

Extension booth at the Bozeman Farmer's market, 2009

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A booth to provide information about MSU Extension activities to the community was set up each Saturday at the Bozeman Farmers market (Fairgrounds, Bozeman, MT) from 20 June to 12 September, 2009. As seen in the pictures above, we set up a table with an Extension Banner, distributed MontGuides and fact sheets from Montana State University, had displays to draw people in to ask questions about each topic, and answered questions from the community. A press release was sent out each week and used in the local paper and on the radio to popularize this activity.

The booth was staffed by a special guest and a pest expert associated with the Schutter Diagnostic lab (table below). If the pest or disorder was not identifiable at the booth, these were brought back to the Schutter Diagnostic Lab for identification and recommendations to the client. We recorded the number of people asking questions during each week (table). New guests this year included Kevin Wanner, Carol Benesh and Danica Jamison from 4-H, Lynn Paul, and Ryan Stover. Each of the diagnosticians volunteered several times to staff the booth.

Date	Guest	Topic	# Questions
6/20	Clain Jones, Mary Burrows	Soil Fertility	65
6/27	Kevin Wanner, Mary Burrows	Pine Bark Beetle	65
7/4	Carol Benesh, Mary Burrows	4H	90
7/11	Bill Hoch, Mary Burrows	Trees and Shrubs for the Home Landscape	40
7/18	Gallatin county fair		
7/25	Cecil Tharp, Mary Burrows	Private Applicator Certification in Montana	80
8/1	Lynn Paul, Mary Burrows	Food Preservation	80
8/8	Jane Mangold, Fabian Menalled, Melissa Graves	Weeds	130
8/15	Toby Day, Linnea Skoglund	Basic Horticulture	75
8/22	Suzanna Carrithers, Linnea Skoglund	Water Quality	63
8/29	Jane Mangold & Fabian Menalled	Weeds	76
9/5	Danica Jamison, Ruth O'Neill	4H	96
9/12	Ryon Stover, Ruth O'Neill	Pine Bark Beetle	105
		Total	965

Some of the most common questions asked this year were about pine bark beetle and weed control. Many people commented that the growing season was about 2-3 weeks behind the previous year and their garden's development was correspondingly behind. Early in the season we had a number of damping off/root rot samples, and later in the season a number of herbicide injury samples.

The number of samples and questions was relatively steady as compared to 2008, where we received 1,115 questions. We distributed 250 copies of MSU Extension's 'Big Sky, Small Acres' magazine in order to encourage subscriptions.

This year, the booth was enlarged to a 6' table instead of a 4' table, and banners were provided by Rick Jackson, Extension communications. Two graduate students (Jackie Campbell, Jean Allen) from the Department of Plant Sciences and Plant Pathology were paid to set up and take down the booth, and to stay and count community contacts. Both students expressed to me that it was a fun and worthwhile activity. Next year Toby Day has volunteered to coordinate this activity.

Positive aspects of this activity:

- Highly visible.
- Reached an audience that might otherwise not be aware of Extension activities.
- Provided a friendly and convenient location to get the public's questions answered, especially plant disease, insect and weed identification.
- Increased public awareness of the Schutter Diagnostic Clinic for their plant disease, insect, and plant identification needs.
- This was a good opportunity for specialists to interact and learn more about each other's programs.
- The questions helped us to identify and prioritize needs for publications and press releases.
- The farmer's market coordinators liked the booth because it drew people to the farmer's market who otherwise may not have come.
- Each special guest enjoyed their time and expressed a willingness to do it again next year.

I would like to extend my thanks to Extension publications, the staff was very helpful. Rick Jackson sent over a box of pens and post-it notes for distribution. We used these to write down phone numbers of other specialists who could answer questions and gave the entire booklet of post-its and the pen to the client. Many were surprised and appreciative. MontGuides from publications always came very quickly through campus mail.