

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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Idaho Victory Garden graduates “grow” beyond the classroom to make a difference

The Situation

The demand for University of Idaho Extension home and community vegetable gardening information and education in the Treasure Valley region of Idaho has risen steadily since 2008.

Clientele are still experiencing aftershocks from the recession; the Idaho Foodbank reports the overall poverty rate in Idaho is at 15.8%, and that one in six Idahoans are food insecure. Others wish to learn or update their knowledge so that the proven physical, nutritional and economic benefits of home food production can be enjoyed. An emerging audience also includes advocates, educators and community leaders looking to initiate or support school, community or public gardens with Extension’s help.

Our Response

The Idaho Victory Garden program was created in 2008 to increase home and community food production in Canyon County (Agenbroad, 2009). Extension faculty are joined by Master Gardener volunteers, community gardeners and small acreage farmers to present six weeks of evening instruction and hands-on activities in February and March. The program trains individuals and families to successfully plan, plant, harvest, prepare and preserve affordable and healthy food.

Clientele are evaluated immediately following the course and again at the end of the growing season. The information they provide is used to improve program quality and content, and assess outcomes.

Program Outcomes

Our program has been offered four times to over 190 diverse individuals. Graduates are growing more of



Sustainable vegetable gardening practices highlighted at the Idaho Botanical Garden in Boise. Photo by Gretchen Anderson.

their own food: an estimated \$80,750 worth of fruits and vegetables.

They are implementing water conserving drip irrigation systems, composting, and using fewer pesticides. Many are even keeping backyard poultry, where permitted. But increasingly, it is how participants are using their new-found knowledge and community connections that is creating dynamic impact with public value.

Extension can link clientele to a wealth of knowledge and expertise in food production, processing, nutrition and other relevant topics, as well as facilitate the development of civic leaders and encourage connections between community members. These networks can help build and sustain local food systems (Raison, 2010).

Idaho Victory Garden graduates are making a difference:

- Nancy Robinson ('09), Roberta and Sam Ireland ('11), and BillieJean Nunnally ('12) began community gardens in Nampa, producing thousands of pounds of food for low income residents and emergency food pantries. Urban community gardeners are also more likely to consume fruits and vegetables, and enjoy increased social cohesion, social support and social connections.
- Craig Olsen ('11, '12) applied for a Garden Grant through the Idaho Department of Education to start the remarkable Pat Anderson School garden at the Southwest Idaho Juvenile Detention Center in Caldwell.
- Ruby Valdez ('12), Community Gardens Coordinator for the Idaho Foodbank organized classes on community gardening to increase capacity for fresh food production.
- Megan McCarthy ('12) and Elizabeth Dickey ('12) restored the kitchen garden at the Idaho Botanical Garden in Boise, demonstrating economical and environmentally friendly practices like drip irrigation and recycled materials construction. The garden is viewed by thousands of visitors annually.

The Future

In 2012, development began on a formal, peer-reviewed Idaho Victory Garden curriculum and interactive online offering, to expand the course statewide. Pilot courses and evaluations are planned for early spring 2013.



The Nampa Storehouse Garden receives positive press coverage for their outreach efforts. Youth harvest produce for local charities from their garden at the Southwest Idaho Juvenile Detention Center in Caldwell. Photo by Ariel Agenbroad.



At home in the garden: The Idaho Victory Garden program has a new home hosted by the Trinity Community Garden, started by Canyon County Master Gardeners. Photo by Ariel Agenbroad.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Dale Anderson, Sheila Anderson, Paulette Blaseg, Ron Galloway, Pastor Meggan Manlove, Trinity Lutheran Church, Ellen Pline, Carol Grassl, Mary Van de Bogart, Gretchen Anderson, Jim and Elaine Jenkins, Wendi Gilliam, Jannine Falk, Beth Rasgorshek, Charlotte Eberlein, University of Idaho Educational Communications, and Canyon County staff.

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References

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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