

IMPACT

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Regional master gardener convention provides hands on horticulture education

AT A GLANCE

The University of Idaho Extension has collaborated with BYU-Idaho in Rexburg, to host a hands on horticulture experience for master gardeners in the tri-state area.

The Situation

The University of Idaho Extension has an established and proven Master Gardener program that annually educates clientele throughout the state of Idaho. These clientele then share this knowledge with members of their community, positively impacting the lives of residents throughout the state. The majority of the training given to Master Gardeners is through classroom instruction via PowerPoint. Students rarely get the opportunity to have hands on horticulture skills taught by instructors in outdoor settings, as well as the opportunity to interact with Master Gardeners from other states. Regional horticulture events have been non-existent in the past, as well as opportunities for learners to broaden their experiences through interacting with out of state Master Gardeners.

Our Response

In 2011, the University of Idaho Extension approached the Plant Science Department of Brigham Young University - Idaho (BYU-Idaho), located in Rexburg ID with the proposed idea of combining the resources of both Universities to host a Regional Master Gardener Convention. BYU-Idaho owns one of the largest and most elaborate privately held horticulture training centers in the nation, overseen by well educated and experienced green industry faculty. The University of Idaho Extension has highly trained and diversified horticulture faculty, and



proven methods of advertising and event publication. By combining the strengths of these two Universities, a successful event was created giving learners a completely hands on training of the subject being taught, and broadening the range of topics and lessons being offered. No other educational event of this nature or caliber is offered in Idaho, Wyoming, or Montana.

In 2011, fourteen classes were offered which included hydroponic tomato production, espalier pruning, landscape concepts walkabout, fruit tree grafting, large and small fruit production, home garden production, cut flower production, soil improvement, turfgrass management, landscaping with native plants, diagnosing plant disorders, plant propagation, and garden photography. In 2012, fourteen classes were offered that included tree identification, high tunnel vegetable production, saving seeds, organic gardening, plant disease diagnosis, flower

arranging, greenhouse and garden tour, edible landscaping, training ornamental trees, turfgrass varieties, plant division, and landscape design concepts walkabout. In 2014 class topics covered plant propagation, fruit tree pruning, asparagus gardening, growing & harvesting vegetables, urban poultry, landscape design, vermiculture, plant problem diagnostics, herb production, drip irrigation, insect management, biological control, composting, and neuro botany.

Program Outcomes

100% of surveyed attendees in 2011 responded that they learned something new by attending this event.

2011 attendees ranked Plant Diagnostics, Soil Improvement, and Fruit production as the three most helpful classes when answering gardening question for the general public.

In 2014, 100% of surveyed attendees responded that they learned something new by attending this event.

100% of the 2014 attendees reported that the outdoor classroom and hands on learning format of this convention created a positive learning environment.

The 2014 attendees indicated that the top skills they learned and which they would utilize in master gardener volunteer work was composting, plant propagation, straw bale gardening, and drip irrigation system design.

The three most enjoyed classes in 2014 were herbal lore and legend, asparagus gardening, and composting/straw bale gardening.

The Future

The Regional Master Gardener Convention will continue to be held in Rexburg, reaching learners from the three state region. Attendees have indicated that they would like to have classes offered covering weed control, plant identification, green house and cold frame ownership, pesticide safety, producing strawberries, how to start community gardens, exclusively organic gardening, walipini gardening, beekeeping, seed saving, and pruning ornamental shrubs/roses.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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