

Granite County

P.O. Box 665 | 406-859-3304 | ben.hauptman@montana.edu | www.granitecountymt.us/



Cattle in Granite County on a cold day, by Ben Hauptman.

Granite County is a rural, natural-resource-supported county in central Western Montana. Winter and summer recreation draw visitors to the scenic beauty year-round, while agriculture is the economic base. Georgetown Lake provides a variety of recreational experiences and is next door to the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness. The county's population is about 3,000, and the county seat of Philipsburg has a population of around 900. The other incorporated town in Granite County is Drummond, with a population of around 300. Montana State University Extension in Granite County is supported by three strong and important partners. County, state and federal funding sources work together to ensure that MSU Extension in Granite County has the resources to provide timely and relevant education addressing locally-identified issues. Montana counties provide about 40 percent of the funding to support local offices, state funding provides about 40 percent and federal partners about 20 percent. Like many Western Montana communities, the Granite County area has a rich mining past, but agriculture has provided the base of economic activity through the boom and bust cycles associated with historic mining. Granite County . . . Montana at its best!

Master Gardener Returns to Granite County

In 2011, Master Gardener was taught in Granite County and generated interest for gardeners in the area. Since then the gardening craze has continued and after speaking with local groups about MSU Extension programs they were interested in, Master Gardener Level 1 was often at the top of the list. This course was offered in Granite County in April of 2022 to teach the basic skills of gardening in Montana. Sections of the course include: Intro to MSU Extension and Master Gardener, Soils, Nutrients and Fertility, Plant Growth and Development, Vegetable Gardening, Growing Small Fruit and Tree Fruit, Herbaceous and Woody Ornamentals, Landscape Design, Pruning, Lawns and Irrigation, and Intro to Integrated Pest Management (IPM). This comprehensive course taught participants how to be better gardeners in western Montana. They are more knowledgeable about soils and soil health, plants that grow well in the area, lawn and tree care, vegetable gardening, and IPM. Participants will also be required to complete volunteer hours, adding 460 hours of volunteer support to their communities. Many are doing so by working

with youth gardeners in 4-H and in the schools and donating produce to the local food banks. This course has generated enough interest in the area to continue the yearly gardening educational series to meet the growing need of people wanting to grow fresh food or to better take care of their lawns and trees.

4-H Quality Assurance at a New Level

The Granite County 4-H program comprises 66 members and 16 leaders participating in various projects. The 4-H program in Granite County combines efforts to share the unique hands-on learning experience that is 4-H. Members in the Granite County 4-H program can share in experiential learning at various county events: Project Possibilities, Foods Fair, Stir-Ups, Quality Assurance, Countywide Demonstrations, IPYA Presentations, and the Skill-A-Thon. The Granite County 4-H Council wanted to emphasize Livestock Quality Assurance for all members and all species during the 4-H year. We integrated a new curriculum to teach kids how to problem-solve situations they might encounter with their project animals and have real-world applications for those looking to pursue animal husbandry as adults. In Granite County, multiple workshops were held, and there was 100% participation from youth taking market animal projects. Kids with breeding and small animal projects also participated in species-specific activities. Afterward, youth learned about and taught each other proper feeding and nutrition, animal shelter design, and proper medication use. And they also had fun! We have seen positive results with increased carcass quality from Granite County 4-H members. Granite County will continue to identify the educational needs of the youth in the program while providing educators and leaders to help them reach their goals.



Top: Braxton Graybeal harvesting brussels sprouts grown from the youth gardening class taught by a Granite County Master Gardener, by Holly Graybeal; **Bottom:** 4-H members prepping their lambs for the big show day, by Karen Palmer

Granite County Staff

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Ben Hauptman
Extension Agent



Karen Palmer
Administrative Assistant