

## **Marion Gold, Director, URI Cooperative Extension and Education Center**

- CE Education Center – Clearinghouse for environmental horticulture outreach and research at URI
- Vertically- Integrated, from research to outreach. They target multiple audiences (growers; green industry = landscapers, landscape architects, garden centers; general public; decision makers)
- Example – replacing pest-prone plants with sustainable plants.
- With regard to Coastal Buffer Zone Management, can raise awareness of issue among all groups.
- Green Industry has a wide range of educational backgrounds, wide range of perspectives on environment. Opportunities for leadership.
- Many Professional Niches
- Turf Industry (= golf course managers, sports field managers, sod farms, chemical lawn care companies, municipal grounds managers)
- Formal & informal training programs integrating environmental stewardship
- Garden is Number 1 Hobby. Americans willing to spend time and money on their landscapes. Provides an opportunity to raise awareness of environmental issues
- Residential Landscapes -- Crisis situations can raise awareness
- Aesthetics are Important
- Economics are Important: Green industry professionals are in business to make money. Challenge is to develop horticultural strategies that are profitable and minimize environmental risks.
- Landscape Problems May Be Complex
- Busy Consumers Look For Quick Fix. Residential landscape practices influenced by time, cost convenience, custom. Practical factors take precedence over environment.
- Promote sustainable plants to minimize pesticide/fertilizer use. Promote sustainable landscaping practices.
- Research on sustainable landscapes (biocontrol of invasives, substitutes for pest-prone landscape plants, pesticide alternatives, low-maintenance turf).
- Education on sustainable landscapes (undergrad/graduate programs, grade school and high school science, volunteer training).
- Extension (television and print media, green industry training, training the trainer).
- URI Sustainable Landscape Program is a collaboration between URI faculty, the green industry, trained volunteers, federal WQ and IPM programs, regulatory agencies, educational and business partners.
- URI Sustainable Plant Manual
- URI Botanical Gardens = 4 acre demonstration gardens to showcase sustainable plants and landscape techniques. Is a living lab and classroom.
- East Farm Plant Evaluation Project: to evaluate sustainable plants for NE – pest resistance, cold hardiness, etc. Also expose growers and landscapers to plants and data
- Residential Audience. Can raise consumer awareness of environmental issues associated with home landscapes, create demand for eco-friendly options, create community support, change behaviors.

- Programs to Engage General Public: URI Master Gardeners, Learning Landscape Environmental Education Program, Demonstration Gardens, Workshops, Tours, Seminars, Media
- URI Master Gardeners program started 1977, currently has 400 volunteers. Certification requires a 50 hr. volunteer “internship” and continuing education to maintain certification. Master gardeners promote sustainable landscape practices to protect water quality and water supply.
- Master gardener projects: speakers bureau, info booths at public events, environmental and gardening hotline, demo gardens/community projects.
- Advanced Master Gardener Programs: Healthy Landscapes Water Quality Project, Master Composter/Recycler Program, IPM Trials with vegetable gardens.
- Learning Landscape Environmental Education Program provides hands-on environmental education conducted in the URI Botanical Gardens for K-5.
- Media outlets for Master Gardeners include weekly TV segments on NBC, weekly newspaper column, and a website (<http://www.urimga.org>).
- Green industry certifications. Voluntary professional certifications = potential for high standards, especially appealing to young leadership in the industry. URI GreenShare Training bestows “certified professional horticulturist” title, with goal of standardizing training and certifications and incorporating environmental stewardship ethic.
- Within green industry, mandated programs reach the most practitioners.
- With regard to implementing a managed coastal zone buffer, need to use the “vertically-integrated outreach” approach. Support requiring certification of landscape professionals through regs to encourage participation.