

What's New in the Extension Office?
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What's new in extension is a question often asked of me at meetings and events. My answer depends upon what time of the year it is. For instance during summer I might talk about horticultural calls or insects or maybe even the master gardener program and what they are up to. During the fall I can mention things like composting, putting your garden to bed, or selecting Christmas trees. But this time of the year I find that we are busy preparing for winter programming and master gardener training.

What is happening now in extension? I could list several events happening around Pennington County and surrounding areas. But first, I would comment on the reduced volume of calls I receive. During July of this year we fielded over 350 questions via phone, e-mail and in-person and only fifty-six in November. Lately, the phone has been fairly quiet. So what do we do now? We are busy planning programming like a course in plant propagation and private pesticide applicator training, both of which are coming in the near future to an area near you.

The plant propagation course will be offered in five locations throughout western South Dakota including; White River, Pierre, Spearfish, Rapid City, and Mobridge. The exact dates and locations have not been determined for all sites but will be coming out soon. The cost of the course will be \$75 per person or couple if they share materials. Participants will have an opportunity to learn how to propagate plants and the biology behind plant propagation. They will also have a chance to practice what they learn during the hands on portions of the course. Topics covered will include propagation by seed, propagation by cuttings, grafting, and other propagation techniques.

Master Gardener training will take place in Spearfish in 2011 starting on March 29, 2011 and running each Wednesday for nine weeks. The cost to take the course is \$160 and includes all instruction and course materials. In addition to the cost we do require a volunteer payback of 50 hours of service within the first two years. Participants wishing to be relieved of the volunteer payback should contact us for additional information. Other sites for Master Gardener training include Mitchell, Pierre, Watertown, and Yankton.

We are also planning some shorter term training sessions. One example of this is the pine beetle workshop for landowners being held on Tuesday, January 4th right here at the extension office. There is no charge to attend this workshop.

One other program we are busy working on is the Second Annual "Spring Fever" Gardening Seminar. This year it will be held at the Ramkota in Rapid City on Saturday, March 5. This year we have a national speaker, Dr. Douglas Tallamy, head of the entomology and wildlife ecology department of the University of Delaware delivering the keynote address. Tallamy is the author of the book *Bringing Nature Home* and will be speaking on using native plants to attract native insects and wildlife to your landscape.

Additional information on any of these events can be found on the Pennington County Extension Website at www.co.pennington.sd.us/extension/extsvc.html or by calling me at 605-394-2188 or e-mail to ricky.abrahamson@sdstate.edu.