

## Regional Master Gardener Convention returns to Rexburg

### AT A GLANCE

The Regional Master Gardener Convention held in Rexburg was very popular with local gardeners. Restrictions prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic halted the event until recently.

### The Situation

The Regional Master Gardener Convention is a gardening event that has occurred for many years to deliver hands-on, in-person learning to horticulture clients in eastern Idaho. The focus is to teach local gardeners the art and science of growing and caring for plants and landscapes in a sustainable way. It epitomizes cooperation between University of Idaho Extension and Brigham Young University-Idaho, where BYU-Idaho provided the venue at their beautiful Thomas E. Ricks Gardens and UI Extension provided the program and expertise.

The convention is open to all people interested in gardening. Idaho master gardeners in the region assist with the logistics. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the cancellation of the event between 2020-2022 at BYU-Idaho. In 2022, UI Extension hosted the convention in cooperation with College of Southern Idaho in Twin Falls. In 2023, University of Idaho Extension educators connected with the BYU-Idaho Horticulture Department to re-establish this valuable resource to help educate gardeners and students.



Gardeners learn about pruning trees properly at the Regional Master Gardener Convention. Photo by Tom Jacobsen.

### Our Response

UI Extension reached out to Jerry Toll, a faculty member at BYU-Idaho, to bring the Regional Master Gardener Convention back to Rexburg at the Thomas E. Ricks Gardens with the understanding that BYU-Idaho students and faculty could participate. The convention was held June 23, 2023. Previous participants, current Idaho master gardeners and faculty from UI Extension offices around the state were invited to participate.

### Program Outcomes

The 2023 convention brought in 30 registered participants plus another 20 BYU-Idaho students and faculty

to participate in one or more classes. Eight UI Extension educators taught different topics which included:

- The microscopic world of botany and entomology
- Edible and perennial landscaping and permaculture
- Ethnobotany: garden medicine
- Water conservation in landscapes
- Bud grafting
- Caring for young trees so they can be great mature trees
- Pest management year-round: using integrated practices
- Root washing: exposing root problems before planting
- Math is fun! learning sprayer calibration

In addition, tours of the Thomas E. Ricks Gardens, the greenhouses and the apple orchard were given.

Evaluation data indicated that participants gained greater understanding of topics covered and developed skills that will help them in their gardening efforts in the future. Participants reported they learned what plants were edible and medicinal, how to properly use herbicides, how to stake a tree to prevent leaning, what to look for when buying a tree at the nursery, how to create a drip system, various aspects of tree care and what plants can be used medicinally.

## The Future

Collaboration between University of Idaho Extension and Brigham Young University-Idaho continues to grow. The Regional Master Gardener Convention will return to BYU-Idaho and the Thomas E. Ricks Gardens in 2024.

## Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

This program's success has occurred through collaboration within University of Idaho Extension personnel and presentations provided by Reed Findlay, Jared Gibbons, Bracken Henderson, Tom Jacobsen, Ron Patterson, Kimberly Tate, Jennifer Werlin and Andy West. In addition, BYU-Idaho Horticulture Department faculty Jerry Toll helped make arrangements with the university to allow the convention to return to the Thomas E. Ricks Gardens, coordinated lunch and shuttle services, and provided alternative classroom settings inside the greenhouses when the weather prevented outdoor classes.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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