impact

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# Bonner County master gardeners offer activities for gardeners of all ages

## AT A GLANCE

**Idaho Master Gardeners address increasing demands for research-based gardening information in Bonner County through gardening activities and advice for gardeners young and old.**

## The Situation

The first Master Gardener training was developed and offered by Washington State University Extension in 1973 to recruit and train the local public to respond to the increasing number of gardener's questions. The original need of meeting the increased demand for gardening information continues in Bonner County today, especially as the population of Bonner County has increased by 15.5% from 2020 to 2025 according to the U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts. There is a large community of gardeners in Bonner County with an interest in learning more about gardening.

## Our Response

The Idaho Master Gardeners Program targets local gardeners that are interested in learning more about all aspects of gardening and then wish to share that information with other gardeners in the county. The Idaho Master Gardener Program training was offered this year for new master gardeners. This is a 10-week class that meets twice a week to learn about all aspects of gardening. Instructors include university faculty and local experts. Additional advanced classes were taught for the returning Idaho Master Gardeners. For both new and returning master gardeners, plant clinic trainings were held during the summer to help them feel more confident about answering gardening questions that come into the plant clinic.



An Idaho Master Gardener teaching at the Worm Composting Workshop.

## Program Outcomes

The total number of master gardeners increased from 26 in 2025 to 33 in 2026. In turn, these trained master gardeners took leadership roles and were active in many educational outreach events. Idaho Master Gardeners started to take the leadership roles in projects such as the Southside Afterschool Junior Master Gardener Program and a worm composting class for the public. At the afterschool program, master gardeners successfully planted and harvested pumpkin in the school's raised bed garden. They also led other Junior

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Master Gardener activities with the elementary school students. One master gardener saw a need for a worm composting class and worked with the local Extension educator and specialist to create the workshop. The program included presentations from two Idaho Master Gardeners, the local Extension educator and Extension organic specialist. Students learned about worm composting and then received all the needed supplies to create a worm bin at their home.

At the Master Gardener booth at the county fair, master gardeners taught over a hundred children about worms and composting. They created mini worm bins with the children. This led into the adult worm composting class that was spearheaded by one of the Idaho Master Gardeners.

Master gardener activities and events for 2026 included:

- Educational event booth focused on starting seeds and making seed tape for youth and adults.
- Educational event both focused on worm composting with the chance to youth to start a small worm bin to take home.
- Afterschool program activities on diverse gardening topics. They also worked with students to grow pumpkins in the school garden beds.
- Worm composting class for adults.
- Plant clinic gardening questions answered utilizing research-based, non-biased information.

Table 1. 2025-2026 data show how trained master gardeners make an impact in their community.

| Event or item | 2025 amounts | 2026 amounts |
|---|---|---|
| Presentations taught by master gardener | 6 | 9 |
| Newsletter articles or fact sheets written by master gardeners | 3 | 3 |
| Plant clinic questions answered | 53 | 53 |
| Hours of master gardeners service | 358 | 553 |
| Contacts made by master gardeners at educational events | 358 | 773 |



Master gardener preparing the Southside School garden beds with fresh soil amendments.

## The Future

The Idaho Master Gardener Program in Bonner County will continue to offer the beginning training and advanced trainings that focus on building confidence and leadership related to master gardener's activities. Master gardeners and the Extension educator continue to look for new ideas to keep them engaged with the program. In the future they hope to organize a regional educational event for all interested master gardeners in the district.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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