

2024 IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Front Range Region

Across Colorado's Front Range, CSU Extension specialists are serving their communities and addressing local needs by sharing expertise and resources, delivering educational programming, strengthening partnerships, and engaging youth and volunteers.

Key impact areas for Front Range specialists in 2024 spanned topics such as youth outreach, health promotion, food systems, natural resources, sustainable landscaping, agriculture, volunteer engagement, and more.

Across the state, Extension is where Colorado State University meets community.



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



Front Range Region

Extension in Your Region

For over 100 years, CSU Extension has strived to be your trusted partner connecting Coloradans to education and actionable, science-based solutions in your community.

COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTORS

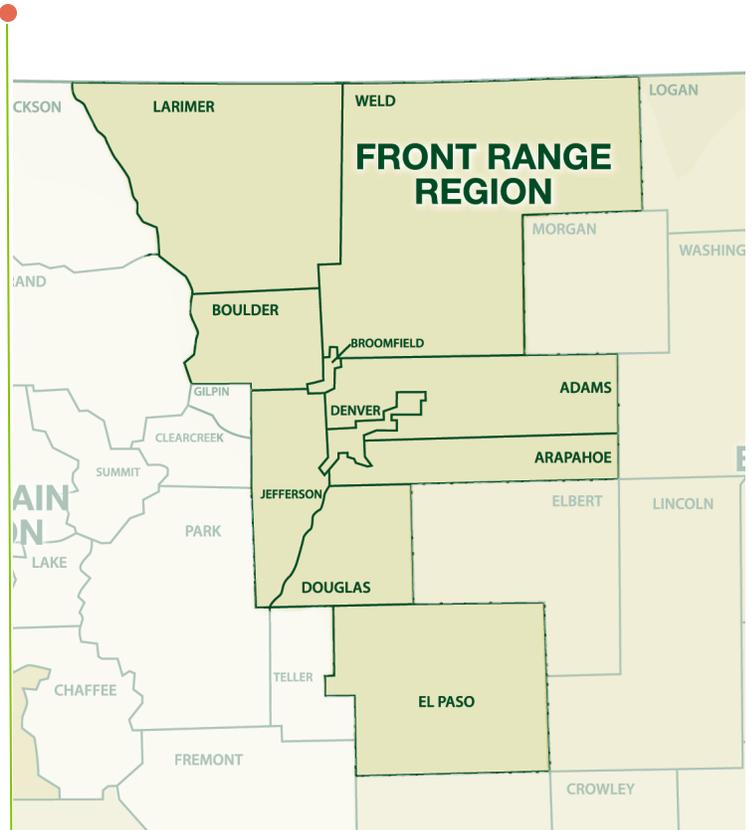
- **Adams County:** Alex Lane
- **Arapahoe County:** Dina Baker
- **Boulder County:** Eric Hammond
- **Broomfield County:** Sarah Schweig
- **Denver County:** Isabel Mendoza
- **Douglas County:** Guinevere Nelson
- **El Paso County:** Jonathan Vrabec
- **Jefferson County:** Jeni Carter
- **Larimer County:** Cary Weiner
- **Weld County:** Kali Benson

REGIONAL SPECIALISTS

- **Ag & Business Management:** Martha Sullins
- **Small Acre Management:** Karla Melgar Velis
- **Accessible Education:** Ruben Flores

RESEARCH & ENGAGEMENT CENTERS

- Agricultural Research, Development and Education Center (ARDEC)
- Colorado Water Center
- CSU Fort Collins
- CSU Spur
- Plant Growth Facilities
- Sturm Collaboration Campus



LEADERSHIP

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Across the Front Range

Small Acreage Management

Support for Ag & Natural Resource Conservation

CSU Extension Small Acreage Management Specialist for the Front Range, Karla Melgar, secured a \$17,000 NextGen Ag grant from the Colorado Department of Agriculture to create a workshop series on how to start a successful farming business. Partners include: AgrAbility, FarmAble, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, Denver Botanic Gardens, and the Food Systems Institute.

Other Small Acreage Management efforts across the Front Range included:

- 56 site visits conducted during the growing season;
- Delivered conservation workshops in partnership with NRCS, Farm Service Agency, Longmont-Boulder Valley and East Adams-Deer Trail conservation districts, Loveland Rotary, and Hispanic Women Farming project;
- Expanded and updated land management resources available at sam.extension.colostate.edu.



Access to Education

Connecting Students to Education Pathways

As the Front Range Region Accessible Education Specialist, Ruben Flores worked to connect high school students from across the Front Range to higher education opportunities and to extend resources and support for lifelong learners, including:

- 33 CSU Q&A information sessions at 23 high schools;
- 196 meetings with high school students to provide resources about CSU and higher education pathways;
- 8 webinars hosted as part of the College Connection series, with each session featuring a CSU college and its academic programs. The webinars also provided simultaneous interpretation in both English and Spanish. Recordings are available online at <https://youtube.com/@CSUExtension>

Business Management & Food Systems

Resources for Producers, Farmers and Ranchers

- A cost-of-production calculator was developed for beef, sheep, goat and pork producers in Colorado and the Intermountain West. This enables businesses to base their meat pricing around what it costs to raise the animals in terms of feed/forage, labor, animal care and handling, and other costs, including incorporating profit for the owner on each head raised.
<https://www.meatsuite.com/calculator/tool/cop.php>

- An agritourism business environment tool was developed for farmers and ranchers starting or considering agritourism businesses to help them better understand the county and state regulations that are often barriers to developing value-added enterprises. In Colorado, each county regulates land use, building codes and other environmental factors differently, which can make it challenging to develop and execute a business plan at a reasonable cost and timeframe. The tool covers all 64 counties and state regulations relevant to a wide variety of agritourism businesses, and is free to use.
<https://coagritourismbiz.org/>

- Market channel assessments were completed for two fruit and vegetable growers - one on the West Slope and one on the Front Range - that helped them understand the costs of getting their products to various markets and to use that information to inform their marketing strategies. Each producer received an individualized report and a consultation with advising on how to best restructure their marketing plans across multiple farmers markets, restaurants and other accounts.

<https://foodsystems.colostate.edu/market-channel-assessments/>

2024 Food Systems Grant Funding & Project Updates:

- Management of a \$30 million USDA Ag Marketing Service grant across six Western states (CO, WY, MT, ID, OR, WA) with a focus on food and farm business development.
- \$2500 grant award from American Farmland Trust to support agrivoltaics outreach to Colorado producers.
- Finalized outputs and products from a \$350,000 WSARE research and education grant on meat value chain development.

By The Numbers

STATEWIDE REACH & PROGRAMMING

242.5

CSU Extension Positions Statewide

Statewide Program Highlights:

4-H Youth Development

Agriculture

- AgrAbility
- Agricultural Business Management
- Annie's Project
- Climate Smart Agriculture
- Colorado Building Farmers and Ranchers
- Cropping Systems
- Livestock
- Pesticide Applicator
- Rangeland
- Total Ranch Analysis for Colorado

Community & Economic Development

- Family Leadership Training Institute (FLTI)
- Workforce Development

Emergency Management

Food Systems

Health and Wellbeing

- Behavioral Health & Resilience
- Cooking Matters
- Cottage Food Safety
- CSU Produce Network
- Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)
- Financial Health
- Food Safety, Preservation, Preparation
- Healthy Aging
- Master Food Safety Advisor
- Nutrition, Disease Prevention and Management

Horticulture

- Beekeeping
- Colorado Master Gardener
- Grow & Give
- Landscape for Life
- Seed Saving/Free Seeds

Natural Resources

- Native Bee Watch
- Native Plant Master
- Rocky Mountain Naturalist

FRONT RANGE REGION

66.3

CSU Positions
51.3 Positions Fully or Partially Funded by CSU

32.6

County Positions
Hired/Funded

REGIONAL YOUTH & VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT



32,631

4-H Youth Reached

1,651

4-H Volunteers

Colorado
Master
Gardener

871

Volunteers

38,573

Volunteer Hours

CSU IN THE FRONT RANGE REGION - 2024

\$277,913

Funds awarded to the
Front Range through
grants and donations

95,824

Contacts reached
through consultations
and presentations

41

CSU Extension Summer Internship projects
connected to research and programs in the
Front Range. 2024 internship topics included:

- Pollinator health and conservation
- Water quality, water management
- Agricultural literacy, ag education
- Livestock and dairy production
- Food systems, producer support
- Health, nutrition, food safety
- Disaster preparedness & response
- Mental & physical health promotion
- Community engagement
- Youth education, rural outreach
- Horticulture and plant health

County Impact Stories

Adams County

Swine Challenge 4-H Project

Adams County piloted a swine challenge project to reduce costs associated with raising and housing livestock that often prevent new 4-H youth members from participating in these programs, ensuring that all 4-H members have the opportunity to raise and sell a donated pig. The program was designed to strengthen the 4-H core mission areas of skill development, experiential learning, youth development and education.

4-H Health Programming

4-H Specialist Rachel Juritsch is leading efforts to redefine the "Health" in 4-H through the revitalized Health Rocks grant program. At a time when youth health and well-being are more critical than ever, Rachel is equipping Extension staff with tools to deliver a program that fosters social-emotional development, encourages open dialogue, and empowers young people to make healthy, informed choices.

Arapahoe County

Bilingual Education

In 2024, Extension specialists received a \$55,185 grant from the Arapahoe County Open Space partners to support bilingual education for Spanish-speaking youth. The funding supported the hire of a bilingual outreach educator, Shawn Tallant. He led a collaborative Día de los Muertos event in November, which welcomed over 100 community members and included face painting, sugar skull decoration, foods from local businesses, and a performance from the Ballet Folklórico.

Family & Consumer Science

Arapahoe County Extension Family and Consumer Science specialists delivered 13 online Colorado Cottage Foods Safety Certification Programs. 435 participants completed and received certification in 2024, including 70 from Arapahoe County. This class helped entrepreneurs in Colorado safely sell their homemade honey, jams, jellies, nuts, seeds, dehydrated produce, preserves, fruit butter, flour, and baked goods to their communities.

Specialists also taught 47 educational programs including High Elevation Baking, Food Preservation, Financial Management, and Adulting 101 - a five-week pilot program where students between the ages of 16 and 21 can learn about creating a budget, establishing and maintaining good credit, meal planning and easy recipes, how to properly clean a home, and how to understand a pay stub.

Boulder County

Soil Revolution Conference

The Soil Revolution Conference was designed to promote knowledge and adoption of improved soil health practices which can lead to increased protection of the environment and conservation of resources. The conference had 227 participants and focused on using livestock to restore arid lands, how psychological barriers impact a producer's willingness to adopt new practices, improved soil health and water use efficiency with row crops, and more.

Collaborative Nutrition Programs

The Community Health program serves as a reliable and science-based resource for local community organizations, offering consultation and workshops on a wide variety of nutrition and health topics. In 2024, these programs reached 151 participants through programming including kids cooking classes, nutrition for adults in recovery from substance abuse, vegetable gardening and cooking, and resources on the importance of eating a balanced and healthy breakfast.



Above: The Broomfield edible sensory garden; one of two educational gardens maintained by Master Gardeners. (Photo courtesy of Sarah Schweig)

Broomfield City & County

Educational Gardens

Broomfield Master Gardeners designed and continue to maintain two educational gardens, each with dedicated sensory gardens. The Broomfield Xeriscape Demonstration Garden at the George Di Ciero City and County Building is an official Plant Select® demonstration garden and was designated as one of ten showcase gardens in the state.

The Teaching Vegetable Garden on the grounds of the historic Brunner Farmhouse and Gardens is an outdoor classroom designed for accessibility and experiential learning. The entirely edible sensory garden (pictured above) invites visitors to experience the space through sight, sound, taste, smell, or touch. This sensory garden has hosted workshops for low vision gardeners, school groups, families, older adults and many more in English, Spanish, and American Sign Language.

Seed Library Partnership

The Broomfield Seed Library, a partnership between the Broomfield Library and Broomfield County Extension, reached 421 members in 2024 and continues to be a first connection to CSU Extension resources and programs. Of the 146 new members that joined the Seed Library in 2024, 69% had no prior experience with Extension. The program features an annual seed swap and connects members to further workshops and resources from CSU Extension and the City and County of Broomfield.

Denver City & County

Denver Master Gardeners

The Denver Master Gardener Program had the most successful plant sale yet in May in Harvard Gulch Park, selling out of the 8000+ vegetable and herb plants that were grown by Master Gardeners City Greenhouse, as well as annual and perennial plants, resulting in approximately \$40K in funds that will be used to further strengthen the program and its impact. 15 partner nonprofit organizations also participated in the event for the first time this year.

In Addition, Denver Master Gardeners tended three gardens located at the CSU Denver Extension Office in Harvard Gulch Park. These include the Native, Plant Select and Vegetable Demonstration gardens which serve as educational resources for the community and also produced 850 pounds of food for donation to hunger relief organizations in the Denver area.



Above: Community members attend the Denver Master Gardener Plant Sale held in May 2024.

Douglas County

4-H STEM Lending Library

With grant funding from the Douglas County Community Foundation and the Metro District Stadium Fund, Douglas County Extension purchased 20 STEM Lending Library Kits, an erosion table, and three livestock education kits available for anyone to check out. The STEM Lending Library includes Pollinator Kits, Marshmallow Catapult Challenge Kit, STEM Mechanics Kits, Outdoor Education Kits, and much more.

Helping Homeowners Associations Conserve Water

Since 2000, Douglas County has made water a top priority by focusing on securing a dependable water supply and advocating for water conservation.

Extension horticulture specialist John Murgel worked with the homeowners association (HOA) of a new single-family home development in Douglas County to review and update their landscaping guidelines and empower residents to make scientifically supported, sustainable landscaping decisions. These guidelines reduce water use while creating a model housing development to showcase beautiful, drought-tolerant lawns and gardens.

Outdoor Recreation

Guinevere Nelson, Douglas County Extension director, initiated the Outdoor Recreation Knowledge Exchange, a webinar series focused on outdoor recreation topics that reached 436 participants.

Partnership opportunities with the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals and other western land-grant universities are currently being explored, with the goal of supporting outdoor recreation professionals through management tools, handbooks and educational resources for ensuring sustainable recreation access.

El Paso County

Central Colorado Foodshed Project

Over 80 cross-sector stakeholders, including farmers, food banks and the El Paso County Property Code Department, came together through the Central Colorado Foodshed Project (CCFP) to learn about the research that the El Paso Extension Food Systems and Natural Resources team was addressing around regional food systems. Participants took part in a live-action reporting activity to contribute to the CCFP Action Report, co-produced with the El Paso County Health Department.

Horticulture Outreach & Engagement

The Master Gardener program saw an expansion of 15 new apprentices resulting in a 20% increase in volunteer capacity. El Paso Extension also added a new program location for the Native Plant Master® course offerings, making the program more accessible for people in Pueblo and Fremont counties.

Funding from El Paso County, Colorado Springs Utilities, and Broadmoor supported the development of a public demonstration garden that showcases four distinct drought-tolerant landscape options and features Colorado native plants.

In addition, Extension horticulture specialists for El Paso County added a virtual after-hours option to the Help Desk as a way to improve customer service for community members.

Program Spotlight

Native Plant Master®

The Native Plant Master® Program (NPM) is an award winning, non-credit, educational program offered by county Extension offices across Colorado.

On the Front Range, **Arapahoe, Jefferson, El Paso, and Larimer counties** offer hands-on, in-person NPM classes. Learners can also earn their Native Plant Master® certification upon successful completion of three additional on-site field courses and passing the associated exams.

7 counties in Colorado offer NPM classes, including four Front Range counties: Arapahoe, Jefferson, El Paso and Larimer.

22 NPM field courses were offered across the state including 17 in the Front Range region.

233 learners statewide participated in the program between April and October of 2024.

69 participants completed the requirements to earn a Native Plant Master® Certificate of Completion in 2024.

LEARN MORE:

<https://conativeplantmaster.colostate.edu>



Above: Learners from Native Plant Master® Program in Jefferson County participate in a nature hike. (Photo courtesy of Jeni Carter, CSU Extension Jefferson County)

Jefferson County

Community Youth Engagement

Eagle's Nest Owl's Roost (ENOR) Environmental Discovery Camp celebrated its 50th year of hosting summer camps for youth in 4th through 8th grade. ENOR is led by the CSU Extension Jefferson County 4-H team and has engaged with over 20,000 youth since its inception. The program was recognized as a pioneer of environmental education and was honored with the Gambel Oak award at the Jefferson County Conservation Awards in 2024.

In addition, Jefferson County Extension health and well-being specialists led an initiative to bring a new financial literacy curriculum, "Captain Cash," to 3rd graders statewide, while the Natural Resource Specialist significantly contributed to the state-wide Rocky Mountain Naturalist Certificate curriculum.

Larimer County

Radon Awareness Social Media Campaign

50% of homes in Larimer County have unsafe levels of radon, a radioactive gas that can't be seen, smelled, or tasted. Exposure can vary greatly in the community and the only way to know if a home has high levels is to test for radon. In 2024, Larimer County Extension developed and launched a social media campaign to educate community members about the dangers of radon and to provide information about mitigation options.

The campaign resulted in 31,214 engagements across social media, newsletters and other communications channels, and 420 radon test kits were distributed to Larimer County residents to test their homes. Funding for the program was provided through the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment.

Therapeutic Horticulture for Older Adults

Evergreen Elders was developed in 2024 to support therapeutic horticulture efforts with older adults, specifically those who are experiencing memory issues. Each of the 12 highly adaptable classes engages learners' senses of smell, touch, and vision through a horticulture lens. Projects have included activities such as making herb butter, creating pressed flower notecards, and crafting holiday ornaments using fresh evergreens.

Weld County

4-H Career Focus tours

Weld County 4-H has implemented career focus tours to connect local youth with different careers they can pursue post-graduation. In 2024, 4-H youth spent the day with the horticulture department at Colorado State University where they were able to explore different career fields related to horticulture. 4-H students toured the greenhouses, participated in a horticulture activity, and learned about horticulture-related academic programs at CSU.

Master Gardener & White Plumb Learning Center

In 2024, Master Gardeners in Weld County partnered with the City of Greeley to create six demonstration gardens at White Plumb Learning Center. Made possible by a grant from the Colorado Garden Foundation, the gardens will be another opportunity for volunteers to show residents what they can do in their own landscapes while enhancing the City property. The six gardens focus on Colorado native and Plant Select® plants, firewise demonstration garden, heirloom and Weld County native plants, and plants that have historical and agricultural significance from the past and present.

CSU EXTENSION OFFICES

Front Range Region

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720-887-2286

El Paso County

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719-520-7690

Larimer County

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970-498-6000

Adams County

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Brighton, CO 80601-8114

303-637-8100

Broomfield County

3 Community Park Road
Broomfield, CO 80020-3781

720-887-2286

Douglas County

410 Fairgrounds Road
Castle Rock, CO 80104-2699

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Jefferson County

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303-271-6620

Weld County

525 North 15th Avenue
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CONNECT WITH EXTENSION

Facebook: [@ExtensionColorado](#)

Instagram: [@CSUExtension](#)

YouTube: [@CSUExtension](#)

LinkedIn: [CSU Office of Engagement and Extension \(OEE\)](#)



Pictured: Learners at the Eagle's Nest Owl's Roost Environmental Discovery Camp in Jefferson County

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