

MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS beautify communities,

SITUATION

Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who provide educational resources to residents, communities, and horticultural producers in Wyoming. People must complete a minimum of 40 training hours through local extension offices to become a Master Gardener and commit to 40 hours of volunteer service in their communities following training. Volunteers may stay active by volunteering and receiving continuing education each year. Individual Master Gardener programs are coordinated at the county level including trainings, volunteer activities, and continuing education. Statewide support is provided by the state coordinator, who provides support to local programs through teaching Master Gardeners, training county-based program coordinators on current and relevant horticultural topics, implementing program policies, assisting with volunteer management, and conducting needs assessment. The needs identified through assessment help provide direction and identify priorities used in program planning, education, and evaluation of the Master Gardener program. An online volunteer reporting system tracks volunteer activities, continuing education, and Master Gardener contacts.

University of Wyoming Extension offers the Master Gardener program in 17 counties. New Master Gardener programs began in Albany and Washakie counties in 2013. The first year of data collected from the online volunteer

reporting system allowed for tracking volunteer numbers and activities for the first time on a statewide basis. Prior to 2013, the impact of the University of Wyoming Extension Master Gardener volunteers was not measured, and the actual number of Master Gardener volunteers in the state was unknown. The reporting system shows 121 Master Gardeners received training in 12 counties in 2012-2013. There are 534 Master Gardeners in 14 counties (Fremont, Uinta, and Sublette counties not reporting) in Wyoming. Of the 534 Master Gardeners, 225 (42 percent) reported volunteer activities. Master Gardeners reported 10,904.5 volunteer hours, 2,216 continuing education hours, and 34,174 total contacts.

IMPACTS

Master Gardeners benefit their communities by extending knowledge of horticulture through volunteer service. They offer unbiased, research-based information to home gardeners, crop producers, and green-industry professionals. Their volunteer activities include community beautification, community gardens, demonstration gardens, educational conferences and workshops, garden tours, greenhouse and high tunnel production, office support, diagnosing plant samples brought into extension offices and other venues, plant sales, school gardens, yard calls, and youth programs.



strengthen horticultural activities



Chris Hilgert
Master Gardener Coordinator/Horticulture Specialist
University of Wyoming Extension
Department of Plant Sciences
(307) 766-6870
chilgert@uwyo.edu



Master Gardener coordinators received training in using the online reporting system. Evaluations indicate the online reporting system is user-friendly, easier for educators to keep track of volunteers and volunteer activities, and Master Gardeners find the system useful. Each year, the reporting system will help the University of Wyoming Extension capture the total number of Master Gardener volunteers in each county and in the state, the total number of volunteer hours reported in each county and in the state, the total number of contacts in each county and in the state, and all of the volunteer projects in which Master Gardeners are involved.

Long-term impacts of the Master Gardener program include diversified and more profitable horticultural production systems, community beautification that enhances

the aesthetic value of Wyoming communities, increased production of local foods, increased numbers of individuals growing their own food, increased access to healthy foods, increased adoption of sound pest management practices, and increased economic and environmental sustainability.

Master Gardeners reported
10,904.5 volunteer hours, 2,216
continuing education hours, and
34,174 total contacts.

