



President's Letter

by **MGV Mary Wolverton**

You may recall that in the January newsletter I explained that I was a reluctant president – called back to the board to avoid dissolving the organization. I knew this year would be difficult given the number of family challenges I was facing. As it turned out it was even more complicated than I thought it would be. Nonetheless I survived the year with the support of a number of amazing SEWMG Members.

I want to thank all your 2023 board members with special mention for several. Valorie Sangsland managed all the Board issues allowing me to focus on membership knowing that the organization would keep moving forward. Jane Belanger, our vice president, and Erin Napier, past president, were at my side to pick up the work whenever personal issues kept me occupied. Betsy Vokac, our secretary, answered every question I had about members and took over the task of social events with her neighborhood get-togethers (and my thanks to those to who stepped up to host). Belinda Brocker, our treasurer, got checks issued and prepared financial reports when I needed them.

I started the year working with Susan Taylor on reinventing the Speaker's Bureau as an SEWMG project. Susan stuck with it working with a tech-savvy team to get our PowerPoints edited. With

Laurie Baker's help we recorded a new speaker training video and Susan got her speaker team through the training and out into the public to make presentations.

Susan McDonell was patient and responsive to my multiple requests to edit the website.

A task I hadn't anticipated was staffing tables at various area events. Thanks so very much to Ellen Grissom, Gary Ertel, Jane Belanger, Jim Fratrack, Kat O'Connell Valuch, Jennifer Lazewski, Kathy Bondar, Jim Gill, Nancy Adams and Laurie Keane for covering those requests.

Somehow I managed to continue to co-chair the State Fair garden due to the support from my co-chair Jim Fratrack and our fabulous team of gardeners.

Sandy Manning and Janet Wintersberger were diligent in reminding me to get these articles in and produce a useful newsletter for our membership right on schedule.

I feel like I'm writing an Oscar speech. I'm sure I've missed someone I couldn't have survived the year without. Please know that I really appreciated your support.

SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardeners

Annual Meeting

Saturday, November 11, 2023

10:30 a.m.

Retzer Nature Center

S14W28167 Madison Street

Waukesha

A Zoom connection will be available.

The Zoom link will be sent the week before the meeting.

Renew Your SEWMG Membership for 2024

by MGV Betsy Vokac

It's easy to renew your membership in SEWMG. The fee is \$20, which includes membership in both SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardeners (SEWMG) and the Wisconsin Master Gardener Program (WIMGA). Dues are payable by January 1, 2024.

To renew using the SEWMG website, click the MEMBERS tab at the top of the page, then select Forms from the drop-down

menu. You can click to pay using a credit card, debit card or PayPal. It's easy to pay this way, and it also saves time for the folks processing your dues.

If you prefer to mail a check, no worries. The application form is included in this newsletter. Or, click this link to bring up the information on your computer: <https://sewmg.org/forms>.



_____ **MEMBERSHIP DUES** _____
Year _____

Name (First, Last): _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Please indicate below any skills/special talents you might be willing to share with the organization:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Graphics/Displays | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Web Design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carpentry | <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> GoDaddy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching/Presentations | <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising | <input type="checkbox"/> MS Excel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing/Editing | <input type="checkbox"/> Event Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> MS PowerPoint |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media | <input type="checkbox"/> Web Surveys | <input type="checkbox"/> Photography/
Videography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | |

Annual dues is \$20.00 and includes membership in both SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardeners (SEWMG) and Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association (WIMGA). SEWMG will pay your WIMGA dues directly.

Make your check payable to **SEWMG** and mail to:

SEWMG Membership
P.O. Box 26453
Wauwatosa, WI 53226

We welcome all certified MGVs who volunteer in Milwaukee and Waukesha counties.

SEWMGs Annual Picnic

by MGV Karla Geiger, Committee Chair

The SEWMG Annual Picnic Committee was proud to host our 2023 event at a new venue this year, the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts. We appreciated the lovely covered, open-air patio on the windy evening and the beautiful air-conditioned great room with fireplace inside, for our pasta buffet. Over 100 members and guests attended and shared camaraderie and fellowship. An extensive silent auction was enjoyed, bid on, and raised well over \$1,000 for our group.

The committee always welcomes members to help with planning, organizing the silent auction and hosting this event that thanks our membership for the work they do in our greater communities. Please reach out to Karla Geiger, committee chair, at karla.geiger@greendaleschools.org if you might be interested.

Save the date for our 2024 event:
Monday, 7/29/24 @ 5 p.m. - 8 p.m.



- 2023 AUCTION AND DOOR PRIZE DONORS**
- Ballantine, Mary
 - Napier, Erin
 - Hile, Bernita
 - Gradsnik, Jan
 - Trader, Jeff
 - Keane, Laurie
 - Mainwaring, Carol
 - Neumann, Brenda
 - Nolan, Geri
 - Ocampo, Lou
 - Pawlak, Mark and Lindy
 - Petersen, Deb
 - Quinlan, Eileen
 - Redlinger, Fred and Mary
 - Slauson, Chris
 - Thieme, Diane
 - Toutenhoofd, Jean
 - Windau, Myrra
 - Wolverton, Mary
 - Ziccarelli, Rich and Ruta
 - State Fair Gardens

Photos from Laurie Baker and Karls Geiger

SEWMG Officers Needed

by MGV Erin Napier

Volunteers are the lifeblood of nonprofit organizations, bringing immense value and contributing to their success in various ways. I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the incredible impact of volunteers in SEWMG's work. Their unwavering commitment and selfless dedication have been the driving force behind our organization's success.

The Leadership Committee recruits and engages members that will go on to be Board Members. Finding high-performing board members who are passionate about SEWMG's mission is one of SEWMG's highest priorities. I find that there is something magical about volunteering on a board with other people – learning from them, sharing with them, and problem-solving with them.

Board members are the fiduciaries who steer the organization towards a sustainable future by adopting sound, ethical, and legal governance, and financial policies, as well as by making sure that SEWMG has adequate resources to advance its mission.

Board members also provide guidance to SEWMG by contributing to the organization's culture, strategic focus, and effectiveness, as well as serving as ambassadors and advocates.

By the time this newsletter is published, the Board will know a bit more about what the new year will look like in terms of its Board of Directors:

- The Leadership Committee has qualified some terrific candidates for Board seats, and we have no doubt that they will shine in their assignments. They bring so much to SEWMG, including fresh perspectives that will fuel our great organization for years to come.

- Currently (as of 10.1.23) we are still recruiting for key board seats – and without those roles, the Board will turn to the SEWMG bylaws for next steps.

Amidst my hopeful outlook for our organization that has overcome and accomplished so much over the years is that we can go on for another 30 years of incorporation with enhanced organizational capacity and volunteer engagement. The time has come to push forward and move into new horizons while also honoring and sustaining what is already good about SEWMG. And we need each of you to up your SEWMG engagement to keep this organization going!



From the Board

by MGV Valorie Sangsland, Board Chair

As the weather begins to cool, and our gardens seek their winter rest, your SEWMG board has been hard at working planning for next year's new growth. We've sorted through budget requests, and crafted a budget recommendation to support SEWMG's activities in 2024. We completed work on the last phase of our Strategic Plan. We've communicated with many of our talented members soliciting additions to our 2024 board, as several of our current Board members' positions need to be filled next year in order for our association to move forward. We've set up technology innovations to take us to the next level and we've pared away unnecessary insurance expenses leaving those that better fit our current organization.

Sort of sounds like cutting back perennials in anticipation of winter, planting fall bulbs, reading seed catalogs, and evaluating and planning for the upcoming gardening year, doesn't it? That's why being a member of the SEWMG board is familiar territory for gardeners. Each of your board members has unique interests, strengths and talents that they graciously offer to the association for the betterment of all. I can't wait to see what great work 2024's Board will do for our association!

Board members aren't superheroes or business gurus. They're ordinary men and women who are willing to roll up their sleeves and work together to move the association forward no matter

what external forces are at play: the COVID-19 pandemic, shut-downs, Extension reorganizations, ever-changing messaging about the Master gardener program, loss of revenue sources. We survive because a diverse group of members decides to work together to do what it takes to move forward. Nothing less.

This quote attributed to Thomas Foxwell Burton sums it up, in my opinion:
"With ordinary talent, and extraordinary perseverance, all things are attainable."

It has been my honor to spend the last five years as part of the SEWMG Board. Starting with two years in the non-voting Assistant Treasurer role, followed by three years as a voting board member, with the most recent two years as your Board Chair, I have had the opportunity to learn much of the history of our association. I have learned the value that every board member brings to the table, and learned to cherish the energy and values of the many members who make up SEWMG. Thank you, all!

***"With ordinary talent, and extraordinary perseverance, all things are attainable." Thomas Foxwell Burton
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Maui Wildfire - Environmental Connections

by MGV Cheryl Lausten

Environmental scientists believe there is a direct correlation between biodiversity, climate change and the extreme natural events taking place worldwide. One such event is the devastating wildfire that took place in Hawaii on August 8, 2023. The direct cause of the fire is under investigation and there are many unanswered questions such as how a relatively small brush fire could grow out of control so quickly.

Environmentalists believe the answer lies at the intersection of two intertwined environmental crises, climate change and biodiversity loss. While not the cause of the fire, these environmental factors contributed to its rapid spread and intensity.

Biodiversity is the richness of all life on earth. It is the variability among living organisms from all sources, including diversity within species, and the ecological complexes of which they are part. Without a wide range of animals, plants, and microorganisms we cannot have the healthy ecosystems that we rely on to provide us with the air we breathe and the food we eat. The biggest driver of biodiversity loss is the way in which people use the land and sea, including pollution, habitat loss, overexploitation of species and introduction of invasive species.

Climate change also has a significant role in the decline of biodiversity. It has altered marine, terrestrial, and freshwater ecosystems around the world. Global warming has caused the loss of local species and allowed invasive species to flourish. The risk of species extinction increases with every degree of warming. Overall, climate change

affects the health of ecosystems, influencing shifts in the distribution of plants, viruses, animals, and even human settlements.

So, what were the factors in Hawaii? The theory is a direct correlation between global warming and a loss of biodiversity on the island that allowed an overwhelming growth of invasive grasses. Hawaii suffered a great loss of biodiversity with the arrival of European explorers. Landowners cleared vast acres of native forests for sugar plantations and cattle ranching and later pineapple plantations. The once diverse forests were replaced with an agriculture monoculture. The loss of native species allowed the land to eventually become overrun with a non-native invasive African pasture grass. The changing climate in Hawaii has shown an increase in air and water temperatures coupled with decreased precipitation. Loss of native species and these climate conditions left large areas of non-native grasslands desiccated and vulnerable to wildfire.

Other unforeseen factors played a role in the massive wildfire, but researchers believe that the extensive dried invasive grasses provided the fuel to allow the fire to spread so rapidly and extensively.

This tragedy must be used as a learning opportunity to better understand the effects human actions have on the environment we are so dependent on. It is critical to address climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, together, to avoid a repeat situation occurring elsewhere and to secure a viable future.

Environmental scientists believe there is a direct correlation between biodiversity, climate change and the extreme natural events taking place worldwide. Biodiversity is the richness of all life on earth. The biggest driver of biodiversity loss is the way in which people use the land and sea, including pollution, habitat loss, overexploitation of species and introduction of invasive species. Global warming has caused the loss of local species and allowed invasive species to flourish. The risk of species extinction increases with every degree of warming. [The Maui Wildfire tragedy] is a learning opportunity to better understand the effects human actions have on the environment we are so dependent on. It is critical to address climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, together, to avoid a repeat situation occurring elsewhere and to secure a viable future.

Community Outreach: Our School Garden

by MGV Karla Geiger

Since the school year has begun, the Greendale HS District Garden has been welcoming and engaging students, families, and members of the greater community. Foods Classes collaborated with Our School Garden to harvest, prepare and serve healthy eating options at a community event. Brain health information was shared by the Greendale Health Department. Students that had attended the Summer Youth Community Gardening Camp, past Boy Scout Eagle Scouts that had contributed projects to the garden, and staff members that chose to donate furniture or more recently a little library near the garden entrance all attended and celebrated the beauty and tranquility of this outdoor learning and gathering space. Music students shared gifts as a string quartet to enhance the evening.

Middle School Earth Club students helped add garden beds and increase seating in preparation for more guests, like the

Greendale Park & Recreation students in the nature journaling class. Park & Rec collaborated to host a nature journaling class in the garden. The instructor shared information and left the students to meander the paths and sit a bit to observe and document the beauty of the garden. Bees napped, allowing to be sketched. Greendale School District Food Service collaborated to harvest winter squash and share samplings during lunches over Nutritious, Delicious Wisconsin Week. Such a great way to get students to try vegetables that are grown in the garden on campus.

Upcoming activities include hosting 2nd and 3rd grade Girl Scouts and celebrating the end of another season with Goodwill adult volunteers that have helped weed, water and mulch all summer. We look forward to our Fall Clean Up and Volunteer Thank You Celebration in November and planning for next growing season and inviting even more students, staff, families and community members into Our School Garden.

Rudbeckia for Fall

by MGV Kelly Kramer

This spring I started some Rudbeckia hirta “Cappuccino” from seed. Rudbeckia hirta is a short-lived perennial that is treated as an annual. Although I’ve heard they can sometimes last a year or so. Most garden centers bring them out with other fall plants.

The seeds need stratification (cold temps to mimic winter) so I kept the seeds in the refrigerator for two months before sowing in early April. The transplants went out into a raised garden bed in early June.

If I had any hope of keeping these plants for at least one year it was dashed when rabbits got into my raised bed and ate all but one of my plants. So fencing went up along with hopes that this one lonely plant would make it. And I was so glad it did! It started blooming in early September. I love the deep orange and burgundy flowers. The blooms are about 4 inches in size and the plants are about 18 inches tall.

My plan for next year is to grow more of these plants, carefully keeping them caged from the rabbits. Then I’ll swap out some of my summer annuals, those in tall containers, for these Rudbeckia hirta for a pop of fall color.

I’ve often grown summer annuals from seeds but this is the first time I’ve thought about growing fall annuals from seed. The seeds were purchased from Renee’s Garden www.reneesgarden.com



Seed starting Tips 101

by MGV Brad Terp

Every year at this time I am feeling relieved that the growing season is over and I can rest up a bit, but at the same time I am thinking about all of the plants that I want to have in my garden next year.

Being a bit on the experimental side, I like the idea of growing my own plants from seed, partly because it saves money, it allows me to have multiples of a plant, and most importantly it allows me to have something unique that is not normally found in garden centers. I always like to have a few unusual plants in my garden, always different from year to year.

I am fairly new at seed starting, after just finally having a garden at my home and having a community garden plot primarily for vegetables.

One method I have tried is planting seed inside under lights. I found this to be preferable for what I typically grow. Here is the list of items that helps assure success with this method:

- Heating mat - specifically for seed starting. Really works wonders to get seeds to germinate
- Grow lights - LED works great, doesn't get hot like its predecessor, nothing fancy is required. Menards sells a basic 23" tube version with a shade for about \$27 that works great under the Smart Electrician brand.
- Timer - the type used for lamps in your home is perfect
- Wire rack - anything here works fine, whatever type of rack system already exists in your home is good. The wire rack makes it easier to suspend the lights
- Pots/cell packs, tray with a plastic lid or a sheet of clear plastic works fine too
- Potting soil - preferable to use something without a starter fertilizer in it, and is fine enough for seeds.
- Grit - poultry grit found at farm supply store; not required but really helps with drainage, and for fine seeds, spreading grit on the soil top helps keep them separated. I add grit to the soil mix for seeds that require sharp drainage, like succulents, and Primulas
- Watering device with a fine spray head
- Painters tape and Sharpie - label each pot as the plants are potted

I research all of the seeds I'm growing to determine if they need light or dark to germinate. I also research if the seeds need cold/moist stratification, which can be accomplished by placing the pots/trays in plastic bags, and placing them in the refrigerator for up to 4-6 weeks generally is sufficient for most seeds. I generally can find good information online especially with many of the seed companies that I source from. It is very helpful to know how many days it takes from germination to

flowering, so seeds can be started at the right time. Lastly, it is also important to know if seeds require bottom heat or not. Some seeds when given bottom heat will go into a dormancy period and not germinate. All of this information is helpful to compile to provide the most success.

For seeds that do well with bottom heat, generally once germination occurs the bottom heat should be removed. It is only used as a push to encourage the seeds to break dormancy, for those that require it. You may only need one heat mat, which can be used for subsequent seed batches.

Covering the seed tray with the plastic cover or plastic sheeting is very helpful as well, until germination occurs, then it can be removed as necessary.

Once germination does occur, you'll need to pay attention to watering so the soil doesn't dry out, but too much water or standing water is not good either.

A very weak fertilizer solution can be used, after germination, but I generally wait a few weeks, and I only bottom water, so I don't risk getting the foliage wet, and this also helps ensure the root zone is getting moisture.

Light - generally young plants need about 14 hours of light per day, and about 10 hours of dark. The timer is handy so that it can be set and the lights come on every day at the same time, and off at the same time.

The light fixtures should be set so they are 1 - 2 inches above the new plants, and as the plants grow, the lights should be adjusted accordingly. You may not want to keep moving the lights, so consider placing a box or riser of sorts beneath the tray of seedlings and then different riser heights can be used so that the lighting fixture stays in place and only the tray of seedlings is adjusted.

Once the plants have their first set of true leaves, I will prick them out and place one plant per small 2.25 - 3 inch pot. Always handle the plant by leaves, not the stem. Leaves are replaceable, but a crushed stem is not.

I have used a number of different types of pots / trays to start seeds, and I generally have found that systems with a water reservoir are super handy so I don't have to worry about watering, but I also like to plant in small trays or larger 4 inch pots as that gives plants room to grow and it makes it easier to prick them out.

These are tips that have worked well for me. It seems like a lot of work, but once you have the key tools, it is worth it to have something you grew and that is probably hardier than what you can find in the garden center. Most importantly, you can have plants in your garden that most of your neighbors won't have and that are fun to watch and see what they do. Enjoy!

Annual Holiday Party

by MGVs Patty Witt and Diane Thieme, Co-chairs

It's time to get out your festive wear, everyone! Time for holiday cheer is fast approaching. Join your fellow master gardeners for an evening of good company, delicious food and drinks, and joyful celebration. Bring yourself (and a guest) to the annual holiday party which will take place on Wednesday, December 6, at Alioto's restaurant on Mayfair Road. Choose from three delicious entrées along with Italian bread, salad, dessert, and beverages. Take home a party favor. Enter to win

one of several door prizes, including some beautiful hand knit scarves made by Kay Shaffer, holiday décor, garden items, and more.

See the reservation form below for all the details, make your dinner choice, and send your check to Patty Witt by November 30, 2023. Let's end the year with an evening of friendship and celebration.



Come celebrate the Season Master Gardener Volunteer Holiday Party

Wednesday, December 6, 2023
Alioto's Restaurant
3041 North Mayfair Road
Near Corner of Burleigh Street
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin



6:00pm Cash Bar
7:00pm Dinner

MGVs \$31; You may bring 1 guest for \$31.

Yes, I will be attending _____
Print for Name Tag

Please include my guest _____
Print for Name Tag

Menu:

Self	Guest	
_____	_____	Petit Filet, au jus, Button Mushrooms & potato
_____	_____	Grilled, seasoned shrimp, vegetables, potatoes & cocktail sauce
_____	_____	Vegetarian Option – Eggplant Parmesan served over pasta



All Dinners include: Salad, Choice of Dressing, Italian Bread, Coffee, Tea or Milk and Sherbet

Make check payable to: SEWMG Holiday Party Reservation
Mail to: Patty Witt
16508 W. Melody Ct
New Berlin, WI 53151-9243

RSVP by November 30, 2023



News from the County Extension Office

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

Growing and Caring for Plants in Wisconsin: Foundations in Gardening – High Enrollment

The Growing and Caring for Plants in Wisconsin: Foundations in Gardening (Foundations) online course is the primary source of horticultural knowledge required for the Master Gardener program. Started in 2020, participation in this online program has increased each year. This year 611 people are registered. Since 2020, 4 optional Labs have been offered to give participants an opportunity to dig deeper into important course concepts. Lab participants have shared that the Labs provide an opportunity to also connect with instructors and others in the course. I have co-lead the Lab component since the course's inception. Lab registration ends at the end of this month.

While I do not have access to information regarding participant county for the main online course, I do have access to that information for the Labs. Presently we have 202 Lab registrations with 45 listing Milwaukee or Waukesha County as their county. So, we have at least 45 potential new Master Gardeners from this area. I am sure there are many others from our two counties that are registered for the Foundations course but are not participating in the Labs.

New Series of Mini Webinars to Begin October 31st

Three new online mini webinars will be held in late October and early November. All are FREE but registration is required. Please share with family and friends. These are open to the public. If you have been curious about the SEWMG Lifelong Gardening Project, check out the webinar on November 9th to get a glimpse of their work.

All are recorded if you cannot watch them live. Watch all three and earn 1.5 hours of Continuing Education (CE). In fact, if you need CE hours, check out the recordings of past webinars.

Debunking Houseplant Myths. It can be hard to separate fact from fiction, especially when it comes to plant care and pest prevention. Join us to discuss common misconceptions about your indoor plant care and learn the correct strategies to keep your indoor greenery thriving and healthy. Tuesday, October 31 at noon. Presented by: Johanna Oosterwyk, DC Smith Greenhouse Manager, UW-Madison.

Adaptive Gardening Tools – What to Think About for Success for Next Season. Here are some ideas of gardening tools that

will make your life in the garden easier and extend your time outside enjoying the weather. By using adaptive gardening tools you can care for your plants while reducing the chance of injury. Thursday, November 9 at noon.

Presented by: Ann Loper, Chairwoman of the Lifelong Gardening Project, SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardener (SEWMG) Association.

Growing Adenium (Desert Rose) – The Flamboyant Succulent.

Adeniums, or “Desert Roses,” are popular houseplants because of their structurally interesting shapes and abundance of flowers available in a diversity of colors. But, as succulents, they have special cultural requirements for care and maintenance. Join us to learn how you can successfully grow these plants and keep them thriving at home! Tuesday, November 14 at noon.

Presented by: Dan Mahr, Emeritus Professor and Extension Entomologist, UW-Madison, and Honorary Fellow and Past President, Cactus and Succulent Society of America.

Register for all at: <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/mini-webinars-for-gardeners/>

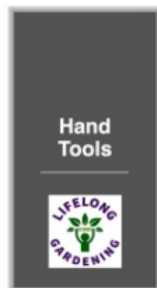
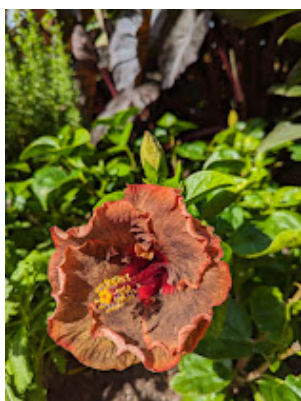


Photo Credit: Ann Loper



Photo Credit: Dan Mahr





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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."