



## New Committee on Education

by MGV Mary Wolverton

When asked why we became master gardeners many of us respond with “education” or “learning”. For that reason, the SEWMG Board has established a new ad hoc committee on education. This committee will create educational opportunities for SEWMG members as well as for the public.

The committee acts as an umbrella for existing programs that had been overseen by Extension and are now sponsored by SEWMG such as Speaker’s Bureau, Lifelong Gardening, Home Show, State Fair and Farmers’ Markets. The committee also covers longstanding SEWMG

programs such as Trips and Tours and In-House Education. The chairs of all those projects are committee members.

Members interested in helping with educational programs also serve on the committee. The committee is open to any member. If you are interested, please contact Mary Wolverton at marycassw@gmail.com.

Work thus far has involved getting the existing programs up and running under SEWMG as well as scheduling speakers for the three strategic planning idea sessions. We are working on programs for the next two member meetings.

Our wish list includes free-standing in-house education programs as well as a day-long conference for the public. The recent idea session on education gave us a number of great topics and ideas. Now our challenge is to turn them into reality. Help us if you can.

### **Help Expand In-House Education Programs**

*A new committee is being formed to enhance education opportunities for our members and the public. Many topics and ideas were discussed at a recent idea session on education. Join a committee challenged to turn them into reality. Contact Mary Wolverton at marycassw@gmail.com.*

## From the Board

by MGV Valorie Sangsland, Chair



As a member of SEWMG, I find myself in such good company. My fellow Master Gardener Volunteers, you are amazing! Gardeners nurture, edit, improve, and learn. Volunteers give freely of themselves with no expectation of payment. You are the best of the best because you take all that you have learned and share it with others. SEWMG is so lucky to enjoy your membership!

According to the Pointsoflight.org website “National Volunteer Week is an opportunity to recognize the impact of volunteer service and the power of volunteers to tackle society’s greatest challenges, to build stronger communities and be a force that transforms the world. Each year, we shine a light on the people and causes that inspire us to serve, recognizing and thanking volunteers who lend their time, talent, and voice to make a difference in their communities.” National Volunteer Week 2022 is April 17 – April 23. That week we celebrate you!

At the second Listening Session held March 9, the Strategic Planning Committee shared that

we have several SEWMG committees that need additional volunteers and/or chairpersons. To mention a few, these include the Education Committee, the Communication Committee, the Public Projects Committee, the Leadership Committee, the SEWMG Anniversary Committee, the Fund Development/Fundraising Committee. At the request of a member at that meeting, these committees will be posting descriptions of their committee activities on SEWMG.org to help you decide which might be the best fit for you. We will put out an announcement when those postings are complete.

I encourage each of you to review the list of committees and consider sharing your talents and ideas with one or more of them. SEWMG works to Cultivate Communities. Consider this a personal invitation to reach further and share your many gifts with our organization and with the public to build, cultivate and transform our communities.

***As a member of SEWMG, I find myself in such good company. My fellow Master Gardener Volunteers, you are amazing! Gardeners nurture, edit, improve, and learn. Volunteers give freely of themselves with no expectation of payment. You are the best of the best because you take all that you have learned and share it with others. SEWMG is so lucky to enjoy your membership! National Volunteer Week 2022 is April 17 – April 23. That week we celebrate you!***

# Spring Pruning Quick Tips

by MGV Brad Terp

As we head into the growing season this spring, one of the tasks that many of us are faced with is some general pruning especially for cleaning up the dead growth on perennials that either we didn't have time to do in the fall or we left it on for additional winter interest. Keep in mind that not only does old growth sometimes interfere with new growth, but it takes away from the freshness of spring renewal. In addition, removing old foliage can assist with removing eggs/larva of overwintering insects that you don't want to proliferate in your garden.

Don't forget to use clean, sharp pruning tools, and you may want to consider disinfecting your tools between cuts with alcohol or a 10% bleach solution if you are concerned with potentially spreading diseases.

Grasses – the old growth for grasses should be cut back to the crown. This task can be done when you begin to see new growth emerge as well if you wish to delay it.

Perennials – if you didn't clean up the foliage last fall, now is a good time to remove the foliage down to the base of the plant, making sure you aren't cutting any emerging new growth.

Spring flowering shrubs – many spring flowering shrubs have the flower buds already set, often set the previous season, even though you may not see the buds on the stems. Waiting until after the flowering period is best, so that the flowers are not cut off. Some shrubs may have already flowered such as forsythia, willows, witch hazels etc. These can be pruned now to shape your bush if you wish.

Other spring flowering bushes such as lilac, rhododendrons, azaleas, kerrias etc. should be pruned after flowering but don't wait too long as next year's buds are sometimes formed very soon after flowering.

There is an excellent publication from UW-Madison Extension on Shrub Pruning which goes into much more detail. It can easily be found on the Canvas website. Viewing the on-line publication will earn 2.5 CE hours.

Hydrangeas – this is always a tricky group because knowing when different varieties bloom, whether on new or old wood, is the key

to pruning at the correct time.

Panicle types – (*Hydrangea paniculata*) Limelight is a common variety. Blooms mid to late summer; its buds set on new wood in late spring to early summer.

Oakleaf types – (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) Flower buds set on old wood, meaning they are set the year before they bloom. Prune immediately after flowering.

Smooth – (*Hydrangea arborescens*) Annabelle is a common variety. Buds form on new wood, meaning the current season's growth, so pruning can be done in the fall or early spring, if you leave the flower heads on for winter interest.

Big leaf – (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) Blooms mid-summer; typically bloom on old wood, so the flower buds were set last year after flowering. Wait until after flowering this year to prune, but keep in mind some newer varieties also bloom on new wood. Prune immediately after flowering, unless it is a rebloomer, blooming on new wood. This is tricky, but perhaps you only will want to prune out dead branches.

Clematis – like hydrangeas, clematis are grouped into three classifications and knowing which group yours fall in, will tell you when the best time is to prune them. If you don't know which group yours fall into, then pay attention this year to when they bloom.

Group 1: *C. Montana*, *C. acropetal*, *C. alpine* are examples. Bloom in early spring, setting flowers on old wood only. Typically, only damaged stems or thinning is necessary and pruning to be done typically after flowering.

Group 2: examples include traditional large flowering hybrids like *Henry*, *Nelly Moser*, *Niobe*, *Ville de Lyon*, and *The President*. These may bloom on old and new wood and generally flower in late spring. Prune in late winter or early spring when buds begin to swell.

Group 3: examples include *Duchess of Albany*, *Ramona*, *Jackmanii*, *Etoile Violette*. Blooms only on new wood and starts flowering in summer or later. These can be cut nearly to the ground just before growth begins in spring. Beware some buds may be already set on stems, but many will sprout from the crown.

Happy spring!



***Old growth may interfere with new growth, and takes away from the freshness of spring renewal.***

***Old foliage may have the eggs/larva of overwintering insects that you don't want to proliferate in your garden.***

***Sharp, clean pruning tools should be used.***

***Disinfect your tools between cuts with alcohol or a 10% bleach solution to avoid potential disease spread.***

***Time pruning based on the flowering shrub type.***

***Hydrangeas and clematis have specific pruning needs based on groups.***

# Create a Private Garden Space

by Melinda Myers

With everyone spending more time at home it is not surprising that individuals want to create peaceful oases to relax, meditate or entertain. They are using a combination of plants, decorative fences and screens or container plantings to provide the desired privacy.

Arborvitae have traditionally been used to create a wall of year-round greenery. What often happens is one or two plants die in the middle of the planting once they reach a substantial size. The fix is to leave the space empty, plant a much smaller plant that looks out of place or try squeezing in a larger transplant and risk damaging its neighbors.

Help them avoid this problem by including a variety of unrelated plants. If a pest attacks, it is less likely to kill all the plants. And it will be easier to add new replacement plants to the mature planting. Plus, with a mix of plants you can add seasonal flowers, fall color, texture, and more diverse beauty.

Narrow upright plants provide screening with a relatively small footprint. Trautman juniper is suited to hot dry locations and grows 12' tall by 4' wide. It is resistant to cedar apple rust and deer.

Year-round greenery is welcome, but help boost the beauty and enjoyment of your landscape with plants that support pollinators, attract birds, and provide several seasons of beauty.

The four-season Obelisk serviceberry grows 12-15' tall and 3-4' wide. Its white spring flowers are followed by purple fruit in June that you and the birds can eat. It ends the season in a blaze of color and once the leaves drop exposes smooth gray bark.

A close relative, the chokeberries (Aronia) are also known for their multiple seasons of beauty. Lowscape Hedger® is upright three to five feet tall and just two to three feet wide. Like the others, it has white flowers in spring and great fall color. This adaptable plant grows in sun or part shade and tolerates wet or dry soil.

Laced UP® elderberry has the foliage of black lace but is upright and narrow, growing six to eight feet tall and three to four feet wide. Its lacy purplish-black foliage makes a nice backdrop for the pink summer flowers, adding to its ornamental appeal.

The narrow columnar apples make a good option for those interested in growing edible plants. Urban®, North Pole™ and Golden Sentinel™ apples are a few narrow upright varieties to consider. Plant two different varieties for fruit to form.

A vine-covered trellis is an excellent screening option for narrow spaces. Consider growing two different vines like climbing roses or Major Wheeler honeysuckle with clematis to double the floral impact or extend the bloom time. Use an annual vine like hyacinth bean, Malabar spinach, scarlet runner bean or Solar Tower sweet potato vine the first year

or two. They'll provide quick cover while the perennials become established and cover the trellis.

Dress up fences with plants. Shrubs, ornamental grasses, flowering perennials can soften the structure and add texture and color. Include pots of tropical plants to create a tropical paradise and annuals for added color.

Espalier fruit and ornamental trees are a great way to add the fruiting or beauty of larger trees into a smaller space. These are options only for those willing and able to regularly prune to maintain the desired size and shape.

Green wall planters mounted on the fence can add edibility or color at eye level. These typically have a very small volume of planting mix and require frequent watering. Irrigation systems that provide water from top to bottom greatly reduce maintenance and increase success.

Make sure the plants selected thrive in the growing conditions and will fit the available space when mature. Less grooming, pest management and care will be needed to grow them into healthy and attractive specimens.

Before placing any plant or structure in the ground, call 811 or file online at [diggershotline.com](http://diggershotline.com) at least three business days in advance. Diggers Hotline will contact all the appropriate companies who will mark the location of their underground utilities in the designated work area. This eliminates the danger and inconvenience of accidentally knocking out power, cable or other utilities while creating a beautiful landscape.

Please remind others to do the same. Since this important step is often overlooked, April has been designated as National Safe Digging Month. It serves as a reminder to always contact Diggers Hotline whenever undertaking any landscape project, large or small.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including [The Midwest Gardener's Handbook](#) and [Small Space Gardening](#). She hosts The Great Courses "[How to Grow Anything](#)" DVD series and the nationally-syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment TV & radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine. Her web site is [www.MelindaMyers.com](http://www.MelindaMyers.com).



photos courtesy of MelindaMyers.com



# News from the County Extension Offices

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

## Questions About the Statewide Master Gardener Program Changes

I realize that all the MG changes continue to generate additional questions. Please continue to visit the Wisconsin Master Gardener (MG) Program website for updates. There is a wonderful Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document on the MG website. They continue to add to it. Go to: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1\\_xYjjiMJQvdV\\_I6NeatTP3-BIVnY1psWoCwALwuLvgs/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_xYjjiMJQvdV_I6NeatTP3-BIVnY1psWoCwALwuLvgs/edit) Feel free to also reach out to me with questions. I am happy to help you.

## You Must Complete MG Onboarding Lite – 2022 Version

There have been questions about this course. Please note:

- Taking this course is a requirement of the terms and conditions of continuing to be a master gardener in 2022.
- You must complete this course before starting to volunteer.
- You can claim five hours of Continuing Education for taking this course (MG Onboarding Lite – 2022 Version) although they estimate it will take you less time than this.
- Even if you took MG Onboarding Lite in 2021, you are required to take the 2022 MG Onboarding Lite – 2022 Version that addresses the MG program changes.
- *If 2022 is your first year as a MG, you already took the full 2022 MG Onboarding Course, so you do not need to take the “MG Onboarding Lite – 2022 Version”.*

## Reporting Hours Into the ORS

The statewide master gardener Online Reporting System (ORS) is now open. Remember, before you can report hours to an organization, you must complete the MG Onboarding Lite – 2022 Version. In the ORS, you will report your hours toward an organization – not a project. For example, if you volunteer at Eble Flower/Herb Garden or the Eble Vegetable Garden you will be reporting hours in the ORS to Waukesha County Parks. Eble gardens are part of the Waukesha County Parks. Waukesha County Parks is the organization's name. If you have questions about this, please reach out to me.



## Finding Volunteer Opportunities

Your MG volunteer opportunities may extend beyond the previous approved project list.

But many, if not most, of the previously approved MG garden and volunteer projects are continuing. You can continue to volunteer at the sponsoring organization if you wish. You will need to become a volunteer for the sponsoring organization. Reach out to one of the past garden chairs to learn how to become a volunteer for an organization. Also confirm the name of the organization to record volunteer hours in ORS.

But remember you can pursue other volunteer opportunities. There are Volunteer Activities Criteria that you must follow for the volunteer hours to count. Questions to ask when determining if the volunteer hours are a fit are: Does it pertain to appropriate MG Subject Matter? Will you use appropriate sources of information in your activities? Is the activity conducted for an appropriate organization? Is it an appropriate activity?

All questions are clarified in the MG Onboarding Lite – 2022 Version or the full MG Onboarding course (depending on which course you took). If you are not sure of next steps or need clarification on anything, reach out to me ([ann.wied@wisc.edu](mailto:ann.wied@wisc.edu) or 262/548-7788), I am happy to help you navigate this new MG model.

## Help us learn too by MGV Janet Wintersberger

*Brad Terp's article on Spring Pruning reminds us about gardening that is research-based. Now we're waiting for your contribution to future editions of Good Earth News. MGVs have different degrees of horticulture knowledge. Teams of MGVs working on garden projects share their knowledge with others. You may have a "specialty" such as growing roses, hostas, vegetables, soils, pollinators, perennials, or having continuous color throughout the gardening season. A quick read at <https://hort.wisc.edu> will refresh your research-based knowledge.*

*Share your knowledge by writing and submitting a horticulture article for the Good Earth News. And earn volunteer hours for researching and writing. If you need guidance contact [jhw53045@gmail.com](mailto:jhw53045@gmail.com) or [sandymanning@gmail.com](mailto:sandymanning@gmail.com).*

# SEWMG Members Only Picnic

by MGV Karla Geiger

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Save August 11, 2022, for our Member-Only picnic at the Mitchell Park Pavilion (Brookfield). Spouses or significant others are also invited. Our picnic will start at 5:00 p.m. with beverages and appetizers. A potluck style dinner will be served at 6:00 p.m.

Entrees will be provided, as well as lemonade and iced tea. If you wish to have adult beverages, please bring your own. Please bring an appetizer, salad, or dessert to share, and a serving utensil. Label your dish and utensil for a convenient return at the end of the evening.

Please wear your name tag, if you have one, so we can get to know each other. Stick-on name tags will also be available.

There is no fee for this event, because we consider this a small thank you to our members for their service to our communities. This is considered a social event and not an Extension activity.

There will be door prizes. We will also have auction opportunities, so bring your checkbook. This will be a rain or shine event because our venue has indoor and outdoor accommodations.

A Pre-picnic Garden Tour

Once again, MGV Jeff Trader will graciously open his garden to us for a drop-in garden tour between 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. His home address is 2490 Shelly Court in Brookfield (approximately 2.5 miles from the Mitchell Park Picnic venue.)

Save the date and watch your email for further details. See you in August!

## 2022 SEWMG Board of Directors

Elected on November 13, 2021

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The March-April issue introduced all but one SEWMG board members. It's time to meet Eileen Quinlan, First Year Board Member.

Eileen completed her Master Gardener training in 2014. She has worked primarily at the Brookfield Farmers Market, working to increase awareness of Extension horticulture and the SEWMG program. In addition, "We added many of the SEWMG specialty groups to our Saturday morning activities. We included times when composting, pollinators, kids gardening, and other groups joined us for our time at the market. These additional groups really created more interactions for families and kids at the market."

In addition to her time at the Farmers Market, Eileen spent some time providing administrative support to the Waukesha County Extension office. This is Eileen's first year as a Board member and she serves as the liaison to the communication committee. "I look forward to working through all of our changes and continuing SEWMG as an organization where we can learn, contribute and have fun."

# In Love with *Verbena bonariensis*

by MGV Kelly Kramer



I fell in love with *Verbena bonariensis* a few years ago after seeing it in a public garden and marveling at all of the butterflies on the blooms. I loved the tall airy stems, purple flower tops, and how they added height without taking up a lot of space. These 4 to 5 feet tall annuals bloom mid-summer through frost.

What really fueled my obsession for *Verbena bonariensis* this year has been watching the British Gardening show 'Gardeners World'. This is what happens when you subscribe to BritBox – you watch lots of marvelous gardening programs! The only negative being they are in the fabulous gardening zones 6 and 7 so their plant hardiness is not ours. And I usually give a huge eye roll when they talk about how their winter, which starts at the end of December, lasts all the way into February. Please!

In these British gardens I see lots of *Verbena bonariensis* added to herbaceous garden beds to provide height and all-season color. I usually restrict my annual plants to containers. But after watching so many shows I am hooked on planting these among my perennial plants. Yes, they are annuals, and yes, they will self-seed a bit, but I love the color, the height and the promise of all those butterflies.

Our gardening friends from across the pond seem to sow a lot of plants from seed. Annuals, perennials, veg, you name it they

like to start it from seed. So, full of the confidence of spring and the garden season ahead, I said I'd grow my *verbena bonariensis* from seed this year.

In addition to reading the seed packet I like to check out one or two websites for additional information. I went to <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu>. An article by Susan Mahr mentions "cover the seed lightly with a thin layer of seed mix (they need darkness to germinate) and that germination can be slow and irregular, so be patient".

Although not listed as university-based research, many seed companies list good sowing instructions for their seeds. Johnny's Select Seeds mentions covering *Verbena* seeds lightly, keeping the soil on the dry side, and placing the seed tray on a heat mat during the day and off at night.

Not having a heat mat I compromised by placing the covered seed tray on a shelf above a heat register during the day and in my cool basement at night. Seeds were sown on March 4th and on March 27th the seedlings appeared! Now that the seeds are up the tray will be placed under my grow light. After the first set of true leaves appear, I'll prick them out and pot them up in separate containers. I'll continue to monitor them under grow lights until they can get planted outside. Looking forward to those blooms and butterflies.

## Opening our Garden Gates

by MGV Jim Schief

Join us for an afternoon of friendship, hospitality and garden idea sharing. Introduced in 2019, SEWMG will host our Open Garden Social on Sunday, June 19, 2022, from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. at fellow SEWMG's personal gardens throughout the region. This purely social event has been wonderfully received, allowing members to build friendships outside their normal gardening efforts while visiting other volunteer's gardens for an opportunity to sit and chat gardens without having to weed or work.

The Committee of two, Jim Schleif and Leslie Davis (welcome Leslie to the post!), need about ten hosts again. Hosting means you open your garden, offer a snack or perhaps something to drink and welcome any SEWMG members who visit. This is not a garden tour, and the only expectation is that you have fun and host passionate discussions on the plants we all love. Last year

we had ten fabulous hosts from the South and North shores to the City to Lake Country and western suburbs. With the opening of the Master Gardening program this year, this event may also help you gain insight and fresh ideas while discussing where others are volunteering.

This social event is sponsored by SEWMG and is limited to SEWMG members, their guests or those interested in becoming members of SEWMG. If you haven't joined SEWMG yet and want to participate you can of course join now. Just contact Patty Witt ([pattywitt8@gmail.com](mailto:pattywitt8@gmail.com)) for an application. To volunteer as a host please contact Jim ([jschleif@shorewest.com](mailto:jschleif@shorewest.com)) or Leslie ([preserveart@gmail.com](mailto:preserveart@gmail.com)) by May 15. Their goal will be to welcome hosts throughout the SEWMG area. A formal invite with a list of hosts will be sent out soon. Meanwhile – save the date – Sunday, June 19.

### **Join the Open Garden Socials**

*Sunday, June 19, 2022, from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.*

*Purely social*

*SEWMG members and guests or those interested in becoming members*

*Locations throughout Milwaukee & Waukesha counties (to be announced)*

### **Host an Open Garden Social**

*Sunday, June 19, 2022, from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.*

*Welcome SEWMG members and guests*

*or those interested in becoming members*

*Share and enjoy your garden setting*

*Provide a snack and a beverage*



# Letter from the President

by MGV Erin Napier

2022 is going to be an exciting year! Life is getting back to near normal, the weather is getting warmer, and SEWMG members have told me that they are looking forward to meeting up and volunteering in and out of the garden. We are celebrating 30 years as a resource in the art and science of gardening, cultivating community connections.

SEWMG is going to have an active year in which we have fun, learn, volunteer, support organizations, fellow gardeners, and communities, and begin our journey to engage new voices and organize some new opportunities for our members, building on our traditional programming.

Our next SEWMG Member Meeting will be hybrid (you can attend in person or on Zoom) and will take place on Wednesday, May 25, 2022, starting at 6:30 p.m. at Wehr Nature Center located in Whitnall Park (Franklin, WI). Look for additional details sent out in the List Serve by the end of April. Continuing Education (CE) will be offered. I'm told that the Hospitality Committee will be back offering refreshments before the meeting!

Change your calendars! The date for SEWMG Open Gardens has been changed to June 19, 2022, from 1:00—4:00 p.m. (from June 12). Look for Jim Schleif's article in this newsletter. Our August Member Meeting has been changed to Tuesday, August 24 (from Wednesday, August 25) and will be held at Schlitz Audubon Center with both in-person and Zoom options available.

We started the first quarter off with a Membership Meeting on February 22, 2022 (with record Zoom attendance of one

hundred members!) and followed up with three virtual "Idea Sessions" in March that were also very well attended. The Idea Sessions informed MGVs of the ongoing work on the Strategic Plan.

There is certainly an abundance of information at our fingertips, and we encourage members to stay up to date with UW-Extension's new direction by visiting their website <https://mastergardener.extension.wisc.edu> for more information on education, Onboarding-Lite, accessing information on changes, the ORS system, guidelines on volunteering, etc. There have been many great updates offered through Listserv e-mails that you might save for future reference.

Meanwhile, SEWMG maintains information on <https://sewmg.org> about our association, events, education, newsletters, etc. We also maintain a Members Only page where you can gain access to meeting minutes, meeting videos and other information. Make sure you make it a habit to check in from time to time on our website as our communications committee regularly adds more information and functionality to the site. More and more we will be using [sewmg.org](https://sewmg.org) to be the source of information for SEWMG.

This is already turning out to be a busy and active year for SEWMG! Thank you for your ongoing engagement in SEWMG and I look forward to seeing you in person at upcoming meetings and events. And, if you are thinking about joining a SEWMG Committee, view our offerings and needs on [sewmg.org](https://sewmg.org). (Select the Members Only page.) We are always looking for volunteers to serve on committees as we organize for our next 30 years!

*While we celebrate 30 years as a resource in the art and science of gardening, cultivating community connections, we are journeying to engage new voices and organize some new opportunities for our members, building on our traditional programming.*

*Our May Member Meeting takes place on Wednesday, May 25, 2022, starting at 6:30 p.m. at Wehr Nature Center located in Whitnall Park (Franklin, WI). The meeting will be hybrid (you can attend in person or on Zoom).*

**New date** SEWMG Open Gardens will be June 19, 2022, from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

**New date** Our August Member Meeting will be Wednesday, August 24, 2022, starting at 6:30 p.m. at Schlitz Audubon Center. The meeting will be hybrid (you can attend in person or on Zoom).

*If you are thinking about joining a SEWMG Committee, view our offerings and needs on [sewmg.org](https://sewmg.org). We are always looking for volunteers to serve on committees as we organize for our next 30 years!*

*Stay up to date with UW-Extension's new direction by visiting: <https://mastergardener.extension.wisc.edu> (Information on education, Onboarding-Lite, accessing information on changes, the ORS system, guidelines on volunteering, etc.)*

*Read Listserv e-mails that you might save for future reference.*

*Check our SEWMG association website from time to time as our communications committee regularly adds more information and functionality to the site: <https://sewmg.org> (Events, education, and newsletters, plus a Members Only page for meeting minutes, meeting videos, and a member directory.)*

*We will be using [sewmg.org](https://sewmg.org) more and more to be the source of information for SEWMG.*

# My Favorite Tool

by MGVs Deb Black, and Fran Luebke

Deb accomplishes her volunteer service by editing the Volunteer Vibe and The Good Earth News. She prefers to participate in non-sunny activities, office assisting, setting up and breaking down for seminars, staffing in covered booths like the West Allis Farmers Market.

“This has been my go-to tool for a very long time. I think I might have picked up the first one at Jung Seeds in Madison. Upon losing it, I promptly replaced it. We found the missing one so now we have two and my spouse and I no longer need to quarrel over who needs it more.

It is a Korean cultivator or hand hoe. I use the point to dig shallow troughs for tiny seeds. I dig a little deeper to disrupt unwanted seedlings. I could make deeper furrows, but my gardening style does not require them. Finally, I use it with a little or a lot of pressure to get deep below taproots of pesky weeds, levering the handle. The whole thing usually pops right out to be grabbed and disposed of.

I cannot recommend this tool any more highly!”

About \$19-30 depending on the store.



Korean cultivator

\$19 to \$30

Hori Hori

\$25 to \$50

Fran lives in Brookfield, began her Master Gardener training in 2014 and “graduated” in 2015. Like all of you, gardening has been a passion for many years but traveling always interfered with taking the course. When I lived in Iowa some years ago a friend and I began a small herb business making herb wreaths (before they became clichés), potpourri, herbal vinegars, and flower décor for special events. We grew nearly all our supplies in large gardens in very fertile soil! After moving to eastern Wisconsin, the land of clay, my gardening has totally changed.

My favorite tool is the Japanese hori hori (which means dig-dig). It is a long slender curved knife traditionally with a bamboo or wood handle about a foot in length and tapers to a point. It is very, very sharp with one serrated edge and one knife-like edge and is handled with one hand like a dagger. They always come with a sheath for safety in storage. It is so strong that it can break up clay soil, cut heavy plant roots, dig the toughest weeds, and saw an edge where shovels are too large. It is the only tool I know that will saw through the matted roots of hosta plants and give you control of where you make your cut. It is NOT to be used to pry things up which is why I bought my husband his own hori hori to ruin and not to touch mine!

They are easy to find in garden implement stores or online and range from \$25 - \$50. Some are made of higher quality steel with thick leather sheaths, but price doesn't necessarily reflect that.



**Your favorite garden tool**  
by MGV Janet Wintersberger

*So far, three MGVs have written about their favorite garden tools. We would like you to share the device that helps make gardening easier with all our MGVs. It's simple. Just tell us what the tool is, how, why, and when you find it helpful. It's approximate cost and, if possible, a photo. Our next deadline for articles is June 1.*

*Please send your article to [jhw53045@gmail.com](mailto:jhw53045@gmail.com) and [sandymanning@gmail.com](mailto:sandymanning@gmail.com).*



UW-Madison Extension Waukesha County  
Waukesha County Administration Center  
515 W. Moreland Road, Room AC-G22  
Waukesha, WI 53188

### SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardeners

**Editors:**

Sandy Manning | sandymanning@gmail.com

Janet Wintersberger | jwintersberger@wi.rr.com

Deborah Black | debsjardin51@gmail.com

Kathy Heinrichs | athyk61@hotmail.com

Laurie Baker | Seasonal Photography

**Grow with us**



## Contact Information

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For more information:

On the Web

[sewmg.org](http://sewmg.org)

Ann Wied (Outreach Specialist, Waukesha)  
UW-Madison Extension Waukesha

262-548-7788; [ann.wied@wisc.edu](mailto:ann.wied@wisc.edu)  
Waukesha County Administration Center,  
515 W. Moreland Road, Room AC-G22, Waukesha, WI 53188

### *Our Mission Statement*

*To support and assist UW-Extension in community horticulture programs through volunteerism, education and environmental stewardship.*