



Meet Karla Geiger, Frequent Presenter

by MGVS Beth Peterson, Speakers Bureau Co-Chair

Have you ever thought about joining the Speakers Bureau? Want to try it but just not sure? Speakers Bureau Co-Chair Beth Peterson had the opportunity to interview frequent presenting speaker Karla Geiger about her experiences volunteering with the Speakers Bureau.

1. How long have you been a MGVS? Since 2015. Ten years already!

2. What is your favorite presentation--why? I love the Container Gardening presentation. I have also enjoyed sharing Seed Starting. Both engage audience members and what is better than sharing gardening information and learning from each other, specifically when there is still snow on the ground?

3. What makes volunteering for the Speakers Bureau rewarding? I find that I push myself to research the topic further and learn more about a subject, as I prepare for the presentation. Then, as I present and learn with the group, it reinforces the subject matter for me, as well. Powerful.

4. What is your most memorable presentation experience? I did many presentations at Tippecanoe Library and became friends with the librarian. The last one that we did was on Seed Starting [before she retired] and we collaborated for her to pull books as reference materials and served her local community together. Another benefit to this service is building relationships out in our communities.

5. How do you connect with your audience? I like to be able to chat a bit with the audience prior to the presentation, asking ice-breakers relevant to the topic. It seems to help to build relationships so your information can be considered and then their experiences can be shared with the group for ultimate education.

6. What are some organizations you have presented to? The library presentations are typically to residents, and not a specific group. I recently shared info with the New Berlin Garden Club.

7. How do you prepare for a presentation? I ask for the slides and speaker notes as soon as I am able to set a date with a requester. This gives me time to understand the materials and plan for the presentation, sharing research-based data.

8. Is there anything else you'd like to share with other MGVS about volunteering with the speaker's bureau? This is a unique learning opportunity, preparing for these presentations and representing SEWMG as a keeper of the knowledge. Consider this volunteer opportunity!



Message from In-House Education

by MGVS Jane Browne

Our next SEWMG member meeting is May 17 at the Brookfield Public library, 1900 North Calhoun Road at 9 a.m. Our SEWMG member Natalie Lester will do a presentation about the Brookfield seed library.

Unfortunately, our organization does not have the technology support to provide further virtual or in-person educational events that require audio visual assistance. I encourage you

to log into the Wisconsin Master Gardener (WIMGA) web page and review their upcoming presentations. Also, the UW-Madison Extension and WI horticulture sites have continuing education. Two additional sources for continuing education are "Garden Talk Radio" with Larry Meiller and Melinda Myers' website.

President's Letter

by MGV Jackie Kirchen

As the days lengthen and a gentle warmth fills the air, we feel the undeniable pulse of spring awakening. After what felt like ages of the garden just snoozing, everything's starting to wake up. There's an undeniable magic watching the transformation. Those bare branches that looked so sad all winter? They're suddenly covered in tiny buds, promising a whole explosion of flowers and smells. And that soil, finally soft and workable, just begs you to get your hands in it, plant some seeds, and dream about all the good stuff you're gonna grow. Spring's just a reminder that even after the coldest, longest winter, nature always bounces back- right on schedule.

Of course, with all this new growth comes a flurry of gardening tasks. But, we know that all this work, along with consistent nurturing, will allow our gardens to flourish with both beauty and bounty. This active participation allows us to fully appreciate the transformative power of spring.

As we embark on this exciting season, I encourage you to embrace the challenges and celebrate the triumphs. We all have our own ideas about what our gardens should be, and spring brings a fresh canvas for all of us. Let's get out there, dig in with open hearts and maybe a little dirt under our fingernails, and cultivate not only beautiful gardens but also a strong and supportive community. I look forward to the fruits (and vegetables and flowers!) of our labor.

Happy gardening!

Neighborhood Meet-up Reminders!

If you're interested in meeting up with fellow SEWMG members let us know! Complete this [interest form](#). Thank you to those of you who responded already- no need to do it again!

Neighborhood meet-ups are informal gatherings organized locally by a group of SEWMG Master Gardeners who live in similar geographic areas.

SEWMG will help facilitate connections for MGs who are interested in local meet-ups. The groups will be responsible for scheduling locations, topics, etc. based on the interest and goals of the group.

Board Updates

• Fundraising Strategy Committee-

Fundraising is crucial to the sustained financial viability of SEWMG.

There are six committee members; two board members, Jackie Kirchen and Ray Corn, and four members, Patrick Smith, Kathy Intravaia, and Teja Shubhchintak, and Sandy Manning.

Committee meetings are underway to recommend some fundraising activities that meet the goals and mission of SEWMG and its membership. The Committee will provide the initial report to the Board late April. Look for more information soon!

• Membership Committee

The membership committee is beginning work to streamline and improve the membership process. The goal is twofold.

- 1) Improved access and ease of use for members, and
- 2) Reduce administrative burden, improve efficiency and accuracy for SEWMG.

We hope to share more information about this project soon.

The membership committee is responsible for the membership management and member retention. This committee is crucial for the operation of SEWMG and would love to welcome a couple more member volunteers. If you're interested in volunteering for the membership committee, please contact the Secretary and chair of the committee, Nicki Hanley (Nicki.Hanley@sewmg.org)

• Technology Committee

The technology committee is continuing to work to centralize all SEWMG materials and communications. To date the Board, Technology Committee, and Speakers Bureau have all been fully utilizing Google Workspace, in addition to gathering documents from other Board committees. The committee will continue to gather SEWMG documents and materials and work with users who need access. If you have questions or feel you need access, please contact Jackie Kirchen. (Jackie.Kirchen@sewmg.org)

Recognition

• **Thank you for a successful Volunteer Day** event on 4/12! Huge appreciation to Jane Browne, the chair of the event and anyone who helped organize, volunteered, contributed or attended!

• Thanks to all who organized and volunteered at the **SEWMG booth/events at the Realtors Home & Garden Show**. This is an enormous undertaking and acknowledges the hard work of Valorie Sangsland, Heide Burns and the whole events team, as well the speakers bureau volunteers and speakers.



Inspire Action: Invasive Species Action Awareness

by Melinda Myers

June is Invasive Species Action Awareness Month in Wisconsin. This is a great opportunity for you to share your knowledge about the importance of managing invasive plants in our state.

As you know, invasive plants escape the boundaries of our landscape, moving into natural spaces and waterways. They outcompete and displace native plants, degrading natural habitats, increasing the risk of soil erosion, negatively impacting water quality, and so much more.

You know, but others may not be aware or understand the importance of managing invasive plants. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI DNR) has declared June as Invasive Species Action Awareness Month to help boost the awareness of this threat and enlist others to make a difference. You can help by sharing information about invasive species as you post on social media, visit gardens, and present gardening information throughout June and beyond.

Encourage gardeners and homeowners to avoid adding invasive plants to their gardens, water features, and landscapes. Many may not know that some online retailers are not aware of the regulations or choose not to follow them. Share the importance of purchasing plants from reputable and local retailers whenever possible. Let them know that the WI DNR's website <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Invasives> is a great resource to consult before purchasing plants.

The website lists the plants prohibited for sale, possession, and introduction into our state. These prohibited plants are rare or not yet present in the state, but do have the potential to cause harm. Those listed as restricted plants are already here and established, so elimination is not practical, but we can stop adding more to our gardens and landscapes. These plants can't be sold or moved into the state, but possession is allowed.

Let gardeners know they can also help by selecting plants best suited to the growing conditions and keeping them healthy. Vigorous plants, including native species, are better able to outcompete invasive plants.

Share tips on how they can manage invasive plants that may already be in their gardens. The [WI DNR website](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Invasives) <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Invasives> and the University of Wisconsin Weed Science Department <https://renzweedsience.cals.wisc.edu/resources/invasive-management-factsheets/> provide information to help with identification and control of these problem plants.

Gardeners can minimally slow the spread of some invasive species, like Dame's Rocket, by removing the flowers before they set seed. Digging, roots and all, is even better but may only be possible with certain species and small populations.

Advise gardeners how to dispose of invasive plant debris properly. Composting is usually not the best option. Most of us do not create compost piles that reach high enough temperatures to kill these, weeds, insects and disease. To prevent them from invading natural areas it is best to bag and

dispose of invasive plants in the garbage. Always check with your local municipality for recommendations before adding these to the trash.

Mowing or repeatedly cutting back can slow the spread and, in some cases, eliminate the infestation of some invasive plants. Timing and persistence are key to success. Smothering, by covering the infestation with black weed barrier for at least one or two seasons, is another solution that may help manage some invasive plant infestations.

And if they opt for chemical control, remind them to read and follow label directions. Remind them to make sure the product they select is labeled for this purpose, application rates and timing are followed, and they wear the recommended safety equipment.

If you discover invasive plant populations in public spaces and waterways, please report them to the WI DNR <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Invasives/report>. Sharing this information with the WI DNR makes them aware of possible new infestations and allows them to explore options for containing the spread.

You can find even more resources and information in my Strategies for Managing Invasive Plants handout at: https://www.melindamyers.com/application/files/5917/3989/1563/STRATEGIES_FOR_MANAGING_INVASIVE_PLANTS.pdf. The recording of the accompanying webinar, sponsored by and co-hosted with WI-DNR and University of WI Madison Natural Resources Institute-Aquatic Invasive Species Program, is still available to watch. Visit <https://www.melindamyers.com/about-melinda/on-demand-webinars> and scroll down to the Strategies for Managing Invasive Plants webinar recording.

Thanks for all your help in increasing awareness and encouraging gardeners to be part of the solution. Together we can make a difference!



Upper photo Garlic Mustard
Left photo Bradford Pear



Spring Refresh of a Perennial Bed

by MGV Kelly Kramer

Spring is a great time to review herbaceous perennial beds and determine if they need a refresh. Dividing perennials can rejuvenate the plant and control the size. If perennials are overcrowded or haven't been performing well, they might benefit from being divided and/or moved to another area.

Plants divided in spring have time to get new roots established by fall. And it's less stressful to divide plants when they're not blooming and when the weather is cool.

Not all perennials like to be divided in spring so it pays to do a bit of research before you start. A general rule of thumb is to divide/move spring blooming perennials in fall, and summer and fall blooming perennials in spring. But some perennials are best divided right after blooming. For example, bearded iris is best divided in July and August. Doing research first will save a lot of time and energy.

If you're unsure which perennials need to be divided, look at notes or photos from the previous year. In addition to a written garden journal, I've found taking photos of my garden beds throughout the season to be a valuable tool. I've also stuck a plant marker next to plants in fall that I know need to be divided the following spring.

Before digging up the selected plant, I would recommend cleaning up the bed by trimming back all dead material and giving it a good weeding. Wait until new growth has appeared and soil can be worked. After digging up the plant, a tool I like to use to cut up the roots balls is a hori hori knife. A sharp spade works well too. After digging and replanting the small plant clumps be sure to give them a good watering.

I have a cottage style perennial bed where everything is planted close together. Plants are always reseeding and editing is needed. Digging and dividing is regular maintenance for me to keep that informal but not totally out of control look. If there is a lot of space between newly divided plants, I'll spread a layer of leaf compost around them to help keep weeds down until the plants fill in. Leaf compost is generally not considered a fertilizer because it's too low in nutrients. I like using it to control weeds and act as a soil amendment. It's my mulch of choice for all of my garden beds.

Just doing a bit of plant division and replanting can give your garden a refreshed look. Dividing perennials is also an inexpensive way to add plants to a new perennial bed.

The Brookfield Public Library Seed Team

by MGV Natalie Lester

Our amazing Seed Team has sorted almost two thousand seed packets to be distributed to the community. I am truly grateful for this incredible group of dedicated volunteers. Their hard work, passion, and commitment are the heart of our growing program. With such a fantastic team, we will continue to thrive and expand our reach, making an even greater impact in our community. Thank you for everything you do!

I will be presenting about our fantastic programs here at the BPL at the upcoming **SEWMG Member Meeting on May 17, 2025**, at **9:00 a.m.** at the **Brookfield Public Library**. My presentation will take place at 9:15 a.m., where I'll be discussing the Seed Library program and answering any questions you may have. I look forward to seeing you there!

Mark your calendars for our next educational event: **Collecting & Saving Seeds on August 16, 2025**, from **10:00 am to 12:00 p.m.** at the **Brookfield Public Library**. This is a drop-in presentation open to all members of the community who are interested in learning how to save and store their own seeds. Counting for continuing education, there will be fact sheets, hands-on opportunities and free seeds for everyone who attends.

How to Donate Seeds to the BPL Seed Library

If you have seeds to donate, we would love your support! Simply bag your seeds and bring them to our donation box, located near

the Adult Services Reference Desk at the Brookfield Public Library. Donation slips are available to fill out along with your donation.

If your donation is too large to fit in the box, feel free to bring it to a reference librarian at either the Adult Services or Main Circulation Desk.

We accept donations of all heirloom, open-pollinated, non-GMO, and non-patented seeds that are less than 3 years old.



Realtors Home & Garden Show

by MGVal Sangsland, Events Co-chair

In 2025, the feature topic of the SEWMG booth at the 99th Realtors Home & Garden was Successful Container Gardening. We shared information with the community on growing annuals, perennials, vegetables, herbs, shrubs and even small trees in containers, focusing on water, soil, fertilization, light requirements, container attributes, and design elements.

In early spring, a group of SEWMG volunteers met twice to plan an update to our topic material that was last displayed in public in 2015. **Kathy McCombe, Cathy Bink-DelFosse, Sandy Potter, Kristie Kroening, Heide Burns and Cecelia Lorenz** (ably assisted by husband **Jerry Lorenz**) met and brainstormed with me. We needed to update our material, layout a 10 x 30-foot booth that was open on three sides, while incorporating more live plants and hands-on examples of our topics. Given the need to display many types of containers, soils, fertilizer and soil additives, it was decided to ask Jerry (a retired carpenter) to construct a three-dimensional display unit that could also be broken down for storage after the show. The results were stunning and offered us an incredible opportunity to display a lot of items in an appealing and organized manner. Check out that photo!

While one team was working on the display, **Shari Kromrey** was busy soliciting donations of seed packets from local sources, and I worked again with **Prairie Moon Nursery** (who donated 500 packets of native *Rudbeckia hirta* seeds, 240 free catalogs and 100 free conference brochures for us to provide to the public. Additionally, I was able to work with two ladies from Argyle, WI (**Elaine Becker and Karen Mayhew**) who founded the **Woollets, LLC** company. Woollets are all-natural wool pellet soil amendments created from wool sourced from local Wisconsin shepherds. These kind ladies created 2000 sample-size packages of their Woollets product, plus printed thousands of full color cardstock handouts for us to give away to our show visitors. They even drove everything from Southwest Wisconsin to deliver to my home, so I could divide up for each shift. If you can imagine two six-foot tall stacks of boxes of samples, you'll have a feel for everything they provided. All of this was done at no charge to SEWMG. Thank you so much, ladies!

The third major component of the Home Show is scheduling our wonderful MG volunteers to staff the booth during the course of the show. New to the task this year is **Heide Burns**, who began the scheduling in early February and filled the schedule by February 15th! Heide took care of any last-minute changes or cancellations due to illness, did the mailing of Exhibitor passes to all volunteers working the first shift of the day, and coordinated and communicated so well that you would think she's been doing this for years! Thank you, Heide!

I cannot offer enough recognition to the incredible volunteers on our transport and set-up team: **Cecelia & Jerry Lorenz, Terry Fabian, Sandy Potter, Judy McCormick, Kristie Kroening** (with help from **Alan Nichols**), **Kathy McCombe** and my incredibly patient brother, **Robert Yoblin**. Our booth was located directly next to the Garden Promenade, and with all the Bobcats, skids of pavers, and planting material used to create those enormous displays filling the aisles on set-up day, the Expo Center facilities team apparently forgot to mark-off our booth area so our team arrived in precise 10-minute intervals to "nothing" where there should have been a booth. After a frantic call to the organizer of the show, the Expo team arrived and taped off our area and laid carpeting. Meanwhile our six vehicles had to find somewhere to get out of the way on the floor of the show while this all took place, since we are only allowed to drive-in during a

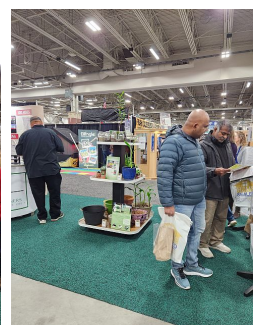
specific period of time, and everyone else with a booth in our area was arriving at the same time! Thirty minutes later, we were able to get started unloading and moving out our cars, so we could begin and everything came together beautifully. Thank you everyone for your patience and good spirits throughout this challenge. I freely admit there were moments of sheer terror running through my head, and you all stayed focused and helped overcome every obstacle.

The following day, Thursday March 20, twenty-five shift captains and booth volunteers attended our Orientation session, with shift captains picking up reusable fabric grocery bags packed with Woollets and seed packet samples to bring back during their shifts. Having an open booth meant there was literally nowhere to store any of these items, so I am grateful the shift captains agreed to transport these items back and forth.

During the course of the show four SEWMG Speakers Bureau members gave five different presentations on the Solutions Stage: **Mary Jane Swedberg** presented Invasives, **Diane Roznowski** presented Raised Beds, **Jim Gill** presented Container Gardening, and **Kristen Villegas** presented Seed Starting 101 and Composting Short Course. Thank you to all of these speakers for volunteering to share our research-based information with the general public and agreeing to be featured in newspaper articles and in the show program and for being in the Solutions Stage spotlight those days. Thank you for the collaboration, Speakers! SEWMG providing this service to the Realtors Home & Garden Show is a big part of the reason they provide us large booths each year at no charge.

The show ran from Friday, March 21st through Sunday, March 30th with two days closed (Monday and Tuesday). After the last shift on the final Sunday night, everything was taken down, packed up and returned to storage or my house for final review. The numbers are in: SEWMG gave away 5,663 pieces of research-based literature to our 2,367 visitors. The attendance was lower than last year, but we did have some really nice days where people likely found things to do outside, rather than visiting the Home & Garden Show. I can only say that the visitors who came during the shift I worked on the final Sunday afternoon were really interested in our topic, enthusiastic and grateful that we were at the show. You can't ask for anything more!

I acknowledge and appreciate every SEWMG member who was involved in this year's show for your efforts large and small. Without the teamwork of our volunteers, we would never be able to stage something as professional and informative as the 2025 Successful Container Gardening booth. My sincere gratitude to you all.



Ebert's Greenhouse Village Tour

by MGV Jane Browne

On March 13th 18 SEWMG members and 9 guests were greeted by Mark and Renee Ebert. Our event started with Mark telling us the history of how Ebert's was started. In 1915 Mark's grandparents bought the family farm which stands on their current property. After the death of his grandfather, Mark's father, at the age of 15 took over the farm with his mother. They worked the farm until 1959, sold the cows and 40 acres of farmland and kept 40 acres. In 1978 a greenhouse was constructed out of wood, cardboard, and plastic. In that crude greenhouse, tomatoes, peppers, marigolds, and geraniums were grown and sold to friends, neighbors and family. Mark told us that he would get up at 5:30 a.m. and weed the gardens for an hour and a half before going to school. In 1990 Mark and his brother purchased the greenhouse from their father. Mark grew the vegetables and his brother sold them. Today they market high quality plants, with a focus on annual flowers and geranium basket combos.

After dividing into two groups our tour started. My first stop was the perennial house managed by perennial specialists Robin White and Deb Moosreiner in their potting and sorting area.

Perennials for the 2025 season were purchased in August of 2024. They all came in bulk form and bare root. Perennials are matched with the correct pot, labeled and priced. Before planting they have to make sure the correct part of the bare root is pointing up. After the flowers sprout, they are placed on the sunny or shady side of the greenhouse, depending on the variety, cultivar, and greenhouse temperature. These plants are moved 3 more times outside to sun or shady areas of the greenhouse before being placed on the sale tables.



Our next stop was a smaller greenhouse that is maned by Mike Timm, one of the horticulturists. His role is planting all the vegetable and herb seeds. He is a super-hot pepper fanatic and trials dozens of varieties at Eberts. In this greenhouse seedling flats were rotated under special lights, plastic tents, and placed on tables with heating elements.

We then walked to our third stop, the large glass annual house, where Shelly Mallow told us about the planning, organizing, and planting of the annuals. This greenhouse was full of geranium baskets, coleus, begonias, and many others young plants. These annuals arrive as plugs and are inspected by staff, then transplanted into pots. They are rotated in this greenhouse according to size so cultivars would benefit from the correct amount of sun and air flow. Here we learned how the geraniums were planted and pruned to encourage flowering. Filler annuals were added, each basket or pot a different combination.

This greenhouse also houses their tropical collection. Prior to them entering the greenhouse, the foliage is dipped in a solution to remove potential sources of disease or insects. The soil is also specially treated.

Eberts uses beneficial insects from the US and Mexico to treat harmful insects in their greenhouse. They have one member of their team that frequently inspects all their plants for diseases and insects.

Our last stop was a room that housed the "soil bailer," a piece of equipment that automatically fills pots and trays with soil, then water the trays.

It was a beautiful sunny day and toasty warm in the greenhouse. Thank you Mark and Renee Ebert for sharing your amazing story and greenhouses with us.



A Seed is Just a Seed --- Right?

by MGV Cheryl Lausten

As gardeners, we are encouraged to plant native plants, but do not assume all natives are equal. It is not just about planting any native plant; it is about planting the right native plant for your specific location. Even within a single species, native plants can have different genetic variations depending on their location. Look at the specific soils, topography, and climate of your selected location.

When choosing plants, we should consider local genomes, or ecotypes. These local native plants are the result of generations of adaptation to a specific environment. They possess the genetic traits necessary to thrive in your area's unique climate, soil, and ecological conditions. Think of it as a "hometown advantage" for plants. An effective method to determine the native plants best adapted to your property, is to visit nearby natural areas with similar conditions.

These local genomes matter because they are tailored for survival in a specific environment. They have deep, extensive root systems, vital for soil health, erosion control, and carbon sequestration. These robust root systems are key to mitigating climate change, maintaining healthy watersheds, promoting water filtration and aquifer recharge, and improving water quality.

Local genomes have evolved alongside local pollinators, creating intricate relationships that are essential for biodiversity. Using local genotypes ensures that these vital connections remain intact. Many insects have evolved to only be able to eat specific plant species, and local genomes help maintain that balance.

Local genomes contribute to ecosystems' overall resilience. Ecosystems are better equipped to withstand environmental

stressors such as drought, pests, and disease. These plants also naturally create plant communities that use underground mycorrhizal networks to share resources.

Introducing non-local genotypes can disrupt local gene pools, potentially weakening native plant populations. Prioritizing local genomes helps to preserve the genetic integrity of native plant communities.

In areas recovering from wildfires, local genomes are essential for successful restoration. They are adapted to the post-fire environment and can help to stabilize soil, prevent erosion, and facilitate natural regeneration.

Using local genomes in your garden will increase the survival rate of your plants and reduce the need for pesticides and fertilizers. "Wisconsin Native Plants-Recommendations for Landscaping and Natural Community Restoration" found on the Wisconsin DNR website, is a reliable source of further information on the use of localized native plants.

Where to find local genomes:

- Native Plant Nurseries:
Seek out nurseries that specialize in native plants and prioritize the use of local genotypes.
- Seed Collection (with permission):
If done ethically and with permission, seed collection from local native plants can be a valuable source of local genomes.
- Native Plant Societies:
Connect with local native plant societies for expert advice and resources.

Planting local genomes is just another aspect of the right plant in the right place. By understanding and prioritizing local genomes, we can unlock the full potential of native plants and create healthier, more resilient ecosystems for generations to come.

Habitat for Humanity Plant Share

by Susan Miller, Milwaukee District Garden Club

Spring is here and the Milwaukee District Garden Club is beginning to plan the 2025 Habitat for Humanity Plant Share. Last year the event was a huge success. Annuals, perennials, vegetables, household plants, soil, and gardening tools were given to 116 families. Perennials were a huge hit, especially hostas!

Plant Share will be held this year on June 7th at the Habitat for Humanity building located at 3726 N. Booth St. We need many plants so your donations will be greatly appreciated. We can pick up your donations or you can bring them to the Booth Street address on June 5th or 6th. Volunteer on June 7th to help homeowners select plants and explain how to plant and take care of plants. Hours are 9 a.m. to noon.

If you have questions or need items picked up, contact Susan Miller at sk8trmom@yahoo.com.





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Our Mission Statement

"We are Master Gardeners who serve as a resource in the art and science of gardening to cultivate community connections."