

COARC Research Garden and Learning Center, 2012

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Abstract

The Central Oregon Agricultural Research and Learning Center is an ongoing project that is currently in its 6th year of production. The garden provides hands on teaching opportunities and local outreach to both adults and students in the central Oregon community. The Research Garden and Learning Center provide a location for community educational programs as well as school science field trips.

Introduction

The Central Oregon Agricultural Research Garden and Learning Center was established in 2008 on a half-acre parcel of land at the entrance to the Central Oregon Agricultural Center (COARC). The objective is to provide an interface with the local community in addition to the agricultural community traditionally provided with research- based information. The garden includes woody ornamental, herbaceous perennials, ornamental grasses, and fruit trees. There are signs throughout the garden with specific information that includes: common name, botanical name, plant height, and width, water usage and sun or shade needs.

Seeds of Science

In partnership with the Jefferson County School District, COARC provided a field trip to the Research Garden and Learning Center for fifth graders in the Madras 509J school district. Approximately 150 fifth-grade students learned about pollinators in the garden, local weather, invasive weeds, wildlife habitat and ecology. The students have also participated in planting a wildlife habitat garden. This was the second year hosting this program at COARC.

Spring into Gardening Class

COARC sponsored a two-hour workshop for people interested in home gardening that included a tour of the Research Garden and Learning Center. Participants of the workshop gained knowledge about pruning fundamentals for trees and shrubs, the care, maintenance, and selection of perennials and managing common insects and disease problems.

Master Gardeners

The Master Gardener Program is a voluntary, educational program designed to meet the community's gardening and landscaping needs. Information and technical assistance about gardening and horticulture is provided through qualified, certified volunteers. Being partnered with Deschutes County has given Jefferson County the benefits of a tri-county Master Gardener Program in which Master Gardeners come to volunteer at the Central Oregon Agricultural Research Center throughout the spring and summer months. Master Gardeners are onsite here every week to answer questions, identify insects and diseases, and answer public inquires. For anyone interested in becoming a Master Gardener the website is:

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/deschutes/horticulture/mg>

Our Goal

Our goal for 2013 is continued development of an outdoor laboratory engaged in teaching, research, and conservation and to continue to provide educational opportunities for the public through hands on learning, exhibits, agriculture and gardening experiences. Our aim is to help beginning and experienced gardeners alike effectively and sustainably use water and soil resources for productive harvest, aesthetically pleasing landscapes and personal satisfaction. We anticipate developing more programs and services to support botanical and horticultural education in our community.