

Jefferson County Master Gardener Volunteer Service Gardening Project Annual Report

Gardening Project: 2014 Jefferson County Fair

Submitted by: Jeannie T., with Paulette T.

Many changes have occurred for those of us that have worked with fair in 2014. The fair secretary of nearly 20 years retired and was replaced by two administrative assistants. It has been a real learning experience for them and for me to spend time working with them to bring them up to speed for our department. Margaret A's schedule has changed and she was not able to be the other Plant Crops Superintendent with me but was able to work some at the fair. Paulette T. is our new Superintendent - a great addition - having worked with our program in the past as well as an exhibitor.

My work with 2014 Fair began in the fall of 2013 - updating the junior and open class fair book information making sure that it was correct and updating some of the topics. Inputting information for judges for the fair. This was followed by updates and communication with the fair office (throughout the year) - this was very challenging at times as they were inexperienced and required time to teach and update them with what needed to be done and was it being done.

We had many surprises that I had to deal with - the biggest - one of our judges choose not to show up on judging day - with a room full of 4-H'ers, FFA members and parents and families waiting. I pulled in a couple of qualified people to help us on the spot--unfortunately there were long waits for judging due this situation - but I got the job done. A first and I expect it to be a last.

Paulette and I made some changes this year in the set up and display of the exhibit including the chairs that we turned into flower planters. These were used throughout the season at the fairgrounds. I ordered three banners from Susan Mahr's office. I wanted our MGVA to see what the large banner as well as the smaller vertical banners looked like. They then could decide what would work best for the banners that JCMGVA were designing.

Fair was July 9th-13th

The previous week I picked up supplies and displays from the Extension office; went to the Activity Building to check on our displays to see what shape they were in and move them into out area. We never know what shape they will be in when they bring them out of storage. We likely need to do the necessary repairs.

Monday evening we set up the display.

Tuesday the 4-hers and FFA members bring in their projects and they are judged (Face to Face Judging) where the judge has the opportunity to question the youth about their project and get an idea of just how much this youth has done and the quality of the crop; vegetable; flower; plant; arrangement or container. This is very interesting for our volunteers who clerk for the judges--

they say that they always learn so much---had some new MGVs help us with this year--which was great.

Adults also bring in their Open Class Entries from 1-7 pm that day (Tuesday) also---it is our busiest day---the day that we need the most help. We had 5-6 including Paulette and me working all day.

Wednesday morning the Open Class Entries are judged. We encourage our exhibitors to come and listen to the judge's reason for placing the class as they do--again another great learning experience. We have 2-3 MGVs plus Paulette and myself working. Then from noon-4 and 4-8 we begin having 2 MGV on duty to answer people's gardening questions each day through Sunday afternoon. We also use this opportunity to inform and educate the county about horticulture issues in Jefferson County such as Emerald Ash Boer (EAB). I had brought out a display of EAB - what it looked like - what to look for under the bark and information about what to do if they suspect they may have it in their yards.

We also helped make a change this year - the non-animal exhibits were released at 6 pm this year rather than 7 pm. Animals are released at 7 pm. This gives everyone a chance to get their projects and then go load their animals and head home. Previously everything was happening at once and it was just too hard to load animals and pick up projects.

The fair provides one of the greatest opportunities to get the word out about the JCMGVA program. This is a great time and place to inform and educate the public as well as market our program.

After the fair, I attended a fair board meeting to lobby for updates to some of our displays for safety reasons; some are in very bad shape. Many of these displays were there when I was in 4-H - some nearly 60 years ago! We also had a wrap up meeting for all the Superintendents so that we can better plan for 2015. Later individual department meetings were held to go over the 2014 fair, address issues specific to our department and plan for 2015 improvements.