

# Dig In!

Canyon County Horticulture News for Master Gardeners & Friends

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## "Greening" Home Gardens & Landscapes

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### Quoting the Season

"The wind that makes music in November corn is in a hurry. The stalks hum, the loose husks whisk skyward in half-playing swirls, and the wind hurries on...A tree tries to argue, bare limbs waving, but there is no detaining the wind."  
- Aldo Leopold

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The National Gardening Association's (NGA) 2008 Environmental Lawn and Garden Survey recently asked a representative sample of U.S. households nationwide, "How environmentally friendly do you think are the practices currently used to maintain lawns and landscapes?" NGA found that only one out of five respondents gave their current lawn and landscape maintenance practices a passing "green" grade.

"There's a real need for improvement in people's appreciation for the impact each of us can have on the environment in our own backyards. Most homeowners have a lot to learn about 'green' lawn and landscape practices," said Mike Metallo, NGA president.

By 2020, the growing population in Ada, Canyon and surrounding counties is expected to exceed 650,000 individuals. The bad news? Population growth will inevitably impact our environment and limit access to precious land and water resources and municipal services.

The good news? Making "green" choices in landscapes or gardens is easier than you might think, and the positive impacts reach far beyond your own cul-de-sac.

For instance: According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), compostable yard trimmings and kitchen scraps constitute 24% of all U.S. municipal solid waste. Allied Waste Services of Idaho estimates that at least 50% of summertime waste could be mulched or composted at home to avoid the landfill.

Here's something else to consider: 80 million U.S. households use home and garden pesticides (EPA 2004). This is 3-10 times more chemicals applied per acre of lawn than crops. Lawn fertilizers and



At Extension's "Greening Your Garden" Exhibit  
Idaho Green Expo 2009

Photo by Brad Beckman, UI Photographer

pesticides contribute to ground and surface water quality degradation, increasing treatment costs and potentially having adverse impacts on health of people, animal, aquatic and other living systems. Simply leaving grass clippings on the lawn can cut your yearly lawn fertilizer applications by 25%.

And chew on this: in 2008, the number of people growing vegetables increased 10 percent over previous years. The NGA estimates that a 600 square foot garden can generate, on average, more than \$600 of produce. Multiplied by the number of food gardeners in the country (36 million households), NGA estimates that American food gardeners are producing more than 21.6 billion dollars of produce a year. Now *that's* green!

Learn more "green" garden tips through our comprehensive Extension Landscapes and Gardens website and publications:  
[www.extension.uidaho.edu](http://www.extension.uidaho.edu).

Ariel Agenbroad serves Canyon County as Horticulturist and Educator in Home Gardening, Small Farms and Youth Development for the University of Idaho Extension.

## "Victory" in Your Garden this year?

**Novice gardeners make the leap...**  
By Marlene Fritz, UI Communications Specialist

Although the growing season has lurched heartlessly from too cold to too hot, University of Idaho Extension educators say Idaho gardeners, even novices, haven't yet turned lukewarm on growing their own produce.

"Our novices are having luck with many of the crops in their gardens, despite some early-season setbacks," said Ariel Agenbroad, an Extension educator in Canyon County who taught "Idaho Victory Garden" classes this spring. "And the problems they are having are generally easy to avoid or correct next year."

One such problem has been healthy, vigorous plants that aren't putting on fruit. "People are saying, 'I don't have any tomatoes/corn/squash on my plants!'"

said Agenbroad. "When it's tomatoes, we look at too much nitrogen, too much shade or very hot temperatures. When it's sweet corn or squash, the reason is usually poor pollination."

Agents advise gardeners to plant sweet corn in blocks, circles or mounds, rather than in solitary long rows, to ensure adequate pollination by wind. Squashes, which have separate male and female flowers, are a bit different: "If the flowers are not open at the same time, or if they're open when insects aren't active, you get tiny fruit that shrivels up or no set at all," she said. "Be patient: eventually you'll get plenty."

But if gardeners hold out for baseball-bat size squash, they won't hit their overall production out of the ballpark, Agenbroad cautions. "Frequently picking small fruit encourages more production. If you're letting baseball bats develop, the plant puts its energy into those and doesn't need to produce more."



Agents encourage gardeners who encounter blossom-end rot in tomatoes or bitterness in cucumbers to note which varieties they planted. "Both of these physiological problems are strongly linked to variety," she said. "If gardeners report which varieties were most susceptible, we can pass that information on and suggest alternatives."

In Lewiston, Extension educator Lydia Clayton says home-grown food production is "working out well" for novice gardeners. "They had a lot of questions, but they got answers to most of them," she said. Plant diseases have been unusually prevalent this year in north central Idaho, Clayton says. She advises gardeners to toss infected plants into the trash, rather than composting them, and to make sure

remaining plants have good air circulation. Next year, Clayton plans to offer additional classes in pest, including disease, management for gardeners. "Teaching gardeners is a lot of fun," she said. "You get to watch people go from feeling nervous about growing plants to realizing that they are very good gardeners and can grow things they like to eat."

In the Magic Valley, Extension educator Jo Ann Robbins says what's plaguing gardens the most is heat damage from gardeners' inability to keep up with watering. "It's been beastly hot," she said. "I hope we have a nice, long, protracted fall, because tomatoes really thrive when temperatures are below 90 and evenings are cooler." But Robbins reminds gardeners that, "Even if it's cooler, everything needs to be well-watered because the plants are bigger and will be using lots of water."

Wayne Jones, Extension educator in Bonneville County, says Idaho Falls-area gardeners hope they don't see Jack Frost before late September. "Temperatures have been too extreme for tomatoes to set, and corn, squash and peppers are all late. If we luck out, we'll get our crops."

His tips for next year: "Plant as early as you possibly can" and use season-extending strategies in both spring and fall. For more information, visit <http://www.extension.uidaho.edu/idahogardens> or <http://www.extension.uidaho.edu>.

## KNOW THIS: Iron Chlorosis in Trees

If you live in Canyon or Owyhee Counties (and even parts of Ada), you've no doubt noticed a great many "yellow" trees in your neighborhood... maybe even at home.



Iron chlorosis is a yellowing of plant leaves caused by iron deficiency that affects many plants in Idaho, particularly red maples, pin oaks, blueberries and fruit trees. The primary symptom is "interveinal chlorosis", in which the majority of the leaf turns yellow with dark green veins. In severe cases, the entire leaf turns yellow or white and the outer edges may scorch and turn brown as the plant cells die.

Iron chlorosis is common in parts of the county where the soils contain a high level of limestone, and where the pH is above 6.5. Iron deficiency and chlorosis is aggravated by clay soil, cool soil temperatures and conditions that restrict air movement into soil: plastic sheet mulching, compaction, and water-saturated conditions. Chlorosis is often more severe where topsoil has been removed exposing lime enriched subsoil. Examples are eroded soils or soils subjected to land leveling for new housing developments.

This describes conditions across every area of our region! What can we do?

First, steer clear of planting susceptible trees. A list of alkaline tolerant trees, shrubs and perennials is found at <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/monroe/soilweb2/alkaline-tolerant.htm>. Second, avoid overwatering or creating compacted conditions in the root zone of sensitive plants.

For a tree slightly affected, there are a few DIY treatments, including foliar sprays (spring) and soil drenches (fall) using products that contain **chelated iron**. Look for these at your favorite nursery or garden center.

In extreme cases, or to try to save a tree in an advanced stage, it would be wise to contact a licensed, **certified arborist**, or "tree doctor," who can inject the trunk or roots with an iron and micronutrient solution. An arborist can also advise on whether or not a tree should be removed.

## UPCOMING EXTENSION CLASSES & EVENTS

GET INFO OR REGISTER BY CALLING  
THE CANYON COUNTY EXTENSION  
OFFICE AT 459-6003

### **Sustainable Small Farming and Ranching**

develops small farm entrepreneurs! Learn the basics of sustainable crop and livestock production on a smaller scale. Plus explore hands-on direct marketing, business planning and other topics designed to help you be successful in your ventures. *Enroll now! First class is scheduled for Wednesday, October 14, from 6-9 pm.* The class will meet on Wednesday nights and on two Saturdays for tours through December. Course fee is \$200, which includes a comprehensive resource manual and several farm tours. Course will be held at the Ada County Weed and Pest building in Meridian.

### **Canyon County Master Gardener**

volunteer development program *will begin accepting applications in November, 2009* for our 2010 team. Future Master Gardeners must be available for 30+ hours of instruction and 30+ hours of hands on service. Classes are tentatively planned for Wednesday mornings from January—April, with service hours to be filled from April, October. Preference will be given to residents of Canyon and Owyhee counties first, but all are welcome.

### **The Idaho Victory Garden Series**

was developed last year by Canyon County Extension Horticulturist Ariel Agenbroad to address the “growing” need for practical community education in home food production and preservation. Plans are in the works to offer this program again in 2010...*call the office to get on the list for more information!*

### **Living on the Land: Stewardship for Small**

**Acreages** is a series aimed at providing current and future land owners with practical information and resources about small acreage management. Develop a plan for your property and share ideas with a team of expert instructors. 2010 marks the ninth year that this program will be offered by University of Idaho Extension. *Call our office to receive information about the 2010 classes starting in January.*

## Canyon County MASTER GARDENERS



Photo by Brad Beckman, UI Photographer

The University of Idaho Extension **Idaho Master Gardener Program** gives gardeners an opportunity not only to improve their horticultural knowledge and skills but also serve their communities.

### **Project Highlights**

#### **IDAHO GREEN EXPO, JULY 2009**

Master Gardener Volunteers and Extension Educators from Canyon, Ada, Payette, Owyhee and Gem counties helped to design and build an indoor “green” garden display that shared concepts of composting, beneficial insects, xeriscaping, water-wise turfgrass, edible landscaping and more with the nearly **15,000** individuals who attended the three day event. For photos, visit our website. Learn more about the Idaho Green Expo at [www.idahogreenexpo.org](http://www.idahogreenexpo.org).

#### **FEEDING THE HUNGRY**

Master Gardeners Dale and Sheila Anderson, Paulette Blaseg and others have spearheaded an incredible effort to grow, collect, and glean produce for Idaho's hungry. With gardens at Trinity Lutheran in Nampa and other locations, and through the generous support of local Wissel Farms, crews of volunteers have harvested and delivered over **21,624** pounds of fresh produce to area food banks, shelters, and meal programs. We weren't the only ones to applaud this effort, either! Dale was featured as a Seven's Hero by KTVB News and was the subject of articles for the Idaho Statesman and Press Tribune newspapers.



### **JUNIOR MASTER GARDENER**

*By Jannine Falk, Advanced Master Gardener*

The Canyon County Master Gardeners were involved in the Canyon County Fair in Caldwell again this year. On Saturday, for 3 hours, the World Famous Informational Junior Master Gardener Scavenger Hunt. It was held in the Open Class exhibit area under the 'Big Top' where homegrown produce and flowers (plus the odd and unusual) from folks of all ages were exhibited and judged.

The venue was used by our own Ariel Agenbroad as the scene for the second annual JMG Scavenger Hunt. Volunteers handed out “treasure maps” with 16 seek-and-find clues; how many blue ribbons, the exhibit numbers of the red sunflower and the largest vegetable exhibit (it was a hotly contested debate among five year-olds between the sugar beet and zucchini), and the list goes on...

Just as last year, seed packets and bracelets provided by the Fair Horticulture Superintendents, Master Gardeners and The Idaho Noxious Weed Council were given as prizes.

In the three hours, a total of forty sheets were completed. For those of us involved it was fun and rewarding to see families so engaged and interested in the exhibits. It's an opportunity to share information about 4H and to remind kids that from the seed packets they can grow and exhibit flowers and vegetables next year. It was amazing, that in spite of the heat that day, many families spent time completing “hunting.”

#### **FARMERS' MARKET BOOTHS**

Master Gardener volunteers could be found every week at the Caldwell and Nampa Farmers' Markets, sharing info, answering questions, and engaging market goers with an array of insects, earwig traps, pinecone weather stations and other fun diversions.

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What exactly *is* an Idaho Master Gardener? Find out in our brand new statewide MG site:

<http://www.extension.uidaho.edu/mg/>

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Idaho Master Gardener website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, University of Idaho, CALS, Extension, and Resources. Below this is a large banner image featuring a butterfly on red flowers, with the text "IDAHO Master Gardener" and "Helping People Grow!". The main content area is divided into several sections: "About Idaho's Master Gardeners" (with a photo of three people), "Why Be a Master Gardener" (with a photo of pink flowers), "How to Become a Master Gardener" (with a photo of pink flowers), "Class Schedule" (with a photo of sunflowers), "Contacts" (with a photo of a white flower), and "Resources" (with a photo of yellow flowers). On the right side, there is a large photo of a woman in a green jacket standing in a garden, with the text "MEET our Master Gardeners" and a blue arrow icon. At the bottom, there is a green bar with the text "VIEW THE IDAHO MASTER GARDENER SITEMAP".