



Welcome to Granite County

The MSU Extension Granite County office has a slightly new look. After 22 years, long-time Extension agent Dan Lucas is no longer in the office as he has moved into the MSU Extension Western Region Department Head position. Granite County native Ben Hauptman returned to the area to start as the new Extension agent in May of 2017 after having served four years as the Blaine County MSU Extension agriculture/natural resource and 4-H agent.

Granite County is a rural natural-resource-supported county in central Western Montana. Winter and summer recreation draw visitors to the scenic beauty year-round, while agriculture is the economic base. Georgetown Lake provides a variety of recreational experiences, and is next door to the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness. The population of the county is about 3,000, and the County Seat of Philipsburg has a population

of around 900. The other incorporated town in Granite County is Drummond, with a population of around 300. Montana State University Extension in Granite County is supported by three strong and important partners. County, state and federal funding sources work together to assure that MSU Extension in Granite County has the resources to provide timely and relevant education addressing locally-identified issues. Montana counties provide about 40 percent of the funding to support local offices, state funding provides about 40 percent, and federal partners about 20 percent. Like many Western Montana communities, the Granite County area has a rich mining past, but agriculture has provided the base of economic activity through the boom and bust cycles associated with historic mining.

Granite County . . . Montana at its best!



Scenic view of Georgetown Lake with the Pintler Mountains in the background.

Noxious weed education in Granite County

Granite County Focuses on Noxious Weeds

Once again, the Granite County MSU Extension office partnered with NRCS, and the Granite County Conservation District to host the 10th Annual Noxious Weed Clinic. Controlling noxious weeds is a high priority for landowners and managers in Granite County. This year's clinic brought in speakers from around Montana to talk about a variety of topics. People attending learned how to identify noxious weeds of concern to the area, how to make herbicides more effective, about biocontrol agents, and ATV safety. Over 40 attendees also received six Private Applicator Credits, which allows them to stay up-to-date on their Private Applicator License certifications. Evaluations showed that participants benefited from visual aids and tools to demonstrate range management principals, and noxious weed identification.

In addition to educational programs, residents in Granite County have begun to utilize biological control as a tool to control noxious weeds. In the spring and summer of 2017, a cooperative effort between Granite County MSU Extension, the Montana Biological Control Association, and area landowners, was made to collect and disperse biological control insects within the county. One insect species in particular that was released was *Mecinus janthiniformis* (Dalmation toadflax stem weevil). Thousands of these weevils were released among neighbors to control an infestation of Dalmation toadflax on terrain that was too steep and rough to spray by hand. This effort saved landowners the expense of aerial application of herbicide or the purchase of biological control insects in order to control this invasive plant.



Dalmation toadflax infested with stem weevils.

Hands-on 4-H learning in Granite County

Granite County 4-Her's share in hands-on learning

The 2016 Granite County 4-H program is comprised of 72 members and 15 leaders participating in various projects. The 4-H program in Granite County combines efforts to share the unique hands-on learning experience that is 4-H.

Members in the Granite County 4-H program have the opportunity to share in hands-on learning at several different county events: Project Possibilities, Foods Fair, Stir-Ups, Quality Assurance, Countywide Demonstrations, IPYA Presentations, and the Skill-A-Thon.

Project Possibilities is a countywide event that provides the opportunity for members to try new projects. Maybe they always wanted to do a woodworking project but did not know how to start. They might have a budding interest in robotics but aren't sure if they can do the programming. Each year the 4-H Council identifies three projects that may be brand new to the 4-H program, or ones that might have low enrollment, and provides hands-on experience to allow members to give it a try.

The Skill-A-Thon is another county event that is hosted by a different 4-H club each year. The members are divided into diverse learning groups to create a balance of both skill, knowledge, and mentorship. Different project stations are set up, ranging from woodworking to cooking. The members must answer questions at each station and then move on to the next station and set of questions. The 4-H teams compete in earnest and develop friendships and experiences that will help them excel.

Foods Fair and Stir-Ups are two more countywide events where members enrolled in the food projects get together and share their love of cooking. Foods Fair is a "special ingredient" cooking event. This special ingredient can be a vegetable, a spice, or even a fruit. A cooked entry must contain that ingredient. This challenges the members to think outside of a normal cake box with their baking. While judging is taking place, the members are learning the skills that will tie into the next cooking event.

Stir-Ups is an actual hands on cooking event. Members make different dishes according to their age. They must bring all ingredients from home. All cutting, measuring, dicing, and slicing must be done by the member. It is a great way for all the food project members to show off their newly acquired skills in a fun, competitive manner.



Trevor Rouse competes at Stir-Ups.

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EXTENSION

Granite County

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