Butterfly Habitat Garden @ the Milwaukee Co. Zoo

by MGVs John Kasti, Ruta Goba and Kris Jensen

Greetings to the manifold gardening vanguards that make up SEWMSGV, Inc.

So what the heck is up with the MGVs at the Zoo? Simple answer, we participate in the UW Extension's public outreach by answering questions and distributing handouts to the Zoo visitors who venture into our Butterfly Habitat project.

Our prime message to the public is simple: If you are a Butterfly Gardener - please stop - and become a Butterfly HABITAT Gardener. Why? Well, sure, pretty butterflies and pretty flowers are nice to look at. But, you don't get the pretty butterflies unless there is a habitat consisting of perhaps less desirable looking "Lamat" host plants for butterflies to lay eggs on, for the caterpillars to eat, and to create a neighborhood of plants for the chrysalis to hang around in. And then you also get to do your Butterfly Gardening to get your pretty flower plants for the Butterflies to nectar on. When we explain the need for Habitat gardening and the person you are speaking to begins to get the point of it and nod their head in an understanding way we feel our mission is being accomplished.

In our demonstration project, we have planted and tend about 115 plants for the public to see and appreciate. There are host plants such as Big and Little Bluestem (Skippers), Milkweeds (Monarchs), Parsley, Dill, and Fennel (Black Swallowtail), Pearly Everlasting (American Ladies), and nectar plants such as Joe Pye Weed, New England Aster, Purple Coneflower, and the list goes on and on.

We participate in various Zoo Special Event Days such as Party For The Planet, Military Appreciation Day, ZooFari Nights, Zoo Ala Carte, Senior Day, and Family Farm Weekend. At these events our volunteers set up our shade tent and set out a display of books and information pamphlets. A big hit is our live display of butterfly eggs, caterpillars, chrysalis, and, when the timing is right, we even have a few butterflies for the children (of all ages) to release. So many thanks are owed to the few volunteers who make this all possible.

It's very satisfying to volunteer at a project when a 12 year old girl takes home a handout on raising butterflies and come back the next year and proudly tells you "I followed the directions in your handout and I raised 10 Monarchs this year." Volunteering is pretty neat, isn't it?

Heritage Garden @ the Milwaukee Co. Zoo

by MGV Susan McGrath

The Heritage Garden located in the Northwestern Mutual Family Farm is a vegetable garden presenting distinct ethnic groups. Four garden beds demonstrate traditional crops, reminding everyone of their rich cultural diversity. Each year, the plant selection and garden layout changes. Recipes are available for ethnic dishes.

Zoo Ala Carte is our next big event (August 14th - August 17th). Tours and extension publications will be given by MGVs. We also staff Senior Celebration (August 29th) and Family Farm Weekend (September 6th and 7th).

The Heritage garden contains a selection of back yard fruits, including trees and berries. Built into a hillside, there is a rock garden filled with perennials. Another feature is the fencing. Each vegetable bed uses a different style of fencing to keep out small critters. Peacocks and chipmunks are always a challenge - it's a Zoo.