

WIMGA



March 2021

WISCONSIN MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION
Serving its members since 1992

WISCONSIN MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION

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WIMGA Vision - The Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association will be the collective voice for the local Master Gardener Associations and individual members in active support for their horticultural projects and services; build networks to enhance outreach, share ideas and promote projects; and help extend University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension's educational role to the public.

President's Message

Greetings Fellow WIMGA Members,

Kudos to all!!! You have magnificently stepped up with wonderful and creative ways to continue to benefit our communities even with the immense stress of the pandemic magnified by the numerous changes to the Master Gardener Program both in short and long term. We are truly amazing, resilient and determined!!! Each of you are valuable. As WIMGA moves forward in these challenging times we will continue to do what we can to support you.

Here is what is currently happening. At our most recent WIMGA board meeting, I was elected along with our new Vice President, Hali Dessecker. Secretary Diane Kachel and Treasurer Byron Hacker were reelected. Thanks to our outgoing President, Becky Guzman for her service.

Our entire board is delighted to announce and extends a warm welcome to Lincoln County Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association who has joined us. Reminder to associations that WIMGA dues are to be paid by March 1st and should be submitted to our treasurer along with members list and independent members should submit directly to him. All WIMGA associations are being required by the UW -Division of Extension to have legal status by the end of 2021. Thanks to our secretary, Diane Kachel and treasurer, Byron Hacker who worked long and hard to put together information on how to do this and which has been sent out to all district representatives.

Sincerely, *Jackie Shaffer*, WIMGA President

WIMGA Board Member-At-Large Elections

Are you interested in becoming more involved with WIMGA outside your own local association? We are looking for candidates for At-Large Directors on the State WIMGA Board. The At-Large Directors represent **all** MGVs in the state (not just their own association). They are expected to attend the six Board meetings per year (most are by Zoom) and serve on WIMGA committees. Elections are held every year to select one Wisconsin MGV to serve a three-year term. Three of the 15 Directors are At-Large; the remaining 12 are selected from the Local Reps in each of the six Districts.

Due to a Covid-19 haze, elections did not take place in 2020. Currently, Marilyn Gorham's term expired in 2020 and Janet Mangold's is expiring in 2021. Both MGVs are willing to run for a second term. The Board is now soliciting additional nominations for both positions. Marilyn's position will be for only two years to keep the position on track with by-laws.

Only certified MGVs are eligible. Nominees must submit a short bio (by email) to President Jackie Shaffer at jackieshaffer54982@outlook.com by **March 30** to be included on the ballot that will be published in the next newsletter.

WIMGA MEMBER DUES

Note the change in the Due Date due to the updated By-laws passed in December: WIMGA dues are \$5 per person. It is the responsibility of each Local Association's Treasurer to assure dues are paid by **March 1** of each year and sent to the WIMGA Treasurer along with a list of current paid members, including address and email for each member. MGVs not affiliated with a local association may send their dues directly to the WIMGA Treasurer.

WIMGA Treasurer
N4511 Hwy 57
Chilton, WI 53014

Contact wimga.treasurer@gmail.com for more information.

WIMGA Educational Grants

WIMGA awards several grants annually to MG associations to aid in their efforts of community education. Applications for each of the three levels of funding are due by October 1 (postmark date) of each year. Electronic submissions will not be accepted. Each association that receives a grant will be responsible for submitting a written report about how the grant was used. The progress report may be submitted electronically to the WIMGA Finance Committee Chairman by July 31 of the following year.

In 2020, \$8,750 in grants were awarded to associations and \$8,850 has been budgeted for 2021. For a list of grant award winners, please go to page 8. Also, more information on criteria for Grant Applications can be found on our website wimga.org/grants.



Inspired by Nature: Art Through the Eyes of Master Gardeners

Submitted by Mary Gruhl, President of Ashland/Bayfield County MGVs

In 2017-2018, the members had an art show at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center (NGLVC) titled Inspired by Nature: Art Through the Eyes of Master Gardeners.

This effort was spearheaded by Patra Holter and Jan Wise right after they completed the Master Gardeners Certification course. Both Patra and Jan are well known artists and avid gardeners. Knowing that they needed a project, they thought it would be fun to have an art show celebrating both the art inspired by their gardens and somehow interweave the science they learned during the course.



They approached the NGLVC to see if they would sponsor a show. With a thumbs up from Susan Nelson, Interpretive Services Specialist for NGLVC and an Ashland/Bayfield MGV and Linda Mittlestadt, Wisconsin Historical Society Archivist. Together, Susan and Linda approve and oversee preparing titles and hanging shows at the center. The next step was to present it to the Ashland/Bayfield County Master Gardener group.



Twelve of the members immediately agreed to submit some of their art for the show. And a date was set for a show beginning November 6, 2017 lasting until May 30, 2018 at which point the show was moved to the Washburn Cultural Center for an additional show from June 1 through June 30, 2018.

Master Gardeners contributing to the show

include: Peggy Burkman, Gayle Chatfield, Ann Christensen, Don Christensen, Maureen Dodge, Ursula Garrison, Mary Gruhl, Patra Holter, Donna Lanni, Susan Nelson, Sandy Rau and Jan Wise.

Art submitted by artists included pressed flowers, photographs, ceramics and sculptures done in

wood, cement and metal. Also featured were watercolor and oil paintings, weaving and lithographs,





Bargas Trail Quilt & Ash Basket

One quilt representing the woods and shorelines and one representing Bishop Frederic Baraga's travel through Lake Superior region were on display. Together, these art pieces reflected the beauty of the surrounding area while educating viewers of the local ecology.

When Patra Holter, MGV, was interviewed about the show, she said, "Part of the reason why I thought this would be a good idea, is to me, gardening is an art form in itself as well as a scientific form." Another

quote from Patra, "Part of the show and part of what master gardening is all about is educating the public." She also said, "Many people don't realize that gardens are natural habitats. They think everything has to be manicured and made to look real nice with no consideration for wildlife."

A Master Gardener's focus is not only to plant flowers, but rather to design a garden that is multilayered inviting all sorts of pollinators and providing food for many types of insects and birds. The joy comes in celebrating the diversity and seeing one's garden come alive.



Woodcarvings of a saw-whet owl, rose-breasted grosbeak, Great blue heron and blue-winged teal.



CARING FOR YOUR GARDEN TOOLS

By Nancy Jahnel

Now is the Time:

Even if you own top notch gardening tools, you know that they need to be cleaned and sharpened regularly to perform their best. Sharp tools make cleaner cuts and will allow plants to heal faster plus it saves energy and time. The old saying: 'work smarter not faster' applies. Now that we well are into Winter, put aside those gardening seed catalogues and take the time to get your tools ready for the upcoming season.

A Good Cleaning:

Hopefully you cleaned the dirt and 'stickies' off your tools throughout the gardening season. You want to prevent the spread of soil-borne diseases and weeds during the gardening season but your annual cleaning should be even more thorough. Anything left on tools during winter storage will hold moisture and cause the spread of rust. UGH!!

Get out your wire brush and scour away any accumulated rust and dirt from all the metal parts. Also sand away stubborn rust on pruners and loppers with fine steel wool and use medium-grit sandpaper on larger tools. If you have a large amount of rust on your tools, you can use an electric drill with a wire brush attachment. (Remember to follow safety precautions such as wearing safety goggles and gloves while using the electric drill, wire brush or steel wool.) To remove sticky sap, use a solvent such as turpentine or Break Free CLP, a synthetic oil containing solvent. Some people use old motor oil from their car or lawnmower, but it contains petrochemicals and small bits of metal shavings and should not be used.

Time to Get Sharp:

Your tools may be sparkling clean but now work on getting those edges sharp. When sharpening, try to maintain the original factory bevel or angle. If the blade is beveled on only one side, as with bypass pruners, then sharpen only that side. File the flat side of the blade only to remove burrs (rough ridges of metal) caused by the sharpening process. Use either a whetstone or a file as a sharpening device, depending on the tool you're sharpening.

You should use a whetstone (also called honing stone), which produces a very sharp cutting edge for your pruners. Start by applying a few drops of oil or water to the whetstone, depending on the type of stone you're using. The liquid carries away metal filings and lubricates the surfaces, making it possible to get a nice, very sharp edge. With the beveled side of the blade against the stone, rub the sharp edge of the blade toward the stone in a curved motion, as if you were trying to shave off a thin slice from the stone. If the blade has any nicks, use an 8-inch-long fine-grit file to remove them; a medium-grit file may be needed to remove large or numerous nicks.



To sharpen larger garden tools such as shears, loppers, shovels, spades and hoes, use a fine and medium grit file instead of a whetstone. For your safety when you are working with a file be sure to stabilize the blades you're sharpening in a vise or against a solid surface to avoid injury and ensure an even and correctly angled stroke of the file.

(Remember those goggles as well.) Always push the file across the blade in a motion away from your body and moving diagonally. The direction of the diagonal depends on what type of file you're using; the objective is to have the cutting teeth on the file biting into the metal on the tool. Most mill files are made for right-handed people, and the serrations are angled so they will grip the steel only when pushed in a left-to-right, forward motion. Do not use oil when sharpening with a file; metal filings will accumulate and clog the file's serrations.

Different Types of Blades:

Bypass pruners or loppers work like your scissors, except that the blades are slightly curved to hold a stem or branch in place.

Sharpen only the beveled side of the cutting blade and not the flat side of the cutting blade. Anvil pruners and loppers have a cutting blade that comes down on an anvil, cutting a stem as if it were laid on a chopping block. The cutting edge is beveled on both sides,

like some knife blades. Be sure you sharpen both sides of the cutting blade from the



base of the blade to the tip. Take care not to remove too much metal; you want to retain the original shape of the blade so it will meet the anvil completely.

Hedge shears, like bypass pruners, also work like scissors; the cutting blade is beveled on the inside edge. Lock long and somewhat unwieldy

blades like these into a vise to ensure a smooth, even stroke of the file. Sharpen the cutting blade with a medium-grit file, running it from the bottom of the blade to the tip. Put a fine finish on the blade by switching to a fine mill file. File the outside of the cutting blade and the opposing blade lightly to remove any nicks or burrs.

Shovels, spades and hoes hold up best with blunt cutting edges. Go at them with a medium-grit file. It will not remove too much metal or put too fine an edge on them but can work out the nicks and chips and make a straight bevel. Brace the tool against a solid surface (or fasten it into a vise) and push the file forward along the tool's cutting edge, in one diagonal direction--from left to right, or vice versa, depending on the type of file you're using--so the file is gripping the steel. For all three tools, smooth sharp edges and remove burrs with a fine-grit file or small whetstone.

Finish the Job:

Once your tools are clean and sharp, they're just about ready for storage. A few more steps at this stage can make sure that your tools will retain their sheen through the winter months. Clean wood handles with a stiff-bristled brush, and smooth down nicks and splinters with medium-grit sandpaper. Coat wooden handles with boiled linseed oil to help preserve them and prevent splintering and breaking. Sand off the factory varnish and wipe on boiled linseed oil with a cloth; apply several light coats, letting the oil soak in after each application. Wipe off any excess with a dry cloth.

If the plastic handles on your tools are tearing or wearing thin, you can remove the coating (carefully) with a craft knife and replace it with a liquid or spray plastic coating. It's sold at hardware stores under the name Plastidip.



Dip or spray the handles and clamp a metal portion of the tool lightly into a vise and let dry. Once the handles are in good shape, reassemble your tools. Oil the bolts and adjust them so the blades are tight enough to provide a strong, clean cut. Lubricate all metal blades and the heads of shovels, hoes, and rakes with a light machine oil or a synthetic oil such as Break Free CLP.

Clean, sharp, and properly coated, your tools are now ready for storage. Store them in a dry place away from heat and moisture. Hanging tools is an effective way to keep moisture at bay. Small tools such as pruners will do fine either hung or stored in canvas gardening bags. When spring comes around, your tools ready to do the job.

*Information sources used for this article :Wisconsin Extension Juneau County Article #XHT1214
The National Gardening Association*

INDIVIDUAL BY INDIVIDUAL, FOOD DONATIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

By Sandy Vold

“Even though we don't see the massive lines of cars waiting at food banks, we know we have a vulnerable population in our county. Food pantries are desperate for supplies, and this is an opportunity for us, as Master Gardeners, to provide help in the coming year.”

With this statement, Crawford County MG, Cheryl Frazier, introduced a plan which encourages individual gardeners to contribute to food pantries with food grown in their own gardens. Crawford County MGs have no community garden and MGs in other counties might also be able to use this approach.

Frazier proposed that all interested MGs simply add an extra row or a few extra plants to their own gardens. When the food is ready, they can harvest, clean and donate that extra produce to a nearby food pantry, whether it be a church, a community center or other location. Participants are asked to keep track of their time and record the weight of the produce for reporting.

She suggested a goal of 500 pounds for the group, reminding people that there would no longer be a need “to drop your extra zucchini on your neighbor’s porch in the middle of the night.” She also suggested that MGs



without vegetable gardens might consider growing and donating extra flowers to places such as nursing homes, senior centers and senior housing. Cut flowers could be placed in disposable jars or other recyclable containers for delivery. Before delivering the flowers or produce, gardeners should contact the site to learn about needs, delivery procedures and any other regulations.



Note: Don't have a food pantry near you? Consider other options such as senior housing or rent-assisted housing. I have a contact at a rent-assisted complex and produce is placed in the community room so people can help themselves. A nursing home near me loves deliveries of fresh, ripe tomatoes to serve to residents.

WIMGA Educational Grants – Awarded 2020

The WIMGA Finance Committee awarded 29 grants in 2020 for \$8,750. All Educational Grants that were applied for were awarded. There were 16 grant applications in the \$400 category, and only 7 applications in the \$250 category – leaving a surplus of \$500, therefore all grants were awarded in the \$400 category.

Bluff Country	\$100	Gardening Fair Supplies – Children’s Education
	\$250	Water Conservation Project-LaCrosse Riverside Park
	\$400	Website Design with New Company
Calumet Co.	\$100	Gardening Series presentation Supplies
	\$250	Horticultural Periodicals for
	\$400	Brillion, Chilton, New Holstein Libraries
Crawford Co.	\$400	Educational Program Speakers for MG’s and Public
Dodge Co.	\$400	Kids in the Garden Supplies
Door Co	\$400	Youth MG tools, supplies – 4 programs
Grant Co.	\$400	Seed Library Supplies
	\$100	Fairgrounds Flower Beds
	\$250	Root Box at Katie’s Garden
	\$400	Annual Garden Conference
Jefferson Co.	\$100	4th Grade Garden Science Class Supplies
	\$400	Landscaping at Fort Atkinson Police Dept.
Marquette Co.	\$400	Nature Trail Supplies and Equipment
North Central WI MG	\$400	Supplies for 1 Acre Demo Shade Garden
North Country MG	\$400	Sensory Garden at Spooner Research Station
Northern Lights	\$400	Educational Signs, Exhibits at Demo Garden
Outagamie Co.	\$100	Online classes speaker fees
	\$250	Annual Garden Walk
	\$400	Annual Garden Conference on 4-10-21
Range MG	\$400	Fence replacement at Norrie Community Garden
Sauk Co.	\$400	Improve Baraboo Community Gardens
Washington Co.	\$100	MG Info materials at Library Information Table
	\$250	Plants for several gardens
	\$400	Monthly Speakers - Zoom
Winnebago Co.	\$250	Garden Improvements at Miravida Living Center
	\$400	Extension of Garden at Parkview Health Center
Wood Co.	\$250	Pro Zoom Account
		Educational Resources for Fair & Festivals



The mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, joy, set it free!

Helen Keller The Story of My Life-1902

Beating the Covid Blues Or Without Garden Expo, Would Spring Really Come?

By Sandy Vold

Hats off to all the people who worked to put together the 2021 Virtual Garden Expo! Oh, I missed the experience of actually being there, choosing which sessions I most wanted to attend, meeting with other master gardeners, and strolling up and down the aisles of vendors and other exhibitors. However, since we couldn't do that this year, the virtual show was a wonderful alternative and a harbinger of spring after a long, cold stretch of winter.

Since I do not have decent internet access which allows me to stream, I had given up hope of watching any of this year's virtual Garden Expo. Thankfully, a fellow MG invited me to watch at her house on Saturday. I watched three presentations and the hour and a half question and answer session.

I watched the Indigenous Agriculture presentation on how members of the Oneida Nation are planting corn using traditional methods which benefit the soil. I oohed and aahed over Mark Dwyer's "Sensational Seasonal Plants," and decided I absolutely had

to have 'Lizard' celosia, with glossy, dark maroon foliage; 'Solar Power' sweet potato vines which are good climbers; and a couple colors of the new impatiens Beacon series, which is resistant to mildew. As I watched the session on growing potatoes, I was reminded of being a small child on the farm in North Dakota, watching as, every spring, my father and grandfather would gather around a big bin of last year's potatoes, cutting them into usable chunks for planting.

I really liked the way the Question-and-Answer period was handled. There must have been six or eight experts present. After a designated expert answered a question, others were able to add their own experiences as well, providing multiple suggestions and perspectives.

I would still prefer to attend in person, and perhaps that will be possible by next February, but this particular expo had certain advantages. There was no need to search for seating; I did not have to arrive early to get a good seat; there was no obstructed vision and no worry about being excluded from a session that was already filled. The drawback was a lack of choice in sessions, but had I tuned in the second day, I would have been able to attend several more sessions.

The general question and answer period was, I thought, a great addition to the expo, with a whole variety of experts available at one time.

Unfortunately, I didn't have time to watch the interactive vendor tour, or the virtual garden tours. I'm sure they, too would have increased my enthusiasm for the coming gardening year. For those who weren't able to tune in to the expo, the presentations were recorded and can be accessed at wigardenexpo.com.



Tips for Indoor Seed Starting

By: Sadie Zobel

I've been starting seeds indoors for the past 10 years or so with varying degrees of success. Last year was the first year I felt I really nailed it. I think it was the extra time I had to dedicate to the proper care and attention needed. Learn from my mistakes. Here are a few tips you can follow to increase your chances to successfully start seeds indoors.



Be Prepared

- **Order seeds early.** Remember the long delay in shipping times to receive seeds from catalogs last year? Lots of people got into gardening due to stay at home orders, and I'd venture to say that will be the case again this spring. Take all those seed catalogs you've received, start planning, and get ordering!
- **Read and follow directions on the seed packet.** This will save you a lot of uncertainty. Some seeds germinate within a few days. Others can take more than a week. Pay attention to the transplant recommendations and don't start them too early indoors. Sowing seeds too early may result in tall, weak, spindly plants which do not perform well in the garden. I start my tomato and pepper seeds earlier than my zucchini seeds, for example.
- **Ensure you've got enough heat for germination.** Most seeds germinate at temperatures higher than we keep our homes at here in Wisconsin – especially at night. Tomato seeds, for example, have an optimum germination temperature of 80 degrees. I use a heating mat under my seed trays to warm the soil and speed germination. After seeds have sprouted, turn it off and remove it. If you don't have a heating mat, you can put the tray on top of your fridge until you start to see the seeds start to peek up through your potting medium.
- **Ensure you have enough light for seedlings.** One of the biggest mistakes made when starting seeds indoors is insufficient light levels. This often leads to spindly or "leggy" seedlings. Most seeds need bright light after germination. Ideally, place your seed trays in a bright south-facing window and combine with use of a plant grow light. I use lights positioned about 4-6" above the top of the seedling and keep them on for 14 hours a day.
- **Add a fan.** This year I finally added a fan to my setup and guess what? My plant stems were sturdier and stronger. I used a small desk fan set on low on my seedlings for about an hour a day. If you don't have a fan, I recommend simply running your hand over the seedlings once a day. Think of it as a mini massage for your plants.



Be Resourceful

- **Pre-germination.** Oftentimes I won't use a full pack of seeds in a season. Since germination rates decrease year over year, I sprout seeds before planting in containers so I can increase my chances for success. I lay seeds between a moist paper towel in a reusable Ziploc bag and keep it in on the counter. Depending on the seeds, usually within a few days, roots begin to show and you can use these to transplant into your potting medium.
- **Recycle or reuse materials.** I try to minimize my waste so I reuse the same materials/containers year after year (after properly sterilizing to minimize any disease transfer). You can also use containers you might have around the house. A rotisserie chicken container can easily be reimagined as a mini greenhouse. Yogurt containers, milk jugs, etc. are all materials you can use to start your seeds indoors.



Be Patient

- **Germination rates differ.** Seed germination can happen relatively quickly (like marigolds or anything in the cabbage family) or it can take awhile (especially for tomatoes and peppers). Don't give up too soon! If your seeds aren't germinating, ensure that you've provided the right temperature, light, water, and time requirements.
- **Harden off seedlings before transplanting outdoors.** Your seedlings are getting big and the last frost date has come and gone. You can finally put those plants in the garden, right? Wrong! You don't want all your hard work to be destroyed overnight (which happened to me one year). Your plants have been grown in perfect conditions; you need to prepare them to be outside in the elements. At least 1-2 weeks before I want to plant outdoors, I start moving my plants outdoors to a shady and protected location for a short time period. Over time I'll gradually move them into the sun and keep them outside longer. Be careful on days it's extra windy, sunny or cooler. Moving in and out might seem like a big effort, but trust me, it will worth it for healthy plants.

Be Forgiving

Gardening is meant to be fun and a stress reliever – not a source of stress. I've fallen



victim to being disappointed that my seedlings didn't mature the way I wanted them too. But I've learned that if you don't succeed, that's what garden stores, farmers markets and plant sales are for. Keep a journal of where you think you might have gone wrong, and make the proper improvements next season.

Happy growing!

Plan, Plant and Create a Beautiful Landscape this Spring

By Melinda Myers

Spring is a time of renewal that often includes rejuvenating existing landscapes with minor or major changes. It's also the time you may be inundated with questions from those planning to do their own renovations. Help them be successful, spend wisely and stay safe with a bit of planning before their first trip to the garden center.

Start with a plan. Make a sketch of the existing landscape including planting beds, permanent plants and structures. A plan helps save you time and money and avoid costly mistakes. Plus, it's much easier to move plants and structures drawn on paper than digging or disassembling them once placed in the landscape.

Gather ideas and get the whole family involved in the process. Identify spaces for the improvements and plantings you would like to make. Consider functional features as well as aesthetic improvements. Locate spaces for managing yard waste, play, entertaining, and storage. Mark these in your landscape sketch. Once you are happy with the placement of these and permanent features like patios, fire pits, and garden beds, look for areas that need added color at various times of the year.

Make your landscape shine throughout the year with the help of plants suited to the growing conditions. Select plants that provide several seasons of beauty with flowers, fruit, fall color or form. Consider those that attract birds and butterflies for additional color and motion in your gardens. Don't forget about winter. Include ornamental grasses with attractive seed heads that sway in the wind, perennials with seeds for the birds and trees and shrubs with colorful bark.



Evaluate the views you need to screen and those you want to preserve. Create privacy with hedges, tall perennials, vines trained on trellises, and structures. Leave openings so you can enjoy the pleasing views you want to preserve.

Place larger permanent plants like trees and shrubs first, making sure to allow sufficient space for the plants to reach their mature size. Next add perennials and annual flowers. These make great placeholders, providing color and greenery until the larger plants reach full size. As the trees and shrubs grow, you'll need fewer annual plants and can move perennials to a new garden bed.

Always call Diggers Hotline at 811 or file a request online at DiggersHotline.com at least 3 business days before putting the first shovel in the ground. And remind others to do the same. Diggers will contact all the appropriate companies who will mark the location of their underground utilities in the designated work area. It's a free service and reduces the risk and inconvenience of accidentally knocking out power, cable or other utilities while creating a beautiful landscape.

This important step is often overlooked so as a reminder April has been declared National Safe Digging month. A 2020 survey conducted by a third-party research firm for Common Ground Alliance (CGA) found only 50 percent of those planning a project



involving digging were aware of this service. We need your help increasing awareness and use of Diggers Hotline now, during April Safe Digging Month and throughout the landscaping season.

Look up to check for overhead utilities and remind others to do the same. Avoid plants that can eventually grow into the wires or structures that may interfere with utilities and power transmission, creating a real hazard. Adjust designs to avoid conflict with

both overhead and underground utilities.

Check your design and look for ways to lower maintenance requirements. Design planting beds with gentle curves, avoid narrow angles and allow easy access for mowing the surrounding lawn. Make sure you can easily reach all plants within the beds. Include steppers or pathways in larger beds, space between fences and back of plantings and easy access between different spaces within the garden.

Add color, sparkle, and personality to the landscape with containers, tabletop or wall mounted fountains, birdbaths, garden art and seasonal décor. You can change these out yearly or with each season as desired.

Make this a fun, productive, and safe start to the gardening season for you and those gardeners you advise. Starting with a plan and contacting Diggers Hotline before installing any landscape project, large or small, are the first steps to success.

Melinda Myers is the author of numerous books, including Small Space Gardening and Minnesota & Wisconsin Month-By-Month Gardening. She hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series and the nationally syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment TV & radio program. Myers' web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.



NJ'S BITS AND BOBS:

Yikes....we are starting our THIRD month of 2021. As we all reflect on this new year (per the Chinese, the year of the OX), we can feel mother earth slumber beneath her blanket of snow. We are all thumbing through those seed catalogues and watching countless hours of Zoom online education classes.

After reading about the master gardener volunteers who doggedly kept working away volunteering at many places and seeing the numbers published in January. . . I feel such a strong feeling of pride at knowing such fine souls. I have to repeat the top volunteers here in this note as I dream of having a big parade with these volunteers riding in convertibles, waving to all of us. Keep up the good work just sounds too trite. What can you say about these selfless people? Here again are the top workers and I will feature the next group of volunteers next month. Do not think your efforts go unnoticed.

5000 HOURS !!!	
Waukesha	Patty Witt
Wood	Barb Herreid
2500 HOURS !!!	
Crawford	Julie Hazen
Oneida	Diane Dei Rossi
Oneida	Janice Sarkauskas
1000 HOURS !!!	
Chippewa	Laura Kasdorf
Dane	Mary Pinkerton
Dane	Monique Warnke
Fond du Lac	Alice Dann
Fond du Lac	Dona McEssey
Green	Paul Roemer
Jefferson	Shirley Brown
Juneau	Margarete Hummelbeck

1000 HOURS !!!	
Kenosha	Margaret Pisani
Kenosha	Nancy Jahnel-Barnes
Kewaunee	Sue Hepp
Kewaunee	Jane Paplham
Marinette	Susan Bork
Milwaukee	Gail Morgan
Outagamie	Karen Peckham
Ozaukee	Jean Schanen
Ozaukee	Heidi Janous
Ozaukee	Sue Kinas
Racine	Sue Helland
Sauk	Gladys Proctor
Walworth	Sherry Mathews
Walworth	Judith Staponkus
Waupaca	Debbie Krogwold

Even if you did not reach a new milestone, know that your community and your fellow gardeners respect every hour that you volunteer.

Gardening of the Hohokam

By Carolyn Swanberg, Barron County Master Gardener Volunteer

I first traveled to Arizona's Sonoran Desert expecting nothing more than sandy dirt for miles. Surprisingly, I found an extremely interesting, colorful and rather weird ecosystem filled with resourceful plants and animals that have developed adaptations to survive their harsh environment. The Arizona Sonoran Desert is one of the hottest and driest regions on the North American continent. Summer temperatures commonly climb above 100°F, and fewer than 12 inches of rainfall is recorded in a typical year. There is normally a summer and winter rainy season with months in between with no rain at all.



The Sonoran Desert is not only one of the harshest areas of the world, it is the most fragile. The desert soils are extremely unusual and vary tremendously in texture; many are sandy and gravelly; others rock hard and limy. Some even contain layers of sticky clay or are covered with a layer of tightly interlocked small stones that fit together like a mosaic and are covered with dark shiny rock varnish. In addition, the desert soil is extremely “old” and nutrient deficient, thus decaying plant and animal carcasses are extremely important. Also, with the lack of water and things for animals to eat, the plants are protected with a covering of thick flesh with spines that are usually long and needle-like.

Considering this, it is amazing the ancient Hohokam natives that lived in the Phoenix/Mesa area were accomplished farmers. They terraced the land as needed and farmed extensively. They may have arrived in the area as early as 2000 BC and appear to have strong ties with Meso-America, especially Mexico. The Hohokam brought crops with them that were hybridized in Meso-America, including squash, corn, zucchini and beans. Sometimes they grew tobacco, amaranth, and also cotton.

Two huge problems with gardening at that location were water and soil fertility. To supply water to their gardens, the Hohokam dug over 700 miles of irrigation canals from the Salt and Gila Rivers that serviced more than 100,000 acres of mostly arid desert land. It was one of the largest and most sophisticated irrigation networks ever created using preindustrial technology - in other words, dug by hand. It is considered to be the largest prehistoric irrigation system in the New World and the oldest in the United States.



Archeological Canal Excavation

For their time, the Hohokam's were the only native culture that relied on irrigation to grow crops. They range from massive in size to small rows to water the individual crops. One large section located in present day Mesa, AZ was 45 Ft wide and 15 feet deep. The city is using it and other Hohokam canals as part of its modern water system.

The ancient canals averaged about 8 to 12 miles long, although, some of the ancient canals watered fields 20 miles away from the rivers. The canals were largest at the headwaters and a partial dam was used to force water into the canal from the river with enough force to flow to the farm fields. They tapered at a down-hill drop of 1 to 2 feet per mile to deliver the water to the fields. If the canal filled with silt, they simply abandoned it and made a new one next to the old one.

As far as fertilizer is concerned, Archeologists think the Hohokam did not fertilize their fields and it's unlikely they practiced crop rotation or let the land lay fallow. The irrigation systems provided a sustainable amount nutrient value in the fertile sediment carried in the floodwaters. They would shovel the silt that settled into the canals and place it on the planting rows. In addition, burning when initially clearing the field added nutrients.

The canals required the organization and labor of thousands of people to build, maintain and use. Farmers had to maintain the fields, open and close the irrigation gates at the proper time, and had to protect the crops from rabbits, birds, and other animals.

Remember every native plant that grows in Arizona tends to have sharp, nasty spines for protection. Corn, beans, squash, zucchini and the few other crops the Hohokam grew are spineless so they have absolutely no protection against thirsty, hungry animals. To help protect their helpless, yummy gardens, the ancient Hohokam may have used a desert plant named Ocotillo, which is also called a living fence. You can cut off the stems of this plant and force them into moist soil. The stems will regrow on the original plant as well as root where they are planted. They can sit in the ground for weeks, months, and even



years and simply look dead. Then suddenly sprout tiny, round leaves when it rains. Regardless of looking dead or alive, they make tall, spiny fences to help discourage animals.

The Ocotillo is semi-succulent and is actually more closely related to blueberries than cactus. They can grow to 20 feet and live about as long as a human. They have long, cane-like unbranched spiny stems that grow from a short trunk. Small two-inch leaves grow from the stems if there is enough moisture. When there is not, the leaves drop off and the plant photosynthesizes from the stems. Dense clusters of red, tubular flowers bloom from the tips from March to June.

The blooming coincides with the northern migration of the hummingbirds and are a more reliable nectar source than many of the other spring flowering plants around the desert. Hummingbirds love them!



Upcoming Events

Several opportunities for virtual learning are taking place in the coming months. Please visit our website, www.wimga.org for updates under the Conferences tab.

Growing Together

Master Gardener Associations from Barron, Chippewa, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pierce and St. Croix counties are collaborating to host “Growing Together” - Western Wisconsin 2021 Spring Garden Seminar. **March 6** will feature Dr. Laura G Jull on Planting Trees and Shrubs and **March 13** will be a virtual tour of wildflowers with Kelly Povo and Phyllis Root. As a continuation of presentations started in February, the registration fee of \$10 includes all four presentations. Registration at EauClaireMasterGardeners.org. Questions can be directed to Andy Heren at UW– Extension at 715 839 4712 or andy.heren@co.eau-claire.wi.us.

SPRING INTO GARDENING MARCH 2021 VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS

Register online at www.go.wisc.edu/springintogardening

Every Saturday in March – March 6th 13th 20th 27th

Two sessions per day – 9:30 am to 11:45 am **Session Topics**

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Seed starting 101 | 5. Trees and Shrubs for pollinators |
| 2. Top 10 annuals for containers | 6. Dwarf fruits and berries for home gardeners |
| 3. Sustainable lawn care | 7. No till gardening techniques |
| 4. New trends in Perennial Plant Varieties | 8. New, improved shrubs for 2021 |

LET'S GET GREEN AND GROWING 2021

March 20, 2021

Brought to you by the Columbia County Master Gardener Volunteers 9:00AM-1:30pm

FREE OF CHARGE Online Conference - Topics

Creating a Garden of Four Season Interest

Daylilies - The Perfect Perennial

Addressing Invasive Species with Citizen Science

Minor Fruits - Major Impact

For more information and to register: Columbia County Extension



Grant County Master Gardeners invite you to our first virtual **Beat the Winter Blues!**

Sessions are free and open to all. Register by calling Grant Co. Extension office

(608)723-2125 or email: lori.vesperman@wisc.edu.

March 25, 2021 – Christopher & Emily Appelman, “Web of Life”

Feeding their community with healthy, safe food in an environmentally sustainable way is the mission of Stone Hollow Gardens & Shroomery. Bioremediation and Mycoremediation builds nutrient rich soil and grows nutrient dense foods. The Appelman family homestead is located in the Midwest Driftless Region next to the Little Maquoketa River. www.stonehollowgardens.com

Zoom link will be sent, via email, to registered participants. Live sessions 6:30-7:30pm. For information about Grant County Master Gardener Association, visit our [website](#).

We love your WIMGA projects, horticulture articles and grant ideas. **Send us your stories and pictures.** Some things to note about your WIMGA projects: the number of volunteers and hours spent, contribution to the community whether in education or with place-making and collaboration with UW-Extension.

Articles and ideas for the Newsletter may be submitted to our editors, Nancy Jahnell-Barnes at westcoasternancy@gmail.com or Hali Dessecker at halirenee@yahoo.com.

March 2021 Newsletter

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The Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association



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Visit the WIMGA Website at <http://www.wimqa.org/>