Volume 16, Issue 4
July/August 2016

South East Wisconsin Master Gardeners

Good Earth News

President's Corner

by Liz Burke

Happy Summer Everyone!!
Our spring was cool and just right for all of the bulbs that bloomed their little hearts out. There was a riot of color in my garden this year. I hope your gardens were equally beautiful and a bit of a hint of what will come this summer.
We have had a busy couple of months, but the results were a very successful Plant Sale. I know that the Plant Sale Committee thanked all of the volunteers for their help. I also want to add my thanks to everyone who dug, potted, moved, arranged, and assisted in putting together a beautiful display of 17,000+ plants. Many thanks go out to all of the helpers, talliers and cashiers on the sale days. We could not do this without your help And a big thank you to all the shoppers.
Now is the time we get down to the support of our 40+ approved gardens and projects. Watch for Candy's updated schedule each week if you are looking to help at a garden. Her schedule lists work days and times. There is plenty of help needed to weed, water and encourage all of the plants to grow and prosper. The Garden Support team will be visiting a few gardens to see if they need additional help. And, I will be visiting a few gardens just to offer my help for the day; please put me to work. Let's get our fingers dirty.
If you have a bit of time, volunteer for special requests. State Fair can always use a few more volunteers. Please contact Faouzi Kablaoui: fkablaoui@aol.com and let him know when you could help. Watch for additional requests from the ListServe.

Our annual Picnic is also in the planning stages. Please hold the date: August 18, 2016. This is a pot-luck picnic so your donated food dishes are needed. SEWMG will provide the meat course, water and soft drinks, and we will look to you for additional treats, salads, dips, vegetables and fruit. We could also use door prizes and plants for a plant exchange. Please e-mail me if you want to contribute door prizes or participate in the plant exchange: EBurke3@wi.rr.com. Watch for details to follow in July.
The state WIMGA Conference will be held September 14th - 17th at the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells. The theme this year is "Helping Nature Thrive." It looks very interesting. You might consider attending at least one day. A few of our members will be presenting and they would love to see you there.

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Save the dates

- August 18th for SEWMG picnic
- September 14th – 17th for WIMGA Conference Wisconsin Dells

SEWMGs Service Enterprise Initiative

by MGV Diane Thieme

*In the last edition of the **Good Earth News**, it was announced that the UW Extension SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardener Volunteer organization was certified as a Service Enterprise Initiative Points of Light volunteer program. To become certified, the Extension and Master Gardener program were evaluated for how well SEWMG met criteria and qualities of successful volunteer organization.*

During the evaluation process, we identified what SEWMG already does well and what it needs to improve upon or add to the program. The evaluation showed that our organization has a very successful program in place that already meets many of the certification requirements to be considered an exemplary volunteer organization. It also clarified where it needed to focus attention to further strengthen the program.

Using the findings of the evaluation, thirty-five steps were developed into an action plan. The action plan focuses on steps in each of eight separate categories: Leadership and Support, Planning and Development, Effective Training, Onboarding* and Supervision, Tracking and Evaluation, Outreach, Partnering to Extend Reach, and Technology and Communication. The scope of the entire plan is too big for discussion in this article, but the following are some examples of key points.

SEWMG needs to:

1. publicize the impact of its programs at community, local and state levels.
2. gather member input of what needs to be addressed in the program
3. examine membership retention and turnover
4. develop a basic volunteer handbook
5. identify unique skill sets for needed tasks and develop a directory of volunteer opportunities using those skills
6. provide volunteer self-assessment opportunities
7. collect community partners' feedback on SEWMG impact and publicize it
8. clarify grievance and termination policies
9. explore online communication/software systems for tracking volunteer information and expanding its Facebook page
10. develop a recruitment plan for a more diverse population to take MGV classes and to present our talks and programs to more diverse audiences

The above list is a very brief summary of some of the goals of the SEI plan. The action plan has very specific and detailed procedures and timelines in place to achieve those goals. What does it mean to SEWMGVs? You will have to do very little. You may be surveyed. You may be asked about any pertinent skills you could share. You may be asked to evaluate something or give us input. You may be asked to help implement something. You will reap the benefits of the changes. Much of the action plan is already completed or is in the process of being completed. The Service Enterprise Initiative team will continue meeting and working on the action plan throughout the year to gradually implement all thirty- five steps.

* matching MGVs' comfort levels, their likes and skills with organizational needs

Garden Support Committee

by MGVs Catherine Price & Ken Loeffel, Garden Support Committee Co-Chairs

"The mission of the Garden Support Committee of the SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardeners is to provide support and guidance to all approved gardens/projects to ensure the Garden Chairs implement the expectations of the UW Extension Master Gardener Program."

Approved Garden Visits in 2016 This year, Garden Support Committee members will visit nine approved gardens and meet with their respective garden chairs. The projects include HavenWoods State Forest Gardens, Lowell Damon House Historic Gardens, Polish Historic Gardens, North Point Lighthouse Gardens, NuGenesis Farm Gardens, Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital Emergency Dept. Oasis Garden, ProHealth Care Waukesha Memorial Hospital Kitchen Garden, Wilson Center Strohmaier Sculpture & Botanical Garden and Linden Grove Gardens.

Two committee members will visit each garden to answer any questions and provide information on resources available to assist each garden to meet the standards of a UW Ext project. A report will be completed for each garden visited and these reports will be forwarded to the Master Gardener Finance Committee for use when the budgets for 2017 for these gardens are being considered.

This is the first year in the cycle of visiting each of the Approved Gardens once every three years. We visited all the approved Gardens in 2010. We visited one third of all the approved Gardens in 2012, 2013, and 2014.

2017 Garden Tours Peg Riesen and Catherine Price are Co-Chairs of a sub-committee to plan and coordinate public garden tours of several Approved Gardens and/or Approved Youth Gardens in 2017. They will be working with the Co-Chairs of the selected gardens to assure all the needed advance planning takes place. The 2015 Public Tour event was very successful. We will have more information regarding these visits in a future newsletter.

We always welcome MGVs to join us at our GSC meetings. We will have our next meeting on Wednesday, August 10, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. in Room 305 at UW Ext Milwaukee Office 9501 Watertown Plank Rd. At this GSC meeting we will review the reports that were completed by our members who visited nine Approved Gardens this year. We will also have an update on planning for the 2017 Public Garden visits for selected Approved Gardens. Lastly, we will start planning for the 2017 Volunteer Opportunity Fair. The SEWMG Web Site Events Calendar is used to list the agenda, date, place and time of all our meetings.

SEWMG Logo on Trailer

by MGV Diane Thieme

For many years, the SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardener Plant Sale Committee has been transporting sale supplies and plants in a "naked" silver trailer. Thanks to a very generous donation from MGV, JoAnn Grill and work done by her son,

our trailer is "naked" no more! We now proudly and beautifully display the UW Extension SEWMG logo on both sides and the back of the trailer for everyone on to see as we merrily roll on down the road. Thank you, JoAnn!

Well done on this year's Plant Sale!

by MGV Patricia Adrian

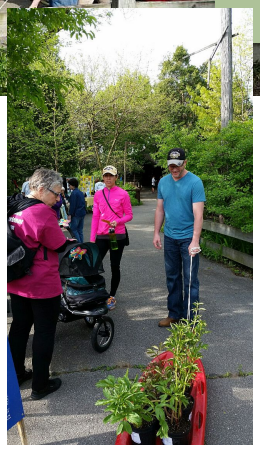
Last year, countless numbers of MGVs began preparing for this year's sale in various ways. Some photographed their unknown varieties of plants, and others dug and healed in plants for the winter at Eble Vegetable Garden. This spring, even more volunteers dug, divided, potted and labeled 17,000 plants. Volunteers numbering 141 worked on Plant Sale Day as hundreds of people converged on State Fair Park. At 8 a.m., the alphabetized plants were arranged perfectly with pots tipped upward for easy identification. Blooming Bleeding Heart plants decorated their area (D for Dicentra) and so managed to sell themselves. What a sight! By 8:30 a.m. sleds were a limited commodity as gardeners selected just the right plant for just the right spot in their gardens.

I enjoyed watching how our customers selected plants. Some people went right for the blooms – but then they would never find the late-summer bloomers. Some knew they want six hostas and finished shopping in ten minutes. Some selected a couple of sleds full of plants then pondered how to place them in their gardens.

This year, the Plant Sale Committee made sure there was adequate coverage for all aspects of the sale. Some MGVs served as experts in a specific plant category, answered questions and suggested plants. Some volunteers became personal shoppers and advised on plant companions and staggering bloom time. Some volunteers helped monitor activities near the gates: determining sled availability, getting plants to customers' cars, collecting sales slips and offering plant sitting. Every job was important. The planning paid off providing a more pleasant shopping experience for volunteers and customers alike.

Regardless of how you helped this year, it took everyone's efforts to pull off an event of this size. Because of you, SEWMG can continue to support our 40+ community gardens, youth and adult education efforts. Furthermore, we were able to donate about 550 plants to Habitat for Humanity, too. Thank you.....Thank you.....for all that you do. Ahhh, now you can spend time in your own gardens!

Regardless of how you helped with this year's plant sale, it took everyone's efforts to pull off an event of this size. Because of you, SEWMG can continue to support our 40+ community gardens, youth and adult education efforts. Furthermore, we were able to donate about 550 plants to Habitat for Humanity, too.



Model Backyard at State Fair Park

by MGV Nancy Dubyk, co-chair

How do you grow a garden? Not the plants but where they grow. What about a SEWMG garden that has a mission to educate? Not to mention being judged by master gardeners and extension staff who remembered what it had looked like in the past and could watch the progress (or lack of) during the plant sale, state fair and county fair.

In June 2014 that's the thought that ran through my head-along with why did I say yes to be a garden chair. We've all done it – said, "Yes" without asking enough questions or thinking it through. Now what?

My involvement with the Model Backyard at the State Fair started the summer before. Sharon Morrisey had a workday to get the garden ready for the Wisconsin State Fair. I concentrated on the over-flowing three-part compost bin. Master Composter certification required creating a display-why not volunteer to maintain the area. Work wouldn't need to begin till the next year. Perfect, I had more than enough hours for the year. With the project done I left, never carefully looking at the entire garden.

That fall I was asked to adopt the small rain garden after an educational rain garden presentation. It seemed like a great way to learn from practice. How about the nearby small native area? Sure, it couldn't be that much more to do - and I'd be right there.

How could such a small area look so big? The garden didn't look anything like the beautiful area I remembered from years ago when I had attended the fair. Now I saw: overgrown plants, empty spaces, plants I had never seen, fallen branches, dilapidated signage and wobbly benches.

Verbal history indicated that the gardens had been moved from a different location. An enthusiastic group had created the Model Backyard's native, shade and butterfly garden. There was a rain garden and compost area. Slowly less and less work was done. Jill Lansing and her sister Karen Johnson were the only volunteers still working in the garden. Their true dedication was creating an inviting home for butterflies. The butterfly area was well known as a not-to-be-missed beautiful garden.

Now it was just me. My husband became a member of the SEWMG volunteer spouse group; gradually more help came from my old and new master gardener friends. Slowly the gardens looked better. All things considered it was more than presentable to give fairgoers a positive impression of UW-Extension Master Gardeners.

Spring 2015 was cold and wet. The plant sale people need to be commended for working regardless of what Mother Nature did. That year help came from other garden chairs to make the area somewhat presentable for the plant sale on several of the better days.

Summer brought volunteers and more improvements. A volunteer built new Aldo Leopold benches to replace the old, wobbly ones. Non-gardening volunteers created a plant reference manual and spreadsheet. A children's garden interest program was launched. During the State Fair, visitors were able to watch as the three swallowtail caterpillars became cocoons.

Spring 2016 the gardens showed the progress that had occurred. Now the plants aren't as noticeable as the memories of all the people who have transformed it into a garden. Everyone's input of ideas, suggestions and hard work has made the garden blossom. Come check us out. We always need people to further develop the garden. In addition volunteers are needed during the ten days of the Wisconsin State Fair to represent SEWMG.

How do you grow a garden – with volunteers! **Everyone's input of ideas, suggestions and hard work has made the garden blossom. Come check us out. We always need people to further develop the garden. In addition volunteers are needed during the ten days of the Wisconsin State Fair to represent SEWMG.**

How do you grow a garden - with volunteers! Without volunteers the many SEWMG gardens wouldn't be able to fulfill their missions. Everyone's help is always appreciated. An added benefit is that working with people who have similar interests is such a wonderful way to grow friendships!

Trips and Tours

by MGV Doris Fons, Commitee Chair

Our summer bus trip includes Olbrich Botanical Gardens in Madison and Epic Systems in Verona. Registration for our summer trip began June 7th. At this time the registration is full. Please read below and sign up for the wait list. Use "Trip" in the subject when registering.

WHEN: Friday, July 22, 2016

WHERE: Our trip this summer will be to Olbrich Botanical Gardens in Madison, with lunch at the Flying Hound Restaurant and on to Epic Systems in Verona in the afternoon.

REGISTRATION: Registration began at 6:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 7, 2016. Registration is currently full. E-mail dorisann.fons@gmail.com or call 414-425-6072 to be added to the waiting list. You may register another Master Gardener or a guest. Please give names of each person registered.

BUS: The bus will depart promptly at 7:30 a.m. from the State Fair Park & Ride with a second pick up at the Hwy 83 Hartland Park & Ride at 8:00 a.m. We will be returning about 5:00 to 5:30 p.m.

COST: The trip will cost $44 for SEWMG members and $49 for non-members.

As always, a letter will be sent to you by Sharon Roy with all the details. PLEASE read your letter carefully and follow the instructions about the payment deadline, your lunch choice and where you will board the bus.

We will have a waiting list since there are often cancellations as the time gets closer to departure.

We are hoping for a beautiful sunny day to make this the best and most wonderful experience for all.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

Volunteer News

by MGV Nancy Lehrer, UW Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator

Summer continues to be a busy time for Master Gardeners giving presentations, assisting at garden tours in Milwaukee and Waukesha counties and keeping the many approved gardens weeded & watered. A garden workday schedule is e-mailed weekly by Candy Krepel. It's also on the SEWMG website (Click the Volunteer tab).

Volunteers are needed at:

Wisconsin State Fair: August 4th – 14th. Please contact Faouzi Kablaoui(414-217-5518).

Milwaukee County Zoo events

Zoo A-Carte—August 18th – 21st

Senior Day at the Zoo—September 2nd

Family Farm Weekend at the Zoo—September 10th & 11th

Dates for your calendar:

Garden Tour: Olbrich Botanical Gardens and Epic gardens in Madison, Friday, July 22, 2016.

SEWMG Annual Picnic

August 18th 2016, Mitchell Park 19900 River Rd, Brookfield, WI 53045, 5:00 pm Appetizers 5:30 pm Dinner

WIMGA Conference, September 14th-17th, 2016

Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells

Volunteer hours are due September 15th **Find the volunteer and education hour timesheets on our SEWMG website. On our website, click the Documents tab and then scroll down to the "Volunteer and Hours Related Forms." Mail the timesheets to Betsy Vokac, 9501 W. Watertown Plank Rd, Bldg A, Wauwatosa, WI 53226**

Budget Requests and Annual Garden Reports are also due on September 15th. **These forms are also on our SEWMG website. Click on documents and scroll down to "Forms Related to Approved Projects and Gardens." Mail Budget Request and Garden Report to the Milwaukee County UW-Extension Office, Attention SEWMG Budget, 9501 W. Watertown Plank Rd. Building A, Wauwatosa, WI 53226.**

O.J. Noer Turfgrass Facility

by Ann Wied, UW-Extension Consumer Hort. Educator, Waukesha County

Wisconsin has an estimated 300,000 acres of turfgrass (covering yards, parks, roadsides, golf courses, athletic fields and sod farms).
In acreage, it's the state's fifth biggest crop.
It is the base of a nearly one-billion-dollar-a-year industry that employs more than 30,000 people.

I recently had a chance to visit and tour the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Facility, located just west of Madison. I had visited the facility a number of years ago but was once again amazed at all that goes on there. I found it so interesting to be able to see many different types of grass growing side by side growing under the same conditions as well as other on-going research projects.

In case you are not familiar with O.J. Noer, I have included below an excerpt from their website:

What gets studied at the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility touches the lives – or rather the feet – of virtually everyone in the state. Wisconsin has an estimated 300,000 acres of turfgrass, covering yards, parks, roadsides, golf courses, athletic fields and sod farms. In acreage, it's the state's fifth biggest crop. Wisconsin's turfgrass is the base of a nearly one-billion-dollar-a-year industry that employs more than 30,000 people.

Researchers use the Noer facility to compare different turfgrass varieties, mowing practices, equipment and strategies for fertilizer, irrigation and pest management. There are typically 70-80 or more projects conducted at the facility each year. Many of the projects are aimed at providing short-term information for Wisconsin's turf industry (sod production, golf courses, lawn care, sports fields, etc.). A growing number of the studies are aimed at mid- to long-term objectives aimed at providing information for science-based regulations and a more sustainable society.

Every year O.J. Noer holds a "Field Day" where you can see the facility and observe the research that is taking place. The whole day is primarily geared toward professionals, but interested homeowners and MGVs may find the morning segment useful and interesting. The afternoon is focused entirely on golf courses. This year the event will be held Tuesday, July 26th. There is a fee to attend and registration is required. The registration form will be available in early June. If turf grass research interests you, go to: http://ojnoer.ars.wisc.edu/

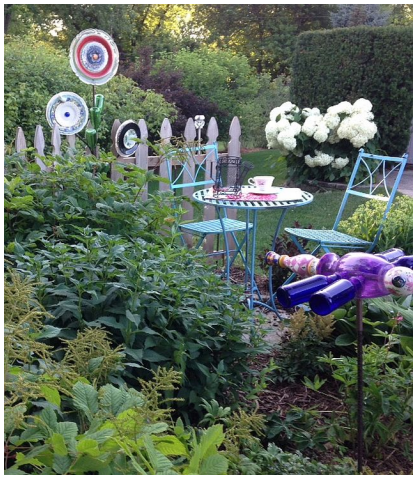
Tour le Jardin

by MGV Cheryl Lausten

There's excitement in the air as the combined effort of the Elm Grove and Mayfair Park Garden Clubs promise a bigger and better garden tour on Saturday, July 16th from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Increasing to seven gardens on tour and limiting the garden locations to a compact Elm Grove-Wauwatosa area will eliminate travel time and provide more leisurely garden time.

Encouraged by the previous year's popularity, the clubs have arranged to have Plein-Air artists engaged in their art at several homes. New this year, at a home to be announced, is craftsman Carl Muenzmaier, discussing and displaying the newly popular barn quilts. Carl will discuss barn locations of these painted wood quilt patterns throughout Wisconsin.

A greatly enlarged contingent of garden-oriented vendors will be stationed at the Marketplace at Sunset Playhouse grounds (800 Elm Grove Road, Elm Grove) with items including nursery plants available for purchase. For ticket information and advance sale, e-mail tourlejardin@gmail.com or contact Nancy Patterson at 414-257-2583. Advance sale tickets are $8.00 and can be purchased at Snapdragon Flowers, Welke's House of Roses and Sunset Playhouse (all Elm Grove). Day of tickets will be $10.00 and will be available at Sunset Playhouse.



Award to Lowell Damon House Historic Garden

by Kit Hansen, MGV Garden Chair

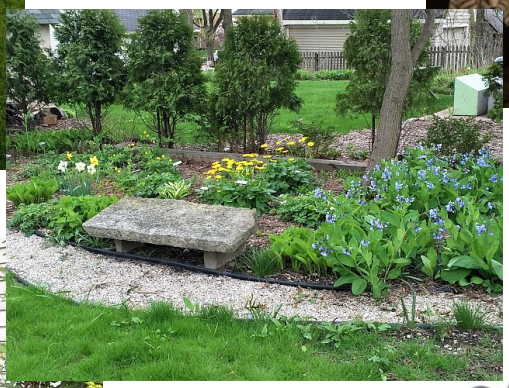
The Milwaukee County Historical Society presented its 2016 Recognition Award to the Master Gardeners who volunteer at the Lowell Damon House on May 11th, 2016, at the Pfister Hotel. These MGVs were recognized for their efforts and contributions to the conservation and restoration of the Lowell Damon House. The Milwaukee County Historical Society owns the house; it was built in the 1840s and is believed to be the oldest residence in Wauwatosa.

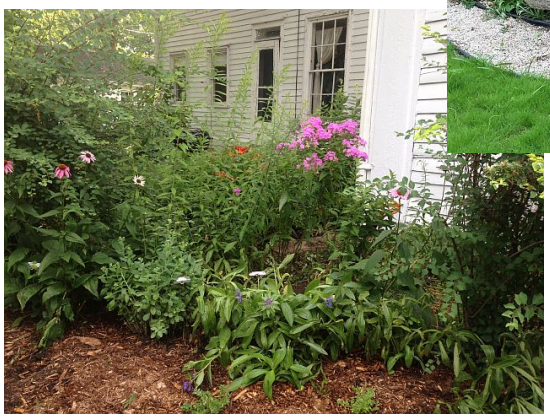
Receiving the Milwaukee County Historical Society's Recognition could never have happened without the initiative and hard work of a number of people. In 2011, MGV Cheryl Rasmann sought approval from the Historical Society to prune the shrubs and enlisted the help of several other master gardeners to do so. In 2012, MGV Kris Jensen made the necessary contacts with the Milwaukee County Historical Society, UW Extension, and SEWMG and submitted the paperwork for the Lowell Damon House to become an approved project.

Kris became the garden chair. It was Kris' vision that the gardens be restored to what they might have been in the 1880s when the Lowell Damon family lived in the house. Although Kris died in 2014, the garden restoration continues.

Initially, it was thought that it would take approximately ten years to restore the gardens because of their neglected shape. However, due to a dedicated team of Master Gardeners (Cheryl Rasmann, Lynda Barbieri, Cheryl Bloomquist, Ann Davis, B. J. Larus, Sue Martin, Bernie Hansen and Kit Hansen), the garden restoration is proceeding more rapidly. It also should be noted that none of this would have happened without the help of UW-Extension and the support and financial resources provided by Southeast Wisconsin Master Gardeners.

The Lowell Damon House Historic Garden Master Gardeners are, indeed, honored to be recognized in this way by the Milwaukee County Historical Society.





News from the County Extension Offices

by Ann Wied, UW-Extension, Waukesha County Consumer Hort. Educator and Sharon Morrisey, UW-Extension, Milwaukee County Consumer Hort. Agent

Only July and August Left to Volunteer

It happens every year. In early September the calls and e-mails start coming in from MGVs who have not volunteered enough to get their minimum requirement done before the deadline on September 15th. While we do try to help those who find themselves in this position, it isn't easy – for them or us. All we can really do is remind them of the existing opportunities such as garden workdays and helping at the Annual Picnic or hospitality at meetings or classes. Then it is up to them to work it into their lives. So, please, do not wait until late August to try to figure it out. Make a plan now and follow it through. This year we are going to enforce the deadline more firmly for the good of us all.

Plant Health Advisor Program Swells

The two training sessions for PHAs conducted in April had 18 MGVs new to the role of diagnosing plant problems out of the 24 people who attended. That brings our total of active PHAs to 38 for both Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties. They are actively taking voicemail questions, answering e-mailed inquiries, coming into the office at the Milwaukee County UW-Extension Horticulture Helpline and staffing shifts at the Hort Center at Boerner Botanical Gardens. In addition, a small team of PHAs are working in the UW-Extension Waukesha County Office. Thanks to you all for helping make the transition from set phone and walk-in hours to the expanded services we are now offering.

SEWMG Presence at Brookfield Farmers Market is Changing

The SEWMG volunteer presence is changing at The Brookfield Farmers Market this summer. In previous years SEWMG volunteers attended each week primarily answering questions and handing out information. Rather than attending each Saturday during this summer, we have decided that in 2016 we will attend only five times (once a month June through October) and having an educational theme (as well as answering questions and handing out information). We plan to have a demonstration or display to accompany each theme. We will have a large tent and multiple tables. We have already confirmed a number of Saturdays with a number of master gardeners. A big thank you to the SEWMGs who have already made the commitment and to SEWMGV Eileen Quinlan who has taken the lead on this project.

SEWMGs at Waukesha County Fair

If you plan to attend the Waukesha County Fair this summer and are there during the day, be sure to stop by the SEWMG table on Thursday (7/21), Friday (7/22), and Saturday (7/23) from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. There will be hands-on activities for adults and children. We will be in the 4-H Forum.

MGVs and Urban Ag Programs

This spring several Urban Ag programs including the MUG Garden Mentors, the SEED Initiative classes and the Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities lead abatement programs needed the assistance of MGVs. Thanks to all the MGVs who rose to the challenge. By diversifying our audiences, we have added depth to Extension programming. It may eventually help us go further toward our goal of diversifying our membership! The following is a summary of these projects:

We have 14 MGVs mentoring 12 MUG gardens that requested gardening advisors. More assistance is always needed. We hope that bonds are formed with these gardens and the success inspires more MGVs to give it a try next year and in the years to come. It is not too late to mentor a garden this year either. Contact Sharon Morrisey for more information on garden locations.

The SEED Initiative grant commits UW-Extension to create 1 million sq. ft. of new gardens in Milwaukee's food deserts in 2016. Eight sites have been identified. Moody Park in the Amani neighborhood was the first to be offered gardening classes. Six participants earned a certificate of completion by attending all three classes. Their garden beds will be built by early June. Six MGVs attended those classes as a training for being presenters of the next classes. Classes have been scheduled at two more sites – Journey House at 24th and Scott in the Clarke Square neighborhood and Sherman Park both in June. More will be scheduled very soon! Thanks to the MGVs helping with this project.

Finally, this year's Healthy Soils workshops at Walnut Way Conservation Corp and the 20th Street location of the Sixteenth Street Community Health Clinics have 4-6 sessions scheduled for this spring, summer and fall. Two MGVs volunteered for the first two sessions at Walnut Way and two other MGVs volunteered for the one session conducted at 20th Street. There are a few others who have selected a specific date and site to volunteer. Again, more MGVs are needed for this. All that is expected is to

News from the County Offices

continued

either answer gardening questions with the adults for a couple short break-out sessions or to work with the children of the participants to do garden-related activities while their parents are in the workshops. Watch for e-mails recruiting volunteers.

UW-Extension Day at the Fair August 9th

The huge success of last year made us want a "do-over." This impressive display of UW-Extension. Departments, offices, services, programs and projects by the dozens will again be at the Wisconsin State Fair all day near the fountain on the mall. Consider visiting the State Fair on Tuesday, August 9th so you can see what all Extension has to offer statewide. It's fun for the whole family guaranteed.

Level 1 Training 2016

We are working out the schedule for the Level 1 MGV Training classes. The class is definitely scheduled to be held in Waukesha at the County Government Center (courthouse) on Monday afternoons from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. The evening classes will probably be conducted at Boerner Botanical Gardens on Tuesdays from 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. Registration information will be sent out by the 3rd week of July. Classes will begin September 12th. and will be held for 13 consecutive weeks ending the week of December 5th.

The future of Cooperative Extension – Status of nEXT Generation

A new infrastructure is being developed to ensure the Cooperative Extension division is able to continue its essential work and grow in the future. The nEXT Generation project is a result of permanent cuts in state funding on July 1, 2015. Working groups will be meeting regularly starting in early June and will be responsible for assessing and offering recommendations on particular areas throughout Cooperative Extension. We anticipate knowing more details by the beginning of 2017. As always, feel free to contact Sharon or Ann if you have any questions.

Only July and August Left to Volunteer

All MGV timesheets are due on September 15th. Please do not wait until August to decide to earn your volunteer or education hours. Instead,take advantage of garden workdays, give a presentation, volunteer as a plant health advisor, join a committee or help with hospitality at meetings, classes or the annual picnic. Satisfy your education hours by listening to extension staff on WPR's Larry Meiller Garden Talk on Fridays, or accessing their past podcasts on the web. Take a guided tour at Boerner Botanical Gardens on Wednesday nights or consider submitting an article to the Good Earth News.

Now is the time to plan and follow through.

The Pollinator Group

by MGV Jennifer Lazewski, Pollinator Group Chairperson

The Pollinator Group ended the learning season on April 16th with a double-header on Hummingbird Gardening and Plants for Pollinators. We also finished a handout on Pollinators (available for printing at both UW-Extension offices) and worked at an educational table at the Plant Sale. During the summer, we will apply what we have learned in gardens, observe and identify pollinators, and take a few field trips (which will be announced on the ListServe).

Hummingbird Gardening

Hummingbirds are incidental pollinators that are not directly interested in pollen, but certain plants have co-evolved with them to hide nectar deeper and then deposit pollen, often on its head or back. There are over 300 species of hummingbirds, but only the ruby-throated hummingbird is usually seen in Wisconsin. You can distinguish adult males by their red throat feathers and females and juveniles by their white tail feathers.

While red and orange are well-known colors for hummingbird plants, the birds also drink nectar from certain blue and purple flowers. But don't count on the Eurasian perennial salvias already in your garden because hummingbirds prefer tropical/annual salvias from the Americas. Hummingbirds also eat insects for protein and tree sap when nectar is scarce. Favorite perennials include: Penstemon digitalis; Mimulus ringens; Silene regia; Lobelia cardinalis; Monarda Didyma 'Jacob Cline'; Nepeta sibirica 'Souvenir d'Andre Chaudron'; and Hosta, usually with taller flowers. Favorite annuals include Salvia coccinea 'Lady in Red' and 'Summer Red Jewel'; Salvia guaranitica 'Black and Blue' and 'Purple Majesty'; Salvia greggi and microphylla; and Agastache 'Kudos' and rupestris (also known as Sunset Hyssop).

Plants for Pollinators

Different pollinators see different parts of the visible and UV spectrum and some flower shapes are best for pollinators. Flat daisy-style flowers (such as Zinnias) umbel shapes with many small flowers (such as dill and milkweed) and rod shapes with small flowers (such as butterfly bush and goldenrod) suit many types of pollinators with different tongue lengths. Avoid rounded double flowers, which are difficult to land on and whose added petals come at the expense of nectar value.

Pure natives are usually best and most effective for pollinators. Cultivars or "nativars" can vary in attractiveness to pollinators depending on what characteristics are enhanced. Changes to flower shape, color, and nectar value can discourage pollinators. Doug Tallamy and others are currently researching the relative pollinator interactivity with natives and their cultivars, but Penn State and MGVs have already completed an interesting study available at http://ento.psu.edu/pollinators/resources-and-outreach/bees-bugs-blooms-2013-a-pollinator-trial.

Handout on Pollinators & More

We then discussed our experiences with plants often listed as "pollinator plants" by season. While we decided to go with common plants for our general handout, a more specific list is being created for MGVs and others with a greater interest. *Our summer mission is to help spread the word on pollinators, so feel free to contact me if you would like someone from the group to attend an event, help at a farmer's market, or do a presentation (indoors or in a garden).*

Clockwise from above Salvia guaranitica 'Black and Blue', Silene regia, and Penstemon digitalis. All photos from Missouri Botanic Garden.

While red and orange are well-known colors for hummingbird plants, the birds also drink nectar from certain blue and purple flowers. Pure natives are often best and most effective for pollinators.

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Our Mission Statement

To support and assist UW-Extension in community horticulture programs through volunteerism, education and environmental stewardship.