

Over the back fence: gardeners get advice from neighbors, friends

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Where do gardeners turn when they need information about annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees? Staff at University of Minnesota Extension have published results of a survey that concludes that the majority of backyard gardeners get their planting and plant information informally—most often from friends, neighbors and local garden centers.

The survey of 1,000 Minnesota gardeners published in the January–March, 2008 issue of HortTechnology showed that although respondents viewed the The University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum as more credible than garden centers, 78% of respondents indicated that they were most likely to turn to neighbors and friends for gardening advice.

Dr. Mary Hockenberry Meyer, Professor of Horticultural Science and Extension Horticulturist at UM Extension, explained, "We wanted to determine where gardeners got their information and if they think university information is of higher quality than information from garden centers or home centers. We found that university information is viewed as higher quality; however, a large number of people indicated they "did not know" the quality of university information, which surprised us."

The survey also indicated that gardeners' age determined the most likely sources for information seeking. Older gardeners were less likely to use the Internet than younger gardeners. When asked "How do you learn best"", most respondents said that they had not attended a gardening

class in the past year and indicated they learn best from talking with friends. Access to publications containing color photos and illustrations was also highly valued by gardeners who responded to the survey.

Source: American Society for Horticultural Science

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