

2015 Fond du Lac Master Gardener Project Report Recap

School Gardens: We have been working with school gardens since 2009, and are currently involved with six schools in the community. Our team members go to the schools usually in March and our Master Gardener Volunteers talk to the students about plants, soils, worms, and beneficial insects needed to have a successful garden. In the spring we plant seeds in classrooms to start peppers, tomatoes, herbs and some flowers. The students keep the flats of plants in their classroom. They watch the seeds germinate, water the plants and make sure they are in a location where they will receive light.

In May, the students, teachers and MGVs go outside, where the students receive instructions about planting seeds for potatoes, pole beans, green veggies, corn, carrots, herbs, beets and sunflowers, and transplanting the tomatoes, peppers and other plants they have grown in the classroom. We talk to them about how to care for the garden by watering, weeding and fertilizing. Many of the students we work with live in apartments so they don't normally get to see a garden and reap its rewards. During the summer the students and parents are invited to pick the veggies or flowers. Sometimes the Girl Scouts and Boys and Girls Club of Fond du Lac maintain the gardens and are welcome to pick what they want. At one of the schools the kindergarteners plant pumpkins, squash and gourds in May and then in fall when they come back as first graders, they get to see the things they planted, which is very exciting for them. The students also help with harvesting Indian corn which they decorate the school with, as well as painting or carving the pumpkins. They really enjoy planting and eating their own popcorn.

Junior Master Gardeners: The gardening experience for the kids is fun. They were very pleased with how well their garden turned out this year. We invited their parents and grandparents to the UW for a special celebration. The kids prepared a meal and made centerpiece bouquets to take home. They had fun playing games and then made herbal oils which they took home. Another of their projects was delivering the extra produce to the local food pantries and people in need in their neighborhoods as well as to their own homes for the rest of their family.

We took a field trip to Horicon Marsh where they learned about how other ecosystems work and how they work together to keep our soil fertile. At the end of the trip, we took the kids to Kelly's Ice Cream for treats.

Plant Sale: Our 2015 Plant Sale was a huge success thanks to help from so many of our volunteers with digging and dividing perennials and potting them for the sale plus setting up at the Fair Grounds, assisting customers with their plant purchases, etc. Our greenhouse grown geraniums were a hit also. We had a large display booth which was visited by the public with many questions. We made about \$9000 to help fund our projects for the coming year. Our 2016 Plant Sale will again be at the Fond du Lac Fair Grounds on May 20th and 21st.

Community Gardens: Last fall 1200 cubic yards of soil were added to the garden to help improve drainage. We had more than 85 take part in the gardens this year. There were very few days throughout the spring and summer that we had any standing water, and none in the areas where the topsoil was distribute last fall. The gardens in those areas looked wonderful. Our Association helped with the extra expenses with two grants.

Free Spirit (Special People in Riding Therapy) Garden: Our garden is approximately ¼ acre. We have 13 MGVs on this team. About five men from the Drug and Alcohol Correctional Center help for half a day, once a week. In June and Sept. we also have people from A. C. Nielson Co. that have a day of sharing, help with

the garden. This is a sensory garden – we have a butterfly section, a meditation circle, vegetable garden (taste), pond area (to listen), color therapy (to see), herb area (for scent) and on the east end is a bird sanctuary. Parents and caregivers enjoy the garden while waiting for their charges to finish their riding therapy, and some people just come with a cup of coffee to sit in the Gazebo and enjoy the garden.

UW-FDL Campus Flower Beds: The largest of these is Sunset Garden set in the lawn of the campus. The garden was beautiful this year with great color, texture and continuous blooms. Many of the annuals were grown from seed to keep expenses down and MGVs over-wintered some of the plants. It was necessary to water often in the dry weeks. All positive comments were received from passers-by.

The Rain Garden was maintained by weeding, pruning and clearing out spent plant materials. Signs were added to identify plants.

Pond View Garden has been revitalized for the past two years. Poisonous ground cover was removed, perennials and annuals were planted, constant weeding and care of trees and shrubs was accomplished, and plant markers were added.

Cranes Nest and Shady Rest Gardens are being redone as we keep losing plants to critters and old age. Grasses were added to the area above the gardens to reduce erosion and potential damage to the rock wall. Three self-watering pots are also used to hide a bare wall in Shady Rest. We have talked to (and educated) a lot of people about these pots which anyone can put together.

Day in the Garden: Our 17th annual educational event was held on Feb. 21, 2015. Topics included “Adaptive Gardening” by Mike Maddox, “Beautiful Blooms; Old Favorites, New Introductions” by Mark Dwyer, “Birdcages and Bedframes: Redefining Garden Art” by Nicole and Brad Roost, and “Four Season Gardening in Wisconsin” by Bill Nettelhorst. Over 175 attendees enjoyed lunch, vendors and wonderful silent auction. The day was a resounding success. For door prizes 24 large house plant planters were a hit. We look forward to seeing everyone at our next Day in the Garden on February 27, 2016.

Horticulture Helpline: The Helpline was available every Tuesday and Thursday from April through October. Master Gardener Volunteers answered 123 phone calls and 35 emails. Questions ranged from aphids to zinnias and everything in between. Volunteers are careful to provide documentation for the answers given, using many reference books and academic websites.

Columbus Park Butterfly Garden: We only did a small amount of spring planting this year, plus weeding, trimming, and other maintenance type activities. We have someone donating 600 cubic yards of rock/boulders to create borders around the flower beds and make raised beds to allow the addition of sufficient organic matter for ease of planting, plant health and good drainage. Once the rocks are in place and the raised beds complete, spring bulbs and more perennials will be added, as well as fall nectar plants, butterfly bushes, butterfly weed and a variety of milkweed.

Bus Trips: Our bus trip project coordinators offered two trips in 2015 – the first in May to Green Bay Botanical Gardens for a guided tour, then to lunch at Thornberry Creek, on to Rose Hill Gardens and Mayflower Greenhouse. The second trip in August took us to Allen Centennial Garden and Olbrich Botanical Garden plus a luncheon cruise on Lake Monona. Both trips were well attended and enjoyable learning experiences.

Yellowstone Trail Park: This is a new project in North Fond du Lac as a collaboration between Master Gardeners, Optimist Club, the Village of NFDL, Hounsell’s and Stuarts Landscaping to finance and physically

create or restore two gardens. The first garden was created from an existing garden that held the Yellowstone Trail signage and a tree. The sign was repainted and the garden upgraded with many new perennials. The second garden was created to hide a weathered wall that houses the electrical equipment for the park. Three design sketches are being reviewed for a structure and bushes, grasses and lilies were planted.

Fond du Lac Public Library: 2015 was a very exciting year for our project at the Library. We purchased two concrete planters for the front entrance. These planters were delivered in time for our summer annual planting. They have proved to be a better option for the front as they are more durable and larger than those previously used. We also did spring clean-up and planted seasonal pots four times a year at both entrances. While working, we frequently get questions from library patrons regarding plant identification, transplanting, growing and maintenance.

Lamartine Veterans Memorial: A lot of weeding and replanting was done to beautify this memorial.

Senior Center Flower Bed: A challenging full-sun flower bed on the south side of the building has been planted and maintained with the intent of growing perennials which need very little maintenance. Our volunteer gets many questions from the people entering and leaving the Senior Center.

Pier Elementary School: Pier has a courtyard which is a wonderland of gardening. Kids press their faces to the windows all year around. Parents wave and thank the MGV who manages this special secret garden.

Fond du Lac Lutheran Home: This project is self-funded by the Home. We have continued to plant perennials in the raised bed and in the courtyard in order to make the gardens more self-sustaining. MGVs also mulched, weeded and watered throughout the season. We have received thank you letters from the CEO who stated that the residents, families, visitors and staff greatly enjoyed the beautiful courtyard. A plaque acknowledging our work is displayed in the Wellness Center.

4H Family Learning Day: MGVs taught classes on how to design and make baskets; how to design and construct Fairy Gardens where each child made a garden and decorated it to take home; and in the third class learned about starting seeds. They planted vegetable seeds and grass seed for an Easter centerpiece.

Sports and Home Expo: This three day event attracted many visitors. We answered many gardening questions. The weather was an issue on the last day, but overall attendance was good.

Fond du Lac County Employee Wellness Fair: The theme this year was Rock and Roll. Many rock gardens, a Zen garden, and guitars and musical accents were incorporated to follow the theme. It was a fun event.

Fond du Lac Agriculture Showcase: Our traveling display drew a lot of attention with fairy gardening ideas and wheat grass growing in planters. Folks were lined up to ask questions and get advice. Over 200 plant sale fliers were distributed and one rain barrel was given away.

Farmers Market Booth: On June 13th we had an educational booth on Main Street. Information was given, questions answered, and annual flower plants given away.

Fond du Lac County Fair Awards: We awarded 4-H youth who put in the extra effort during the fair with projects in the horticulture department with cash awards of \$25 for five divisions.