

IMPACT



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Franklin County Master Gardener Class Supplies Much Needed Local Gardener Training

The Situation

Franklin County has been experiencing rapid population growth, particularly during the past 10 years. Most of the people moving into the county are building homes. This has resulted in an increased need and demand for horticultural information. Most of the businesses in the county that sell garden supplies are not interested in trying to answer all the garden questions that come to them. These stores normally refer their customers to the Extension office for answers to their questions. This has resulted in an extra workload for Extension personnel. Consequently, the need for the expertise of properly trained Master Gardener volunteers has grown.

Our Response

To meet this demand for Master Gardener volunteers, the University of Idaho Master Gardener educational program was adopted approximately 10 years ago. During the first few years, the class was taught in Preston and rotated between Soda Springs, Montpelier or Malad. This seemed to work well because it was difficult to find enough students in the surrounding communities to hold the class every year. The demand for the class has remained highest in Preston. Presently, the class is only being taught in Preston but interested gardeners from surrounding counties are encouraged to attend.

The class is taught by qualified Extension personnel from Idaho and Utah. Extension educators and

specialists are utilized in teaching subjects related closely to their areas of specialty and expertise.

The University of Idaho Master Gardener Handbook is the text for this class. This book was published in 1993 and has since been updated several times. It is now in its eighth edition. Participants in the class seem to enjoy the manual and find it to be a valuable resource in helping other gardeners find answers to their questions.

Participants who complete the class, take the required exams and finish their hours of community service are awarded a Master Gardener Certificate and name badge. The majority of the class participants do not plan to certify as Master Gardeners. Most take the course for their own knowledge and enjoyment. Those who have become certified have been very helpful in lightening our horticultural workload at the Extension office.

Program Outcomes

Evaluations of the class have been very positive. Eighty-eight percent of participants said they learned "some new information" or "considerable new information."

Eighteen percent of participants said that before the course they used particular gardening skills "often" or "almost always." Sixty-eight percent of participants said that after the course they would use these same skills "often" or "almost always."

Some comments made about the course are:

“Since the course we have used the resource book frequently for our own & others’ benefit and applied a better understanding to much of our yard and gardening work. Thanks.”—Cal

“Thoroughly enjoyed the course and have recommended it to others. Thanks for so much valuable info. I have referred back to materials learned and received often. Thanks.”—Bryan

“This was a very worthwhile course. I feel that my time was well spent every week. Thank you for making this program available to residents of Caribou County.”—Dean

One class participant expressed her feelings about the course in the following letter:

“My husband, Dave, and I took the Master Gardener class and successfully completed the requirements to be certified as Master Gardeners. It was a great experience for both of us. Even though we have been lifelong gardeners, we learned a lot and were able to improve some of our techniques. In part, because of the great experience we had in the Master Gardener program, I decided to pursue a long time dream and return to school at Utah State University. I am now a sophomore there, majoring in horticulture. My desire is to continue at Utah State until I obtain my bachelors, then round my education off with a Masters in water conservation. Without the support of my family and the inspiration of the Master Gardener program I probably would not have undertaken getting my degree. It has been a very satisfying experience, one I hope to put to use here in Cache Valley sharing the knowledge I have gained.”—Billie Curtis

The Master Gardener program will continue to be offered in the Southeast Idaho area as long as there are participants in the class. It truly is meeting a need for the citizens of southeast Idaho and the Franklin County Extension office.

Other Contributing Faculty:

Wayne Jones, Extension Educator
Bonneville County

Reed Findlay, Extension Educator
Bannock County

Brian McLain, Extension Educator
Jefferson County

Jerry Goodspeed, Extension Educator
Weber County (Utah)

Mike Pace, Extension Educator
Box Elder County (Utah)

Loralie Cox, Extension Educator
Cache County (Utah)

Tony McCammon, Horticultural Assistant
Box Elder County (Utah)

For More Information

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