

GREEN THUMB GARDENING CLASSES IN CASCADE COUNTY, MONTANA

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NEEDS IDENTIFICATION

The National Gardening Association stated that 35% of American households grow vegetables, fruits, and other produce either at a home or community garden. This is a 200% increase from 2008 to 2017. The goal of the Green Thumb gardening classes was to reach novice adult gardeners and teach them through Extension resources on how to grow a successful garden to feed themselves and their families.



EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Increase adult learners' knowledge of:

- Starting plants and sowing seeds
- Transplanting houseplants
- Plant cuttings
- Garden planning
- Planting a garden
- Transplanting seedlings
- Understand garden types
- Greenhouse types, function, and maintenance
- Harvesting vegetables
- Soil testing
- Composting

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The Green Thumb Gardening classes was a four-part, hands on, continuing educational series for novice gardeners. The classes were from April to August covering topics from sowing seeds to harvesting vegetables. The classes are focused on adults who cannot commit to the Master Gardener program but want to grow their own produce to feed their families. Educational resources from Montana State University Extension, Colorado State University Extension, Michigan State University Extension, North Dakota State University Extension, University of Missouri Extension, Purdue Extension, Penn State Extension, and University of Maine Extension. The four sessions were titled, "Spring into Gardening," "Gardening 101," "Greenhouse 101," and "Harvesting 101." Montana State University Extension partnered with Bundi Gardens and River City Harvest Community Gardens to reach out to more adult learners on horticulture knowledge and insight to horticulture in Cascade County, Montana.



PROGRAM DELIVERY

The "Spring into Gardening" class kicked off the four-part class series with adult learners sowing seeds, starting plants, transferring houseplants, and plant cuttings. The class began with introductions and setting gardening goals for the 2019 growing season. Adult learners dug into the class by hands-on activities where they prepared seedling trays to plant tomato seeds, learned how to properly plant seeds, transferred their own houseplants from one pot to another, and used rooting hormone to create cuttings from a mother plant.



"Gardening 101" was a garden planning session where adult learners put their garden plan on paper, researched vegetables that grow in Montana, planted root vegetable seeds directly in the garden, transplanted tomatoes into a garden, and learned about different garden types. The class incorporated both hands-on and lecture to learn about the different aspects of gardening.

The third class, "Greenhouse 101," was taught by Jim Bundi of Bundi Gardens. Jim and his wife, Marcia, have been growing flowers and vegetables in greenhouses for over 40 years. The adult learners toured three different types of greenhouses in use at Bundi Gardens. They learned about greenhouse structure, purpose, maintenance, and construction. Jim discussed the difference between hot beds and cold beds and which greenhouses are best suited for the home gardener.

The final class was "Harvesting 101" where adult learners traveled to a community garden for hands-on education. The class was jointly taught by Janice Driver with River City Harvest and Rose Malisani with MSU Cascade County Extension. Adult learners toured the community garden and learned about different vegetable varieties, the best time to harvest vegetables and fruit, how to pull a garden soil sample, soil tests, composting, and preparing your garden for next year.

OUTCOMES

Twenty-one adult learners took the opportunity to learn from the Green Thumb Gardening classes from April to August 2019. Their gardening knowledge ranged from novice to some experience growing vegetables and fruit at the first class. By the end of the classes, the adult learners expressed their increased knowledge of gardening and planted successful gardens with the gardens producing hundreds of pounds of produce.



I really enjoyed that hands-on experiences and wealth of knowledge gathered by the teacher and classmates. Would recommend the classes to the beginning gardener and the Master Gardener.

-Green Thumb Gardening class participant

IMPACTS

Ratings for the Green Thumb Gardening classes were as follows:

- 5.0 out of 5.0 for "Spring into Gardening"
- 5.0 out of 5.0 for "Gardening 101"
- 5.0 out of 5.0 for "Greenhouse 101"
- 5.0 out of 5.0 for "Harvesting 101"

Adult learners stated that the most valuable sections for their personal growth were:

- Commodore between adult learners.
- Hands-on learning.
- Learning from Extension.
- Building a network of gardeners.

Green Thumb Gardening class adult learners plan on:

- Try new vegetable varieties.
- Transplant houseplants at home.
- Build my own greenhouse for personal use.
- Taking cuttings from a favorite houseplant.

The Green Thumb Gardening classes promoted learning through hands-on activities, camaraderie between adult learners and educators, and visiting different garden locations in Great Falls to promote horticulture. Continuing education for adult learners is essential to promote healthy lifestyles that will feed them and their families. 97% of participants said they would recommend the Green Thumb Gardening classes to others.