

impact

of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



Greater Harmony Between Agriculture and the Environment Master Gardeners in Arizona

Issue

With over 3 million people in Maricopa County, a large percentage of them newcomers to the Sonoran Desert, there is a tremendous need for public education regarding appropriate selection, placement and care of plants. The Master Gardener program seeks to improve the health of plants and people while promoting environmental responsibility in the garden. It includes the efficient use of water, fertilizers and pesticides and the reduction of green waste.

What has been done?

Two 17-week training sessions were held in 2002; 120 new Master Gardeners were trained. Using the multiplier effect, training of Master Gardener volunteers expands the coverage of County Extension agents to fulfill needs throughout Maricopa County.

Impact

Master Gardeners immediately give back to the community by teaching others what they've learned themselves about gardening and landscaping. In 2002, volunteers gave over 95 talks attended by more than 4,212 people. Participants said they improved their general knowledge about soils, turf, efficient irrigation, pruning, vegetables, native plants, wildlife habitats, citrus and fruit trees, ornamentals and botany. As a result of educational outreach regarding pesticide use, Maricopa County Cooperative Extension learned, from a call-back survey, that 86 percent of the participants intended to reduce herbicide and pesticide use after talking to a Master Gardener. A survey of 53 participants in the public classes showed that 87 percent found information in the courses offered that would help them irrigate properly, use pesticides appropriately, and become more confident in their ability to

maintain their landscape to reduce green waste. In a survey of 107 participants at the Citrus Clinic, the average rating for the session was 9 out of a possible 10; 88 percent reported that they learned how to irrigate, fertilize, and use pesticide alternatives properly; 80 percent were likely to change the way they used both fertilizers and pesticides; 90 percent planned to irrigate more deeply and less frequently.

The Horticulture Hot Line, staffed by 45 volunteers per week, fielded 25,000 gardening and landscaping calls and assisted 3,400 walk-ins with gardening and landscaping questions at the main Extension office and three satellite locations in 2002. Maricopa County Master Gardeners donated 36,000 volunteer hours of service in 2002, equivalent to 17 FTEs.

"I have learned more from the Master Gardener training course in six month's time than in 30 years in the professional landscape business." –Master Gardener trained in 2002

Funding

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