

## Garden Packet Yields Mixed Results

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### Recommended Citation

Claesgens, Mark (1985) "Garden Packet Yields Mixed Results," *Journal of Applied Communications*: Vol. 68: Iss. 3. <https://doi.org/10.4148/1051-0834.1657>

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### Abstract

The 1984 second annual home gardening packet prepared by the WSU College of Agriculture and Home Economics Information Department saw an increase in readership but a decline in the number of participating papers from 1983.

# Research Briefs

## Garden Packet Yields Mixed Results

The 1984 second annual home gardening packet prepared by the WSU College of Agriculture and Home Economics Information Department saw an increase in readership but a decline in the number of participating papers from 1983. Readership increased by 2.46 percent—a 103,573 raw circulation gain—but 13 fewer papers published the stories. Increased readership was the result of larger circulation papers using the packet.

Of course, these tallies are based on clipping service selections, which makes the results approximate and conservative.

Nearly two-thirds of the participating papers were repeats from 1983. Together, the repeats and new participants totaled 37, about 23 percent of the 163 daily and community papers around the state.

Because the 1983 tally revealed little interest in fillers, the 1984 packet dropped them except for a series of cutlines to accompany pest illustrations. Papers were also given a larger selection of stories—15 compared to eight. In addition, all dailies were added to the mailing list. For the previous year, community papers were the target media, although bootlegged packets did reach some dailies.

Yet, despite the greater selection and increased mailings, packet use did not proportionately balloon. In fact, the story that was picked fourth most often in 1983 was selected more often for publication than the top ranking story of 1984.

However, there was a similarity between the two years in that the order in which the packet was assembled had little bearing on which story was selected for publication. The second and sixth stories, for example, were chosen most often in 1984. In 1983 the third story was picked most often.

Another similarity was that the geographic barrier separating the state into east and west side climatic and cultural differences was not a barrier to publication. Seventeen east-side papers and 20 west-side papers participated. In 1983 the numbers were 23 and 28, respectively. Service to both sides of the state appears to have been fair, even though WSU and most of the gardening resources are located on the east side.

Ranked by popularity, the top five subjects picked by editors in 1984 were fertilizers and container gardening, watering, small-yard gardening, bee warnings and gardening sociology, and mulches, herbs, and unusual crops (see Table 1). Of these stories, mulches contained artwork. Like the previous year, artwork apparently did not attract greater use.

Overall, the results of the second packet were encouraging because of the increased readership, but discouraging because fewer papers participated. It is especially discouraging that a greater selection did not improve use, when papers are normally hungry for copy on this perennially favorite subject.

A third packet is in use at this time, and perhaps its results will indicate a trend. Following that, a survey of newspapers around the state would be in order to learn about preferences.

Table 1. Comparative rank order of stories.

Stories	Order		
	Assembled	Use	Readership
Watering	1	2	6
Fertilizers	2	1	4
Tomato Tips (long)	3	8	13
Tomato Tips (short)	4	7	15
Small Yards	5	3	11
Containers	6	1	3
Mulches*	7	5	12
Herbs	8	5	10

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Unusual Crops	9	5	9
Master Gardener	10	7	2
Pest Control	11	6	7
Bee Warning	12	4	1
Pest Cutlines*	13	8	14
Master Food Preserver	14	6	5
Sociology of Gardening	15	4	8

\*contains artwork

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