impact

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

Idaho master gardeners grow knowledge, volunteers and community

AT A GLANCE

The Idaho Master Gardener Program connects north Idaho residents with university resources while developing knowledgeable volunteers who share their passion and expertise with the community.

The Situation

Our county is experiencing significant population growth and development, bringing new residents and increased interest in sustainable, successful home gardening and landscaping. With development, local gardeners face increasingly complex questions about pests and diseases, water use, pollinators, soil health and adapting gardens to local growing conditions.

Our program provides an important bridge between University of Idaho Extension research-based horticulture knowledge and the gardening public. An extraordinarily dedicated volunteer group allows our program to maintain a presence in our communities, providing residents with opportunities to connect, learn and contribute to our local gardening community.

Following a year of program transition, we have opportunities to build on a strong foundation, intentionally grow and strengthen volunteer and partner networks.

Our Response

The Idaho Master Gardener Program in Kootenai County is focusing on nurturing our dedicated certified volunteer base and welcoming a connected and sustainable new class in 2026-2027.



Program Coordinator Megan Snodgrass and certified Idaho Master Gardeners at the Demonstration Garden in August 2026.

Key priorities include:

- Building volunteer community and connection
- Strengthening recruitment, onboarding and mentoring for new volunteers
- Expanding community education, outreach and involvement
- Developing volunteer leadership and community partnerships

We are also strengthening relationships with other Extension programs, local gardening organizations, community partners and other organizations that share an interest in horticulture education, volunteerism and community wellbeing.

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Program Outcomes

The program's impact extends beyond individual volunteers. Idaho master gardeners gain horticultural knowledge, practical skills and opportunities to serve their communities, while residents gain access to reliable, research-based gardening information.

Expected and emerging outcomes include:

- Increased volunteer engagement, connection and retention
- A stronger pathway for recruiting and preparing new volunteers for certification
- Increased capacity for volunteers to provide horticultural education and outreach
- Development of volunteer leadership and mentoring capacity
- Expanded collaboration with local gardening and community organizations
- Strengthened network of strategic partners to increase community reach and impact
- Greater public access to University of Idaho Extension and other research-based horticultural resources

Table 1. Our impact in numbers.

2025-2026 in Kookenai County	Numbers
Certified volunteers	24
Collective years of service	242
Hours of community service	2,236
Hours of training and continuing education	822.5
Contacts with Kootenai County residents	10,886
Value to our community	$93,912

The Future

Maintaining and growing our volunteer group is essential to our continuing efforts to build a sustainable program that can grow alongside the community we serve.

In 2026-2027, our program will focus on establishing strong systems for volunteer recruitment, onboarding, mentorship, retention and leadership; expanding accessible educational opportunities; and developing strategic partnerships throughout Kootenai County and within University of Idaho Extension.

Success will be reflected not only in the number of volunteer hours or educational events, but in the program's ability to create lasting community connections and increase access to reliable horticultural information.

Our goals are simple: grow a robust volunteer program that helps Kootenai County grow stronger, more knowledgeable and more connected through gardening.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Current and potential partners include:

- University of Idaho Extension (including Extension educators and partner programs like 4-H, Eat Smart Idaho and Idaho Master Forest Stewards)
- Idaho Fish and Game
- Kootenai County Fairgrounds
- North Idaho College
- Community Library Network and Coeur d'Alene Public Library
- Regional gardening clubs (Coeur d'Alene Garden Club, River City Gardeners, Rathdrum Garden Club, ABC Gardening Group)
- Local schools and youth organizations

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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