



Montana Women's Prison Garden

Fri, 06/14/2013 - 12:09 -- morducks

The [Sow It Forward Grant](#) from Kitchen Gardeners International (KGI) provided a jump start for the Montana Woman's Prison Garden. Yellowstone County Master Gardener Association (YCMGA) volunteers to assist the Prison in their gardening project.

While the Prison had an excellent greenhouse provided by the State of Montana the soil was not in the best condition inside the greenhouse and in the garden area beside the greenhouse. A soil test was obtained using some of the grant's money (test attached). This test showed that the soil was very low in organic matter. YCMGA asked for help from Rocky Mountain Compost, Inc. in Billings and that firm provided several cubic yards of compost to be mixed into the soil. The problem was that the Prison had no money for the garden which meant that there were no tools to work the garden.

The Sow It Forward Grant provided the funds to purchase the necessary tools and irrigation items (receipt attached). The items included a wheelbarrow, hoes, moisture meters, hoses and nozzles, a yard cart, shovels, rakes, and trowels. With the purchase of necessary garden tools the work on the garden was underway and is still progressing (photo attached). It will take time and work for the garden to meet its goal of providing fresh vegetables for the Prison population. However, without the grant, it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to even begin gardening. The Prison has no money to support the garden although it has willing hands to work it. The YCMGA provided 16 weeks of gardening education to selected inmates so the gardening skills were in place. With the tools provided from grant funds, gardening became a reality at the Prison.

Problems remain with the garden project. The State has not provided money to complete the security fence around the garden area. This limits the number of inmates that can be in the garden area and requires extra guards and limits work time. When the proper security is in place the garden should get all the attention it needs. The Prison Garden will then provide gardening skills to inmates, it will produce a continuing food supply to the Prison, and should provide excess garden produce to the Billings Food Bank that will include vegetables, fruit and seeds. Without the assist from Sow It Forward Grant from KGI the Prison garden would have remained at a stand still until the State of Montana could provide funds.

The Montana Woman's Prison authorities have expressed their gratitude for the help they have received. In order for the Billings, MT community to know about the KGI influence, a press release (attached) has been provided to the local newspapers giving details about KGI and the Prison garden project. We thank you.

Project Sponsor: Yellowstone County Master Gardener Association, MSU Extension Service, POB 35021, Billings, MT 59107

Image (optional):

