

2022 MSU EXTENSION HIGHLIGHTS

Powell County



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Deer Lodge Mountain in the Flint Creek Mountains seen from Grant-Khors Ranch National Historic site, by Deer Lodge Chamber of Commerce.

Powell County is a rural county with a total population of about 7,000 people and over 35,000 cows. There are seven census-designated communities in Powell County, the largest of which is the county seat, Deer Lodge. Powell County's economy is heavily based on natural resource industries like agriculture, forestry, and mining. Over 50% of the county is owned by either federal or state government, most of which is open to livestock grazing, timber production, and mineral extraction. Powell County is home to beautiful and scenic landscapes composed of six distinct mountain ranges, three major rivers, vast swaths of rangeland, and small amounts of irrigated cropland and pasture.

The Powell County MSU Extension office, located in the courthouse in Deer Lodge, is staffed by one full-time MSU Extension Agent and one full-time administrative assistant. The office provides information and outreach to local constituents and organizations in agriculture, horticulture, 4-H/youth development, and more. Powell County MSU Extension provides newspaper articles and free publications, hosts public workshops in numerous program areas, offers one-on-one consultations for local constituents in several capacities, and works with school children and 4-H youth across the county to serve the people and places of Montana.

Montana 4-H Gone W.I.L.D. (Wilderness Learning Independence and Development) Backpacking Camp and Gear Library Debut

After soliciting and receiving nearly \$10,000 dollars in grant funding and a year of planning, Montana 4-H's first youth backpacking camp launched in the summer of 2022. Grant funding was used to create an outdoor gear library composed of sleeping bags, sleep pads, tents, camp stoves, bear spray, and other outdoor essentials which are now available to be loaned out to local 4-H youths and their families. The outdoor gear library also served to outfit local 4-H youths for the inaugural trip of the MT 4-H Gone WILD backpacking camp.

In late July and early August of 2022, seven 4-H youths successfully completed a 4-day, 3-night backpacking trip in the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness south of Georgetown Lake. 4-H youth, aged 12-14 years old, were taught how to pack and carry their camping gear, set up and maintain a camp, plan and cook nutritious backcountry meals, and many other outdoor lessons. Instructors Ben Hauptman (Granite County MSU Extension Agent), Kayleen Kidwell (Deer Lodge County MSU Extension Agent), and Bo Walker (Powell County

MSU Extension Agent), led the 4-H group over five miles into the backcountry to Johnson Lake where they set up base camp.

From base camp, 4-H youths were immersed in the natural world while learning about fire ecology, mountain flora and fauna, wilderness first aid, and leave-no-trace principles as well as enjoying campfires, swimming and fishing in the lake, and tracking wildlife. The trip's highlight for many youths came on the third day when the group made the five-mile round trip hike to the summit of Rainbow Pass (9,200 ft). No campers had ever hiked that high up or had the opportunity to enjoy such a sweeping, high-mountain view before.

Around the campfire and after a warm meal each night, 4-H youths and camp instructors discussed the highs and lows of the day. Many campers enjoyed the experience of being outdoors and away from their cell phones and social media all day long. Some campers reveled in the quiet and solitude of their temporary home. Others liked that they had to work hard to maintain adequate food, water, and shelter. Overall, all 4-H youth campers deemed the trip a success and a highlight of their 4-H years.



Montana Master Gardener Program Returns to the Montana State Prison

After a four-year hiatus, Powell County MSU Extension returned to the Montana State Prison to offer the Montana Master Gardener Level I certification. In total, 27 inmates – many of whom pursued a separate landscaping certification in tandem – completed the 20-hour course and 20-hour community service requirement. Students learned about soils and fertility; plant physiology and ecology; vegetable and fruit management; turf grass management; shrub and berry pruning; and more.

Many student-inmates enrolled in the program currently hold landscaping, ranch or farm management jobs on the prison property. The knowledge and skills acquired through the Master Gardener Program both complement and add to their current skill sets. Many student-inmates who took the course hope to continue working in landscaping and horticulture upon their return to society.

The Master Gardener Level I course was in high demand during the spring of 2022. So much so that Master Gardener Level II will be offered in the Fall of 2022 to further inmate students' horticultural knowledge. Currently, Powell County MSU Extension plans to offer Master Gardener Levels I and II once per year while demand remains high.



Top: The inaugural class of MT 4-H Gone WILD posing in front of Johnson Lake in the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness, July 2022, by Bo Walker; **Bottom:** Montana State Prison Inmates learn about haskap berry management as part of the Master Gardener Level 1 course, June 2022, by Bo Walker

Powell County Staff

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

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