Master Gardeners and Commercial Landscapers Learn Erosion Control Techniques

The Situation
Kootenai County passed a site disturbance ordinance that became effective January 1, 1997. The ordinance was implemented to decrease the impact of construction and earth moving on surrounding landowners, and on the county’s surface water. County Planning and Zoning was concerned that word of this new ordinance was not reaching the public.

At the same time, Master Gardeners in Kootenai County were answering an increasing number of calls from homeowners seeking information on slope stabilization for new home sites, new roads, or existing problematic slopes. They often needed a quick cover, or wanted a “natural” look. Master Gardeners requested additional training to meet these requests.

Our Response
We organized a workshop that included information on the new ordinance, hardscaping for slope stabilization and native plants and grasses that control erosion. A report of current erosion control projects in the Hayden Lake area completed the workshop. We had two objectives: to “get the word out” on the ordinance, and to provide training on how to meet the requirements of the ordinance. Our target audience included landscape designers, contractors, landscape maintenance professionals and Master Gardeners.

Approximately a month after the workshop, a hands-on field activity provided participants with the opportunity to plant native materials on a steep slope above Hayden Lake.

Achievements
Evaluations from the 40 participants rated the coverage of topics as outstanding (4.6 out of a possible 5). Comments included “Excellent. Lots of information. Your program covered all phases of information to what can be done not only with law, but construction, suggested grass and shrubs.” “Great speakers. It is important to have speakers with practical experience instead of just book knowledge.” “What a great session.”

Five Master Gardeners attended the hands-on field day and reported that it was an excellent opportunity to evaluate a real situation, and be involved in stabilizing a slope with native shrubs. Master Gardeners that attended either the workshop or the field day report that they have far more confidence in answering the public’s questions about slope stabilization.

The Master Gardeners developed a display for the North Idaho Fair on plant materials to use for erosion control. Plants were displayed, along with handouts on the growth requirements of each plant, and Master Gardeners handed out site disturbance flyers. Approximately 10,000 people
had the opportunity to view the display, and over 400 flyers and handouts were distributed.

Cooperators and Co-sponsors
Kootenai County Planning & Zoning Commission
Natural Resource Conservation Service
Kootenai/Shoshone Soil Conservation District
Panhandle Health

The Future
Master Gardeners will continue to work with Kootenai County Planning and Zoning and the other cooperators to help the public with questions on erosion control methods.

For More Information
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