



Favorite Garden Tools

by Good Earth News Editors

Here's a new feature for Master Gardeners: Please share your favorite garden tool with others through the Good Earth News. Tell us why you like the tool and attach a photo. The deadline for the next issue is April 1. Forward your article to Sandy Manning (SandyManning@gmail.com) and Janet Wintersberger (jhw53045@gmail.com)

Brad Terp's Favorite Tools

One of my favorite newer tools is the Radius Garden 22311 Root Slayer Nomad. It is lightweight, a little over two pounds, with an inverted V shaped steel blade, and root cutting rip-saw teeth, providing the ability to easily slice through roots and small vegetation with great ease. It is easily found online for about \$44.



The other indispensable garden tool is the multipurpose, flexible tub. I have them in every size and several different colors. I prefer the Red Gorilla brand, which can be sourced direct from their warehouse in Minnesota, but many garden catalogs also offer their products. Buying direct means they offer discounts throughout the year. They are made in Spain, so sometimes the warehouse may be out of certain colors. Because they are flexible, and very strong, I use them for mixing soil, potting up plants, carrying water, weeds, leaves, transplants, and for harvesting vegetables. They are easily washed out. As they are flexible, I can squeeze the sides together to form a spout, making it easy to pour water or soil out. Honestly, I don't know how I got along this far in life without an arsenal of these. Further the handles are built-in and they can be nested and stored and hung over a hook when not in use.



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Getting Ready for Spring

by MGV Kelly Kramer

When the temps are starting to warm up, but it's still not time to get full into outside garden work, it's a good time to go over your garden needs for the season. I find when everything is ready and prepped it makes it easier to head full into spring garden work. Every year I put together a spring prep list to work on over the winter months.

Here are my **10 tips** for getting ready for spring garden work.

- 1) **Go through seeds and seed starting materials.** March and April are good months to start growing seeds indoors. Make sure all containers are clean and sanitized. I like to use new seed starting soil mix each year. If you use grow lights set them up and test the lights and any timers.
- 2) **Inventory garden materials.** Look at garden gloves, knee pads, plant markers, tools, basket liners, pots, etc. Make note of anything that needs replacing. Wash gloves or replace them if they are very worn. My favorite garden gloves for general weeding are cotton gloves with a grippy rubber coating on the palms and fingers.
- 3) **Clean garden tools.** This is so important. I clean tools after each use but the end of the season my tools get a deep clean, blades get sharpened, and oiled. Tools work so much better when clean and sharp.
- 4) **Wash/sterilize containers and pots.** In fall I usually find time to give my containers a good blast of water from the hose to remove most of the soil. Then I set them aside for a deep clean. If I can do this in fall great, if not it's done over winter. I give the pots a good scrub with a mild bleach solution, let them air dry.

5) **Prepare your body for garden work.** If you're not already doing this, start the habit of doing slow gentle stretches every day to get your body ready for garden work. Then tell yourself not to overdo the first few work days of spring.

6) **Update a garden journal or log book.** A record of your garden is a wonderful reference to have. Not only to list the variety of plants but notes on what worked and what didn't. Make note on new plants you'd like to try.

7) **Outdoor field trip.** After the snow melts take a walk in your garden and assess any damage from the weather and/or animals. Make a note if pruning or replacing is needed.

8) **Plan the veggie garden.** Whether you have a veg garden in containers, raised beds, or in the ground beds it pays to make a plan on what you want to plant this year. Then determine what seeds to direct sow and what seeds need to be started indoors.

9) **Research new plants.** If you're thinking of adding a new perennial, shrub, or tree to your garden this year you'll save a lot of time and money up front by doing research before you head into the nursery. Research the mature size, maintenance, light requirement, soil type, possible pests and diseases, etc. This allows you to make a good decision on the plant and add it to your shopping list for spring.

10) **Go through seed catalogs and old garden magazines.** Take a coffee break and go through seed catalogs and garden magazines. Keep only the ones you might find good for a reference and recycle the rest.

2024 Membership Committee

by MGV Susan Westergard

- The Membership Committee*
- Keeps a membership list and collects dues
 - Meets regularly to work on increasing and enhancing membership.
 - Creates opportunities for MGVs to connect with one another

Look closely behind the scenes of SEWMG and you will discover its Membership Committee, one of many committees conscientiously working to make the organization as effective for dedicated gardeners as possible.

Currently chaired by Betsy Vokac and including six more enthusiastic members, the Membership Committee is charged with keeping a membership list and collecting dues. It also meets regularly to work on increasing and enhancing membership.

A member survey in 2021 revealed, on a very high level, that members want to feel valued, included, and have positive interactions with each other. These are ideas that the Membership Committee could implement with help from members. In the future we can work on offering group outings, creating specific interest groups, developing a welcome program for new members – all focusing on the idea of connectivity and inclusivity, something our members desire from SEWMG.

From the little things, like following a dues payment with a thank you note to organized gatherings, the committee works to

engage members. For existing members, the committee has been holding Neighborhood Gatherings to create opportunities to connect with each other. A variety of locations, times, and days of the week have been implemented: Milwaukee's east side, Waukesha, Bay View; afternoon, evening; weekdays and weekends, for example.

Activities at these gatherings have included sharing garden catalogs, chatting about favorite places to volunteer and gardens to visit, getting to know each other, and of course, enjoying delicious snacks. Each gathering has been well attended, and more gatherings are in the works for Menomonee Falls/Germantown and again in Waukesha.

Comments are always welcome to help engage, retain, and attract new members. Please feel free to contact any one of these committee members with your ideas.

Betsy Vokac, Heide Burns, Geneen Miresse, Eileen Quinlan, Nancy Schunk, Mercedes Vega and Susan Westergard

SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardeners - Strategic Plan

by MGV Jane Belanger

Organizational leaders realized that major changes within our partner organization would create a significant impact on our members and our association. In order to adapt and strengthen our group it was decided a new initiative needed development.

During 2020, SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardeners began a process to identify what is important to our organization. Sharing our knowledge and gardening skills, our time and effort with each other and people in our communities is important to us. We expect a fun experience, receiving and sharing science-based gardening information. We want to share our time and talents with everyone, with anyone.

The design phase was the next step, with concern to how actions and policies would involve and impact members, leadership and community connections. A specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based plan was created.

- This plan encompasses current communications methods and directed data management
- We will provide a safe, welcoming environment for new and experienced gardeners is a high priority.

- We will expand member involvement and opportunities in gardening, education, and community outreach.
- Operational excellence was addressed with a Bylaw revision and annual reviews
 - Leadership roles were better defined and a process of revision of outlined. Succession procedures were created.
 - Insurance costs were reviewed and adjusted
 - Financial management occurs at regular intervals with an annual audit. Reports are available to all members. A reference manual was created for the Treasurer's role

As we move forward, using all procedures and policies, we will ensure that we encourage diversity, equality, accessibility and inclusion (DEAI) in all activities and interactions.

The final two steps are to Build and Manage. This work began last year and will continue this year and into the future.

This is a very short summary of a the SEWMG Strategic Plan found on our website under the Membership heading.

Strategic Planning Action Items

by Communications Committee

Communications Committee

- Develop social media posts explaining the process of becoming a Master Gardener and SEWMG membership.
- Send reminders about Certification

Education

- Speaker's Bureau support from social media
- Farmers Market info table (goal is ten per year)
- Annual One Day Garden Conference
- Share SEWMG.org at each event & presentation

Membership

- Informal member gatherings by neighborhoods
- Regular member surveys
- Welcome program for new members

Information Technology

- Develop storage system for data, photos, videos

Internal/External Communications

- Newsletter and website key source of member information

Social Media

- Develop a calendar to highlight membership, education, projects, SEWMG, etc.
- Support Speaker's Bureau

Trips & Tours

- Host outings in spring or fall

General

- Develop special interest groups
- Develop gardening interest groups
- Establish guidelines for use of photos, logo, letterhead, etc.

Public Outreach

- Conduct an urban study of non-profit organizations for horticultural support

Volunteer Organizations

- Post list on website
- Highlight one organization in each newsletter
- Share SEWMG.org
- Deliver SEWMG annual report to organizations
- Donations to organizations were voted out
- Develop a guide on how to work with partner organizations

Operational Excellence

- Bylaws were revised with a requirement of annual review
- The insurance policy was reviewed and updated
- The Finance Committee and the board drafts an annual budget with consideration to our mission, vision, values and strategic plan. The budget is approved by membership which is then posted on the website
- A reference manual was created for the treasurer's position (Treasurer's Toolkit) to detail financial processes.
- New board members are provided copies of the Bylaws, budget, position descriptions and expected practices. Job descriptions are updated annually before passing on to new officers. Binders and flash drives are transferred to new officers. Board members to communicate monthly with committee chairs who are invited to board meetings to cover relevant topics.
- Board members are tasked with regular review of policies, procedures, Bylaws, etc. to integrate and monitor Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion establishment (DEAI) and progress.

President's Letter

by MGV Jane Belanger



As gardeners, we certainly are subjected to change. We face weather changes ranging from over a hundred degrees to freezing temps, wet, rainy stretches to drought conditions, watching for an early spring or facing night time temperatures below 50 degrees well into June. We definitely see it all. As Master Gardeners we research, we adapt and we make changes.

As SEWMG Master Gardeners our group has had to adapt to many membership changes as well. Extension revamping their master gardening model forced many adaptive conversations. We are and will continue to make changes to protect a group we enjoy, an activity we love and a program we know is respected.

With Ann Wied's retirement we lose access to the UW Extension's Listserv. Master Gardeners not members of our group also lose that access. Unless we are proactive and adaptive, we will no longer receive notices of volunteer and continuing education opportunities. We will also lose a connection to new Master Gardeners to invite them to join our group.

The first step we are taking to address these issues is to create a volunteer site list that we can post on our website with the name of their best contact, email address, phone number, the site's physical address and hours available for volunteering, etc. This list will have a search feature. The next step is the creation of a second Google email list for members and nonmembers to subscribe to that will be dedicated to volunteer and continuing education notices. As you may know we invite nonmembers to help at The Home and Garden Show and The State Fair. This second list will control duplicate messaging on the same subject. We will continue to adapt as we attempt to grow our membership.

A second topic I would like to address is Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion. As a group we need to rethink our approach to how we interact with each other. When a new person joins a social event, a meeting or gardening group, introduce yourself, welcome them, ask their name.

If you need to lift something heavy don't look around for the person who looks like they could handle it, find a tool or a second person to help lift or admit you can't do it and ask for help.

I have lower back pain, so ideally, I should have recommended by now that we have stools available during the State Fair for volunteers. Yes, we have benches but I feel we come across as "lazy" or "unapproachable" sitting that low.

If you volunteer in a garden and theft is an issue don't post signs targeting specific backgrounds. Find or create something that relays the message universally, like the one below.



As gardeners, we certainly are subjected to change. As Master Gardeners we research, we adapt and we make changes.

With Ann Wied's retirement we lose access to the UW Extension's Listserv. Master Gardeners not members of our group also lose that access.

We will create a volunteer site on our website with the details about Madison approved partners.

We will also create a Google email list for members and nonmembers to subscribe to that will be dedicated to volunteer and continuing education notices. We will continue to adapt as we attempt to grow our membership.

As a group we need to rethink our approach to how we interact with each other. Be welcoming to someone you meet. If you need help lifting an object, don't assume someone who looks strong is capable of doing it. He or she may have physical limitations. Ask first.

The Social (Media) Side of Gardening

by MGV Margaret Krueger

In little more than a decade, the impact of social media has gone from being an entertaining extra and a way to connect with friends, to a fully integrated part of nearly every aspect of daily life. Just as quickly, social media has insinuated itself into politics, the workplace, home life, and yes, even gardening!

These days, traditional garden tools, spades, rakes, shears and watering cans are essential but one of the most powerful gardening tools you may have is not in your potting shed at all. It's social media. With social media, you can watch a YouTube video on how to prune your roses. You can take a photo of your prized Dahlias to share on Facebook. You can follow garden influencers like Melinda Meyers on Instagram. You can instantly visit gardens from all over the world. You can join a Facebook community to share garden information, tips, ideas as well as glean more garden inspiration than you could possibly imagine!

More than ever before, we're using social media platforms to become better, smarter and more publicly engaged gardeners.

SEWMG uses both Facebook and Instagram to share our gardening knowledge and create awareness about what we do. We let people know about area garden events and provide university, research based gardening information. We work to dispel gardening myths and we even toss in a little humor! Most of all, we share what SEWMG is doing in the community and encourage people to join us.

If you aren't already following us, please do! You can find SEWMG on Facebook at SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardeners and on Instagram at @sewisconsinmastergardeners. Please also share our posts to help grow our social media presence as a powerful and effective outreach tool, sharing what Master Gardeners do and how we serve our communities in valuable ways!

Cicadas are Coming---Lots of Them!

by MGV Cheryl Lausten

2024 promises to produce a record number of periodical cicadas. This spring, two broods of the insect will surface together after living years underground. The dual emergence could produce more than one trillion cicadas in roughly a 16-state area.

Periodical cicadas are native to the eastern and central United States and occur nowhere else in the world. They have an unusual life cycle, spending either 13 or 17 years underground as a nymph, then emerging only for a few weeks in which they reproduce and die. There are seven species of cicada, three of which have 17-year life cycles, and four which have 13-year cycles. Each emergence is referred to as a brood and is designated by a Roman numeral. There have been 13 broods of 17-year cicadas and five broods of 13-year cicadas recorded.

This spring, for the first time since 1803, two cicada groups, brood XIX or the Great Southern brood and brood XIII or the Northern Illinois brood, are set to appear at the same time. The largest number of insects will be seen where these broods overlap, primarily Southern Wisconsin and Northern Illinois. The simultaneous emergence of a 13-year brood and a 17-year brood only happens every 221 years, and the next will not happen until 2245. Nobody alive today will witness this dual emergence again, so you don't want to miss it!

Nymphs live in the soil at depths of 2 to 24 inches where they feed on sap from tree roots. In May or June of an emergent

year, after the soil temperature reaches 64°, they burrow to the surface, exit the ground, and crawl up tree trunks or other upright objects. There they molt one last time and become winged adults. About 10 days after emergence, males begin their mating song by vibrating a membrane on the sides of their bodies. This is the incredibly loud sound these insects are known for. After mating, females deposit eggs on twigs and branches of various trees and woody shrubs. Each female can lay 400 to 600 eggs. Adult periodical cicadas live for only three to four weeks and after mating and laying eggs, they die. The eggs hatch in six to eight weeks and the white ant-like nymphs drop to the ground and enter the soil where they feed on fluids from plant roots for the next 13 (or 17) years.

The cicadas need stands of large, mature, deciduous trees to survive, especially oaks, maples, and apples. They do not usually deposit eggs in coniferous trees. Thankfully, these insects do not sting, bite, spread disease or harm any vegetation. Cicadas are considered an important link in the food chain by providing a protein rich feast for small predators giving those animals a population boost. In addition, they benefit the ecosystem by aerating the soil with their burrows and providing nitrogen to the soil as their bodies decay.

They are an excellent fertilizer so don't discard those that end up in your yard!

Meet the Board

Compiled by MGV Sandy Manning

Jane Belanger, President

As president of SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardeners I recognize that my most important responsibility is to represent our members. I am very serious about maintaining a strong, stable and respected organization while moving us forward in our space with all the tools available to us.

I'm excited to problem solve with the board and SEWMG members.

Like most of you, I became a Master Gardener to gain knowledge for a hobby I love. I didn't see leadership in my future - been there, done that. However, having said yes to the three year president's track, when asked, I decided I'd better jump in with both feet. Last year I was on the Strategic Planning, Membership, Finance and Audit committees. I gardened at State Fair, the Garden District Neighborhood gardens and the Conservancy for Healing and Heritage. I was part of a few "firsts" for me - we planted a butterfly garden, I grew 350 mums from plugs and a group of us tackled buckthorn removal.

I seriously respect the members I've worked with. As volunteers they maintain a high level of professionalism.



Jackie Kirchen, President Elect

While relatively new to the MG world, I joined SEWMG two years ago and am eager to learn more from this fantastic community. I'm impressed by the organization's strong foundation and dedicated members. I'm most excited to focus on bolstering member support and education, enhancing outreach and awareness, and optimizing our operational and fundraising efforts. Though I haven't yet served on any committees or boards, I have attended the member meeting and have begun to establish valuable connections with leadership and fellow members. I'm eager to roll up my sleeves and contribute directly to the organization's continued growth and impact.



Gineen Miresse, Secretary

I've been a Master Gardener since 2012. During this time, I found my way into different areas of service from being a greeter at Boerner Botanical, volunteering at WI State Fair, Senior Days at Milwaukee County Zoo, The Garden Cart at Boerner Botanical and for the last five or six years, I've been putting up displays at Boerner botanical in the lower level of visitors' center with fellow Master Gardener, Kristie Kroenig.

There's so much to learn about the SEWMG program, and that is what intrigued me most about taking on the role of secretary. I feel I will have the opportunity to learn more about the organization. This is my first board position.

Belinda Brocker, Treasurer

Belinda is continuing her second year of a three-year term. She is responsible for maintaining our financial records. Belinda and other members help develop the budget for the next year. In her role, Brenda's role is essential to our organization.

Mercedes Vega, 3rd Year Director

My motivation to join the Board comes from other community organizations for years that provided engagement with others having similar interests, serving in Community, and having fun.

Immediately joined the Membership committee to brainstorm how to connect members knowing our membership spans miles between Counties. The birth of neighborhood Meet n Greets, provides an avenue to engage others with similar interests, discuss opportunities to serve our Communities, and have FUN.

Today, I continue to seek out opportunities to serve my Community engaging with others similar in interest, the Board has provided this avenue.

Meet the Board

by MGV

I believe the most important accomplishment I've added to the SEWMG is being present as an active interested member, assisting with future growth of the organization.

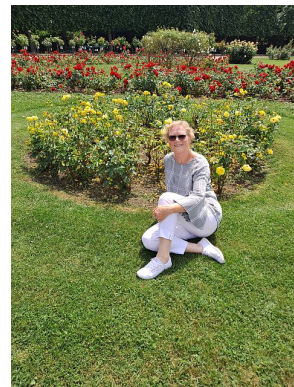
Sandy Potter, 2nd Year Director

What excites me most about serving on the Board is being on the ground floor. My first year in SEWMG we were still a part of the University of Wisconsin-Extension. My second year was when we were trying to get our footing in place as a self-sufficient organization. We have come a long way, and I expect that we will continue to grow and become stronger.

I have been on the Audit Committee, first as a Member-at-Large, and last year as a Director. I have also been on the Finance Committee.

I have volunteered at the Franciscan Villa and Oconomowoc Arts Center in the past. I also put in an Adoration garden with a water feature at St. Anthony on the Lake Parish in Pewaukee. All of these are approved gardens. This past year I was involved with the Humane Animal Welfare Society of Waukesha County (HAWS) working in the garden there. I have also volunteered in the Pollinator Garden at the Milwaukee County Zoo.

The value, for me, has been being on the ground floor and helping form policy that will allow us to become a strong, productive organization for the benefit of our respective communities.



Thomas Johnson, 1st Year Director

Thomas has a deep-rooted passion for gardening and a lifelong commitment to community service and is excited to contribute to the growth and success of SEWMG. He brings a wealth of experience to the Board, having been a Master Gardener Volunteer since 2017, and an active member of SEWMG for 6 years. During this time, he volunteered for various committees and events, attended educational workshops, and helped with many programs that enriched the knowledge of fellow gardeners in the community. These experiences provided him with a profound understanding of our organization's mission and values.

Outside of SEWMG, Thomas has a background in production and operations management, finance, sales, project/event planning, board and committee membership, mentoring, and volunteering and all these experiences fueled his leadership, organizational, and communication skills. He describes himself as a person of integrity, honesty, humility, and "independent mindedness". He also has the means to handle complexity and ambiguity.

Ray Corn, At Large Board Member

I have been a MG for the last two years. I am excited to be more involved in the organization and assist wherever possible. I have assisted with the Harvest for the Hungry at Firefly Ridge, revitalizing the perennial and rose gardens at the Sharon Lynn Wilson Center and participated in educational opportunities at the State Fair gardens and realtors home show. I attended my first Holiday get together this past December and met a lot of new people. I look forward to helping steer the association into the future.



Carol Belonger, At Large Board Member

I feel like a lifelong Master Gardener Volunteer having taken my first training class in 1997. Throughout my time I have volunteered for many different projects exploring my interests and discovering where I can make an impact. I find my favorite events are things like the Home and Garden Show, State Fair, and our past plant sale where I can answer questions and pass on the information I have learned to others. Over the years I also learned that life happens and constantly changes our involvement and commitment within the Association. As a new member of the board, I hope to use my experiences to find ways to retain the members that we have, increase engagement and help us grow in the future.



Garden Vision

by MGVs

Connie Byrne

As we move closer to Spring with its warm breezes, hopeful green tulip sprouts, and sunnier days, excitement grows in our hearts and we long to get our hands and shovels in the soil. Like other gardeners, I keep myself busy during the grey months of winter by reading and researching, making a list of changes to be made in my gardens and yard.

Warmer temperatures and spreading drought have impacted ecosystems and much of wildlife is struggling to cope. This has made me consider with greater urgency what I could do that would make a difference for wildlife in my little corner of the world. I've decided that, as I'm honing my Change List for 2024, I'll be giving more weight to native and drought tolerant plants.

My first priority is always our Bird Garden, so called because the garden incorporates our bird feeding stations. The thirty by nine foot garden edges our backyard patio and is a special place for inspiration, even in our snowy, sleety winter. The full sun garden was created when we moved into the house three years ago, and I've been amending soil and plantings ever since.

Our first planting was a contorted filbert tree. While not a native, its lovely twisting branches have been a beautiful permanent structure and the perfect spot for birds to land and pose for pictures while surveying available food. A large pink butterfly bush and a ninebark anchor opposite ends of the garden, providing nectar for pollinators and hiding spots for birds. In the middle are a small fish pond that hosts water lilies and miniature spearwort, and a large wooden pyramid that provides support for a vigorous Bees Jubilee clematis. Plants that fill out the garden are a mix of natives and cultivars, including calamint, lavender, hyssop, butterfly weed, cone flowers, hollyhocks, penstemon, nodding pink onion, spiderwort, and an aster.

The aster, calamint, and lavender, which are in the front of the garden, have made it to the top of my Change List since they've become overly exuberant in the last year. I love them and they are powerful pollinator magnets, but one of my first chores this spring has to be to remove, split, and transplant them all. Emptying this whole area will allow me a chance to see where I might add some more natives. Plants that I'm considering are those that can thrive with less water like the wild blue lupine, purple poppy mallow, and hoary vervain. I'll have to wait until I remove the existing plants to decide which of these will be right for this spot.



In the meantime, I'm continuing to leaf through my plant and wildlife books, sharpening my tools as well as my list, making more ecologically responsible plans for this year or next, and watching nature slowly awaken our Bird Garden to the warmth of another Spring.

Janet Wintersberger

In 2023 I refreshed the foundation planting at my condo. Over the years, all that had survived were two boxwood shrubs and a Limelight Panicle Hydrangea. My goal was to have something blooming throughout the season. I added two shrubs on either side: a Wine and Roses weigela and a rosy-pink hibiscus on one side, and a small lilac and a rosy-pink Summerific hibiscus on the other. For contrast, I added a Sun King aralia (chartreuse) between the two boxwoods.

The garden bed narrows closer to my door. I intermixed deep purple coral bells and pink profusion salvia to echo the colors in the longer and deeper section of the bed.

Last year's record-high temperatures presented rough growing conditions for the first-year plants. We'll see what spring brings.

Jane Belanger

This is the second winter that I look out at my yard with my puppy paths shoveled around the perimeter and I picture ground covers, low growing pollinators and herbs in the center area. This has been a grassy area with so much year-round activity the plan for this spring is new sod. The last sod planting had a five-year survival. Switching it out to a garden bed will require hardy varieties, pet safe plants and the availability of back-up plants. Whichever plan I go with there will still be ball chasing, critter tracking and leg lifting. (Herbs in the center of the bed please.)

Sandy Manning

This is the year to honor three of the people we have lost recently. My twenty year old River Birch finally gave up its battle with alkaline soils, the ash tree in the back yard lost its crown to borer and the Village decided there was only one way to prune one of my street trees, and that was at ground level. This spring I look forward to a new Yellowwood for my husband Steve, a Hackberry for my father-in-law, and a Redbud for my father. It will be great to see them grow over the years reminding us all of the family that went before us.

2024 Realtors Home & Garden Show

by MGV Valorie Sangsland

SEWMG will again be educating the public at the Realtors Home & Garden Show at the Wisconsin State Fair Park Expo Center in March. This year our booth topic is Native Plants, and the Home and Garden Show organizer was so impressed with the engaged crowds at our booth last year and positive comments by show visitors regarding last year's SEWMG speakers at the Solutions Stage that she tripled our complimentary booth space, providing us two large booths separated by a walkway directly inside the West Entrance of the Expo Center and in front of the huge Aquatica pond exhibit.

Because of our larger footprint, we are also offering an additional volunteer opportunity on every shift so we can comfortably staff both booths. The Display Committee worked most of the winter creating a brand-new display on the topic of Native Gardening, and this year we're offering advanced access to topical brochures so that volunteers can brush up on Natives prior to the show and are offering a Zoom training exclusively for show volunteers on Natives as well. Both will count for Continuing Education (CE) hours. We will also be welcoming members of local Wild Ones chapters as guests in our booth during several shifts.

The Display Committee has created a brand-new display on the topic of Native Gardening. This year volunteers will have advanced access to topical brochures so they can brush up on Natives prior to the show. Show volunteers will also have exclusive access to Zoom training on Natives.

Event Dates & Times:

Friday, March 22: 10am – 8pm
Saturday, March 23: 10am – 8pm
Sunday, March 24: 10am – 5pm
Monday, March 25: CLOSED
Tuesday, March 26: CLOSED
Wednesday, March 27: 4pm – 8pm
Thursday, March 28: 4pm – 8pm
Friday, March 29: 10am – 8pm
Saturday, March 30: 10am – 8pm

This year SEWMG Speakers Bureau members will also be making five presentations at the Solutions Stage, and as of this writing we have recruited two Wild Ones Members to present as well. It is our hope that these Speakers will direct additional visitors to our booth to answer gardening questions and provide supplemental resources should they want to start or expand a native garden. Watch for the Solutions Stage schedule in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and be sure to stop by and support our speakers.

I hope to see many of you volunteering in the booth again this year doing what we do best: sharing research-based horticultural information while having fun and sharing your love for gardening. We couldn't do this without you!

News from the County Extension Office

by Ann Wied, UW-Madison Waukesha County Extension Outreach Specialist

Updated Wisconsin Horticulture Website

If you have not recently visited the UW-Madison Division of Extension Wisconsin Horticulture website, check it out. Staff have been busy updating it making it more user-friendly. Specifically visit: <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/free-online-programs/> All free online programs will be here. In the past the horticulture webinars and pollinator-themed online programs were on two different pages. I think you will find this new and improved website helpful! By the time you read this, it should include free upcoming March and April programs too. Be sure to share these free program opportunities with your family, friends, and neighbors. These are open to the public.

Master Gardener Website - A Helpful Place to Visit

I know that at times the Master Gardener Program can be very confusing. If you haven't visited it lately, visit the Wisconsin Master Gardener Program website. Specifically visit the "Toolbox" link on the menu bar. It has important information and links for current master gardeners. If you are having problems with the ORS or Canvas this should be your first place to visit. Check it out at: <https://mastgardener.extension.wisc.edu/toolbox-2/>

Thank You!

In late January, I shared the news I am retiring via an email, but for those who have missed it I will be retiring in mid-April. Over the years I have gotten to know many of you and for that I am grateful. Also, thank you to all of you helped me over the years on projects, at events, and with gardens. It was greatly appreciated! I am filled with gratitude for all of that you do as master gardeners and the wonderful memories I have working alongside you!

Last year I was able to visit a few of you at sites where you were volunteering, and I also attended the SEWMG picnic. It was great to see so many of you. Watch for an email from me by early April giving you guidance for when I leave. Milwaukee/Waukesha County Master Gardeners are the best!



The Green Cart

by MGV Polly Ryan

During the remaining minutes of a shift as a volunteer at the State Fair I had an opportunity to take advantage of a stool and to meet Beth Peterson “a Life Long” Master Gardener. As we chatted, my eyes were drawn to the herbs in a Raised Bed display. This cart was stunning! Herbs with thick green foliage and yellow marigolds. The yellow flowers captured my attention, a variety of herbs were growing, and signage matched the plant to its name and characteristics. Wow- what a lovely and informative display!

My “real volunteer” job was at the Heritage Garden at the Zoo. The Zoo Garden has a large green display cart that was relatively empty in comparison to the lush in-ground, culturally varied, garden beds. The members of the team often chatted about our relatively empty green cart, recognizing this as an opportunity to potentially attract attention to the gardens. Our dream was to create a display that would attract and educate people as they passed by the garden; an especially challenging job as Nelson lives within 20 feet of our garden. (Nelson is very charming Norwegian Fjord Horse).

Being relatively new I wondered.... What happens to the plants after the State Fair? Was there a way we could take advantage of this fantastic display that was already growing? Was sharing across gardens an option? Beth Peterson put me in touch with

Ann Loper, Chairperson of Life-Long Gardening, and the gardener of herbs in raised bed. I proposed the idea of bringing the herbs and flowers to the Zoo. Two days after the closing of the State Fair we moved the plants and flowers and signage from the State Fair to the bright green cart at the Zoo. Because of Ann willingness to share her work, the display was used for more than a single project and was located at the Heritage Garden door all summer and fall. It attracted attention and provided information. The plants loved their new location, caught the eye of many young and old. The plants continue growing lush providing their specific fragrance and taste.

I am sure our green cart was not the first to benefit from the work of others – but we are very grateful to Ann and we want to recognize and thank her for generously sharing her knowledge, and creativity.

So many ways things can be shared – our experience provides one small example. We thought it important to say thanks out loud and look forward to finding opportunities in the future opportunities to share.

Masters Gardener’s from the Heritage Garden in the Milwaukee County Zoo.



Perennial Plant of the Year

by MGV Janet Wintersberger

This year’s perennial plant of the year is a panicle phlox, Jeana. In mid-summer to fall the blooms are impressive, its habit is tall and sturdy, and it is a pollinator-magnet. Although the flowers themselves are smaller than the typical garden phlox, at its peak, the density of the blooms is attention-getting. ‘Jeana’ helps bridge the gap between earlier and later phlox. Reaching 5 feet tall when it’s in bloom, the dark green leaves are attractive when not in bloom.

‘Jeana’ is highly mildew resistant. Mix the plant with other tall plants or use it as a backdrop for shorter plants. Suitable in full sun in cooler climates or afternoon shade in warmer climates. This phlox prefers moist, fertile, well-drained soil. It dislikes dry conditions.

Avoid self-seeding by deadheading blooms; avoid powdery mildew through thinning. Deer and rabbits can be pests.





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