

## **City Gardener Program Helps Inexperienced Gardeners (2006)**

### **Issue:**

No comprehensive educational program addressed the needs of inexperienced urban gardeners. The local Extension board recognized this and suggested that action be taken. The City Gardener Program was developed when 94 percent of the respondents of a survey indicated they were interested in a beginning gardening class (47% "very interested" and 47% "somewhat interested").

### **Extension response :**

A Purdue horticulture educator and horticulture specialist developed the City Gardener Program for new or inexperienced gardeners in urban areas. The program was held at a local public garden on two Saturdays in April from 8:30am to 3:30pm. The 12 hours of training included lecture and "hands on" learning at White River Gardens in Indianapolis. The topics were chosen according to survey results and contacts with local gardeners. They included: How a Plant Grows, Soil & Fertilizers, Pests & Pest Management, Tree & Shrub Selection & Care, Weed Identification & Control, Lawn Care, Vegetable Gardening, Animal Damage Management, and Annual & Perennial Flowers. Each participant received a reference notebook containing outlines of each presentation and supporting publications for the \$30 registration fee. Pre and post tests and an evaluation survey were used to help measure impact.

A total of 20 program evaluations were filled out and returned at the last session. Program evaluations suggested that 100 percent of those who filled out the survey indicated that their knowledge of lawns and gardens increased as a result of the program. The evaluations also showed that 100 percent of the participants felt they became a better gardener due to the program.

### **Impact:**

According to the survey, 100 percent of the attendees who gardened previously said they would change a gardening practice as a result. Participants indicated they would do the following differently as a result of the City Gardener Program: "test my soil before treating," "fertilize (the lawn) in the fall, not in the spring," "more use of composting materials," "I will no longer water in the evening," "decisions about buying plants," "mow grass at one-third rule and not bag clippings," "better planning," "I will also supply my garden and lawn with the nutrients it needs," "make sure all pots have holes in them," "adding more mulch around my trees," "mow (the lawn) to 3 inches (tall)" "I learned how to prune trees and bushes," and "better use of pesticides." "I was always afraid to use chemicals to treat weeds, fortunately now I can use the correct treatment without detrimental results to plants."

Twenty-five percent of the attendees had no previous experience in gardening, and 100 percent of them indicated they are going to begin gardening. "I learned a

lot of new things and now know how to proceed to start gardening."

Other comments about the program included: "this was a good basic program of the basics," "excellent references," "interesting program with lots of good information," "I also liked having the class at White River Gardens," "I learned about websites to access more information," "lot of excellent material presented," "I was glad to find out about the program for this time of year," "the course was fun and a true value," and "it helped me realize there is a lot more to gardening than planting the flowers."

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