

2018 Fond du Lac County Master Gardener Project Reports

Garden Fair and Plant Sale: We held our first ever Garden Fair and Plant Sale in May 2018, in lieu of our regular plant sale, due to the risk of spreading jumping worms. At the event, we had speakers on “attracting pollinators to your yard,” “monarch butterflies,” “jumping worms,” “vermiculture,” “blue birds,” and “beekeeping.” We also had demonstrations set up on straw bale gardening, square foot gardening, container gardening, and lasagna gardening. There were also booths with information on Junior Master Gardeners, our Horticulture Help Line, composting, and rain barrels. We had vendors with bee products, compost, glass art, and others, along with a food court sponsored by Helping Hands 4-H. We sold herbs, vegetable plants, and succulents that we started in potting mix, as well as annuals and perennials we purchased wholesale. Over 450 people attended the event. Dolores Braun, Norb Chesney, and Patty Percy organized this event with the assistance of approximately 45 Master Gardeners.

Master Gardener Motor Coach Trip: Our association normally sponsors two motor coach trips per year where we invite both Master Gardeners and the public. On August 7, 2018, we had our second trip of the year for the purpose of education and fellowship among gardening/horticultural enthusiasts. We provided four hours of continuing education with guided tours of Christopher Farm and Gardens and West of the Lake Gardens, and we explored the many interactive educational exhibits at the new Farm Wisconsin Discovery Center in Manitowoc. The bus was full, so some people drove themselves. Positive feedback was received. Many individuals are planning to return to the Farm Discovery Center to take friends and relatives. Janet Tess was the project leader for the bus trips.

School Gardens: The project leaders were Cindy Boudry, Bill Behnke, and Jo Schouten. A team of 10 MGVs also helped. In April, they started planting seeds for marigolds and vegetables in Riverside School, Parkside School, and Rosenow School. This year, the focus was on compost. Cindy had 20+ Ziploc bags of different materials and asked the students, if they could compost the materials or not. She compared the nitrogen and carbon levels to their happy meals and shared with them what plants needed to grow.

Other stations showed students how the seeds grow, what vegetables the seeds grow into, how to plant the seeds, and transplant marigolds. Cindy started seven flats of marigolds that the children transplanted into cups. The students were told they were responsible for keeping the marigolds alive until May. They talked about what that would involve and how much sun and water the marigolds would need. The marigolds were used for May Day and Mother's Day and the vegetables were planted in the garden in late May. Our Master Gardeners worked with over 1300 children in five schools.

Veterans Park in Downtown Fond du Lac: This is a large public park which is crossed diagonally by sidewalks which meet at a central plaza where various events take place, the largest being the annual post-parade Memorial Day Ceremony which was attended by hundreds. During spring clean-up, seven Master Gardeners removed damaged large shrubs due to the spring snowstorm. The Master Gardeners also planted annuals, pulled weeds, and watered and mulched the gardens throughout the summer. In the fall, they planted additional bulbs for spring flowers. Hal Barfknecht was the project leader.

Thrive Veterans Garden: Veterans, Master Gardener Volunteers, and community members built the handicapped accessible downtown garden. Businesses showed support through donations of supplies, time, and deliveries. Contributors included Thrive Church, US Marine Corps, Menards, L&H Gyr, Bud's Soil and Grading, Sign Crafters, and Kitz & Pfeil True Value Hardware. In total, 45 individuals dedicated their time to volunteer during this project.

There was also a large section in the Community Gardens where Veterans were able to plant and harvest. They planted and successfully harvested tomatoes, beans, peppers, etc. Patty Percy was the project leader for these gardens.

Junior Master Gardeners: We had another very successful year with this group. Nine MGVs, plus Amanda Miller, UW-Extension FoodWise Educator, assisted Patty Percy, the project leader. The kids decided what to plant; seedlings were started in the UW Greenhouse. Volunteers helped with the planting and food preparation in the classroom. Fresh homemade pizzas were made from the garden produce for the celebration meal. For the field trip this year, the Junior Master Gardeners went to Park Ridge Organics and Horicon Marsh.

Columbus Park Butterfly Garden: Elaine Heineke was in charge of this project. The garden was reconstructed after it was pretty much destroyed last year during removal of ash trees by the Village of Campbellsport. This year, many zinnias and other perennials were planted, so the garden was in bloom at different times. The Master Gardeners also put in some milkweed plants and butterfly weed plants to give the butterflies the nourishment they needed for survival. Elaine researched what varieties of flowers tolerate the negative impact of two black walnut trees in the garden.

Fond du Lac Lutheran Home Courtyard: This garden has been planted entirely with perennials to keep maintenance at a minimum, but the continued growth of the mulberry tree is having a negative impact on the sunshine that gets to the plants. The Master Gardeners will have to adjust to more shade plants in the future. This garden is for the enjoyment of the residents of the home. Ellen Flynn was the project lead with assistance from two other Master Gardeners.

Chegwin School: Linda Schneider maintained flowerbeds in front of the school for the past ten years. She weeded and planted the gardens in the back of the schools this year.

UW Campus Gardens: Thirteen Master Gardeners volunteered almost 50 hours to clean the beds, remove several small trees, and prune existing bushes to renovate the Courtyard Garden. The volunteers removed several truckloads of leaves and overgrown vegetation. Nine yards of mulch were spread throughout the garden after hydrangeas, daffodils, and daisies were planted. The bulk of the renovation project was supported by a monetary donation from the family of Gloria Kelroy, who was a long time UW-Extension staff member. The garden was designed to focus on fall colors and winter interest plants to stimulate the students throughout the school year. Paul Freund was the project leader.

The Sunset Garden on the UW Campus is a large colorful perennial and annual flower garden. Sue Furness was the project leader with the assistance of two other MGs. They decided to change a portion of the annuals to perennials to reduce the need for watering, and they chose plants for the light conditions and the plants that spread together and reduce weeding. Passers-by, faculty, and students, who comment or ask questions while we work, enjoyed the garden. Additional flower identification will be added next year.

Day in the Garden: This was our annual garden conference held March 24, 2018 at UW-Fond du Lac. The purpose of the conference was education and fellowship with other garden enthusiasts. Four speakers gave the following presentations: “It’s all about the Birds and Bees,” “Creative Containers,” “As the Worm Turns...Twists...Writhes and Leaps,” “Less is More Gardening,” and “Garden Hints, Tips & Hacks.” Five hours of education was provided. This is a popular event with Master Gardeners and the public with 188 registered attendees. Beth Howman-Combs and Alice Dann were Co-Chairs of Day in the Garden. The silent auction and raffle at Day in the Garden were the fundraising portion of the event. Fond du Lac County Master Gardeners donated items to be sold and/or raffled; including many handmade items. The silent auction/raffle committee coordinated this part of the event; however, the donations from members made it a success.

Fond du Lac Public Library: Our project at the Library is at first glance a beautification project, but it also has an education component. The Master Gardeners planted two containers at each of the two library entrances with annual plantings of flowers, grasses, etc. in the spring, summer, and fall. In the winter, greens, birch, and other natural décor is added to bring a festive touch. The library has little green space and the containers provide beauty and interest, but they are also a topic of discussion and conversation about plantings that are full south sun on one side and almost all shade on the north side. Volunteers at the library watered the flowers.

In the spring, we hosted a bulletin board at the library, which focused on gardening. We also advertised our Day in the Garden event and had registrations forms available for the public. Books about gardening were displayed and could be checked out. Project Leaders were Alice Dann and Vel Hynek.