

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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Master Gardeners support and educate homeowners

The Situation

Bonneville County is becoming increasingly urban. Several of the residents have an interest in gardening and landscaping around their homes. Newcomers to the area are not accustomed to the difficult climate that exists in Southeast Idaho. Many plants that thrive in other areas of the nation are not able to survive the harsher climate of the area. There are also many diseases and insect pests that are challenging for homeowners to deal with. The County office typically has several calls each day concerning various aspects of gardening which takes a considerable amount of time to handle for the Extension Educator.

Our Response

The Master Gardener program was implemented to give the urban population access to basic gardening techniques that allow for effective, successful gardening. The twelve-week course consists of fundamentals of gardening from basic botany to the best varieties of fruit trees to grow in the area. Thirty-six hours of classroom training followed by forty hours of hands on training gives the participants a well-rounded background in most aspects of gardening. Part of the hands on training consists of working in the Extension office answering questions from walk-in clientele as well as phone in questions.

Extension Educators from two states, Specialists, Advanced Master Gardeners, and local business operators participate in classroom instruction by presenting information from their areas of expertise. In southeast Idaho the Master Garden program is offered in Bannock, Bingham, Bonneville, Jefferson, and Madison Counties.



Program Outcomes

Several projects have come out of the program; among them are:

A Master Gardener started a community garden program, now with 3 different sites, where people who wish to garden but do not have the space can go to plant and tend a garden. Other Master Gardeners help the program by teaching and assisting with the gardening experience at one site set aside just for kids.

A 4-H gardening program for children was started as an offshoot of the Community Garden program. Kids from 7-11 years old were set up in teams and given an area to raise a garden. The program covered several aspects of gardening and was met with great enthusiasm among the participants.

A speakers bureau is available to local community groups which allow Master Gardeners to share their knowledge to a wide diversity of people.

Master Gardeners are responsible for a booth at the Eastern Idaho State Fair where interest is so high the Fair Board had to assign two booths to accommodate the crowds.

The Farmers Market in Idaho Falls also has a booth where Master Gardeners interact with several local people and help them with their gardening problems.

Two Master Gardeners decided to write a grant to build a greenhouse to instruct the kids in their high school as well as to serve as a work study program emphasis. The grant was funded and now there is a high school horticultural course offered which is open to students in other area high schools.

The last twelve years have seen over 412 people graduate from the program. These volunteers have put in about 20,000 hours in helping the public with urban horticultural problems. Last year alone over 15,000 people were reached through the various programs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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