Change of Scenery Working Wonders for USU Professor Sheriden Hansen | Kaysville

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It all started with a small plot of land in 2009, and soon a passion blossomed. After 15 years as an operating room nurse, Utah State University Extension horticulture assistant professor Sheriden Hansen was looking for a change. Looking for a way to deal with her high-stress job, Hansen started a small organic farm with her mother, running a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), where farmers purchase a share of a farm for one year in return for receiving a weekly basket of produce.

“We sold at farmers markets,” Hansen said. “Learning to run a small farm, I found I needed more knowledge, so I enrolled in USU’s Master Gardener program in 2012 and then decided to take a few college-level courses to get some more advanced information and skills.”

Hansen enrolled at Utah State University Kaysville to start to learn more. Seeing an excitement start to grow for the subject, she decided to seek a second bachelor’s, this time in plant science. She would go on to earn her master’s in plant science and fruit production. Being able to find a local USU campus close to her home, Hansen loved the experience in Kaysville.

“It was excellent,” she said. “I had access to the same professors as the main campus and I was able to fit the courses into my schedule while working as a nurse and being a mom to my two boys. The classes were hands-on and intriguing.”

Soon after her graduation, Hansen joined the USU Extension team, working as an assistant horticulture professor at the USU Kaysville campus, while also being an Extension specialist for Davis County as well as working at the USU Botanical Center. In this position, Hansen oversees several gardens.

“I run a number of the gardens located at the site including the Edible Demonstration Garden, Park Strip Redesign Garden, Pollinator Garden and Urban Farm Demonstration Garden,” she said. “I also run the Master Gardener Program in Davis County and the USU Botanical Center/USU Kaysville site is where our volunteers come to learn the hands-on piece of the program.”

Hansen has also become somewhat of a celebrity in the local gardening community. She is a bimonthly contributor to KSL Studio 5 and recently filmed an episode of Modern Gardener on PBS. She also is part of the social media program Garden Guys and Gal, which aims to teach basic horticulture principles and help Utah gardeners be successful. Those channels can be found on Facebook and YouTube.

With a historical drought hitting Utah this year, Hansen and the USU Extension team have worked to help local gardeners and farmers use water at the highest efficiency. Farmers have received some criticism for their water usage this year, something Hansen thinks was unwarranted.

“Many of our growers have been the recipients of some harsh criticism regarding water usage,” she said. “It is true that agriculture takes a lot of water, but they are growing the food that we eat, and they are very conscious about how they apply water. Our growers are well educated on water usage and do everything they can to water effectively. They do a great job, and they need our support more than ever!”

USU Extension has several resources available for gardeners who are looking to be more conscientious with their water usage. Resources can be found on drought.usu.edu, as well as cwel.usu.edu/utah-drought. Hansen also encourages people to visit the USU Botanical Center, where they can see examples of plants that go together and fit the Utah landscape.

“You can visit the gardens at the USU Botanical Center to get some excellent ideas on how to plant effectively for
water conservation and still have a beautiful landscape, plant selection for park strips, effective irrigation in vegetable gardens, appropriate tree selection for Utah landscapes, and more," she said.

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