

impact

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

Idaho Master Gardener Program grows and makes a difference in Kootenai County

AT A GLANCE

Master gardeners connects with our community as it expands to grow more food locally, plant pollinator-friendly gardens, help increase property values and support friendships with others of similar interests.

The Situation

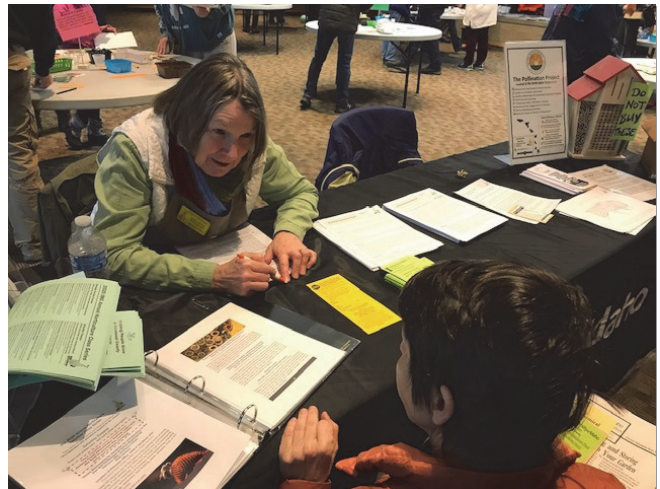
It is estimated that the population has increased in Kootenai County by 9.9% from 2020-2024, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That percentage estimates 16,961 additional residents in Kootenai County alone, 78% of which moved from other states, according to the Idaho Department of Labor.

As the number of homes rises, so does the desire to grow our gardening community. We invite and gather to guide best practices around growing food, supporting pollinators, caring for lawns and landscapes, protecting our waterways and aquifer, and share about our free Plant Diagnostic Clinic and services we provide.

Our Response

The Idaho Master Gardener Program sees growth as an opportunity to inspire residents about living life to the fullest capacity in Kootenai County by:

- Adapting our popular “Welcome to the Adventure of Growing in Northern Idaho” workshop from a two-day event, into individual, in-depth classes occurring over four months. This created room for varied class topics and deepened the knowledge base of over 1,436 class attendees. On average,



Master gardeners visit with a new resident at the Local Seed Swap at the CDA Public Library. Photo by CDA Public Library.

evaluations showed a 52% increase in knowledge when attending a class hosted by our program.



Master gardeners teaching our public class series and working in the free plant clinic. Photo by Kara Carleton.

- Adding a second option to our rigorous volunteer certification course for those in the professional green industry and those not able to make the

volunteer commitment. This Green Certificate Program allows individuals to gain knowledge and experience, and delay or forgo their volunteer requirements. Higher class fees reflect the offset of the annual volunteer time that would be returned to our program (25% of our students in 2024 participated in this option).

- A 52% increase in visits to our mobile Plant Clinic and pop-up booths inspired us to double our locations. We served just under 3,000 community members who asked 3,394 questions during our six-month season.
- Expanding our class offerings for youth through our 4-H STEM center utilizing a multigenerational approach with our volunteers and 4-H participants. Students learned about hydroponic gardening, how to collect data and photograph native pollinators, and surveyed habitats where native pollinators are found.
- Expanding the Pollination Project and Demonstration Garden utilizing technology to educate the public about insightful plant combinations, native pollinators and reduced pesticide use.

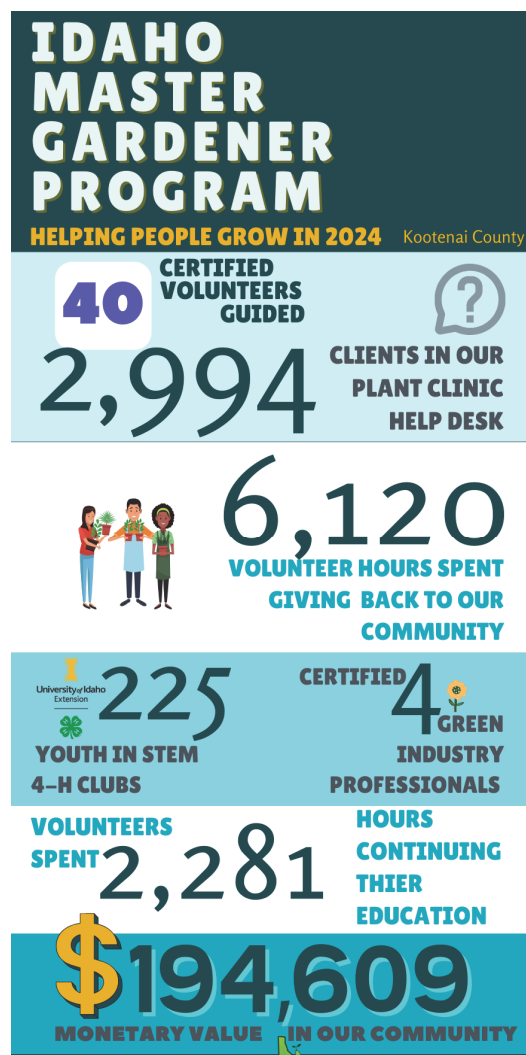


4-H youth collecting data and photograph bumble bees, to enter scientific surveys about the health of pollinators. By Carleton.

Program Outcomes

The Extension Master Gardener Program is one of the largest volunteer organizations in the country. The work of our volunteers holds great public value

centered around regional concerns. In 2024, our volunteers contributed \$194,609 back into our community through their dedicated service.



Expanding our outreach and volunteer base has increased excitement for our community classes. Because of the work of our Idaho Master Gardeners in Kootenai County, more people are growing local food, planting pollinator-friendly gardens, better caring for landscapes, and increasing awareness about stewardship for our region.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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