



PUEBLO COUNTY
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Pueblo County PATHWAYS

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Photo by MJ Fisher



Artisan Breads

With the Family & Consumer Science programming, FCS Specialist Laura Griffin attempts to provide the most up-to-date and relevant topics to Pueblo County residents. Sourdough bread making erupted in popularity during the pandemic and the interest in homemade breads has continued over the past several years. In October 2023, Laura hosted the first Artisan Bread Making Workshop in Pueblo County. Artisan bread is a great option for those looking to create a sourdough like product without the commitment of keeping a fermented starter alive. It takes a fraction of the time to prepare and can have a very similar tangy flavor if desired, but also has other options for a more subtle flavor as well.

This program provided education and resources on nutritional content of different types of breads, flours, and whole grains. There was also a hands-on component where participants were able to mix their own dough to take home to bake at a later time and shape their own dough to take home and bake immediately, providing tremendous value to participants.

This program was a huge success and sold-out months in advance to attend. Watch for it to be offered again in 2024!



Fungus for Farmers in Pueblo County

Farmers in Pueblo County face many challenges from labor issues and climate change to market swings and equipment failures. Novel approaches to these challenges are being formulated every day. Another approach is to look into the soil. This past growing season, the Pueblo County Extension Agronomy Specialist worked with farmers in the area to test the efficacy of beneficial fungal inoculants on field corn to improve soil health and increase crop yield. The project was funded through a CSU mini-grant by Western SARE and culminated in a group meeting at the end of November 2023 to discuss results and future implications of the project. Nine farmers and community members participated in the meeting at the Fulton Height Community Center.



Beneficial fungi have been shown to improve crops especially in drought, allowing the plants to reach water deeper in the soil profile. Inoculating seed of a crop prior to planting can increase the number of beneficial fungi, therefore soil tests were taken before planting, during the growing season and after the harvest. These tests looked specifically at the microbiological aspects of the soil. Though no significant improvements in fungi were observed over the season, the soil was very active which helped the corn crop. There was also no significant difference in crop yield between corn plots that were inoculated and those that received no inoculation. This could be contributed to the erratic weather and that this was the first year for this study (lack of comparative data).



Farmer participants noted that they would like to see this project conducted on more acres, over more years and also would like to see this project in other crops such as dry beans. The data and knowledge gained through this project will provide a stepping stone for similar projects that will benefit Pueblo County Farmers and help them to mitigate extreme weather events and fluctuating economic markets.

Master Gardener Program Welcomes New Graduates

By Amanda Weidner, Horticulture Coordinator

On November 10th of last year, we celebrated the graduation of our latest class of Master Gardener apprentices, and they officially joined the ranks of the well-respected and beloved Pueblo County Master Gardeners. In addition to Sherie Shaffer, our director and former Horticulture Specialist, and myself, we were joined by over thirty Master Gardeners and their families, as well as our State Colorado Master Gardener Program Director and Horticulture State Specialist, Chris Hilgert. Chris happily made the trip down from Fort Collins to be there to congratulate the students and share with them just how meaningful the work they do is, both for our community and for the state overall.

While the apprentice class sizes fluctuate from year to year, we were thrilled to get an especially large group of eighteen students last year. Knowing that these dedicated gardeners will be out helping in the community, educating, and working to make gardening easier and more enjoyable for our Pueblo County residents, is both heartwarming and exciting.

The work our Master Gardeners do is priceless. They are truly the labor, time, and especially the expertise that guide our community projects. One of the projects that they'll be volunteering for this year is our All Pueblo Grows program that, in conjunction with the Pueblo Library, hosts the free seed library where anyone with a library card can 'check out' up to five packets of seeds per visit to take home and plant, hopefully returning at the end of the season with their own seeds to donate. Additionally, this program provides a monthly presentation at the Rawlings Library that is seasonal specific to help out home gardeners who would like to learn more on subjects such as seed starting, pests, and cool season crops.

While some Master Gardeners will be busy with All Pueblo Grows, others will turn their attention to the Edible Landscapes project that we collaborate on with the Pueblo Food Project. At four separate sites small food gardens are grown to be both demonstration gardens and food resources for any who visit. These gardens are planted and maintained all season long.

Our newest project this year is our Nature and Wildlife Discovery Center Gardens group. The Master Gardeners have taken on the task of cleaning up and maintaining the water-wise demonstration garden beds at the NWDC. As many of you know, this area has seen significant flooding in the last several years and sadly much of the gardens had to take a back seat to the continual flood clean-up. We are hoping to freshen up the beds and add more educational signage and enjoyment for the many folks who use and visit the river campus there.

Finally, there's the annual spring plant sale that Supporters of Horticulture Education (SHED) puts on whose ranks are heavily made up of Master Gardeners. The plant sale's reputation for offering quality, and sometimes harder-to-find plants has earned it a special spot in the Pueblo gardener's favorites list and it's always well-attended.

Besides taking on project work, our Master Gardeners can always be counted upon to answer countless public horticulture queries through the growing season and are a regular presence at many events in Pueblo. It's shaping up to be a busy season in 2024, and that's just the way we like it.



New apprentice and continuing Master Gardeners were invited to attend.



Garden Scholars and 100-Hour Club
In addition to graduation certificates and awards for years or service, certificates were presented for the 100 Hour Club (100 hours of volunteer service) and Garden Scholars (48+ hours of continuing education) members above



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Upcoming Events

For details, call 583-6566 or visit
<http://pueblo.extension.colostate.edu>

Family and Consumer Programs

- Foods Safety Training for Cottage Foods Producers, 3-year certification, fee \$50.00. Various online webinar dates are available. Register at Eventbrite.com
- Mediterranean Diet , March 6, 2024 Fee: \$10 Register at <https://mdmarch.eventbrite.com>
- Free pressure gauge testing. Call 719-583-6566 for appointment.
- Follow the FCS program on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/PuebloFCS/>

Horticulture Programs

- All Pueblo Grows Seed Library, collecting and packaging seeds. Look for neighborhood seed boxes. Visit: allpueblogrows.org
- Monthly Lunch and Learn sessions. Call 719-583-6574 for details
- Follow the Horticulture program on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/PuebloCountyHorticulture>

4-H/Youth Development

- 4-H Accepting new members– Deadline 2/1/24—call 583-6566. for information
- Ongoing Club and County Programs
- Follow us on Facebook and YouTube

Agronomy/Ag/Range/Natural Resources

- Sun, Soil, Water, AG Summit, Feb. 24, 2024 Fee: \$15.00, Pueblo Community Collage, register at <https://pueblofoodproject.org/sunsoilwaterag/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/PuebloAg>

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4-H Specialist Loewen Transfers to El Paso County, Pueblo Staff Unite to Keep Program Operational

By Alexandra Deary, 4-H Program Assistant

The month of January is one of the most crucial for our Pueblo County 4-H program. Members must be enrolled and paid by February 1 to exhibit at the Pueblo County Fair. We have one final surge of enrollments before we settle into a regular (and rather hectic) schedule of trainings, camps, clinics, and shows. And this year, we are on-par to surpass last year's enrollment numbers, which were a turning point in themselves.

It is very unfortunate, then, that we find ourselves without a 4-H Specialist to lead the way. El Paso County should be very grateful that they get to benefit from Jen Loewen's hardworking attitude and compassionate demeanor. Her impact on our program here in Pueblo County will be felt for a long time, and we will miss her dearly.

We are lucky to have such an amazing staff here in Pueblo, who were more than happy to step up and help where they could. Dorothy, our 4-H Coordinator, has taken on the bulk of our council and committee work, where Shane, our County Fair Assistant, has adopted Shooting Sports into the breadth of his duties. Laura, our Food and Consumer Science Specialist, took over the planning for AgFest, a three-day symposium that benefits urban Pueblo County youth. Kristi, our Agronomy Specialist, has been hard at work planning Contest Day, a long-running Pueblo tradition that highlights demonstrative arts like Cake Decorating and Speech. Sherie, our Director, has fearlessly jumped in and has done whatever is needed to keep the program flourishing; she even parked cars at the State Fairground on behalf of our 4-H Globetrotters Club during a fundraiser!

All that to say, we are in need of a 4-H Specialist who can not only lead our program, but also bring it into the next generation. We need someone who can not only honor our long-held traditions, but also develop new programs and activities to meet the needs of our diverse community.

Keep an eye on the job postings, and if you know someone who might be a great match, please encourage them to apply when the job is posted.

Meanwhile, we will continue to persevere and achieve, no matter how short-staffed we may be. However, feel free to send coffee; we will definitely need it!



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