

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Canyon County master gardeners meet community needs with clientele site visits

### AT A GLANCE

UI Extension in Canyon County Master Gardener Tree & Turf team visit clientele where they live and when is convenient for research-based solutions for tree, shrub, garden and lawn problems.

### The Situation

The cities of Caldwell (51st) and Nampa (91st) in Canyon County are among the 100-fastest growing cities in the U.S. with at least 20,000 individuals moving into these municipalities from 2020-2024, with Caldwell's population growing 21.5% and Nampa's population growing at 16.8% per year, respectfully U.S. Census Bureau. The majority of the growth within cities in Canyon County are single family homes on average-sized residential lots or sometimes small acreage residences, often individuals who have moved to the area from out-of-state or from a different climate than the high-desert sagebrush-steppe climate of southern Idaho. Clientele often have problems with their plants and landscape in this regionwide situation, often including tree, shrub, garden, lawn, planting, irrigation, pesticide misuse/drift, fertilizer, hardscape, weed, homeowner association or other horticultural concerns. The value of plants in the residential setting may range from a few hundred dollars to thousands of dollars, depending upon the age, size and complexity of the potential horticultural problem or recommended solution. Landscape and plant health issues in residential settings are highly site-specific and difficult to accurately diagnose without direct observation and dialogue with the landowner. Factors such as irrigation



Canyon County master gardeners meeting with clients to diagnose a declining tree during a site visit. Photo by Brad Stokes.

practices, soil conditions, plant selection, plant placement and localized microclimate environmental conditions significantly influence plant performance and overall landscape health.

### Our Response

University of Extension in Canyon County responded by creating the Master Gardener Tree & Turf team to meet clientele at their residences for official site visits to examine the potential problem in person, suggesting university approved research-based solutions onsite with the clientele and with a follow-up written report for future landscape plans or problems. The Master Gardener Tree & Turf team members are well-suited for onsite diagnoses and recommendations for the public, as they have been through the 16-week

University of Idaho Extension's Idaho Master Gardener Program course, often they are continuing or Advanced Idaho Master Gardeners with years of knowledge in diagnosing plant and landscape problems. Questions from the public that require a site visit vary. Depending upon the clientele's needs, the Master Gardener Tree & Turf team may be asked to travel, assess, diagnose and recommend science and research-based solutions for horticulture problems in the region.

## Program Outcomes

During the spring-summer-fall of 2025 the Master Gardener Tree & Turf team conducted 27 site visits in the region of southwestern Idaho, with 24 site visits conducted within Canyon County alone. On average the round-trip distance to each site was 14.7 miles away from the UI Extension Canyon County office location. The average time spent with clientele for each site visit on location was approximately 52 minutes. The average time spent by Master Gardener Tree & Turf team members writing, reviewing and editing site visit reports for the clients was 1.25 hours. The average number of UI Extension's Idaho Master Gardeners per site visit was three to four individuals, volunteer numbers depend upon volunteer schedule availability and clientele availability for each site visit. Site visit reports are sent to Master Gardener Tree & Turf team, as well as the UI Extension horticulture educator for review before being sent to the client for future recommendations and research-based solutions, often these include links to UI Extension/PNW publications from experts in the region. Problems in southwestern Idaho for horticulture are numerous, but the most identified challenges by UI Extension Canyon County's Master Gardener Tree & Turf team included:

- Over irrigation (frequency and duration, tree/shrub/lawn) and over watering (trees/shrubs/ornamentals)
- Plant selection and location in the landscape

- Plants are incorrectly planted (depth, spacing and hole size)
- Mowing height, timing and fertilization (lawn)
- Weed barrier use/misuse and heat sinks (often dark-colored hardscape surrounding the plant)
- Herbicide misuse, drift and damage (phenoxy herbicides [active ingredients], weed and feed products and broad leaf weed specific herbicides)

As a result, clientele directly increased their knowledge of common horticultural challenges in southern Idaho, they also gained a better understanding of the risks associated with weed barrier misuse, heat retention from hardscape materials, irrigation misuse and improper herbicide use. Clientele adopted improved landscape management practices from site visits. In the long-term, improved landscape management supports the protection and enhancement of residential property value — estimated to account for 10 to 20% of the total property value, while also improving curb appeal, energy/water efficiency and overall property marketability for the home/landowner.

The Master Gardener Tree & Turf team is solving horticultural problems for clientele when and where they live through volunteering, mileage, expertise and recommendations within Canyon County and beyond, directly supporting the University of Idaho Extension's mission statement.



A struggling pine tree, surrounded by weed barrier, dark-colored hardscape and a drip line emitter. Photo by Don Benson.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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