

Jefferson County Master Gardener Volunteer Association (JCMGVA) 2014 Annual Report

In 2014, the JCMGVA had 31 certified Master Gardeners, with additional participation from inactive and intern members. Our meetings are on the second Thursday of the month at the Jefferson County Extension office. Summer meetings, however, are potluck, 'garden tour' meetings at our member's homes or project sites.

Our association has continued support of existing projects, with particular growth in projects at our youth gardens at Jefferson West Elementary and the Lake Mills Activity Center, as well as the Jefferson Rock River Community Garden. We will be offering 2015 Level 1 education, using JCMGV subject matter experts as facilitators. Classes will be held every other week for a total of 12 weeks, dates and times have not yet been set.

Our Highlighted Project:

WE GROW (West Elementary Garden and Recycle Organic Waste), Jefferson – This project has been growing since its start as a 2011 After School Program at Jefferson West Elementary School. Participation in this project this year included 6 MGVs reporting 529 hours, 14 additional adults, 43 Summer and 52 After School students. Some highlights: The After School Club: planted potatoes, harvesting over 70 pounds; made seed tapes; created signs to mark crops; planted fall bulbs; carved pumpkins and saved seeds; and did their own fall clean-up. The Watch It Grow Summer School students, formally taught by a MG, and assisted by others, learned about using mulch; planted seeds and tried straw bale gardening; planted and took home annuals; and decorated the new garden shed. The garden was enlarged to 40 by 90 feet with the addition of a fence partially provided by a United Way Pillar Grant. A handicap accessible garden table was purchased with help of a WIMGA grant. Planned improvements include perennial plants such as rhubarb, asparagus, and raspberries; a monarch butterfly way station; and partnership with Jefferson High School students.

Major Accomplishments or Projects:

Hoard Historical Museum, Fort Atkinson – The Museum garden program is managed by a team of 5 MGVs with additional help from 4 other MGs, reporting 274 hours in 2014, with another 55 hours devoted to lecturing to outside groups about the intersectional peonies in the Anderson Peony Garden. This year's education series of 8 events, presented at the Museum by the MGV team, included Water Management, Seed/Seedling Planting in our gardens, Local (Fort Atkinson) Garden Traditions, tours of the museum gardens, and a half-day Herb Seminar. The Herb Seminar included a demo in the museum herb garden, herb definition, garden design, herb usage, and hands-on for essential oils and drying. The seminar content will be reformatted and condensed into a 1-2 hour presentation format for presenting to other groups in 2015. The 2015 education series is still being finalized, and permanent educational signs have been designed and will be erected in the Rain and Peony Gardens next year.

Rotary Waterfront Park, Jefferson – This long-time JCMGVA project has been a saga of rebuilding. A concert stage and building were recently added to the park, requiring a redesign of gardens and borders. A team of 7 MGV and 4 other volunteers spent 331 hours planting, clearing brush, starting a small rose garden, and maintaining perennial and annual beds. Students from the Jefferson HS Ag Dept. raised annuals from seeds provided by the JCMGV, and student Rotarians helped with spring clean-up. This

park hosts concerts, public gatherings and a farmer's market, making it a highly visible public project. Future plans are to more closely partner with high school students in utilizing their new greenhouse to grow annuals for the Rotary Park.

Jefferson Rock River Community Garden - This project is now transitioning from a new project to an on-going activity that will be primarily directed by the community gardeners who use it. 4 MGVs were involved this year in working with the City Parks and Rec department to plan, move materials such as rocks, compost, and mulch, and then plant a memorial 'Pink Garden' to enhance the entrance and street appeal of the garden. The people who rent garden plots are taking on a more active role in management and planning of the garden.

Jefferson County Fair – The JCMGVA annually organizes much of the horticulture department of the fair. We have two members that are Plant Crops Superintendents, working year-round on the junior and open class fair book, coordinating with the fair office, organizing and recording judging, keeping the horticulture exhibits presentable, and post-fair review and planning for the next year. During the run of the fair, we have 2 MGVs on duty to answer questions and offer information about horticulture issues. This year one of our long-time superintendents retired, as did the overall fair secretary. The new people still provided a great fair experience for everyone!

Ongoing Projects – Most of our other projects have one or two MGVs working with organizations that have public spaces – these include 5 area churches, a library, YMCA, police station, prairie preserve, and several schools. They also provide information booths at 3 local Farmer and 2 Winter Markets, work with local 4-H members, and provide plants and volunteer at plant sales, including our own annual fundraiser. Finally, we have 3 MGVs who are long-time Old World Wisconsin volunteers, reporting over 250 hours this year, while working with an intern college student, planning a railroad garden, and incorporating heirloom plants into entry gardens.

Participation in Theme – Engaging Others in Gardening:

WE GROW – This program at West Elementary School in Jefferson engages students as well as their parents in the After School and Summer School programs. Recent middle school students who have left the school have asked to be allowed to continue to garden, so it is likely that a Middle School WE GROW Club will be formed-

Healthy Lake Mills Kids Garden, Lake Mills – This project is part of a community partnership between various community organizations, businesses and schools. The garden is located at Rock Lake Activity Center and is open to any children in the community, particularly in the year-round after school and summer programs for the children at the center. Any member of the community is welcome to spend time in the garden, and the product is used for snacks and meals at the Center.

Plant Health Advisors support our county Ag Agent, staffing the Extension office Tuesdays and Thursdays from May through September answering questions from calls, email, and walk-in clients. This year 12 MGs reported 160 hours as PHAs.