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Where We've Been...

Rain Barrel Workshop Helps Pueblo County to Be Water Wise



As you may know, in 2016, using rain barrels to capture and store precipitation for beneficial use became legal in the great state of Colorado. With this new law, came many questions from Coloradans into County Extension offices on how they could legally use a rain barrel. In response to this influx of inquiries, in August of 2016, CSU Extension-Pueblo County Horticulture Coordinator, Sherie Caffey, and CSU Extension Regional Water Resources Specialist, Blake Osborn, held a class to teach the public about the new law, and about water quality and safety concerns that come along with a rain barrel. The class filled immediately, but it was not enough. Once residents knew the law, they wanted to know about actually using the rain water in their landscapes.



To meet the demand, in June of 2017, Blake and Sherie teamed up with the local Swire Coca Cola distribution center to give out rain barrels and teach people about how to use the precipitation they collect in them.



Twenty-five Pueblo County residents took part in the workshop. Coca Cola donated 20 barrels (some participants shared barrels), and 20 kits that had all of the materials needed to turn a syrup barrel into a functional rain barrel. During the first part of the workshop, participants learned about the law and about what to do with their rain barrel once they got it home. They also went over other barrel designs, and passive rain water harvesting. CSU Extension believes that just having the barrel is not enough to make a community truly water wise, people must learn about using harvested rain water to be efficient.



The feedback from those who attended the workshop was outstanding. They were very excited to take home their new barrels and 100% of them indicated they learned something new about harvesting rain water. CSU Extension in Pueblo County hopes to do more workshops in which barrels will be distributed so that our county can continue on the track of being smart about our most precious resource, water.

Where We've Been...

Regeneration and Revegetation After the Fire

When a wildfire strikes, we see the smoke and watch the news reports and the efforts to extinguish the blaze, but what happens once the fire is out? A scar is left that can cause as many threats to homes and safety as the wall of flames did. When the firefighters leave, the process of cleaning up and mitigating future threats caused by the fire begins.



Regrowth on the Beulah Hill burn scar, June 2017

CSU Extension-Pueblo County Ag and Natural Resources Agent, Tom Laca, has been a part of a team following the Beulah Hill fire that is working to help the charred land recover. Damage assessments began almost immediately, determining the extent of the burn and its effects on the soil and plants that it consumed. Working with the local USDA-NRCS office and other experts, the team looked at the extent of the damage, and the potential future hazards they could expect due to the damage. One of these hazards is the potential for flash flooding to occur. As the plants are burned off and the soil is burned, the ground loses some of its ability to accept water, therefore increasing the runoff and erosion from a rainstorm.

One way to combat this issue is to speed up the revegetation process through seeding of new plants. New growth not only provides above ground organic material that will aid in slowing down the velocity of the falling rain thereby decreasing erosion, it also puts down a root system that helps to hold the soil and provides a path for the water to enter the ground. Tom came up with a mixture of grass seeds that would grow in the area that could be broadcast into high risk areas. This mix consisted of species that have historically done well and grow naturally in the area in order to insure a high success rate. The grasses chosen included both native and introduced species that have the ability to establish quickly as well as provide future forage for both wildlife and domestic animals.

The highest risk areas are those with the steepest slopes and very rough terrain. Because of this, the seed needed to be distributed by hand as they were unable to safely get mechanical equipment to the site. This planting method required many man hours to accomplish.



Wildflower on the Beulah Hill burn scar, June 2017

The team has been able to work with a number of service and volunteer organizations to accomplish this goal. One of the groups that provided great assistance has been Pueblo County 4-H. On June 10th a group of 4-H youth and adult volunteers spread over 500 pounds of seed on areas that were high risk for erosion. Without their efforts the regeneration process would take much longer. As the rains fall, we will be able to return to these sites to determine if our efforts are paying off.

Fire is a natural component of our ecosystems. As devastating as it may look at the time, it offers land managers a chance to make the landscape better and more productive for future generations. Tom expresses thanks to all of those who have helped out as they attempt to help protect our people, property and lives after a disaster.

Where We're Going...

The Summer of Herbs!



Here in Pueblo County, the “Garden to Table” lifestyle has been growing in popularity. People are becoming more aware of where their food comes from, and are learning to appreciate the freshness of a homegrown product. Because of the demand for information surrounding this topic, a collaborative class between the Horticulture Coordinator, Sherie Caffey, and the Family and Consumer Science Agent, Laura Krause was planned. This class covers the best of both worlds: the ins and outs of successfully growing herbs, as well as ways to preserve them, and appropriate pairings and recipes for cooking with them. Participants also get to partake in a hands-on activity, where they can plant a tabletop herb garden to take home, customizing their herb selection to their personal taste.

After selling out the first class nearly a month in advance, with an ever growing waiting list, a second class was quickly planned. The additional class, not scheduled until the end of July, has also already filled its quota as well.

Additionally, Sherie and Laura will be presenting an abbreviated version of this class to the SRDA, a low-income senior housing property. Participants in this class will be able to plant herbs in mason jars, which can easily be grown in their apartments. They will also learn about simple and nutritious recipes which can utilize these fresh herbs.

Finally, a presentation and demonstration on growing and preserving herbs will be given at the El Pueblo Museum Farmers’ Market on Saturday, September 30th. This will round out the programming for the summer of herbs!



An Introduction to the Cast Iron Dutch Oven

Pueblo County Extension Director, MJ Fisher, is developing curriculum for an introductory cast iron Dutch oven workshop, using the outdoor-type Dutch oven. (These are also called camp ovens or cowboy ovens.) Some of the items to be discussed will be selecting the appropriate size of Dutch oven for your needs, seasoning cast iron cookware, charcoal briquette placement for various types of cooking, and heat estimates based on the number of charcoal briquettes used. The workshop will be designed for the novice who hasn’t used a cast iron Dutch oven before. MJ is targeting either late August or early September for this workshop. Visit our website at pueblo.extension.colostate.edu in August for more details and dates for the workshop.



Dutch oven cherry cobbler

Upcoming Events

Call 583-6566 or visit
<http://pueblo.extension.colostate.edu>
for details.

Family and Consumer Programs

- Herbs: Growing, Using and Preserving, July 25, 5:30 - 8:00 p.m.
- Food Preservation Series– From pickling to pressure canning, get the latest recipes and techniques. Go to pueblo.extension.colostate.edu or call 719-583-6566 for more information.

Horticulture Programs

- All Pueblo Grows Seed Library, collecting and packaging seeds, last Saturday of every month, Rawlings Library, Thurston Room, 1st Floor
- Herbs: Growing, Using and Preserving, July 25, 5:30 - 8:00 p.m.
- Pollination Maker Series: Going Batty Bat Houses, Sept. 16, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
Fee: \$25.00. Build your own.

4-H/Youth Development

Ongoing Club and County Programs

- Pueblo County Fair, July 17-23

4-H STEAM

- Summer Camps for youth. See website for details
 - BeeWise Summer Camp, July 17-22 or Aug. 7-11 at the Pueblo Zoo
 - Making the Future Camp, July 10-14, Lucero Library
 - Geocaching Camp, July 24-28, various locals
 - Adventure Day Camp, Aug 1-3 at CSU-P

EFNEP (Expanded Food and Nutrition Program)

- Nutrition classes– Ongoing-call for schedule

Ag/Range/Natural Resources

- Ag Tour of Southern Spain; November 26 thru December 8, 2017. Info at <http://worldwide.on.ca/pueblo2017/>
- Cast Iron Dutch Oven Cooking Workshop, TBD
- Site visits and consultations– Ongoing, upon request

Congratulations!

Local Extension Efforts Recognized

Carol Kuhns, Jane Crayton, & Laura Krause Recognized at Regional Extension Meeting

CSU Extension has three regions across the state. Pueblo County is one of thirty-one counties in the Peaks & Plains Region. During this year's Peaks & Plains Regional Extension meeting, two Pueblo County Extension team members were honored with "Extending Excellence Awards." Youth Development Extension Coordinator Carol Kuhns was recognized for being a "Volunteer Manager." The award reflects Carol's effort and commitment to fostering strong relations between 4-H & local volunteers. School Enrichment/STEAM Extension Agent Jane Crayton received the "Early Adopter/Program Innovator" award to recognize the innovative work that Jane is doing implementing STEAM into the Pueblo community.

Additionally, Family & Consumer Sciences Extension Agent Laura Krause, who became a new Agent in December, received special recognition for her early career programming.



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Extension programs are available to all without discrimination. If you have a disability for which you seek an accommodation, please notify CSU Extension at 719-583-6566 at least five (5) business days in advance of the event. Colorado State University Extension, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Colorado counties cooperating.