

# WIMGA



January 2022

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. The opinions reflected in this publication are expressions from individual master gardeners or associations and not necessarily the view point of the UW-Madison Department of Extension Master Gardener Program Office.

### Happy New Year!

*Marilyn Gorham, St Croix Valley MGV*

As 2022 arrives, I look forward with hope and anticipation. While subzero temperatures will ring in my New Year, I know that spring is coming closer with each day. My new garden catalogs are coming, a sure sign of Spring. I can already see the position of the sun is changing and the days are getting longer.

One certainty in 2022 are the changes to the Master Gardener Program, some of which are still in the planning stage. Your completion of Onboarding Lite and acceptance of the new Terms and Conditions of the Master Gardener Program are very important changes for all Master Gardeners. **Both need to be completed before you can volunteer in 2022.** The cold days of January offer a perfect time to do these tasks and with completion of Onboarding Lite, you can record 5 continuing education hours. You can be halfway to your education requirement! [For More Information.](#)

WIMGA is continuing conversations with Program Office Leadership, Jay Dampier, Extension Horticulture Program Manager, and Kimberly Miller, Program Coordinator. This partnership is highly valued by WIMGA as we all try to make the transitions to the Program changes go as smoothly as possible. Answers to the WIMGA related questions resulting from the changes are in final review and will be posted to the WIMGA website in early January. Please continue to submit any questions you have to the Program Office and/or to WIMGA. They are important to hear.

Please join me in looking toward this New Year with hope and anticipation!

*Marilyn Gorham, WIMGA President*



## Can You Talk?

*Becky Gutzman, Columbia MGV*

Well, of course we all talk...to our family, to our friends, and to other gardeners! We love chatting about what we care about, and for us gardeners, that includes the plants we love, the problems we've tackled in our gardens, and new techniques we're trying for planting, weeding or maintaining our gardens.

Master Gardener Volunteers are a wealth of information that others want to know. Why not pick a topic that you really love, and develop it into a presentation to share with other Master Gardener friends? You may start out by offering to share it with your local association at a monthly meeting, or call your local library to see if they would like to have you give a talk at the library (I bet they will say yes!)

Your talk could be a demonstration of something you know how to do well, using props and actual supplies to show what you are doing, such as seed starting, or pruning techniques. Some topics could be done best by bringing supplies and having listeners create their own along with you, such as making seed tapes. Or you might choose to create presentations using pictures and text, such as PowerPoint, or Google slides. Think about what you want to share, and what you really want your audience to get out of your talk. Here's a tried-and-true way of organizing your talk:



1. Tell them what you're going to tell them. (Introduce the topic; share why it's important, why they'll benefit, and how you know this information.)
2. Tell them! (Share your information, including the resources you have used; make it interesting; share your personal experience; make it real!)
3. Tell them what you told them. (Review your major points, or important things they need to remember.)

Finally, consider sharing your talk with other Master Gardeners! The WIMGA Speakers Bureau is in need of more topics and speakers to include. During these COVID times, many groups have been meeting virtually, and are looking for speakers who are willing to present in an online format, such as Zoom. If you have a PowerPoint presentation, you can share anywhere without driving—that sounds pretty appealing during Wisconsin winters! The Speakers Bureau is found under “Resources” on the website, and you can fill out the form there to sign up. You'll include your contact information as well as a title and description of your talk. Be sure to include if you are willing to present via Zoom.

Thanks for speaking!

## WIMGA MEMBER DUES

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 WIMGA's Treasurer along with a list of current paid members, including email address for each member. The email address ensures members receive notifications from WIMGA including Newsletters. MGVs not affiliated with a local association may send their dues directly to the WIMGA Treasurer.

Byron Hacker, WIMGA Treasurer  
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Contact [wimga.treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:wimga.treasurer@gmail.com) for more information

## What are Holiday Cacti?

Holiday cacti are indeed true cacti, in the same plant family as the giant saguaros of Arizona and our native Wisconsin prickly pears. The origins of holiday cacti are found in the mountainous jungles of Brazil, where they grow as epiphytic plants, with their roots anchoring them to branches high up in forest trees or sometimes growing in shady areas of cliffs or rock outcrops. Because of their rounded and flattened appearance, the stems are often confused for leaves but, like most cactus, there are no true leaves. In nature, the plants are pendant, hanging from their perches on trees or cliffs. Although young plants have an upright form, as they age the ends of the branches tend to sag, giving a very graceful appearance. In age, the basal stems get thickened and woody, helping support the weight of the younger stems and, seasonally, the great profusion of flowers. [Read Full Article](#)



## 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.

The Board is now soliciting nominations for At-Large Director. Only certified MGVs are eligible. Nominees must submit a short bio (by email) to President Marilyn Gorham, [magorham87@gmail.com](mailto:magorham87@gmail.com) by January 31 to be included on the ballot that will be published in the next newsletter.



## A New Journey: Learning the about Wooly Bears

By Michelle Hansen, Washington County MG  
Follow-up to November Article

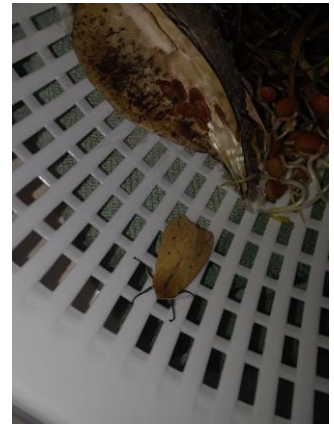
It's in January when I get another call from Erika. We are in the fourth month and I am surprised to find that the Wooly Bears are still alive and well. Erika tells me she was concerned with them because a few nights ago they started acting jittery. The next morning, they were cocoons and there was one cocoon that was smaller. When we did the initial research, we found that the Wooly Bear turns into the Isabella Tiger Moth.



*Erika's Cocoons*

Tiger moths are in the subfamily Arctiinae, within the family Erebidae, a diverse group that includes about 250 species of tiger, underwing, Zale, tussock moths, etc. in North America and many more worldwide (except Antarctica) – Tiger moths are unusual in that they have an organ on their thorax that vibrates to produce ultrasonic sound. They “vocalize” to attract mates and to defend against predators. If you have sound-making ability, you also need “ears,” and those are on the thorax, too. Like tigers, the adults of many species are hairy and sport bold color patches, stripes or patterns (like the striking, arrowhead-shaped Leconte’s Haploa/Colona moth). (UW Milwaukee, 2015) The average lifespan of the Tiger Moth is about two weeks.

So, Erika and I are wondering what will happen to the cocoons and how long will they take to open, if they do at all. Again, in February, I was surprised to hear that one of the cocoons did open and Erika had a Tiger Moth! The smaller of the two cocoons did not open and we thought it may have been underdeveloped. According to literature I found on the Internet, the average time it takes to come out of the cocoon is about 21 days or so. We waited almost a month. So, now Erika was a proud parent of a Tiger Moth but unfortunately it was too cool to let it out and find a mate. (see picture)



In March, the Tiger Moth did pass on, but it had a great home and lived longer than expected at 27 days. The whole journey was 6 months of conversations and learning a life cycle.

After this wonderful experience that I got to be a small part of, I had to meet Erika. So, in May we had lunch together to talk about our experience and what we learned. Not only did we watch the life cycle of a Wooly Bear/Tiger Moth, but I have a new friend.



*Erika and the empty cocoon*

## Barn Owls Back in Wisconsin

*Nancy Jahnel-Barnes, Racine-Kenosha MGV*

In a rare sighting, the first barn owl nest was documented in the state of Wisconsin in more than two decades after a La Crosse resident spotted an owlet in their backyard, according to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The bird has been an uncommon sight in Wisconsin, and was put on the state's endangered species list for a time. The last nest was detected in Grant County in 1999 — until now.



After the owl was spotted, Karla Bloem with the International Owl Center in Houston, Minnesota, was able to use a camera scope to peer into the tree cavity — a common spot for barn owls to nest and roost — and found a pair of barn owls and three owlets. “This is an exciting development for Wisconsin as this nest could have easily gone undetected,” said Ryan Brade, DNR conservation biologist and bird monitoring coordinator.

While this is the first documentation of a nest in more than 20 years, the DNR said, the barn owls themselves have been spotted in Wisconsin and in the upper-midwest more frequently in recent years, and there has been speculation that there may be some nests in southern Wisconsin.

Kathy KasaKaitas, the animal control protection and rescue supervisor with the Humane Society, said she didn't believe the officer at first when they texted about their discovery. “I can't even tell you how excited I was to find out that it was actually a barn owl,” she said. “It's been so many years since they've been spotted in any type of numbers, and when finding out that they were actually correct when I opened the door up; I was very excited at what I was looking at.”

KasaKaitas has been doing wildlife rehabilitation work for 12 years and said helping rehabilitate the barn owl was likely a “once-in-a-lifetime” opportunity because the bird is so rare to spot in the area. The owlet was in OK shape when it was first brought in, she said, and had likely attempted its first flight when falling out of the tree. It had a mix of flight and down feathers, which helped indicate that it was about a month old.

KasaKaitas said she always does fresh research on an animal when it is brought into the shelter, even if they've helped one before, and had already done research on barn owls in the past, saying she found them “fascinating.” The wildlife rehabilitation program typically brings in a mix of baby squirrels, rabbits and other birds of prey such as great horned owls and red-tailed hawks, and already had the right food on hand for the owlet.



The bird was a “pretty ferocious eater,” sometimes eating up to one-and-a-half times its weight in a day. The barn owl is also known as a somewhat aggressive bird of prey, and the owlet would often come feet-first to the door for feedings and spread its wings to look big, KasaKaitas said, calling it “feisty.”

Once the owl was discovered, the Humane Society contacted the DNR to try and identify a safe place to release it once rehabilitated, since at the time there were no known populations in the area. KasaKaitas said it was rare to find the birds in an urban setting. That’s when Bloem’s team came in and was able to find that the backyard was housing the nest all along. “It’s hard to describe how exciting it was to find this nest,” Bloem said.

She said she’s been using passive acoustic monitoring to detect wild barn owls in southeastern Minnesota the last two years and has detected owls at most, but no barn owls have used any of the team’s nest boxes yet. “So, I was beyond ecstatic to see barn owl legs show up on my screen when we had the endoscope in the tree cavity.”

The teams monitored the La Crosse nest using sound to help determine if they were still there, listening for their screeching and begging noises, KasaKaitas said. The owlet was returned to its nest in a healthy condition on October 2, something KasaKaitas said was “very fulfilling and rewarding” to be able to provide the right food source and training for it to be renested with its parents. The owls remained near the nest site at least through the end of October.

The DNR told the Tribune that the homeowner who first spotted the owl could not be publicly identified in order to protect the habitat from unwanted visitors or disturbances, hopeful that the owls will return.

The owls may be appearing more in the area due to warming winters, the DNR said. Though the species is one of the most widespread birds in the world, they appear more often in the south and KasaKaitas said they were driven out of the area partly because of the use of pesticides. “I think this all points to there being more barn owls in Minnesota and Wisconsin than we know about because barn owls are so good at avoiding detection,” Bloem said. “They don’t call much and they are strictly nocturnal, so they are mostly found as road kills, when starving, or a very few have been found nesting.”

If the bird was to become more prevalent in the state with an annual breeding population discovered, it could be placed back on Wisconsin’s endangered and threatened species list, the DNR said. Officials said that residents can help support the barn owl population by reporting observations or possible sightings.

The barn owl has an “iconic” white, heart-shaped face and does not have ear tufts like other owls do, giving a sleeker look on their head. The plumage on their head, back and upper wings are a mix of buff and gray colors and their face, body and underwings are white. The sound of a barn owl can also be distinctive, though still difficult to decipher between other species, and the DNR said they are known for their high-pitched scream.



Their sound is often confused with the “begging” call of a young great horned owl which is much more common in the region, and Brady said in a quote that 99% of barn owl reports turn out to be a horned owl. “If you think you hear a barn owl, try to record the sound with your phone or other device,” Brady said. Sightings can be reported to the Wisconsin eBird website or through the DNR’s rare species online reporting form.

Other ways to support the barn owl include leaving up dead trees when safe to do so, since the birds often nest and roost in their cavities (as well as in abandoned barns and buildings) and refrain from using pesticides and rodenticides, the DNR said.



*Photo: Pamela Dimeler  
Audubon Photography Awards*

## Upcoming Events

Please submit any notices for winter gardening conferences to [news@wimga.org](mailto:news@wimga.org) or [halirenee@yahoo.com](mailto:halirenee@yahoo.com) and we will post them on the WIMGA website under the [Conference](#) tab. Many events are also listed on the [Master Gardener Program website](#).

# # #



*Garden Visions Winter Conference hosted by the North Central Master Gardener Volunteers in Marathon County on Saturday, January 29.*

**Enjoy three topics from the comfort of your home!**

- Landscaping with edible and pollinator friendly plants. Creative ideas and tips for garden design which is not only beautiful but that you can enjoy and eat from! Presented by: Leigh Presley, owner of Clearview Nursery
- Designing Plant Communities with a focus on combining plants into resilient communities so they flourish together and help the environment. Presented by: Paula Westmoreland, co-owner and a designer at Ecological Design
- Landscaping with various grasses and sedges that will thrive in our Midwestern climate. Presented by: Lisa Johnson, Dane County Horticulture Educator

For event details and registration go to [www.ntc.edu/calendar](http://www.ntc.edu/calendar) and search for Garden Visions.

## WIMGA Educational Grants – Awarded 2021

*Byron Hacker, Calumet MG, Finance Committee*

The WIMGA Finance Committee awarded 26 grants in 2021 for \$7,400. All Educational Grants that were applied for were awarded. The WIMGA Budget for 2022 includes grants in the amount of \$8,850 for educational projects for local associations. More information on criteria for Grant Applications can be found on our website [wimga.org/grants-1](http://wimga.org/grants-1).

Six \$100 Grants were awarded to:

Calumet County	Printing of Informational Brochures
Grant County	Mulch in Marsden Park Sensory Garden Beds
NEW (NE Wisconsin)	Mongin Perennial Demo Garden
Northern Lights	Sign Holders for Herb-Fragrance Garden
Racine-Kenosha	Zoom Pro Partial Cost
Washington County	Printing of Informational Brochures

Eight \$250 Grants were awarded to:

Barron County	Spring Expo Speakers
Calumet County	Shop Vac for cleaning buildings used at Fairgrounds
Dodge County	Education Garden at John Hustis Museum
Grant County	Doll & Toy Museum Garden supplies
Jefferson County	We Grow Program supplies – West Elementary School
NEW (NE Wisconsin)	2022 Garden Speaker Series
Sheboygan County	Stone Silo Prairie Garden Speaker
Washington County	Plants for four gardens planted by MGs

Twelve \$400 Grants were awarded to:

Barron County.	Barron Community Garden
Calumet County	New Tables for use at Fairgrounds for various events
Door County	Pollinator Garden supplies – Ridges Sanctuary
Fond du Lac County	Garden containers and Zoom class supplies
Grant County	Speaker fees for Educational Conference
Jefferson County	Materials for Haumerson Pond Project
Marquette County	Signage, printing pamphlets for Interactive Nature Trail
MGs of the North	New irrigation supplies Rhinelander Area Food Pantry
NEW (NE Wisconsin)	Native Prairie Plants – Locktender House
North Country MG	Kids in the Garden Program supplies
Outagamie County.	Improved Walkway – Impact Garden
Washington County	Monthly speakers for MG Meetings

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.



## NJ's Bits and Bobs:

*Nancy Jahnle-Barnes, Kenosha-Racine MGV*

New year... New me... New resolutions...  
Don't look back on old year, look forward

January came in with a bang in most of Wisconsin as we saw snow fall as well as temperatures. Many young and old delighted in having snow this past weekend to go out and make snowmen, slide down the hill or just have a good old-fashioned snowball fight. I stood outside for a bit with my tongue out catching snowflakes like I was three again.



Don't start this new year with old baggage – we are master gardeners, a tough lot with dirt under our nails while in the garden, pulling weeds in the rain, covering tender seedlings with a quick tea towel for cold protection. I look forward to starting this new gardening year as I always do when those seed catalogues appear in my mailbox.

This year will be a new experience for most of us as we will be able to branch out (joke) and spread our seeds (no weeds) in many old and new projects in our communities. The local groups we work with will be our support net and we have the opportunity to venture into new ones. They give us their blessing and we roll up our sleeves. Many of you may feel that 'Madison' is pushing us away but the truth is, we are going to spread our wings (gloves) and move into more community groups we can help educate, inform and love. I look forward to working on new (to me) community gardens, nature areas, schools, libraries and senior communities.

Preaching aside, I plan to spend more time helping others by growing food in community gardens. Here in Racine/Kenosha we have several community gardens.

### **OUR GARDEN OF GIVING IN KENOSHA . . .DRUM ROLL. . .**

Donated over seven thousand pounds (7,000) of food to our local food bank!

An article will be forth-coming about other community gardens around the state who have contributed to help our food insecure families. BTW, when did food insecurity become the buzz word for hungry? If your association did have a garden for food donations, please send me some information at [westcoasternancy@gmail.com](mailto:westcoasternancy@gmail.com).

### **MEME FOR TODAY:**



"If you're happy and you know it buy some seeds  
...clap clap."



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We love your Master Gardener Volunteer projects, horticulture articles and grant ideas. **Send us your stories and pictures.** Some things to note about your projects: the number of volunteers and hours spent, contribution to the community whether in education or with place-making and collaboration with UW-Madison Division of Extension. **Articles and ideas for the Newsletter may be submitted to our editors,**

Nancy Jahnel-Barnes at [westcoasternancy@gmail.com](mailto:westcoasternancy@gmail.com) or  
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**Visit the WIMGA Website at**  
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January 2022 Newsletter

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HORTICULTURE PROGRAM

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