

Fond du Lac County Master Gardener Association 2017 Project Reports

Plant Sale: Eileen Blackburn was the project leader for our major fundraiser, the annual plant sale, which was again held at the FDL Fair Grounds. We had a profit of over \$5,000 that is used to support our projects, scholarships, and other expenses. 344 customers came to our plant sale and almost all of our MGVs were involved in digging and potting plants, pricing plants, set up for the sale, assisting customers, etc.

Veterans Park in downtown Fond du Lac: Veterans Park is a large (about 300' x 300') public park, containing many memorials, a fountain, a pool, raised "stage" and flagpoles. This year garden clean up and flowerbed prep began in April. In May, the county provided a pickup full of bedding plants and a trailer full of bark mulch. A crew of MGVs worked long hours planting, watering and mulching. They planted petunias, phlox, marigolds, alyssum, geraniums, dahlias, tea roses, salvia, dianthus, and bedding begonias. The park looked very nice during the Memorial Day ceremony. In fact, the county executive pointed out that Master Gardeners help to maintain the park. Maintenance such as weeding, deadheading, watering, mulching, pruning and replanting continued until fall when 400 additional bulbs were planted by MGVs for spring tulips, crocus, daffodils, and resurrection lilies. Hal Barfknecht was the coordinator for this project and was assisted by nine other MGVs.

School Gardens: Our project leaders, Cindy Boudry, Bill Behnke, and Jo Schouten, along with eight team members, worked with Riverside School, Parkside Elementary School, Rosenow Elementary School, St. Mary's Springs Academy, and Faith Lutheran School. They started planting herbs with Riverside School students in November. Cindy dug up rosemary, parsley, dill, cilantro, sage, and basil, so the children could touch, smell, see, and taste the herbs they were planting, and she talked about how some of the herbs are used. They also planted micro greens, so the kids would see their seeds growing since herbs take a while. This involved 60+ children in third grade.

In March, we started planting seeds for marigolds and vegetables at Riverside, Parkside, and Rosenow Schools. The focus this year was on the value of pollinators and why we need them. Cindy did a program on the bee communities using costumes and props. The marigolds were used for Mother's Day, and the vegetables were planted in the garden in late May. MGVs worked with children in K thru 6th grade, involving over 1100 children this year.

In late May, we planted the gardens outside. The focus was on planting a rainbow of color from blue potatoes, purple peppers, yellow tomatoes, purple kale, orange pumpkins and carrots, red beets, yellow peppers, and lots of green. The kids placed colored sticks by the color vegetable they were planting, and learned how each is pollinated. For a class of blind, deaf, or special needs at Riverside School, we planted potatoes by touch, so the youngsters could get a chance to feel the soil and seed potatoes. Cindy also found Ketchup 'n Fries tomatoes that were planted at each school. In the fall, the tomatoes were dug up, and the kids enjoyed seeing potatoes on the roots.

In September, the kindergarteners who planted pumpkins brought their wagons and picked the pumpkins to decorate the school. The other plants were harvested and the kids got to try some of the vegetables left in the gardens.

Pier Elementary: Eileen Blackburn's project is in its 17th year. This year a new border was installed with white rocks for all the 400+ children to paint and leave in the garden. Each rock

has the child's personalized art displayed in the garden. This concept is to empower children's sense of permanence and self-esteem. The eye-spy garden also attracts the children and parents to gaze out in the courtyard and play. All the plants have labels to add educational value to the project.

Landscape Smart: In accordance with our primary purpose of education, our members participate in an hour-long Saturday morning Fond du Lac radio program. The show, sponsored by Rademan Stone & Landscape, answers horticulture questions called in by listeners. Responses are provided by a panel made up of Ron Rademan and two of eight MGVs. The program also provides moments to publicize other Master Gardener events and activities.

Day in the Garden: Our 19th garden seminar was held on Saturday, March 18. A Day in the Garden, under the leadership of Beth Howman-Combs, is for both Master Gardeners and the public. In 2017, nearly 200 people joined us for our program. This annual event is designed to provide Master Gardeners a portion of their required continuing education hours.

The day featured four speakers with a variety of presentations. Zannah Crowe spoke on Foolproof Perennials, Megan Cain discussed Design Inspiration for a Creative Vegetable Garden, Allen Pyle covered Gardening for Pollinators and Beneficial Insects, and Tina Nohl used Nature's Resources in Arrangements & Decorating Trends.

The day included vendors, as well as our silent auction and raffle. It was a very successful day. We look forward to seeing everyone next year – March 24, 2018.

Sport and Home Expo: Eileen set up a beautiful booth which was manned by about 14 MGVs over three days. The booth attracted many to the miniature straw bale, raised lasagna garden and square foot garden. Handouts and plant sale fliers were given out to the public. The project leaders were Eileen Blackburn and Norb Chesney.

Ag Show: Eileen was the project leader for our booth at the Ag Show on March 4 at the Fair-Grounds. Team members distributed 250 plant sale fliers, discussed the 2017 growing season, gave ideas, and solved basic problems in the garden. This was an excellent event to promote and educate.

Fond du Lac Lutheran Home: Ellen Flynn and Teresa Steger maintained the courtyard, filling it in with more perennials, trimming bushes, spreading mulch, dividing hostas, and otherwise keeping the garden beautiful for the enjoyment of the residents, visitors, and staff.

Level 1 Training started September 5 and ran weekly for 13 weeks. There were 14 registered participants. Numerous Fond du Lac County Master Gardener Volunteers spoke to class participants about various projects and the many volunteer opportunities available to Master Gardeners. The course is presented in a "Flipped Classroom" style, with participants watching lectures on-line and reading about the current topic prior to attending class. Class time was spent doing hands on activities and/or interacting with invited guests. Dr. Loretta Ortiz-Ribbing led several of the classes, sharing her expertise on the topics of Plant Pathology, Entomology, Weeds, and Integrated Pest Management. Guest speakers included Cindy Boudry on bees, John Redmond on pruning, Bill Zeleske on fruits and vegetables, and Patty Percy on plant propagation. Sally Boatman and Mary Gorske were project coordinators.

UW Campus Art Garden: With all the rain we had this year, many hours were spent simply managing the rapidly growing vegetation in the garden. Wood chips, supplied by the city, were

added to the garden. We continue to work on removing undesirables like yellow loosestrife, donkey tail, and quack grass from the garden. Several hostas were rescued from one of the overgrown sections of the courtyard garden and relocated where they can grow and be seen. The south end of the garden was spectacular this fall, with purple coneflowers, Joe Pye weed, and purple asters as tall as our volunteers.

UW Campus Rain Garden: The rain garden remains a joy to maintain, although this fall we had an enormous pile of vegetation to remove and haul away with the perfect growing conditions we had this year. It was a pleasant surprise to see a photo of our rain garden in the November/December 2017 issue of Wisconsin Gardening. The article is entitled “Water Works” by Erika Jensen. Sally Boatman was the project leader.

NFDL Project: Dona McEssey, Bob McEssey, Katie Hornung, and Maggie Meyer worked collaboratively with the Village of North Fond du Lac, Hounsell's Greenhouse, and the NFDL Optimists to complete the Veterans Memorial Park located in North Fond du Lac. The sidewalk leading to and around the memorial was dug up, new dirt was added, weed barrier/pavers were installed, and lilies and grasses planted. Two urns were purchased for annual flowers. One area was prepped for an additional resting spot. A local youth group assisted in the maintenance and care of Veteran's Memorial Park. Discussion/planning began regarding the NFDL OO area, a neighborhood improvement project, with the goal to collectively restore neighborhood pride, stability, and a sense of community with greenspace.

Horticulture Helpline: The Fond du Lac County Master Gardener Helpline was available every week from mid-April through October. Master Gardener volunteers manned the desk for two hours every Monday and Thursday during that time period, answering questions via telephone and email. The majority of the 160 questions answered this year came in May and June. Many questions were related to tree issues and mildew problems, most likely due to the relatively wet summer. Calls are most often taken by the Extension Office staff and answered by the volunteers during the designated hours on Mondays and Thursdays. Eight different volunteers worked the helpline during the 2017 season. Volunteers are careful to provide documentation for the answers given, using the groups' reference library and many academic websites. Sherry Freiberg was the coordinator for the Helpline.

Scholarship: This year, the Fond du Lac County Master Gardeners awarded a \$500 scholarship to a young woman who is attending UW Fond du Lac. Her ultimate goal is to study botany and soil science after receiving her Associate's Degree. She was highly qualified, and had taken Level 1 Master Gardener training during her junior year in high school.

Rosendale Peony Garden: Several Master Gardener Volunteers helped maintain this garden that contains many heritage plants, as well as more modern varieties of peonies, and tree peonies. The local historical society has an annual June “Peony Day,” during which refreshments are served while visitors tour the gardens. The gardens are open year round and are free to the public. MGVs help with deadheading, pruning, and weeding.

Columbus Park Butterfly Garden: The butterfly garden had an abrupt disruption and then a beautiful new beginning in 2017. Due to a gas line installed through the garden, then a massive tree removal because of the emerald ash borer infestation, the garden sustained a huge amount of damage. After the dust settled, Elaine Heineke salvaged whatever hostas and day lilies she could and the Campbellsport residents started donating plants to the park, including two

butterfly bushes. The woman from California who donated the butterfly bench in remembrance of her late mother, also purchased flowers to be planted in the garden.

In the fall, about 200 spring bulbs were planted, so the garden would have blooms from spring through fall, helping to provide food and rest for butterflies. Also, three flat rocks were placed for butterflies to rest on. Markers will be added to identify the flowers for the many people using the trail that goes past the garden. Elaine has taken over as project leader.

Community Gardens: Patty Percy, together with the help of extension staff, puts out a newsletter full of current garden issues plus hints, recipes, and year-end cleanup instructions. Since the weather helps certain crops do better than others in any given growing season, it is always a challenge to have a good diversity of produce planted to make the most of the conditions that can be so different from year to year. Patty uses the garden newsletter to help with any issues that are unique to these challenges. In 2017, 85 families rented garden space, and the best part is that 25 of these families were first time gardeners.

The Master Gardeners funded Patty's request for cover crop seeding once again, and the soil has been improving. The cover crop on unused garden areas helps keep weeds out and helps deter the varmint infestation.

Junior Master Gardeners: There were 43 children involved with the JMGs this year. Nearly all of the children ate everything picked or prepared. On average 6 to 8 children said that the food they tried was new to them at each session, including spinach, green peppers, dried fruit, mango, kiwi, refried beans, guacamole, pineapples, basil, etc. Of the surveys returned, the comments included "my child asked me to buy a fruit or vegetable that I usually don't buy", "my child has been eating more fruit", "my child has been eating more vegetables", and "my child seems to understand more about health eating". Patty Percy was project leader for JMG.

Solution Center Women's Shelter: For the first part of this project, MGVs spent several hours cutting tree limbs that were hanging low and shading the gardens. The second part was digging up a very overgrown garden and planting hostas. The third part was digging out a heavy plastic sheet that was buried about a foot under the ground many years ago. This part of the project took hours of backbreaking work. The area was replanted with hostas because of shade.

The next part of this project was pulling very old landscape fabric from a garden next to the north side of the house. It was twisted around plants and was a mess. We then put the garden back together. A thick layer of mulch was put down on all the fresh gardens. Next spring the project will continue. Karen Kinziger, Steve Kinziger, and Lisa Drees were active on this project.