

Horticulture 101

EDUCATES PARK COUNTY TO GROW



Park County Master Gardener Bob Prchal demonstrates proper pruning of fruit trees.

Situation

Horticultural crops encompass vegetables, fruits, nuts, herbs, flowers, turf, and ornamental trees and shrubs. Every year, the University of Wyoming Extension employees in the Park County offices consult with clients on a range of horticulture issues. Most questions focus on plant identification, plant health, best management practices, and how plants grow and develop.

Wyoming's short growing season, cold winters, low annual moisture, and other climatic conditions make it a difficult state in which to grow horticultural crops. And many Park County residents have moved from other states that have higher annual precipitation and more fertile soils. The difficulty is compounded when residents lack basic knowledge of horticulture, which is the art, science, technology, and business of growing plants.

To address this lack of education and assist clientele to be more successful with their horticultural endeavors, a Horticulture 101 course has been offered in Park County for the past two years. The course is conducted over eight weeks and provides a minimum of 40 hours of hands-on instruction in climate, soils, fertilizers and composting, vegetable production, season extension, fruit trees and small fruit, lawn care, tree care, introduction to botany, plant identification, plant diseases, herbaceous and woody ornamentals, entomology, weed management, and integrated pest management.

Twenty-six people have completed the Horticulture 101 Course. To evaluate program success, participants completed a pre- and post-course evaluation, which consisted of a 100-question quiz and a written evaluation at the end of each class. In addition, participants were emailed a follow-up survey six weeks after the



Horticulture 101 participants gather in the greenhouse for a session on plant propagation.

program to assess how course information is being used and its impact.

Impact

In 2015 and 2016, the average post-course evaluation increased by 27% and 29% respectively over the pre-course evaluation. The evaluations indicated that participants increased their comfort with the horticulture topics by an average of 1.74, increased their ability to make educated decisions for their need by an average of 1.65, and increased their ability to describe the important aspects of the topics by an average of 1.60.

In the six-week follow-up, seven participants (25%) indicated they had used more than 50% of the course materials. All responding participants stated they have implemented changes in their horticultural practices. Examples include the following:

- They started a compost pile.
- They changed management of house plants.
- They changed their management of soil preparation.

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