



# Making a Difference

2016 – 2017

## Horticulture Program Focus Team

# Extension Master Gardener Volunteers Enhance Horticulture Programming

## Grand Challenges

K-State Research and Extension: providing education you can trust to help people, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.

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### Situation

The demand for horticulture information often exceeds the ability of an individual K-State Research and Extension agent to meet client needs. Tomato problems were the most common area where Extension Master Gardeners volunteers delivered assistance followed by lawn weed control and tree diseases. In many cases, the problems were due to environmental stress rather than disease or insect damage. Accurately identifying problems helps reduce unnecessary pesticide sprays.

### What We Did

The Extension Master Gardener Program offers in-depth horticulture training in exchange for volunteer time. Trained Extension Master Gardeners volunteers provide information in a number of activities: response lines, demonstration gardens, garden shows, public presentations, garden tours, community events, and vegetable research trials. Each county tailors its activities to specific needs of their local population.

### Outcomes

Extension Master Gardeners are required to donate a minimum of 40 hours during their first year. After that, Extension Master Gardener volunteers must contribute time to retain active Master Gardener status; however, they go well beyond the minimum. They averaged more than 80 hours each in 2015.

In 2016, more than 100,000 hours for a total value of \$2.2 million were donated by 1,203 Extension Master Gardeners.

### Success Story

One Extension Master Gardener volunteer in Rawlins County took the lead at the elementary school garden by donating more than 300 hours last summer. She works with elementary age youth to plant and care for the garden and trains volunteers on gardening practices. Two other Extension Master Gardener volunteers took the lead at a community garden; helping community members with 'brown thumbs' learn to plant in a community setting.

When the agriculture education/FFA teacher unexpectedly resigned midyear, three Extension Master Gardener volunteers stepped up to help teach two horticulture classes and oversee a large greenhouse. The Extension Master Gardener volunteers stepped up to help teach the horticulture classes and have volunteered every Tuesday and Thursday all semester to teach FFA students about transplanting, starting seeds, growing produce, etc.