



GARDEN NOTES

THE MASTERS OF GARDENING KEEP UTAH GROWING

By Dennis Hinkamp

August 1998

Summer-22

Two hundred years ago tending plants and keeping a garden were considered a necessity for survival. Today, most of us consider it a hobby. In fact, it is one of our most popular pastimes. One in four Americans claims to enjoy some form of gardening.

Here in Utah that percentage is actually a little higher, says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. "Of all those who love gardening and related activities, there is one group of people who not only enjoy it but go to the trouble to learn everything they can about the subject," Goodspeed says. "They then help others through community service. This zealous group is known as master gardeners. They are some of the greatest people on earth and many of the best gardeners in Utah."

Master gardeners can be found in every state and in most parts of Canada, he says. The Master Gardener Program was started in 1972 by Ogden's Dr. David Gibby of Gibby Floral & Greenhouses. Gibby was then working as an Extension agent in King and Pierce counties in Washington (home to Seattle and Tacoma).

In such populated areas he received more than 200 calls a day asking for horticultural advice, Goodspeed explains. So Gibby developed one of the greatest volunteer programs in the nation. He helped train 150 in horticulture and, in return, they each agreed to volunteer 50 to 60 hours to help others.

"In Utah, our Master Gardener Program is modeled after Gibby's original idea and classes," Goodspeed says. "Currently, six counties offer master gardener classes. The course is taught in Box Elder, Weber, Davis, Salt Lake, Utah and Uintah counties. Each county runs the program a little differently, but the basic information and structure are the same."

Classes cover most horticultural areas beginning with the basics of botany, soils and fertilizers, moving on to instruction in different topics each succeeding class, he says. Some of the subjects include annuals, perennials, shrubs, trees, vegetables, fruit, insects, diseases, pesticides and turfgrass.

The goal of the class is to give the participants a good background in horticulture. In return for the training, each participant is asked to volunteer 40 hours of their time back to the community, Goodspeed says. After 40 hours of volunteer time is completed, they are awarded the

Master Gardener Certificate.

“I am amazed at the wonderful people who take the class,” he says. “Many go well above and beyond the 40 hours of service with 79 percent working many additional hours. Four of our master gardeners over the last three years have spent hundreds of hours creating and maintaining community gardens.”

Classes fill quickly. If you think you have what it takes to be one of the few, the proud, the master gardeners, contact your local [USU County Extension office](#).

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