



# Master Gardener Spotlight: Vegetable Starts to Finish

In the spring of 2022, Flathead Reservation MSU Extension and the Missoula County MSU Extension Horticulture program worked closely with the Tribal Health Office of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) to develop and offer educational programming about backyard vegetables to their employees. The goal of the program was to prepare Tribal Health employees to better understand vegetable gardening, grow food locally to support their neighbors and community members, and integrate fresh foods into their lives and the lives of those they serve. As part of the Wellness in the Workplace initiative, vegetable garden training and raised garden beds were provided to employees of the Tribal Health Office.

Missoula Master Gardeners were invited to participate in the endeavor when more vegetable transplants were needed for the raised beds. As part of their volunteer hours, Master Gardeners grew vegetable starts for the raised beds. Tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, and broccoli starts were grown for the project in Missoula, where the mild climate makes it easier to get a head start on the growing season.

Missoula County has 137 active Master Gardeners who volunteered more than 200 hours in 2022. More than 100 new Master Gardeners completed the course and volunteered throughout the county. Volunteering is a major component of the MSU Extension Master Gardener program, and service projects vary by community. Volunteer commitments for Master Gardeners range from 20 to 40 hours. A significant part of volunteering is educational outreach. Working at information booths at farmers markets, volunteering for local non-profit garden clubs and working with local schools are ways Master Gardeners volunteer in their communities.

The collaboration between these two communities epitomizes the purpose of the MSU Extension Master Gardener program. Education and volunteering make a positive impact on communities.

**To learn about the Montana Master Gardener Program and volunteer opportunities, visit [montana.edu/extension/mastergardener/](https://montana.edu/extension/mastergardener/).**



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