

Tenured Faculty Review for
Sharon Morrissey
Consumer Horticulture Agent
Milwaukee County
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Gardening and plant-related environmental issues are topics of ever-increasing public interest. Opportunities abound for public education on a range of topics in a variety of formats. Master Gardener volunteers (MGVs) and the use of the mass media multiply Extension's ability to respond to public needs and interests. I will discuss three major methods I use to program: mass media, the MGV program and diagnostics.

Mass Media

For 15 years, I have had a successful partnership with the local Fox affiliate on Channel 6 TV referred to now as the Green Thumb Garden. It reaches XXXXXX viewers each week when we air 4 live segments on the morning Wake-Up News show. Segments are then also posted to <http://FOX6Now.com> where they can be viewed by visitors to their website and they remain for the entire gardening season (Exhibit #1- please click on the link provided). The Station has also given us permission to copy those segments to DVDs for use in our educational programs. In 2012, I added links to supplemental literature related to our segments to the Milwaukee County UW-Extension website (<http://milwaukee.uwex.edu/horticulture>). Viewers may access our website from a link on the Fox website. In 2013, I plan to post information about our segments to the Milwaukee County UWEX Facebook page.

The segments all feature our university research-based recommended gardening practices having to do with growing vegetables, flowers, herbs and fruits. MGV volunteers assist me at a workday each week. With their help, the garden was expanded in 2009 from the original 920 sq. ft. to 2,250 sq. ft. The local SouthEast Wisconsin MGs (SEWMGs) budgets funds to help purchase supplies and equipment since no funding is provided by the TV station. The produce is donated to Hunger Task Force, a hunger prevention program. In 2013, I plan to also provide UWEX factsheets on nutrition and preparation of the produce for them to distribute to program participants.

As with all of our partnerships, acknowledgement of UWEX is vital to me. For the Fox 6 garden program, that includes mentioning of my affiliation at the start of each segment each week, my wearing of UWEX logowear, portable signage in the garden which is moved to strategic locations for each segment, and use of our logo prominently displayed on the Fox6 website as well as a link to the Milwaukee County website so viewers can access the supplementary materials I post there.

This program also drives much of my professional development. Each year I take advantage of as many educational opportunities as possible on the topics of fruit and vegetable production and organic gardening and pest management.

Impacts are difficult to document with mass media programs. There are a few inferences that can be drawn, however. The extreme visibility of UWEX this program provides definitely increases

public awareness of UWEX and participation in our programs. Clients seeking diagnostic assistance through our Hort Help Line and the UWEX Hort Center at Boerner Botanical Gardens (BBG) often state that they saw a segment on Fox 6 that encouraged them to call. Many of our new MGVs say they learned about the program through its mention on FOX6 during garden segments. I personally am frequently recognized in public settings and often sought out for educational presentations because of my reputation on TV. The people I meet always make positive comments about the segments and what they have learned through them. Admittedly, many also say they don't even garden, they just like to see what we're up to in the garden.

Master Gardener Volunteer Program

Our program includes both Milwaukee and Waukesha County MGVs and is co-directed with Ann Wied, Consumer Horticulture Educator for the Waukesha County UWEX. I serve as the lead agent and educator for the program. Currently, there are 378 certified MGVs who provided 23,964 hours of volunteer service and 7,993 hours of continuing education in 2012.

We provide training through the Level 1 and Level 2 courses consistent with the statewide UWEX MGV program. In addition, I have developed and taught my own short courses for our local MGVs in 2007 – 2009, 2011 and 2013. These courses each cover one topic and consist of 4 evening sessions. The first 3 courses included an outdoor component at BBG as part of each session. In 2011, the course topic was vegetable gardening and was open to the public as well as MGVs. I offered it to several of the local urban agriculture organizations as training for their members. The topic for the 2013 short course, trees and shrubs, was chosen as a direct result of an e-mail survey I conducted of our MGVs. Those results also informed the decision for the course topic for 2014 which will be garden design.

Evaluations from the 2009 course on garden flowers (Exhibit #2) showed that 86% of participants said that the course fully met their expectations. To 91% of them, some or all of the information was new. By the end of the class, 77% had already used some or all of the information and the same percent said they would most likely change their practices as a result of taking the course. Evidence of the multiplier effect of teaching is verified by 72% of the participants said they would likely share the information with others.

Plant Health Advisors (PHAs) are what we call MGVs who have taken additional training in plant problem diagnosis. They volunteer with the UWEX Hort Help Lines in the Milwaukee and Waukesha counties and at the UWEX Horticulture Center at BBG. A regional training session for PHAs is offered each year for MGVs from all four of the southeastern counties formerly in the Quad district – Kenosha, Racine, Milwaukee and Waukesha. They also attend the statewide program “Responding to Hort Inquires” offered by state specialists.

In 2008, I started an additional training program called Plant Health Updates. These sessions are offered every other week from May through September and are aimed at PHAs but all MGVs are encouraged to attend when they can. Sessions are 1.5 hours long and include review and discussion of current growing conditions, pest problems and phenology as well as a look ahead to problems to expect. Participants also bring plant samples for the group to discuss and diagnose.

I also provide MGV continuing education through monthly Hort Reports presented at all SEWMG general meetings, bi-monthly newsletter articles on feature topics, an annual Speakers' Workshop and Pruning Workshops co-taught with Ann Wied of Waukesha County UW-Extension. Since 2000, over 800 people have taken this last workshop. These workshops are open to MGVs and the general public. I created the PowerPoint presentation we have used for all of the workshops (Exhibit #3).

In 2008, I added an educational component to the SEWMGs annual Perennial Plant Sale. It includes educational signs stationed along the waiting lines at the entrance and check-out, educational displays and demonstrations conducted by MGVs and a plant question and answer area. I developed a factsheet on perennials which is given to every customer with their purchase. I also coordinate a group of MGVs who serve as Plant Specialists each assigned to a specific plant group such as irises, hostas, daylilies, shade plants, sun-lovers, natives and many more. These MGVs wear signs on front and back encouraging customers to "Ask Me About.....".

My most in-depth educational program for MGVs outside of the Level 1 and 2 and short courses is the annual educational focus. With input from the MGVs and through contact with the general public year around, a topic is chosen each year to address in a three-pronged effort. These include a major educational display, a detailed brochure and a PowerPoint presentation. Using all of the existing UWEX publications and factsheets along with some additional literature which includes further university research, I concisely organize the key issues and recommendations into a format that can be used for all three educational methods. I work with UW specialists to assure accuracy of the content.

Next, two of our MGVs who are professional graphic artists develop a motif and then use the content I have provided to create attractive display panels that conform to our display units (a pop-up, curved, floor standing model and two, 3-panel tabletop units). Another MGV with expertise in producing brochures, uses the motif and content to create a full-color 3-panel brochure on the topic (Exhibit #4). Using the same motif, I prepare a PowerPoint presentation. One version contains detailed information for presenting to MGVs while another, more basic version is made for use with audiences of the general public.

I make my presentation to MGVs at a special educational session offered a few weeks prior to our major special event, the Realtors' Home and Garden Show in late March (Exhibit #5). MGVs scheduled to staff the booth are encouraged to attend. The brochure is e-mailed to all MGVs. A booth featuring the new display is designed, set-up and staffed by MGVs throughout the eight day show.

The display, brochure and presentation continue to be used throughout the year and in future years for a wide variety of venues and audiences. The display is set-up in the lobby of the Milwaukee County UWEX for the month after the show and then moved to the Education & Visitors Center at BBG. MGVs use the presentation for group presentation requests. The brochures are reproduced and sent along with MGVs to their events and activities. It is also posted on the Milwaukee County UWEX website.

Recent topics have been small space, small budget vegetable gardening; trouble-free tomatoes; lawn care choices; and tree care. I have sent the brochure as a .pdf file to my horticulture colleagues who program with MGVs and the general public for their use if they wish. Many have used it. I have also had requests for copies of the display panel files for them to make their own laminated display panels. Two of the brochures were chosen by colleagues to be included in a project that paid for them to be translated into Spanish.

Future goals for the MGV programs include increasing their involvement in urban agriculture projects with culturally diverse audiences and increasing youth gardening programming. Administratively, I plan to develop a volunteer handbook for MGVs. I would also like to be able to produce 2 sets of display panels for our educational focus displays to be placed in UWEX Media Collections.

Plant Diagnostics

Questions about plants and diagnosing plant problems are handled in Milwaukee County by staff and PHAs of the Hort Help Line at the Milwaukee County UWEX office and by the PHAs of the UWEX Horticulture Center at BBG. Together, approximately 1,000 inquiries are received and handled every year. This agent directs the activities of both of these offices. The Hort Help Line is managed on a day-to-day basis by a veteran staffer with over 15 years of service in that capacity. We confer on diagnoses that are new or unusual and on displays and procedural issues. I work with her to assure the professional appearance of the public area where this takes place and to institute new ideas and policies.

As survey instrument is being created with the assistance of the UWEX evaluation specialists. During 2013, we plan to train MGVs to conduct the survey of Hort Help Line clients for whom we have phone numbers. We may also conduct the survey of clients who contacted the UWEX Hort Center at Boerner.

The UWEX Horticulture Center at BBG opened in 2007 as a regional center to make UWEX resources available to the public. We entered into a memorandum of understanding. It includes the Milwaukee County Parks department that owns and operates this site located in Whitnall Park in Hales Corners; their support organization, the Friends of BBG; and the County designated caterer on-site at the Gardens. The County agreed to provide office space, phone service and internet access. Funding for furniture, equipment and supplies came from a grant through Senator Herb Kohl's office, part of a much larger grant for horticulture and agriculture programs of ANRE. This grant supported the Hort Center staff and some supplies and expenses through 2012.

This partnership has been positive for all partners. For UWEX it has given us a new, targeted site for serving the gardening public. We also have privileges for use of meeting rooms and classrooms. The caterer has also waived the catering requirement contractually included with the use of these spaces. In return, UWEX provides educational opportunities and projects of a more scientific nature than those offered by the Friends group. We often partner with the Friends and the county staff on public events.

Being a regional center, the four horticulture agents of the Quad Counties including this agent, served as the steering committee in the development and direction of the Center. It was set-up and kept operating by paid UWEX staff through 2011. The goal was to establish a core group of MGVs to staff the Center keeping it open to the public as much as possible and to have PHAs to do diagnostics. The steering committee provided direction, conducted public educational sessions and assisted the coordinator with projects.

The UWEX coordinator for the Center established several very productive group projects of MGVs serving the Center and BBG. These include the Bloom Team, the Garden Cart volunteers, a displays committee, and the Plant Sales Yard volunteers. She also ran two very successful nursery plastic recycling events at the Gardens that collected and recycled plastic for homeowners as well as commercial and municipal entities.

In 2012, when the Kohl funding ran out, MGVs agreed to take on both the roles of operating the Center and doing plant diagnostics for the public. Being in Milwaukee County, I agreed to provide the UWEX oversight. One of the MGVs agreed to serve as coordinator for the Center and the volunteers. My role is now that of director as well as lead educator for the PHAs.

In 2013, we plan to add e-mail diagnostics and expand the phone diagnostic services of the Center to increase the volume of contacts handled by the MGVs at the Center.

Working with our County Partner

Horticulture and Urban Agriculture programs often involve partnering with various County Departments especially Parks and Recreation. Boerner Botanical Gardens, the Mitchell Park Domes, the Wehr Nature Center and the Milwaukee County Zoo are all County owned and operated facilities where UWEX provides programs. At BBG, UWEX and the MGVs provide diagnostic services for the gardening public, offer educational programs for the public and MGVs, assist the Friends group with special events, install educational displays, collect bloom time data through the MGV Bloom Team, staff the Garden Cart during concerts in the park and other special events and assist with maintenance of the Plant Sales Yard. In 2010 for the first time, the county union agreed to allow volunteers to work in the gardens but only with weeding and only under supervision of an "expert". MGVs were called upon to serve as the group leaders and "experts". To assist them in weed identification, I created a laminated set of factsheets of weed photos with names. In 2012, the Union decided to allow volunteers to work side-by-side in the gardens with the County horticulture staff. Again MGVs were recruited for their expertise.

At Wehr Nature Center, I instruct a class on basic botany for the Master Naturalist training program each year. UWEX staff and volunteers help staff booths and set-up displays at special events like Cider Sunday, Maple Sugaring, Bug Day and Earth Day.

MGVs maintain two gardens at the Milwaukee County Zoo in the Children's Zoo. The "Heritage Garden" features vegetables that are used by 5 different ethnic groups to prepare traditional dishes. The "Butterfly Habitat Garden" consists of plants and habitat that attract butterflies and other pollinators. At both gardens, the MGVs install plant labels and educational signage, distribute literature and interact with the public while they are tending the gardens as well as during all of the Zoo's special events through the year.

Community Partnerships

Virtually every program conducted by this agent and the MGVs is done with a partner. My media partners include Fox 6 TV, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and State-by-State Gardening for which I write a regional report on horticulture and gardening for southeastern Wisconsin they publish in the Wisconsin Gardening magazine. I am also a frequent source sought out by other TV, radio and print media in the metro area.

I am also invited to speak by state and local garden clubs, plant societies, MGV associations, DNR facilities, municipal beautification committees, libraries, schools and colleges and even some non-plant-related organizations.

UWEX is frequently asked by local community serving agencies and organizations for assistance with their gardening projects and programs. In 2012, I developed a set of criteria that needs to be met by the organization before we will commit to providing assistance. The main criterion is that they have a group with strong leadership committed to the project that will carry out the organization and coordination of the work. Then, we offer assistance with direction, planning and education. Our Urban Ag program may be able to provide some assistance and supplies if they are available.

One such project recently was with the 16th Street Health Centers and benefitted both partners. They organized a group of their community leaders from areas in the Latino neighborhoods around the clinic who wished to form gardening projects. This agent provided two sessions of training on vegetable gardening each of which included a hands-on activity. One of our Spanish-speaking MGVs conducted activities with the participants' children while the parents were learning. The coordinator from the Health Centers translated into Spanish, the PowerPoint presentations and the key hand-outs. She also arranged for an interpreter for the sessions. I now have those translated materials for use with other Spanish-speaking audiences. I will be following up this spring to offer more sessions and to assist with their community gardening endeavors.

MGVs also serve as speakers for many different organizations to help meet the demand for educational programs in the metro area. I have developed over a dozen PowerPoint presentations that they can use that are in binders they can check-out. The binders include a paper copy of the presentation, a CD and the accompanying hand-outs. Our office provides copies of the hand-outs for the audience and a stand-up sign with the UWEX and SEWMG logo to display at the presentation.

MGVs also set-up and staff educational displays at events sponsored by other area organizations. I have worked with a committee of talented MGVs providing them with the content for them to use to create extremely professional looking displays on a wide variety of subjects. There is a priority list of topics for displays to create as time permits each year. When taken to events, our office provides copies of numerous hand-outs related to the display as well as some seasonally appropriate ones on other topics.

Several of the local farmers' markets have requested the presence of MGVs to answer their clients' questions. Again, we send a supply of hand-outs for them to distribute to visitors to their booth.

Many of our longest-term partners are ones who have asked UWEX and the MGVs to create and manage a garden at their site. These gardens are approved for MGV service by myself and Ann Wied of Waukesha County UWEX if they meet a set of criteria we developed. These gardens must be open to the public and have an educational focus such as native plants, attracting butterflies, reproducing historical plantings, healing or therapeutic or designed for disabled individuals. UWEX must be acknowledged at the garden and in literature prepared by the partner. UWEX literature must be made available. And the MGVs must represent themselves as such when volunteering. There must be three MGVs to serve as a leadership committee for the garden. Partners are asked to sign a memorandum of understanding that details the roles of both partners. MGVs also need to submit an annual report for the garden each year in order for it to remain an approved garden. There are currently approximately 56 of these gardens. Additionally, there are some 40 youth gardens managed by MGVs.

Working with Ann Wied, this agent provided the leadership to develop these project criteria, to create the necessary forms for the MGV garden committees to complete and to author the memorandum of understanding.

I am currently working with office staff and student workers to create a database of all of the partners that the MGVs and I have worked with. We intend to add to it all of the partners of the Urban Agriculture program. This will provide us with a powerful mailing list as well as make it possible for us to communicate with them about our civil rights policies and our other programs as well as ask for their assistance in communicating to their county supervisors what the value of Extension is to them.

Service to Extension

I am a member of the Horticulture Team of ANRE program area and serve as co-chair of the Consumer Hort Working Group. I participate weekly in the Wisconsin Horticulture Update teleconferences and serve as host a couple of times during the season. From 2010 until the present I have served as the District Liaison for the Quad Counties, now in the East Metro Region.

I am serving my second term as the Quad Counties representative on the nominating committee for the Department of Ag and Life Sciences.

For the Quad Counties district, I served on the regional team for the UWEX Horticulture Center at BBG since it opened in 2007. Now, I have taken the lead in directing the activities there since the other three counties have withdrawn their involvement.

In the Milwaukee County UWEX office I serve in several roles. I am the Program Coordinator for the Horticulture and Urban Agriculture program. I conduct monthly meetings for the staff which includes academic staff member Dennis Lukaszewski and 8 LTEs. Working with Program Coordinators for the other Program Areas in our office, we coordinate office communications,

revenue generation planning, strategic planning, and civil rights reporting. I also serve on the Marketing Team for our office's strategic plan. I am also involved with political effectiveness efforts with our county board of supervisors and county executive as well as UWEX administration.

Summary of Future Goals

With most of the programs described above, I have mentioned my future plans or projects. I will summarize them here. I will continue with my three main programs – media, Master Gardener Volunteers and diagnostics. Goals for media work are to continue to present information on the most current topics and environmental issues facing home gardeners, to increase understanding of the value of university research-based information and to make it easily accessible to all. I will post information from the Fox 6 TV segments on the Milwaukee County Facebook page and will provide nutrition factsheets to be distributed with the produce.

In my work with the MGVs, there is a need to increase our involvement with community and urban agriculture organizations of which there are now many in Milwaukee County. My goal is for UWEX and the MGVs to serve in educational and advisory roles in partnerships with them.

There is also a need for educational youth activities related to plants and gardening. We are already working with a few libraries, youth centers and municipal Recreation Departments to offer sessions. There are many more opportunities for MGVs to conduct programs for 4H participants. Scouts have merit badge work we can assist with. My long-term goal is to set-up a Junior MG program for Milwaukee County youth.

For the MGV program, a volunteer handbook is desperately needed particularly since we have such a large and active program. I will likely seek the assistance of MGVs for this project.

I will also conduct a programmatic evaluation of plant diagnostic services of UWEX in Milwaukee County.

On the horizon, we know that the County executive thinks UWEX should be part of the educational programs at the new County Greenhouse Center that is being added to the Mitchell Park Domes. Surely, the MGVs and I will be called upon to help with that. It is currently under construction and should be ready by fall of 2013.

One of my very long-term goals is to pursue production of a Green Thumb Garden Guide developed using my years of experience using research-based information in the garden at Fox 6 TV. Sponsorship by Fox 6 could provide funding and help with marketing. The format would be similar to the monthly garden calendar I have written for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel for 20 years and consist of weekly listings of activities but here specifically for the vegetable garden. The same information could then be consolidated into a crop-by-crop section.

Supplemental Materials

- Exhibit #1: Videotaped segments on the Fox 6 website
at <http://fox6now.com/category/wake-up/in-the-garden/>
- Exhibit #2: Evaluation of 2009 MGV Short Course
- Exhibit #3: PowerPoint hand-out of slides for “The Art and Science of Pruning”
- Exhibit #4: Brochure “Your lawn. Your Choice. Conventional, Organic or Somewhere-in-between”
- Exhibit #5: Photos of UWEX/MGV booth at the 2012 Realtors’ Home and Garden Show