

Best Education Practices (BEPs) for Water Outreach Professionals
Defining BEPs, Refining New Resources and Recommending Future Actions

POSTER PRESENTATION

Presenter(s): Scarlet Tang and Todd Murray, Whatcom County Cooperative Extension

Title: Lake-Friendly Gardening: Case Study In Homeowner Education In Whatcom County Washington

Abstract: Stormwater pollution is a growing concern for Lake Whatcom, a multi-use lake that is the drinking water source for over 85,000 Whatcom County, Washington residents. A 1999 state report documented multiple urban pollutants, including pesticides used by homeowners, in stormwater drains and tributaries within the watershed (Serdar and Davis 1999). In addition, the lake is listed on the Clean Water Act 303(d) list for low dissolved oxygen due to excessive phosphorus, a component of most fertilizers.

Changing residents' yard and garden practices was key to minimizing urbanization's effects on the lake. In response, Washington State University Extension and Whatcom County Water Resources produced a booklet series, the Lake-Friendly Gardening Kit (<http://lakewhatcom.wsu.edu/gardenkit>). The team rewrote research-based Extension materials in a more engaging style and design. The kit is geared towards local issues, with booklets titled The Ten Most Un-Wanted Pests, Top Secret Agents, and Passive-Aggressive Plants, among others.

Three months after receiving the kit, recipients were mailed a written survey. About 50% responded, with these results:

- 38% of respondents read the entire kit; 48% read half to most of it.
- 100% agreed the kit was useful.
- 98% thought the materials were easy to understand.
- 86% felt they learned how to make their practices more lake-friendly.
- 52% managed pests differently.
- 48% purchased pest-resistant plants.
- 52% changed their lawn care practices.
- 48% shared what they learned with someone else.
- 89% recognized the connection between their land use actions and water quality



Target Audience(s): Education

Educational Purpose: Information, capacity building

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