

Grow, Eat, and Know



A Resource Guide to Food and Farming in Missoula County

2004

Community Food Assessment Participants

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Grow, Eat, and Know

Welcome to the Resource Guide to food and farming in Missoula County! As one component of the Missoula County Community Food Assessment, this is your guide to the organizations, programs and businesses that are involved in our food system—the complex web that incorporates all things food, from growing to distribution to eating.

Within these pages you will find brief descriptions and contact information for a variety of groups. You'll find entries for agriculture and food assistance groups, but also for land trusts and business development. All these groups play an important part in supporting our food system. Though the resource guide is specific to Missoula County, a few organizations based outside of the County that have programs here are included. Please take some time to read the brief descriptions of the program or organization and then feel free to contact them for more information or to see how you can help.

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Missoula County Community Food Assessment 2004

To increase understanding of Missoula County's food system, faculty and students at the University of Montana initiated a process known as a community food assessment in spring 2003. Such assessments—which have been conducted in about 15 other communities in the United States—are designed to look systematically at a wide range of issues related to food and agriculture in a particular place.

Community food assessments are a collaborative and participatory process. In order to be responsive to community input, UM organizers put together a steering committee that represents 15 different organizations or interests in the local food and farming system. The committee includes farmers, County extension, a public health official, a planner, anti-hunger advocates, conservationists, and others. The role of the steering committee has been to identify specific questions that need to be investigated, to give input into the research process, and to develop recommendations based on the findings.

University of Montana students have also been key participants in this process. The students involved in the project are primarily working at the graduate level and come mainly from the Environmental Studies Program and the Social Work Department. Under faculty supervision and the guidance of the steering committee, students have carried out much of the data collection and analysis for the food assessment. The process has given them a unique opportunity to learn valuable skills while making a strong contribution to a community-based research project.



Photo: Neva Hassanein

Sustainable Agriculture and Gardening



Missoula has many organizations dedicated to helping us farm and garden sustainably. Sustainable agriculture and gardening are important because they encourage ecologically sound practices that work to conserve resources for future generations of humans, plants, and animals. Organizations in this category advocate for sustainable agriculture policies and provide technical support for farming and gardening sustainably.

Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO)

432 N Last Chance Gulch
Helena, MT 59601
(406) 443-7272
aero@aeromt.org
www.aeromt.org

AERO is a Montana-based, grassroots membership organization dedicated to sustainable resource use and community vitality. AERO promotes sustainable agriculture, smart growth planning and transportation alternatives, renewable energy and conservation, environmental quality and community self-reliance. AERO's Buy Local Food & Farm Products Initiative is working to strengthen connections between local food producers, consumers, businesses and institutions. Their goal is to create food systems that foster the social, environmental, and economic health of communities. Outreach materials include Abundant Montana, AERO's Directory to Sustainably Grown Montana Food, and Buy Fresh, Buy Local Montana signage to highlight locally grown food in the marketplace.

Garden City Harvest

103 Hickory or
PO Box 205
Missoula, MT 59806
(406) 523-FOOD
help@gardencityharvest.org
www.gardencityharvest.org

Garden City Harvest (GCH) is a collaborative effort working to provide high quality produce to Missoulians in need while educating the community about sustainable food systems and agriculture. GCH manages a network of five community gardens where people can rent a

garden plot and learn how to grow their own vegetables, and where volunteers can receive a share of whatever produce is ready to harvest in exchange for their help. GCH provides a service-oriented employment program for at-risk youth referred by the courts. It also supports an educational urban farm program for university students and manages Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs. (CSA members pay a portion of the farm's operational expenses in the spring, and then receive a share of the harvest each week throughout the growing season). *To learn more about the university-level educational opportunities that GCH supports, see Program in Ecological Agriculture and Society under the Agriculture/Gardening Education section of this guide.*

Missoula Urban Demonstration Project (MUD)

629 Phillips
Missoula, MT 59802
(406) 721-7513
mud@wildrockies.org

The Missoula Urban Demonstration (MUD) Project is a non-profit organization that believes people can fulfill their present needs without compromising the needs of future generations by making positive choices regarding food, transportation, shelter, and waste. MUD's mission is to provide tools for building a sustainable community here in Missoula. They provide physical tools in a tool lending library, educational tools in the form of seasonal workshops and classes, demonstration tools at their Demonstration Site on the Northside, and community building tools through seasonal events.

National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT)

127 N Higgins, Ste 201

Missoula, MT 59802

(406) 327-0705

info@ncat.org

www.ncat.org/agri.html

NCAT's Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development projects provide services and information to help farmers reduce their use of pesticides and other expensive inputs, utilize a diversity of crops and livestock that add strength and flexibility to farm operations, incorporate new ways to market and add value to their products, improve soil fertility and water quality, and educate on how to become better stewards of natural resources and the environment. NCAT also operates Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA), a national sustainable agriculture information service. Visit <http://attra.ncat.org> to learn more.



Photo: Garden City Harvest

Growing in Missoula

Growing season: 90-115 days

Annual precipitation: 13-15 inches

Missoula's last killing frost of the spring: May 25-June 7

Missoula's first killing frost of the fall: September 15-30

Source: Missoula County Extension Service

Food and Agriculture Government Programs

The federal, state, and local governments support many different food and agriculture-related programs. These programs provide information and assistance for farming and gardening, and facilitate a direct link to local, state, and federal agriculture policies. This section covers government programs that provide information about conservation and other best practices for agriculture and gardening, as well as programs that advocate for agriculture in Montana.



Farm Service Agency

Missoula Service Center
3550 Mullan Ste 106
Missoula, MT 59808
(406) 829-3395
www.fsa.usda.gov/mt/

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture administers farm commodity programs; farm ownership, operating and emergency loans; conservation and environmental programs; emergency and disaster assistance; domestic and international food assistance and international export credit programs. FSA's programs are delivered through a local Missoula office.

Missoula Conservation District

3550 Mullan Ste 106
Missoula, MT 59808-5168
(406) 829-3395
msslacd@montana.com
www.missoulacd.org

The Missoula County Conservation District provides private landowners in Missoula County with the tools, staff and resources to implement conservation practices that protect and promote the wise use of our natural resources.

Missoula County Extension Office

2825 Santa Fe Ct
Missoula, MT 59808
(406) 829-4200
missoula1@montana.edu
www.micro-mania.net/extension/

The Missoula County Extension Office is part of the Montana State University (MSU) Extension Service.

The MSU Extension Service is an educational resource dedicated to improving the quality of people's lives by providing research-based knowledge to strengthen the social, economic, and environmental well-being of families, communities, and agricultural enterprises. The Missoula Extension office operates the following food and agricultural-related programs:

Master Gardener

Offered by Extension, Missoula's Master Gardener Program is a unique horticulture and gardening training program because it incorporates organic and ecologically sound gardening practices into its series of classes that certify participants to be Master Gardeners. Upon completion of the course, Master Gardeners volunteer a certain number of hours each year to maintain their certification. Volunteers often staff extension office informational phone lines or assist at local plant clinics.

Missoula County Weed District

www.mslacountyweed.org

The Missoula County Weed District works to inform and educate the residents of Missoula County concerning the problems of noxious weeds, and to facilitate a process for all private and public landowners to minimize the impact of noxious weeds through the use of sound ecological practices.

The Extension office also offers advice on food safety, canning, household financing, and cleaning. To learn more about the Extension Services' 4H program, see the Agriculture/Gardening Education section of this guide.