

Broadwater County



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Sanfoin field in the Big Belt Mountains northeast of Townsend, by Allison Kosto.

MSU Extension in Broadwater County is a partnership between Broadwater County, Montana State University, and the United States Department of Agriculture. This partnership provides educational outreach in the areas of Agriculture/Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, Community Development, and Family Consumer Sciences. The office in Broadwater County houses one MSU Extension Agent and an Administrative Assistant who also serves as the Fair Manager.

Broadwater County is a fast-growing county with a population of about 6,237. The county encompasses 796,000 acres of agricultural land, small acreage subdivisions, rural communities, and range or forested land. With about 45% of the county in public land, the area is a popular choice for recreation especially around Canyon Ferry Reservoir. Primary industries include agriculture, manufacturing, mining, and services. Townsend is the county seat and home to the Extension office.

Growing New Skills Through Gardening Programs

The pandemic led to an increase in home gardening. As a result, several gardening programs were held in 2021 including

the Master Gardener program, Native Plants Class and Backyards of Broadwater lawn and garden tour.

Level 2 of the Master Gardener program was held. It had been nearly 10 years since the last level 2 class. Participants could attend class virtually, in-person or in combination. Seventeen people participated in the eight-week program from four counties. Participants learned about soils, nutrients, fertilizer, plant growth, plant propagation, insects, diseases and pesticide education. Several participants chose to pursue becoming a certified Master Gardener, which involved taking a test and volunteering at least 30 hours. Volunteers contributed over 200 hours to the community doing horticulture-related activities including helping with the farmer's market, assisting the horticulture class at the high school, maintaining public flowerbeds, organizing Backyards of Broadwater and assisting with horticulture exhibits at the fair. Due to the pandemic, several participants from the 2020 Level 1 class also completed hours. Together, both classes contributed \$5,386 in time to horticulture efforts in the community.

A Native Plants Class was held in partnership with several local experts. The class covered benefits of using native plants in landscaping and locally-recommended trees, shrubs, grasses

and forbs. The class was offered both virtually and in-person and 69 people participated.

Backyards of Broadwater is a yard and garden tour organized by Master Gardeners. It highlights community members with unique and innovative landscapes and provides an opportunity to network with others and share lessons learned. It takes place annually in July and 65 people participated this year.

Through the gardening programs offered by MSU Extension in Broadwater County, participants were able to learn new skills and knowledge to help them grow safe, healthy food at home.

Teaching Youth Life Skill Development

Even though the pandemic contributed to a slow start to the 4-H year, the program quickly gained momentum. This year, 126 club members were enrolled. In the fall, a new club was formed called the Radersburg Rattlers. This is the third new club in four years.

A 4-H Babysitter Training was held that involved 4-H youth and non-4-H youth. The office partnered with STOKe, a local youth organization promoting science, technology, outdoors and entrepreneurship. Fifteen youth participated in the two-day program learning about safety, first aid, CPR, child development, nutrition, entertaining children and business development. As a result of the program, participants were better prepared to create a safe and healthy environment for babies and young children.

The 4-H program is supported by 53 certified volunteers who lead clubs, organize project work, serve on committees, and coordinate events and activities. On average, volunteers spent 8 hours per month with 4-H. This equates to a value of \$128,370 in time given by 4-H volunteers to support local youth in 2021.

Through 4-H, youth learn life skills including leadership, communication, critical thinking, goal setting, and healthy choices. On their scholarship applications, graduating seniors shared skills gained through 4-H:

"4-H will help me a lot in my future. It has helped me with communication skills and being able to talk in front of a crowd. It has helped me with interviews, taught me confidence and taught me that I can do anything if I put my mind to it. 4-H has taught me to be prepared, plan ahead and complete tasks." Kinzee Howey

"4-H has helped me develop interpersonal skills, marketing to potential buyers and communicate with new people in general. I've learned many important life skills such as caring for something other than myself, organizational and record keeping skills and budget management." Allyson Kamps

"4-H has taught me a lot of skills on how to manage my time, money and priorities in the proper way." Wade Leachman



Top: Master Gardeners Samantha Ferrat, Lynette Dyk and Becky Flynn assist in the greenhouse with a horticulture class at Broadwater High school, by Allison Kosto; **Bottom:** Grace Kroeger and Chloe Flynn practice CPR during the Babysitting Class, by Allison Kosto

Broadwater County Staff



Montana State University Extension is an ADA/EO/AA Veteran's Preference Employer and provider of educational outreach.

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