

COARC Research Garden and Learning Center, 2013

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Abstract

The Central Oregon Agricultural Research and Learning Center is an ongoing project in its 7th year of production. The garden provides a hands-on teaching location for local outreach, community programs, and K-12 science field trips. In addition to local programming, the garden provides an opportunity for local OSU Master Gardeners to work and provide services to the local community.

Introduction

The Central Oregon Agricultural Research Garden and Learning Center was established in 2008 on a half-acre parcel of land located at the entrance to the Central Oregon Agricultural Research Center (COARC). The garden provides an opportunity for COARC and central Oregon Extension programming to extend services and opportunities to the local community in addition to the agricultural community. The garden includes woody ornamental, herbaceous perennials, ornamental grasses, fruit trees and raised garden beds. Garden signs throughout the garden display specific plant species and other information, including: common name, botanical name, plant height, width, water usage and sun/shade needs.

Events and Activities

Seeds of Science

As part of an ongoing partnership with the Jefferson County School District and Oregon Open Campus, COARC hosted approximately 150 fifth-grade students from the Jefferson County 509J School District. Students were provided with opportunities to learn about Bird Habitat and Ecology, Bee's, The Importance of Pollinators in Agriculture, Worms and Composting, Beneficial Insects and Seed Biology at individual teaching stations located in the garden. In addition, students participated in planting a vegetable garden. Staff at COARC maintained and harvested the vegetable garden, donating all vegetables grown to a local charity.

Pruning Class

During spring of 2013, COARC hosted a two and a half hour pruning class. The class consisted of one hour of classroom instruction and one and a half hours of hands instruction in the garden. In the classroom section, participants were provided with opportunities to learn why and when they should prune along with basic pruning principles. During the hands on section, participants split into small groups and actively pruned and observed pruning techniques for ornamental trees and fruit trees along with berries, shrubs and low growing plants under the guidance of Master Gardeners and COARC staff.

Kids Club

COARC hosted Jefferson County Kids Club summer agricultural camp participants for a field trip. During the fieldtrip, COARC staff presented information about the research center, agriculture equipment, worms and composting, the on-site weather station and invasive weed species.

Master Gardeners

The Central Oregon Master Gardener program serves Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson Counties. This gives Jefferson County the benefits associated with a tri-county Master Gardener Program, including increased participation from Master Gardeners from outside Jefferson County. The Master Gardener Program is a voluntary, educational program which trains volunteers in the basics of designed botany and entomology; integrated pest management and pesticide safety; soils, fertilizers and composting; ornamental, herbaceous plants and woody plants; vegetable, indoor and container gardening; sustainable landscaping; and plant pathology. Master Gardeners are available at the Central Oregon Agricultural Research Center weekly throughout the spring and summer months. Volunteers are available to provide informational and technical assistance and to answer questions from the local community in gardening and horticulture. Additionally, volunteers identify insects and diseases based upon sample submissions from the community. For those interested in volunteering or for more information about the Master Gardener program, more information is available at: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/deschutes/horticulture/mg>

Future Plans

Goals

During 2014, COARC will continue to develop the Central Oregon Agricultural Research Garden and Learning Center as an outdoor laboratory to engage in teaching, research and conservation. COARC plans to offer two gardening classes and will host two field trips during 2014, including the Seeds of Science field trip which is planned for expansion to the Culver School District. In addition, during 2014 COARC will partner with the Jefferson County Kids Club to form a year-round agriculture club. This will allow youth to learn about local and regional agriculture along with gardening and the inputs that go into both agriculture and gardening. The garden will also continue to provide educational opportunities for the public through hands on learning, exhibits and classes in addition to other agriculture and gardening experiences.