Hispanic Youth and Adults Share Hands-on Learning and More in Bi-lingual Family Gardening Workshop

The Situation
In 2008, the United States Census Bureau affirmed that 20% of Canyon County residents are of Hispanic or Latino origin. Data also indicates that 17% of the population in this county speaks a language other than English at home.

Interest in gardening education remains high among communities in Idaho. However, success in attracting the growing Hispanic population to traditional Extension horticulture programs has been low. The National Extension Diversity Center cautions against trying to fit new audiences into existing programs designed for traditional Extension audiences (Hobbs, 2008). Educators in Southeast Idaho found this to be true when their first attempts to promote Spanish Master Gardener classes through traditional channels resulted in little or no attendance. For programs with Latino audiences, the Diversity Center also recommends offering a family-centered approach to delivering programs in a comfortable language and teaching through demonstration and group interaction whenever possible.

Our Response
With funding from the Latino Junior Master Gardener (JMG) Expansion Pilot Urban Extension Grant, the first one-day, free Spanish language family gardening workshop, Cultivar una Huerta Familiar, was planned for Caldwell in July 2008.

Two bi-lingual volunteers with gardening backgrounds were recruited to help deliver Spanish presentations adapted from Master Gardener materials translated by Extension Educators Reed Findlay and Wayne Jones.

An agenda was planned to include short lessons for adult audiences on tree planting, care and pruning, basics of soil and fertility, plant problem diagnosis, and vegetable gardening. A series of JMG activities from the Spanish handbook were chosen to run concurrently with the adult session. Activities included “Plant Parts We Eat,” “Suck-a-bug” and “Compost Critters” and story time.

Additional Spanish language publications addressing flower gardening, landscape design, pesticide safety and entomology were compiled from University of California Davis and Oregon State University and assembled into a resource notebook for participants. Additional activities that could be shared with children were included in each section of the notebook as well.
The workshop also included a catered lunch and a hands-on container garden planting activity for the whole group, using donated bedding plants.

Participants were invited to the workshop through personal and organizational partner connections formed during the three years of the JMG Expansion program. Promotion was also conducted through email, Spanish radio, and flyers posted at local Hispanic markets and businesses.

**Program Outcomes**

Twelve families attended the workshop at the Caldwell Center for the Arts. While the agenda provided a good framework, the participants helped to shape the day, for example, voting to head outside for an unscheduled, hands-on demonstration of rose pruning. Spanish and English were spoken equally, with many technical questions translated from Spanish into English and back again. An evaluation was given in Spanish and the responses were translated. The responses were overwhelmingly positive to this pilot workshop.

**What did you like best about the event?**
- Everything! (5 responses)
- There were project for both kids and parents
- What I liked best was that it was a family event and the children’s activities were as educational as the adult’s
- The information given to take home
- Soil and Pruning discussion
- Components of soil and how to improve it
- I learned a lot and in my language!

**What would you like to learn more about?**
- Roses
- Planting gardens
- Nutrition, gardening
- How to use the produce – recipes, cooking
- Control of fertilizers and how to be safe
- About gardens, landscaping, and grass
- Safe plants for animals and kids
- Native Idaho plants

**The Future**

All of the participants said they would attend more workshops of this kind and shared valuable advice on developing future programs. Several participants expressed interest in English Master Gardener classes. However, the overall feedback indicates that educators, translators and facilitators with basic content knowledge and Spanish language skills will be a key component to the success of Latino programming. Since JMG Expansion grant funding is ending, Extension will also need to seek community partners and sponsors to help keep these programs free or very affordable for audiences.

**Cooperators and Co-Sponsors**

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Katie Painter, Garden Coordinator, Idaho Office for Refugees
Scot McGavin, Ada County Master Gardener and co-director of Puentes Language School
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