

## Gardening Series Scores Well With Agents; Senior Staff at International Research Centers

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## **Gardening Series Scores Well With Agents; Senior Staff at International Research Centers**

### **Abstract**

Two Research Briefs: Gardening Series Scores Well With Agents, by William F. Braden; and, Senior Communication Staff at International Centers, by Cynthia L. Garver, with Olivia Vent.

# Research Briefs

## **Gardening Series Scores Well With Agents**

A 13-part series on home vegetable gardening developed in 1981 for county extension agents in Texas scored well, based on an evaluation survey.

The gardening series was prepared so agents would localize the information and try to use it as a special series rather than a simple substitute for an on-going newspaper column.

Sam Cotner, horticulturist, provided subject-matter information while William Tedrick, program evaluation specialist, prepared the evaluation instrument and analyzed data.

Agents received the series on a “request only” basis and agents from 204 of the state’s 254 counties did so. The material features a number of glossy photos and line drawings. Topics covered were: Plan Garden—Then Plant; Money-saving Tips on Gardening; Good Soil Preparation for Gardening Success; Damping-off Control in Gardens; Nematodes—The Underground Enemy; Planting Your Garden; The How and Why of Transplanting; Best Tomatoes Ever; Weeds and What to Do About Them; How to Tell When to Water—A Real Mystery; Proper Equipment for Defense; Protect Leaves for Top Vegetables; and A Time for Harvesting and Thought.

We measured usefulness of the material by sampling 80 agents, randomly selected. The sample included 60 agents from rural counties and 20 from urban counties — those with 100,000 or more population — to enable a comparison in the use of the series between rural and urban agents.

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A 97.5 percent return was obtained. General findings included:

- 76 percent of the agents used the series in one or more ways.
- 34 percent used the series in regular news columns.
- 29 percent used the series for special columns.
- 23 percent used the series on radio.
- 12 percent used some of the graphics.
- 11 percent used the series in newsletters.
- 7 percent used the series in other ways.

Other observations based on responses included:

- 73 percent rated the series “very useful” and 27 percent “somewhat useful.”
- 88 percent saved the series for future use.
- 64 percent planned to use the series again in 1982.
- 46 percent localized “most” articles while 48 percent localized “some.”
- 78 percent indicated article lengths were “about right”; 22 percent said they were “too long.” (Articles generally were two pages in length.)
- 44 percent visited editors about the series while 51 percent did not.
- 86 percent of those who contacted editors reported positive responses by the editors.
- 65 percent rated the series above average when compared with other extension information; 22 percent labeled it superior.
- Almost 5.5 million people were exposed to the series (that’s an estimate).
- 46 percent of the agents said the series brought more or maybe more media coverage while 53 percent indicated no change.
- 80 percent of the respondents wanted more special series on various types of subject-matter. Topics suggested most often were landscape horticulture, fruit and nut production, lawn care and beef cattle production.

Based on a chi-square test at the .09 level of significance or greater, the following relationships were noted:

- Rural agents were more likely to localize articles than urban agents.

- Rural agents are more likely to check with their local editors than urban agents.
- Urban agents rated articles higher than rural agents when comparing the gardening series with other extension information received.
- Rural agents reported that the series obtained more media time for them than did urban agents.
- Rural agents used the first article (Plan Garden—Then Plant) more for newsletters than did urban agents.
- Urban agents used all articles except the second (Money-saving Tips) and eleventh (Proper Equipment for Defense) more for “other” purposes than for news columns, radio programs or newsletters.
- Rural agents used the second article (Money-saving Tips) significantly more for “other” purposes than urban agents.
- Urban agents used the eighth article (Best Tomatoes Ever) more than rural agents.

In general, county agents seemed to feel that special series such as the one on home vegetable gardening were more useful to them in their information programs than other extension information materials.

Rural agents, especially, were able to make good use of such special series and could get additional media exposure. They also tended to localize the information to fit their county situation and had closer working relationships with their local newspapers. This tendency may relate to the general trend (in Texas, anyhow) that it's easier to get rural newspapers to use extension information than metropolitan newspapers. However, working closely with editors can pay dividends for urban agents as well.

Graphics were not used extensively by newspapers. The pictures were of a general nature and had little impact with larger newspapers, especially. Rural newspaper editors, on the other hand, preferred pictures with local people.

While the series was designed to be used as a special newspaper column, many agents used the information in other ways, such as for newsletters, handouts and radio programs.

In general, county agents labeled the special series “timely,” “useful,” “understandable,” “easy to localize,” “easy to read,” “concise,” “interesting” and “informative.” They also said the series had good continuity and organization and was well accepted by readers. On the

negative *Journal of Applied Communications*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (1999), Art. 6  
side of some agents said the series was "too general," "too long" and "difficult to localize," and needed "more advanced or in-depth information" and "better graphics."

Because of the success of the home vegetable gardening series, several other series have been developed — home lawn care and home fruit production — and others will likely follow. Suggestions and comments by county agents as a result of this evaluation will be considered in developing future materials in an attempt to make them even more effective.

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### **Senior Communication Staff at International Centers**

After receiving a letter from the Secretariat of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) listing senior staff members in communication at CGIAR supported research institutes — see map — we made a listing of staff by country and sex, shown in the attached table. (There are some inconsistencies since definitions vary for the term, communication center.

An analysis shows a nice variety of nationalities represented and a goodly proportion of women. The United States remains strong as a source of communication staff — 20 of 49 senior staff come from the U.S. Eight are heads. Almost as many (18) from the developing world are senior staff members and three are heads. The balance (11) are from Canada and Europe. Women number 12 of the total; four of these are heads; three of the female heads are from the U.S.

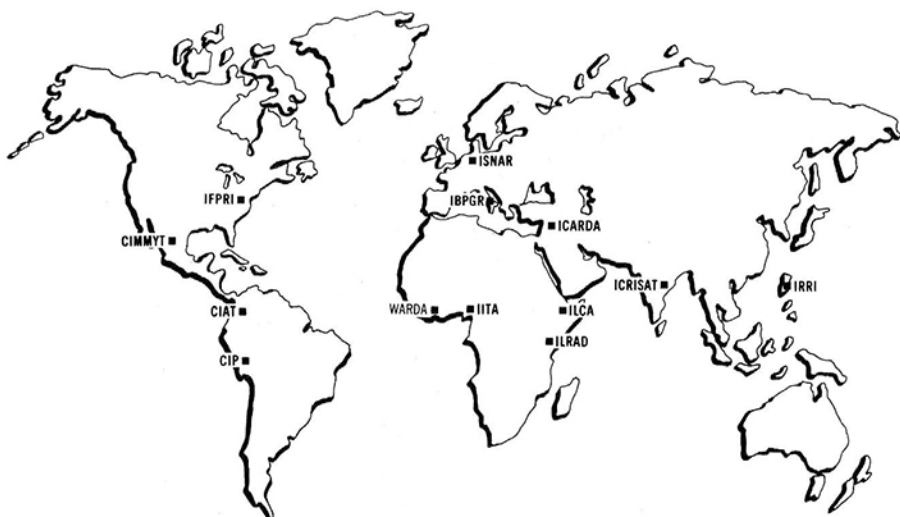
In addition, but not included in the CGIAR report, nationals number strongly as staff and department heads in the communication sections — photography, graphics, etc. My organization, for instance, relies heavily on an excellent national staff of about 40 people for editorial, graphics, audiovisual, and production services. Only the heads of communication support and library services and one senior staff editor are from outside the country. The heads of pro-

President of the Cardenas Society Science Well With Agents: Senior Staff at Internet  
 duction and public information are from Colombia and Ecuador, respectively.

The three noncrop research institutes (IBPGR, IFPRI, and ISNAR) have six senior communication staff members in total, only one of which is not a U.S. citizen (he's from the United Kingdom). IFPRI has two men; IBPGR has two women; and ISNAR had one man and one woman. Of these, there are two men (U.K. and U.S.) and one woman holding the position of Director of Information.

Thirty-five percent (15 people) of all senior communication staff members at the centers are from the U.S. There are 28 non-U.S. staff members, representing 65 percent of the total senior staff. Six of the U.S. nationals are heads of staff — that's 40 percent of all the U.S. citizens employed and 55 percent of all the heads. Of these U.S. heads, two are females; the other female head is from France. The other male heads are from Switzerland (CIAT), Syria (ICARDA), and Nigeria (IITA); the head of WARDA probably is African — his nationality is not given. Thus, three of the nine centers

### Locations of Boards and IARC's in the CGIAR system.



- CIAT - Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical, Cali, Colombia
- CIP - Centro Internacional de la Papa, Lima, Perú
- CIMMYT - Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maíz y Trigo, El Batán, México
- IBPGR - International Board for Plant Genetic Resources, Rome, Italy
- ICARDA - International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, Aleppo, Syria
- ICRISAT - International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, Hyderabad, India
- IFPRI - International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, D.C., United States

- ILCA - International Livestock Center for Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- ILRAD - International Laboratory for Research on Animal Diseases, Nairobi, Kenya
- IITA - International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Ibadan, Nigeria
- IRRI - International Rice Research Institute, Los Baños, the Philippines
- ISNAR - International Service for National Agricultural Research, The Hague, the Netherlands
- WARDA - West Africa Rice Development Association, Monrovia, Liberia

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have heads of communication services who are from the country in which the center is located. Other nations represented on staff are Colombia (2), El Salvador (1), Peru (1), Uganda (1), Philippines (1), Scotland (1), Canada (1), W. Germany (1), U.K. (5), and Africa (9).

The total number of "developing-world" senior staff in communication is 18 (including the 10 Africans, some of whom might conceivably be French or Belgian; see footnote d in the table below). At this time, both CIMMYT and IRRI have all U.S. senior staff.

**Senior communications staff in the boards and at institutes of the CGIAR system.**

Country	Total staff <sup>a</sup>		Heads	
	M	F	M	F
<b>3 boards</b>				
U.S.	2	3	1 (IFPRI)	1 (IPBGR)
U.K.	1		1 (ISNAR)	
Total	3	3	2	1
<b>9 centers</b>				
U.S.	10	5	4 (IRRI CIP IITA CIMMYT)	2 (CIAT ICRISAT)
U.K.	5			
Canada	1			
France		1		1 (ILCA)
Germany	1			
Switzerland	1		1 (CIAT)	
Scotland	1			
Philippines	1			
Syria <sup>b</sup>	1		1 (ICARDA)	
Colombia	1	1		
El Salvador	1			
Peru	1			
Nigeria <sup>c</sup>	1		1 (IITA)	
Uganda	1			
Africa <sup>d</sup>	8	2	1 (WARDA)	
Total	34	9	8	3

a. Total staff includes heads and nonheads.

b. The Syrian head is in ICARDA, in Syria.

c. The Nigerian head is in IITA, in Nigeria.

d. Two people at ILCA are not denoted by sex; we have placed them in the "male" column. They are also not denoted by country, so we have assumed they are African. Eight people at WARDA are not denoted by country, so we have assumed they are African; they are all denoted by sex. Some of these 10 people, however, may be French or Belgian, perhaps, since their names have French overtones.



At the nine centers, there are 34 men and 9 women senior staff members; 8 men and 3 women are heads [CIAT has a head of communication support (male) and a head of library and documentation (female); IITA has an assistant director of public affairs (U.S.) and a head of communication and information (Nigeria), both male; ILRAD does not denote a head]. Thus, of the total male staff members, less than one-fourth (8 out of 24) are heads; but of the total females, fully one-third (3 out of 9) are heads. Over 25 percent (11 out of 43) of the total staff are "heads," leaving 75 percent senior staff workers.

Women hold 27 percent of the positions of communication director and represent almost 21 percent of the total senior communication staff. U.S. women in particular hold 18 percent of the total head positions. Of the nine women senior staff members, three were formerly employed in the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, University of Hawaii.

Thus, it appears that right now U.S. women in agricultural communications are well represented in the IARCs and the CGIAR system. It would be interesting to know how their salaries and benefits compare with their male colleagues.

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CIAT, with Olivia  
Vent, CGIAR

# Reviews

**Thomas and Marilyn Wessel, *4-H: An American Idea 1900-1980*. National 4-H Council, 7100 Connecticut Ave., Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815. 1982. (\$15 individual hardcover copies, \$12 each in lots of 5 or more.)**

I was afraid this would be a stuffy book. It isn't. It hooked me.

It might not hook some people so fast — if they hadn't lived through a lot of what is reported in this book, and had some familiarity with names and events. But then it might.