

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Advanced Idaho Master Gardener program keeps volunteers engaged from year to year

AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension's Advanced Idaho Master Gardener program in Bonner County helps to keep the volunteers engaged.

The Situation

Each year there is some loss of Idaho Master Gardener volunteers for a variety of reasons. Although there have been some long-term volunteers, just one of the 15 students from the 2015 Idaho Master Gardener continue to be active in the program. When the next Idaho Master Gardener training program was offered in 2017, the students indicated that continued educational opportunities were of interest. The students desired more in-depth lessons to the Idaho Master Gardener training.

Our Response

An Advanced Idaho Master Gardener curriculum was designed to include seven classes in 2017 and eight classes in 2018. The specific topics varied each year to maintain the interest of the volunteers, but both year classes built on to the initial Idaho Master Gardener training. In 2017, the topics covered included: horticulture, plant identification, plant diagnostics, plant propagation, soils, and insect identification and preservation. In 2018, the topics covered and in-depth look into various fruits and vegetables. The students were also asked to research a topic and give a presentation to the class on that topic to build both their



2018 Advanced Idaho Master Gardener class.

research skills and presentation skills. These classes were offered in the fall of each year.

Program Outcomes

In 2017, 10 students participated in the Advanced Idaho Master Gardener training program. Six of these students had just completed the Idaho Master Gardener training in the spring of that year. At the completion of the program all 10 agreed that it was worth their time to attend the Advanced Idaho Master Gardener training. When asked if they would attend this training again, the class of 10 also agreed that they would. The students indicated that some of their favorite parts of the training included the Plant Clinic walk through/triage and getting to know the local experts

and networking with other Idaho Master Gardener volunteers.

Most of the topics were rated as being meaningful to the Idaho Master Gardener volunteers. The comments indicated that most information was practical and easy to understand and apply. Soils ranked as the least meaningful with one comment stating “Information was too technical. Hard to apply. Over my head.”

The students were also asked if they would like to attend a similar fall series of classes that would cover different topics or monthly Advanced Idaho Master Gardener classes covering various topics. Eight of the 10 students thought that another fall series would be a good idea while only five thought that monthly classes would be a good idea.

In the fall of 2018 the Advanced Idaho Master Gardener training was offered again. This time, the topics were changed to focus solely on fruit and vegetable production. Six of the students from the 2017 Advanced Idaho Master Gardener class enrolled in the 2018 class. Eight other students who had completed the initial Idaho Master Gardener training program joined them to form a class of 14 students. From an end of class survey 10 students indicated the class was worth their time and nine students thought they were likely to attend another Advanced Idaho Master Gardener training.

Again, students were asked their preference for year-long monthly classes or a fall series of classes. The 2018 Advanced Idaho Master Gardener class had 10 students that indicated they would likely attend monthly classes throughout the year, but also had 10 students indicate they would likely attend another fall training. Topics suggested for future classes include ornamental landscape plants, organic growing methods, native plants, root cellars, trap cropping, fire-wise landscaping.

The Future

The Advanced Idaho Master Gardener training in Bonner County will continue to be offered with the guidance of the Idaho Master Gardener volunteers. The classes offer additional education and engagement with the volunteers during a time when other Idaho Master Gardener programs such as the Idaho Master Gardener training program or Plant Clinic are not offered. Both monthly classes and a fall series of Advanced Idaho Master Gardener training will be considered. Topics of classes will be selected from suggested subjects.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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50-18-jjensen-master-gardener • 11/18