



What is Going on With Winter Weather?

by MGV Cheryl Lausten

Extreme weather events worldwide have many people convinced that global warming is not happening. Logic would indicate that warmer temperatures would lead to less snowfall, so how do you explain a frosty winter when data indicates the earth is warming up?

Data proves a warming trend is happening. From 1970 to 2024, average winter temperatures rose in 235 out of 241 locations in the United States by an average of 4 degrees Fahrenheit. That might not seem like much, but this warming has a large effect on the jet stream, which is the driving factor for all the world's weather.

There are two jet streams-narrow bands of strong wind that blow from west to east around the globe above the Northern and Southern hemispheres. These jet streams run along the boundaries where hot and frigid air meet. The greater the temperature differential, the greater the force of the jet stream. The Arctic is warming four times faster than the rest of the planet, an effect called Arctic amplification, and this is weakening the polar jet stream. It is this jet stream that keeps frigid Arctic air in the northern regions. Another component affecting our weather is the Arctic polar vortex which is another strong band of winds in the stratosphere surrounding the North Pole. The polar vortex typically does not interact with the jet stream, but when the polar vortex or the jet streams are unstable, this allows the frigid air from the polar vortex to be pushed southward, which in turn allows warmer air to reach further north.

As Arctic air is increasingly reaching southern latitudes, harsher winters can be expected in normally mild areas. The warmer air reaching further north is adding to the melting of polar glacial ice which in turn is adding to the warming of the planet.

To create snow, you need a source of moisture along with the chilly air. Climate change impacts both, because as the planet becomes hotter there is more moisture in its atmosphere. For every degree Celsius the atmosphere warms, it can hold 7% more water vapor. Most heavy snowfalls occur when there is relatively warm air near the ground.

Lake effect snowstorms with copious amounts of snow are influenced by warmer temperatures. This is because the warmer temperatures are preventing lakes from freezing, and the colder arctic air now passing over the open waters produces heavy snowfalls.

Does global warming mean we can expect milder winters and less snowfall?

The answer is yes and no--snow storms will become less frequent, but when they do happen, they are going to be more extreme. Get your shovels ready!



Reminder report your hours by 5:00 pm January 3rd

The "Distinguished" participation level:

This is a new participation level. For those of us who have over 1000 hours of volunteer service. No need to apply.

This participation level will automatically be granted to an in-good-standing participant after recording 1000 hours of volunteer service showing their longevity within the Wisconsin Extension Master Gardener Program.

Participants within this level will be required to log in to the ORS every year and to record hours yearly. Once the level is attained, a yearly entry of at least 1.0 hour of Continuing Education and 1.0 hour of Volunteer Service must be recorded in the ORS to maintain it.

For participants actively holding the Honored participation level, when the ORS reopens in 2025 you will automatically be moved into the Distinguished participation level.

President's Letter

by MGV Jackie Kirchen

"A garden requires patient labor and attention. Plants do not grow merely to satisfy ambitions or to fulfill good intentions. They thrive because someone expended effort on them."

– Liberty Hyde Bailey, American horticulturist and cofounder of the American Society for Horticultural Science

This year will mark five years for SEWMG as a standalone organization, apart from the UW Extension. As we continue to navigate the landscape of our post-UW Extension journey, we are reminded of the inherent challenges and rewards of cultivating something new. Much like a garden, our organization requires consistent care and attention to flourish.

The past few years have undoubtedly been a period of significant change. Yet, despite the challenges, our organization has

demonstrated remarkable resilience and growth. This achievement is a testament to the dedication and passion of our members. We are grateful for your unwavering support and active participation.

I am excited to serve as the 2025 SEWMG President and continue to care for the seeds sown by the previous leaders. Guided by the previously developed five year strategic plan, the goals for this year will focus on three pillars- member engagement and growth, operational excellence, and community partnerships. As we move forward, we invite you to continue nurturing the proverbial SEWMG garden. Your contributions, whether through volunteering, attending meetings, or sharing your expertise, are invaluable. By working together, we can create a vibrant and thriving community of master gardeners.

Committees and Volunteering

by MGV Jackie Kirchen

SEWMG Committee Reorganization

To better serve our members and enhance the overall effectiveness of our organization, SEWMG is embarking on a committee reorganization. This decision is informed by valuable feedback from our members, committee members, and the Board, along with a comprehensive re-evaluation of member interest, volunteer availability, and the evolving support and needs of our committees. By streamlining our committee structure, we aim to improve communication, increase organizational efficiency, and ensure that our resources are allocated strategically.

This reorganization was shared at the 2024 Annual meeting and is highlighted in the image to the right. All existing activities that have active participation remain in this new structure, though they may be reorganized. Old, inactive groups have been dissolved and new areas have been added.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact Jackie Kirchen (president@sewmg.org). If you are currently involved in volunteering in any of these areas and have not gotten the opportunity to speak to leadership, please contact Jackie.

Member Input and Volunteer Opportunities

As we begin to prioritize SEWMG goals for 2025, we'd love to hear from members about what is important to you- or what you'd really like to see.

And, in order to meet those goals, we need volunteers. Whether a single event, or a long term commitment, there is a volunteer opportunity for all skills and commitment levels. Plus, any time spent volunteering for SEWMG qualifies as volunteer time in ORS for MG Certification.

These areas represent our most pressing volunteer needs.

Assistant Treasurer: Appointed by Board, 1 year term to assist/backup Treasurer. Skills: bookkeeping, accounting

Fundraising Strategy: newly formed committee to identify fundraising opportunities. Skills: fundraising, strategy, general interest
Membership (Board Committee): Maintain membership directory, collect dues. Skills: General office/date (i.e. Excel/Google Sheets, email)
Member Engagement: Member experience, engagement, diversity, programs and benefits, and member retention. Skills: general interest, organization, communication

Please take a few minutes to complete this [brief survey](#) to share your interests and learn about volunteer opportunities.



Don't Let Your SEWMG Membership Lapse

by MGV Betsy Vokac

We value your continuing support and participation as we work together to enable a better future through plants, people, and communities. Please take a moment to renew your membership. The annual fee is just \$20, and includes membership in both SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardeners (SEWMG) and the Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association (WIMGA).

To renew online, go to sewmg.org. Click the MEMBERS tab at the top of the page, then select Forms from the drop-down menu. You'll have the option of paying with a credit card, debit card, or PayPal. You'll receive a receipt by email, so there's no need for paper. If you opt to pay by check, simply print out and complete the membership dues form

Mail the form with your check payable to SEWMG to SEWMG Membership, PO Box 26543, Wauwatosa, WI 53226. The form is included in this newsletter, or you can click sewmg.org/forms to open the form on your computer. Not sure if you've already paid 2025 dues? Email Betsy Vokac



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.

SEWMG Master Gardener Education Committee

by MGV Jane E. Browne, Chair

Our committee's role is to organize freestanding educational and informational programs and plan for speakers at the four-member meetings in February, May, August, and November. We obtain speakers, in person and via zoom, and plan trips and tours for 2025. (The cost of the bus transportation and admission is paid by the members.)

February 1st is our quarterly meeting at Greendale High School. After the meeting, there will be a short presentation on winter sowing and a hands-on activity for us to participate. In March we are invited to a behind the scenes tour at Ebert's Greenhouse Village in Ixonia.

April is our annual Volunteer Information Fair in the Educational Building at Boerner Botanical Gardens. We appreciate your participation in creating a poster board and/or brochures about the gardens or area where you volunteer for SEWMG.

There are also many avenues for our education.

- All SEWMG are members of WIMGA, Wisconsin Master Garden Association, which have continuing educational programs scheduled for 2025. Their programs are all zoom and registration is required. January is their annual meeting and will feature speaker Doug Tallamy. He will be speaking on challenges to create a diverse ecosystem in our yards.
- Other CE credits can be obtained by listening to Garden Talk Radio with Larry Meiller and Melinda Myers; visit her website for gardening presentations with handouts.
- Don't forget to visit the Master Gardener Program Canvas Classroom. There you will find Onboarding-Lite and Plants Plus, which are free continuing educational series.
- Visit our SEWMG website calendar for opportunity dates and time.

Ellen Grissom is partnering with me on the Educational Committee. I welcome any suggestions members may have for speakers, presentations, or events. If you are interested in assisting us on this committee, please contact me.

Jane Browne, Education Committee Chair
janeebrowne@icloud.com
262-565-8810.

January 16
Lisa Johnson, UW Madison
Winter Pruning
Zoom
6:30 pm

February 1
Member Meeting & Winter Sowing
Greendale High School
10:00 am
6801 Southway, Greendale
Winter Sowing and
Hands-on activity

March (date to be determined)
Behind the scenes tour
Ebert's Greenhouse Village
12:30 pm
W1795 Fox Road,
Ixonia
Car pool

April 12
Poster Presentation
(Annual Volunteer Information Fair)
Plus Garden Market
Boerner Botanical Gardens
8:30 am Set up; 9:00 browse
9400 Boerner Dr
Hales Corners

Get Aboard the Educational Committee

Our committee needs your help in selecting and scheduling educational speakers for 2025. We have heard many MGVs say they miss getting together with other members and learning more about horticulture today. So we are trying to fill that gap. Join Jane Browne and Ellen Grissom in developing our own educational programs.

Take advantage of the post-holiday lull, and step aboard a personally satisfying team to strengthen our organization's sense of unity.

2025 Officers SEWMG

Jackie Kirchen, President

I'm thrilled to step into the role of 2025 President for Southeast Wisconsin Master Gardeners. My year as Vice President has been a valuable learning experience, equipping me with the skills and insights necessary to lead our organization forward.

As President, I'm committed to leveraging my organizational and program management expertise to advance SEWMG's strategic plan. My focus will be on fostering member engagement, operational excellence, and strong community partnerships. I believe that our dedicated and knowledgeable members are the heart of SEWMG, and I'm eager to collaborate with both experienced gardeners and newcomers to enhance our organization and deliver exceptional value to all.

Raymond Com, VP

This is Ray's second year on the SEWMG board. "I have a lot of interest in the organization and the ability to expand in membership and support. As an Employee Relations Manager, I hope that my education and experience can contribute to the betterment of the organization. Patience and people skills go a long way in making people feel heard and understood."

Gary Ertel, Treasurer

Gary Ertel was born and raised in Racine, Wisconsin and gardened as a boy with both of my grandfathers and my mother. "I have kept a vegetable garden all of my adult life and continue to do so. Over the last 10-12 years, I have also developed some expertise, knowledge and contacts in regard to Dahlias. I am a member of the American Dahlia Society and the Wisconsin Dahlia Society. I have been a Master Gardener for three years."

Gary has a degree in accounting from Drake University and an MBA from Marquette. "Early in my career, I passed the CPA exam and worked for Arthur Andersen in their Milwaukee Office specializing in privately held corporations. My career after Arthur Andersen consisted of 26 years as a financial executive for a Milwaukee corporation and finished with 12 years at another corporation in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin."

I am retired now and enjoy doing all of the things I was not able to do when I was working. Other than gardening, I enjoy hiking, fishing, golfing, cross country skiing, attending live theater and just being in the outdoors. I am also a licensed Amateur Radio Operator and a Private Pilot licensed to fly Single Engine Aircraft Land and Sea."



Nicki Hanley, Secretary

Nicki is very excited to be the new 2025 SEWMG Board Secretary. This is my first time serving on a board and I couldn't be more passionate about the subject matter. I became a MG in 2022 and have spent time volunteering at Lakeshore State Park and the WI State Fair garden. I am excited about the new role because I get to put my organizational skills to good use, and I'm also super excited to be a part of the SEWMG Board of Directors who get an in-depth behind-the-scenes look into a very important and interesting topic. I have been a customer service / data entry clerk for over 20 years and an online website editor for 4 years, so keeping records, typing and digital formatting are my specialties. Looking forward to what 2025 brings. Happy Gardening!



Jake Begun, First Year Director

"While I've spent many seasons in my own gardens, I didn't make my entry into the MG space until a few years ago. In those first years, the pandemic made outreach a little complicated to say the least, but since then I've found our work at State Fair to be some of my favorite as a volunteer. The active sharing and interaction is central to what our organization does, and I haven't met an MG yet who won't drop everything to talk about their garden."

What excites me about this organization and serving on this board is much of what I enjoy about gardening broadly. There's always something new to learn, some new technique to try, and through our outreach, someone new to share it with. It's been a pleasure to work with so many people who don't mind getting their hands dirty, taking their time to see things through, and investing their skills in their communities."



Jean Akhter, Second Year Director

I have been a MG for twelve years. My professional background is in elementary education—teaching and administration. 2025 will be my second year to serve on the Board of Directors and as Co-Chair of the Speakers Bureau. My volunteer service has been varied and rewarding. I have presented to audiences throughout Milwaukee on behalf of SEWMG, supported the Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens with their educational programs, and worked with community groups with their children's gardens and gardening education.

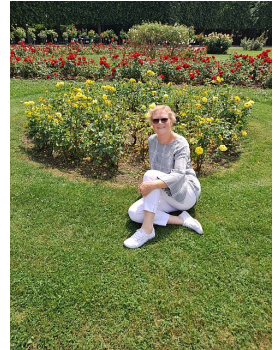
2025 Officers SEWMG

I am excited to serve on the Board because it gives me the opportunity to support SEWMG, an organization that I respect and value. SEWMG serves local communities and supports Master Gardener Volunteers in meaningful ways. I look forward to continued growth with SEWMG, and I look forward to meeting many of my fellow members who have a passion for gardening.

Sandy Potter, 3rd year Director

"My first year in SEWMG we were still a part of the University of Wisconsin-Extension. My second and third years were 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. 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."

Sandy has been on the Audit Committee, as a Member-at-Large, and for the last two years as a Director. I have also been on the Finance Committee. An avid gardener, Sandy has been involved in several approved gardens: Franciscan Villa; Oconomowoc Arts Center; St. Anthony on the Lake Parish in Pewaukee; Humane Animal Welfare Society of Waukesha County (HAWS); and the Pollinator Garden and Bird Habitat Garden at the Milwaukee County Zoo.



Bruce Hinkforth, Director at Large

I've been an active member of SEWMG for at least 10 years. (I forget when I actually started.) I'm currently volunteering at the Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital food pantry garden project. I love helping out each year at the State Fair and I usually volunteer for three shifts. I lived across the street when I was growing up, so it brings back memories. In the off season, it was our playground.

I have degrees in Biology and Geology and had teaching certification in Biology, Chemistry, Geology and Earth and Space Science. I taught for 15 years. I've also spent about 20 years in the retail grocery business. About half that time was spent as a staff and board member of three different food co-ops which depended heavily on volunteer help.

I inherited a love for gardening from my father. He was a master of tomato magic. His plants grew to the eaves of our garage every year. And he loved growing flowers. I have attempted to include aspects of permaculture design in my own garden and use of native natives as ground cover. I really have little use for grass but with three Corgis my options are limited.



I am happy to serve as a member of the SEWMG Board of directors. One of the reasons is that I feel the social aspects of this organization have declined since the Covid epidemic. Zoom meetings have their benefits but they don't allow time to catch up with old Master Gardener friends and share our recent experiences in our gardens. Every one of us has our own specialties and we love to share our knowledge with each other. That doesn't happen online. Encouraging a focus on the social aspects of our organization will help it endure and remain strong.

Carol Belonger, Director at Large

This is my second year serving on the board and I will continue my current position as a Director at Large. Our organization is still working through the separation from UW Extension and redefining itself with new opportunities for growth. Although things may be different I am excited that we still have a large group of members eager to learn and make an impact. I hope to use my experience as a long time MGCV to develop ways to engage our members.



Ellen Grissom, Past President

This year I will be serving as the Past President of SEWMG. I have held other positions during the Board's last four years. The last two years were as the WIMGA representative for our organization. That time gave me a deeper understanding of the Master Gardeners Organization as a whole and how our local organization can benefit from being a part of that. I believe these experiences will enable me to do a good job as the Past President for the coming year.

I took the Master Gardener Class in the Fall of 2019. I immediately joined SEWMG and have enjoyed being an active member. I volunteered at a few different gardens and later choose to volunteer at the State Fair Garden as my primary site. I enjoy the variety of tasks involved in upgrading and maintaining the garden. And being a volunteer during the fair satisfies my need to help and educate others, once a teacher always a teacher. I am looking forward to serving as your Past President this coming year.

Amaryllis Bulbs

by MGK Kelly Kramer

Amaryllis bulbs are very popular around the holidays. These large bulbs are used as houseplants and are usually planted in late fall to produce blooms around Christmas or New Years.

Typically, the bulbs produce one or more thick hollow stems called scapes with buds appearing at the top of the scape. The blooms are available in shades of red, pink, salmon, orange, or white. There are also striped and multicolored varieties. I have found the bulbs sold already potted up, as regular bare bulbs, or waxed bulbs.

Amaryllis bulbs are large and usually planted one to a pot. These bulbs like to be pot bound so choose a pot that is just a bit bigger than the bulb. Large wide pots can accommodate more bulbs.

Before planting the bulb, soak the base (not the entire thing) in warm water for an hour or so. Then plant in well drained potting soil, keeping the top half of the bulb above the soil line. Place the container in direct sunlight in a warm place. Heat is needed to start the development of the stem. Water sparingly and make sure the top two inches of soil is dry before watering again. Overwatering is the main cause of problems with amaryllis bulbs. When the plant starts to bloom, move it out of direct sunlight to bright indirect light. .

Saving the bulb and getting it to rebloom can be done with some work. After blooming, cut back the flower stalk but leave any foliage. In summer, move the plant outside. Continue to water and fertilize. Stop watering in August and when the leaves die back, cut them down and bring the pot inside. Keep in a cool dark location for six weeks. Then place it in warm sunlight and lightly water to get the growth cycle started again.

My favorite type of amaryllis bulb is the waxed bulb. These large bulbs are coated with wax with all the nutrients and water contained in the wax. Absolutely no watering needed! I love giving these as presents for the holidays – especially to non-gardeners who love the blooms and easy care. Just set the waxed bulb in a bright, warm location and wait for the shoots to appear. Once they start blooming, move them to bright indirect light. I usually get 3 weeks of blooms. Sometimes the bulb will send up a second stem with more blooms. Clip off the spent blooms. Unlike regular amaryllis bulbs these bulbs are a one-shot deal and should be disposed of when finished blooming.

Also important to note the Amaryllis bulb is toxic to pets so keep them away from animals that might treat them like a tempting snack.



Spring Logowear Sale

by MGVs Kelly Kramer and Ray Com

Watch your email in late February/early March for the Spring Logowear sale information. There will be new additions to the sale, perfect for gardening and representing SEWMG out in our communities.



Holiday Party 2024

Photos by MGTV Laurie Baker





Find us on Facebook or Instagram



Instagram



Facebook

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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."