

## Home gardening classes teach skills promoting success of beginning gardeners

### AT A GLANCE

Informed gardeners set realistic goals for planting and growing a garden and make better consumer decisions with their gardening budget.

### The Situation

The extended growing season in the Lewis-Clark Valley supports an on-going community-wide interest in gardening knowledge and skills. However, new and beginning gardeners are often uninformed about what they need to know to grow plants successfully in the region. A sales associate in a local large outdoor goods store observed that “new gardeners don’t know what to ask for or when to ask for it.” The lack of experience can lead to beginning gardeners overspending on unnecessary amounts of garden supplies or the purchase of supplies and equipment that do not match gardening goals.

Access to pertinent information in a timely manner helps beginning gardeners become better consumers. Learning what is important to know as well as when to use that knowledge; gardeners can develop realistic expectations and spend money wisely on appropriate gardening equipment and supplies as needed.

### Our Response

University of Idaho Extension in Nez Perce County partnered with Lawn & Garden at North 40 Outfitters to provide a series of home gardening educational



Phil Shinn, advanced master gardener, teaches a class on Mason bees in the Home Gardening series at North 40 Outfitters.

classes emphasizing basic skills and knowledge to encourage beginning gardeners. The series of six one-hour classes were taught from February through May covering eight topics: Integrated Pest Management, Beekeeping, Mason Bees, Container Combinations, Lawn Care, Right Plant in the Right Place, Starting Plants from Seed and Starting Tomatoes.

Extension provided program marketing, instructional handouts and evaluation surveys as well as information about the University of Idaho Extension Idaho Master Gardener volunteer training program and other regional horticulture programs, businesses and resources. Evaluation surveys were summarized and results shared with managers at North 40 Outfitters.

Five advanced master gardeners gained additional community teaching experience by providing presentations on several topics in the series mentored by master gardener peers and Extension educator.

### Program Outcomes

There were 96 participants from seven communities in Idaho (Lewiston, Grangeville, Lenore, Orofino, Juliaetta, Culesac, Lapwai) and four communities in Washington (Clarkston, Asotin, Colfax, Pullman) attended Home Gardening classes at North 40 Outfitters in Lewiston. Attendance at individual classes ranged from five to 47 participants with 28 being the average. 20 percent of participants attended three or more classes.

A total of 116 evaluations were received from the six classes in the Home Gardening series. The class evaluation return rate ranged from 45 percent to 100 percent with 78 percent being the average rate for the full series.

A summary of survey evaluations completed at the end of each class showed that:

- 97 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the speakers were knowledgeable and well prepared, they had received a good working knowledge of the subject matter and they would use the information/knowledge they gained.
- 85 percent felt the amount of time for the class was appropriate while 11 percent felt it was too little.
- 95 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the registration process, the presenters, the facilities and the materials provided.

Anecdotal responses indicate that participants would like classes to be longer and presentations on composting, pruning and local plants added to the schedule of topics.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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