technology to Tackle Watershed Issues**

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### Abstract:

Teams of Master Gardener Coordinators, Agents and Specialists from Georgia, Alabama and South Carolina met and pooled their resources to develop an advanced training for Master Gardeners (MGs) on urban water issues. MGs receive home horticulture training and in return, they 'pay back' local University Extension Agents through volunteerism, often dealing directly with home owners. Home owners have a significant impact on both water quality and quantity in urban watersheds. Though many aspects of this impact are dealt with in traditional MG training (pesticide and fertilizer use, yard waste disposal, home irrigation, etc.) the goal of this training was to expand their understanding beyond the yard, to local streams and ultimately to the watershed. The objectives were to:

- Create an advanced training in water issues curriculum.
- Expand the knowledge of MGs from the home landscape beyond the boundaries of county and state to the watershed.
- Team-teach the course in Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina using internet education technology.
- Supply state with teaching and demonstration resources to accompany the training.
- Empower MGs and Agents to educate homeowners of their impact on watersheds, nonpoint source pollution, water quality, and water quantity.

### Impact Statement:

The course entitled 'Advance Concepts in Water Smart Landscape Design' includes many aspects of watershed management not generally covered in MG training, such as identifying sources of water pollution, the affects of impervious surfaces and infiltration on water quality, and assessing stream habitat and water quality, emphasizing the role of sediment as a pollutant. Each state team developed one, 2.5 hour training and delivered it to over 200 hundred MGs in 23 locations in four states using live classroom technology. County Agents in each location developed 'hands-on' afternoon activities, keeping the trainings local and relevant, and encouraging active participation in the teaching process.

Category: Human Dimensions

Type of Presentation: Oral Presentation