President's Corner
by Liz Burke

January and February will soon be a memory and spring is in sight. Yes, we may get a bit more snow and cold, but we will all have our fingers in the dirt very soon. Watch out, weeds; I will be looking for you!

Welcome all new Master Gardeners. I met and or worked with some of you at the Volunteer Opportunity Fair. Thanks for helping and learning about the individual gardens and projects SEWMG are involved in. Approximately 225 master gardeners were at this event and the educational program that followed. If you did not attend the Fair itself, you missed learning about our approved gardens and projects. You also missed the entertaining presentation about what-to-do while your garden rests.

Congratulations to our new Master Gardener graduates. I enjoyed talking with you and learning about your interests. I look forward to working alongside you in an approved garden or at the Plant Sale and seeing you again at a monthly meeting.

Our monthly meetings will be held at three different sites (Milwaukee Extension office, Boerner Botanical Gardens, and Waukesha Courthouse) and two different time periods (9:30 a.m. or 6:30 p.m.) Please check the website for specifics. All members are welcome at our monthly meetings. Share your ideas with us, learn more about the SEWMG organization and meet our officers and board of directors.

Future activities you may be interested in are as follows:

- Home and Garden Show booth and speakers: please contact Faouzi (fkablaoui@aol.com)
- Presenters needed at various locations: please contact Nancy Lehner (nancy.lehner@ces.uwex.edu)
- Garden Chair Forum for all Garden Chairs and interested MGVs.
- Trip to the Chicago Garden Show.
- Garden Symposium at Rotary Botanical Gardens, Janesville.

One area of need is for a volunteer or two to join the hospitality team to set-up refreshments at monthly meetings and annual picnic. Please contact me if you are interested in volunteering.

I am certain that all approved gardens and projects could use additional volunteers at their sites; please see the website for a list of all approved gardens and contact information.

Gardens specifically asking for MGVs are:

- Linden Grove Health Center Relaxation Garden, contact Terrie Ziegler (ziegler6@sbcglobal.net)
- Lynden Sculpture Garden Pollinator Garden (Youth Garden) contact Pat Conole (bconole@wi.rr.com)

Think spring and tulips and daffodils. Oh how I am yearning to get into my garden!

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**Highlights inside this issue**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Plant Sale activities are a great way for new Master Gardeners to get involved. You will meet many new faces, tour some wonderful gardens, and learn a lot about plants.” Bonnie Papilham
**What is the Garden Support Committee?**
*by MGVs Catherine Price & Ken Loeffel, Garden Support Committee Co-Chairs*

The Garden Support Committee always welcome MGVs to join us at its meetings. The next gathering will be on Wednesday, March 9, 2016 right after the MGV Business Meeting (about 10:45 a.m.) at the Waukesha County Courthouse.

**Another Success:** The Volunteer Opportunity Fair About 215 Master Gardeners-In-Training and MGVs attended the Volunteer Opportunity Fair on January 23rd. There was lots of energy and excitement among the attendees. It was a chance to socialize and to learn about ways to earn required volunteer hours. This event was for seasoned MGVs and those new to the program. Forty-three extension-approved gardens and projects provided informative displays about their activities. The Garden Support Committee appreciates our volunteers’ help in setting up and taking down the tables, baking the breakfast goodies, creating the displays for gardens/projects, and generating all the enthusiasm.

**Garden Chair Forum in March**
All approved garden/project chairs are expected to attend the March 15th Garden Chair Forum at 6:30 p.m. It will be held at Boerner Botanical Gardens Educational and Visitors Center. Other interested MGVs may also attend. Chairs will learn about administrative tasks, requirements for reporting, the Extension’s expectations and available resources. There will also be presentations on new 2016 flower and plant varieties and lifelong gardening tools. We hope to see all the garden/project chairs (or a representative) there. It is important that every project/garden be represented at this event.

Please contact Catherine Price at wolvescnp@yahoo.com or Ken Loeffel at kloeffel@wi.rr.com with any ideas or comments for the committee.

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**Thank you from Linden Grove Relaxation Garden**
*by MGV Terrie Ziegler, Project Chairperson*

The Volunteer Opportunity Fair was a welcomed event to introduce newbies and oldies to our Relaxation Garden at Linden Grove in New Berlin. As I explained the help that was needed to visitors at our space, I refreshed my view of what we do, and how much the help is truly appreciated. Several current garden workers stopped by and confessed that they often take a break and enjoy the peaceful surroundings after pulling weeds or deadheading. Tending this place of peaceful enjoyment is the work related to our garden.

I can attest to the pleasure the garden brings to our residents as I work with them throughout the year. My mother was in rehab here last summer. She was happy that she did not miss out on the fresh picked vegetables during her stay. She enjoyed the zucchini that was planted, picked and grilled by the residents right on the patio.

I hear similar comments from other patients and their families. Our master gardeners take care of the ground level plants. Linden Grove follows the EDEN philosophy which selects “Resident Elders” to take care of our raised gardens. The Linden Grove foundation has provided wheel chair height pots, raised beds, a table garden and a trough planter. These enable our “family” to actively garden rather than just watch.

This year we are working on a railway garden. Our men are having a great time and hopefully we will have it up and running through a ‘ground covered’ town with gnomes and fairies.

As the project chair for Linden Grove and an activity therapist on the staff, I want to thank SEWMG for funding the gardens. The residents thank you as well and look forward to another great year.
In-House Education Committee
by MGV Rita Piper, In-House Education Committee Chair

The Evening Garden
Saturday, February 27th, at 10:30 a.m., Zannah Crowe, Monches Farm
Franklin Library, 9151 W Loomis Rd, Franklin, WI 53132
Busy work and volunteer schedules keep many of us away from our gardens during the daylight hours and it is often evening when we find time to relax in our gardens.

Horticulturist Zannah Crowe of Monches Farm will present a program on expressing your creativity in a garden in the evening through plant selection, lighting, sound and fragrance. Zannah has a degree in Landscape Architecture from UW-Madison and has been working in the field of horticulture for over thirty years. She managed the perennial plant division of a specialty nursery in Connecticut for twelve years before returning to her Midwestern roots when her son was born. For the past twenty years she has been employed as the lead horticulturist at Monches Farm, a perennial plant nursery that has been a destination for adventurous and discerning gardeners since 1980. In addition to gardening Zannah is a hobbyist photographer, with several published photos in national magazines.

Creative use of Shrubs and Trees in your Landscaping Design
Wednesday, March 16th, at 6:30 p.m., Bill Reichenbach, Senior Plantsman Diagnostician and Certified Arborist, Wachtel Tree Science, Inc.
Sunset Playhouse, 800 Elm Grove Road, Elm Grove
Bill is a member of International Society of Arboriculture and the Wisconsin Arborist Association. He has served on the board of directors of the Wisconsin Arborists Association, and has appeared on PBS's 'The Victory Garden' and 'The Wisconsin Gardener' over the years. He has won numerous industry awards, including an International Society of Arboriculture Gold Leaf Award and a Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council Award.

Artful Edible Gardening
Thursday, April 7th, 6:30 p.m., Ben Futa, Garden Director, Allen Centennial Gardens
New Berlin Library, 15105 Library Ln., New Berlin
Edible plants can offer more than produce in the garden.

While they nourish the body, they also can nourish the soul. In this lecture, discover, explore, and discuss a range of inspirational ideas for integrating edible plants into your ornamental landscape.

Benjamin Futa is a life-long gardener born and raised in South Bend, Indiana. Above all, Ben is passionate for connecting people to plants through public gardens. He is an active member of the American Public Gardens Association and has written for Chicagoland Gardening magazine. Ben’s personal garden in Indiana was featured in the 2015 May/June issue of Chicagoland Gardening, and Ben was featured as an emerging leader in American horticulture in the April 2014 issue of Organic Gardening magazine.

Ben recently accepted the position as Garden Director of the Allen Centennial Garden at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Allen Centennial Garden is the artful living laboratory of the Horticulture department at UW-Madison providing authentic and meaningful learning experiences for the entire University of Wisconsin and surrounding communities. Prior to this role, Ben worked at Fernwood Botanical Garden in Southwest Michigan as the Head of Horticulture and Manager of Member and Donor Relations.

Pre-registration is required for all sessions. The SurveyMonkey registration link will be sent via e-mail to all Master Gardeners three to four weeks prior to the program. All Master Gardeners and Master Gardeners in Training are invited to attend the programs, which can be used for your annual continuing education hours. Due to space constraints, ONLY SEWMG are allowed to register. We typically have waiting lists for all programs, so please contact us, as directed on the registration link, if you need to cancel, so that we can give your spot to someone else.
Plant Sale Update
by MGV Bonnie Paplham

It’s cold outside, there is snow on the ground, and the seed catalogues are arriving. So it must be time to think about the 2016 SEWMMG Annual Plant Sale that will be held on Saturday, May 21st, at State Fair Park in West Allis. The SEWMMG Plant Sale is held on the third Saturday in May each year. The Plant Sale supports SEWMMG’s many activities, its gardens and projects, donations to the Extension offices and to Boerner Botanical Gardens.

Plant Sale activities begin with a meeting that is open to all SEWMMG members. The meeting will be held on March 3rd at the Milwaukee County’s UW-Extension office. In April we have Trailer Day (April 4th), Carlin supply day (April 11th) and Pot-a-Thons begin the following week. We have thirteen Pot-a-Thons (POTS) on the list at this time including nine at members’ homes and four at Eble Park.

There are usually between 25-35 MGVs at each Pot-a-Thon and many jobs utilizing varied abilities. You can divide and pot plants and/or attach labels to the pots. We will teach you how to do these things if you have never been at a Pot-a-Thon before. Our goal is to pot up between 15,000 and 17,000 plants over a three-week period of time beginning the week of April 18th and finishing by May 7th. A schedule of dates and locations will be posted later on the SEWMMG website.

In May, we finish the Pot-a-Thons and move into activities of Plant Sale week (May 16th-21st.) We need many volunteers for each one of the days beginning on the 16th. There are many different jobs available. You can transport plants from varied sites to the fairgrounds. At State Fair Park we need MGVs to unload the trailers, drag sleds, alphabetize sections of plants, put up signs and pictures, help with set up and clean up at State Fair Park.

We need the most volunteers on Monday and Tuesday, as so much is happening. Wednesday and Thursday are less hectic. But on Plant Sale Day (Saturday), we need about 125 MGVs. We need tabulators,cashiers, MGVs to help sell plants in each area, pick up and stack empty trays, plus do many other jobs. We especially need your help on that day.

Plant Sale activities are a great way for new Master Gardeners to get involved. You will meet many new faces, tour some wonderful gardens, and learn a lot about plants. The Plant Sale Committee appreciates all the time and effort that you can give. E-mails will be sent out on the ListServe giving everyone dates and times for each activity. You do not need to sign up in advance. Just dress appropriately, bring gloves, hand tools, and a smile and stay as long as you are able. All of your time including travel time counts towards your volunteer hours. So think spring and start watching for the Plant Sale e-mails that will begin in February.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>MGVs needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 3rd</td>
<td>Plant Sale Meeting</td>
<td>Learn the process. Pick areas to work in.</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 4th</td>
<td>Trailer Day</td>
<td>Set-up the trailer, clean stotage unit.</td>
<td>12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 11th</td>
<td>Supply pick &amp; distribution</td>
<td>Transport potting mix from Carlin to potting sites. Trailers &amp; trucks needed.</td>
<td>20-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 18th to May 7th (Details to follow)</td>
<td>Pot-A-Thons</td>
<td>Divide &amp; pot plants, label for sale.</td>
<td>25-35 for each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 16th</td>
<td>Set Up at State Fair Park</td>
<td>Transport plants to state fair, unload trailers. Move plants to sales area using sleds, arrange sale area, put up signage and photos. Clean area to be ready for the big day.</td>
<td>35-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 17th</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 18th</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 19th</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 20th</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 21st</td>
<td>Plant Sale Day!</td>
<td>Tabulators, cashiers, customer help, clean up, and other jobs.</td>
<td>125 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 23rd</td>
<td>Clean up</td>
<td>Reverse of set up</td>
<td>15-20</td>
</tr>
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UW Extension Pruning Workshop Offered in March

Two University of Wisconsin Extension Hands-On Pruning Workshops will be offered in March. Choose the date and location that works best for you! [Registration has been open for a number of weeks. Space is limited.]

Pruning workshops will be held:

Saturday, March 5, 2016 – 9:00 a.m. to Noon at Lynden Sculpture Garden, 2145 W. Brown Deer Road, Milwaukee, WI 53217

Tuesday, March 8, 2016 – 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, 36014 Sunset Dr., Dousman, WI 53118 (corner of Hwy 18 and Hwy 67) Maps to these locations can be found at: http://waukesha.uwex.edu/horticulture/horticulture-programs/

Registration will be taken on a first come, first serve basis. Registration closes when classes are filled. The workshop will include an indoor presentation on pruning techniques and tools followed by an outdoor, hands-on pruning component where participants will be given the opportunity to practice what they have learned. The workshop will be team taught by Ann Wied, Waukesha County UW-Extension Horticulture Educator and Sharon Morrisey, Milwaukee County UW-Extension Horticulture Agent. Participants should bring their own hand pruning tools and gloves and dress for the weather including comfortable shoes or boots. Workshop will be held regardless of weather. In case of extreme weather, call 414-256-4660 on the day of the workshop one hour before the scheduled time to confirm that the workshop will be held. Questions about workshops should be directed to Christa at 262-548-7775. Confirmations to this workshop will be done by e-mail or phone call. We prefer e-mail. If you do not have e-mail, you must have voice mail with your phone number.

Cost of the workshop: $25 for UW-Extension Master Gardener Volunteers and $45 for the General Public. Fill out the registration form on bottom of this page and mail in with your registration fee.

University of Wisconsin, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties cooperating, UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming including Title IX and ADA

--- Pruning Workshops Registration Form (Clip Bottom Form & Mail with Check) ---

Have you attended the UW-Extension Pruning Workshop before? ___Yes ___No (If so, when? __________) (If you attended this UW-Extension pruning workshop in the past, your name will be placed on a waiting list. You will be contacted only if space becomes available.)

Fee: $25 = UW-Extension Master Gardener Volunteers $45 = General Public

(Check payable to: University of Wisconsin Extension) Mail registration form and check to: UW-Extension Waukesha County, Pruning Workshop, 515 West Moreland Blvd AC G22, Waukesha, WI 53188

Choose date:

_____ Saturday, March 5, 2016, 9:00 a.m to Noon at Lynden Sculpture Garden, 2145 W. Brown Deer Road, Milwaukee, WI 53217

_____ Tuesday, March 8, 2016, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, 36014 Sunset Dr., Dousman, WI 53118 (corner of Hwy 18 and Hwy 67)

Are you a Master Gardener Volunteer? ___Yes ___No If yes, ___Milwaukee County ___Waukesha County ___Other County

Name __________________________ Address ____________________________________________

City __________________________ Zip __________ Email ____________________________

County where you reside __________________________ Phone (_____) ____________________
Bee Mania
by MGV Jennifer Lazewski, Pollinator Group Chairperson

The newly formed Pollinator Group has a goal of better educating its members and the public about pollinators. Once the group establishes a solid knowledge base, members will determine how to develop, display and present materials on pollinators. Its goal is to bring university-based research to the public on these issues.

Bee Mania meeting was the perfect antidote for a cold January morning with thoughts of buzzing bees, blooming flowers and warming sunshine. Our volunteer presenters shared fantastic information about the different types of bees, their identification, social habits, nesting environment, and how to help them. While all bees eat nectar and pollen and spread pollen along their way, their behaviors can be quite different.

We learned about solitary cavity-nesting bees, such as mason bees and leafcutter bees and other bees that line their egg cells with mud and pieces of leaves. More efficient pollinators than honeybees, they only live only a few weeks before starting their next annual cycle. Cellophane bees and mining bees are solitary digging nesters that line dirt cells to protect their young.

The social behavior of bees has different levels - sweat bees share the duties of females. Bumblebees have a Queen but only annual colonies. Honeybees have a longer-lived sophisticated social system and honey production.

MGVs Jean Akhter, Stacy Stevens, Judy Plier, Janet Barthel, Chris Cera, Claire Bauer, Mary Jane Swedberg and Cheryl Kuhn researched and presented the information.

The February 9th meeting explored more about honeybees and other bees, their decline and the challenges they confront. We learned how bees gather pollen, the pests and pesticides that affect them, and other reasons for Colony Collapse Disorder and declines in populations.

On March 8th from 6:00-7:30 p.m., the Pollinator Group will discuss creating a butterfly habitat garden with host and nectar plants, raising caterpillars, and attracting hummingbirds to your garden.

On April 16th at 10:00 a.m., we will discuss plants for pollinators--what the lists say, what we have experienced, natives and nativars, how to arrange and design gardens, and other issues.

After taking May off to help with the Plant Sale, we will be getting out of the classroom and out into nature to observe pollinators during field trips. We will use our increased knowledge to share the importance of pollinators and methods to help them with our gardens.

If you are interested in the activities and information of the Pollinator Group but are not yet part of our e-mail group, please e-mail to jenlazewski@gmail.com and become connected to the Group and what it is learning.
Volunteer Appreciation Gathering

Glutton Award winner Diane Thieme
Pollinators: The Gardener's Best Friends
by MGV Ann Weronke and Janet Wintersberger, Co-Editors of Good Earth News

Master Gardeners are always seeking ways to improve our gardens. Each January, we scour seed catalogs for new varieties of plants. We decide to add dashes of red here and a sprinkling of blue there. We seek new shrubs and trees to augment our landscapes. But we can also think about ways to stimulate the growing and thriving of our plants. One way to do so is to consider drawing pollinators into our gardens. Four kinds of pollinator friends can make our jobs as gardeners easier, more productive and more satisfying.

One type of pollinator, the 4,000 species of bees, dusts pollen on our fruits and vegetables. Planting nectar rich plants and providing nesting areas for them will lure bees into your yard. These bees may seek nesting sites in the ground, in branches and in dead trees. So providing such areas may be the invitation for more bees in your gardens. Bees not only pollinate our plants but feed the economic system by billions of dollars each year.

A second pollinator flutters into our gardens as butterflies and moths. While seeking nectar in our richly colored plants, the beautiful winged butterflies scatter pollen during the day, thus dusting our plants to create the production we gardeners crave. Drawing these winged beauties such as monarchs to your garden’s flowers can be done by adding milkweed plants, used for laying eggs. Moths also perform much the same labor in the nighttime seeking the evening garden’s flowers.

A third pollinator type includes birds and bats. We watch the fluttering wings of the hummingbird as it drinks in food from our many deep-throated and colorful blossoms in our planters and gardens. Those same wings transport pollen to other plants. Included in this type of pollinator group are two bat species found in the Southwest regions of the United States. So we do not have to worry about removing bats that invade our homes.

A fourth kind of pollinator includes insects such as beetles and flies that visit our flowers and spread pollen. Beetles are responsible for pollinating over 80% of all flowering plants. Flies pollinate some of the paler flowers and even our dreaded mosquito is involved in the task of pollination.

Indeed, our flowering plants rely on pollinators for reproduction in the growth of fruits, vegetables and seed plants. Pollinators also service plants that provide fiber, medicine and fuel that we may use daily. Without their help, we would have no blueberries or strawberries for jam, no fruits such as peaches and apples, no yummy chocolate and no Halloween pumpkins. Indeed, our diets would suffer without our garden pollinators.

In search of its own food, a pollinator deposits pollen needed to produce fruit and seed. Gardeners know that many plants need that pollen transfer for reproduction.

Finally, doing what we can to use the benefits provided by the four types of pollinators is in our own best interests when gardening. To improve our personal gardens and the gardens of SEWMG this year, our rallying call should be “Come on in, pollinators. We love you.”

“Master Gardeners are always seeking ways to improve our gardens. Each January, we scour seed catalogs for new varieties of plants. We decide to add dashes of red here and a sprinkling of blue there. We seek new shrubs and trees to augment our landscapes. But we can also think about ways to stimulate the growing and thriving of our plants. One way to do so is to consider drawing pollinators into our gardens.” Ann Weronke
Note of Thanks
by Ann Wied, Consumer Horticulture Educator, Waukesha County UW-Extension

Each year SEWMSG donates funds to the consumer horticulture programs in Milwaukee and Waukesha counties and to the urban agriculture agent (Milwaukee) and commercial horticulture agent (Waukesha). Below is Ann Wied’s “Note of Thanks”.

In 2015, I used the SEWMSG donation to:
• Purchase one large tank that holds water at the Waukesha County Community Gardens. There are six water tanks located throughout this garden. One of the tanks leaked so I needed to replace it. All water tanks are connected to the hydrant on site. The tanks all have connections allowing people to use watering cans for their gardens rather than hoses.
• Purchase plants and seeds, gloves and other miscellaneous gardening supplies for two garden programs. Each of these programs had either no budget for plant material or only a very small budget. Your donation allows me to continue to offer these programs even with tight budgets
• Purchase for fall educational event.

I did not spend all the money this year and have carried over leftover funds to 2016. With a reduced budget, it is nice to have this money to turn to for unexpected expenses as well as for other purchases that will benefit my consumer horticulture programming efforts. Again, many, many thanks for SEWMSG’s support!

Volunteer News
by Nancy Lehrer, UW Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator

Spring has sprung and so have requests for presentations! Please watch for my e-mails to get the latest volunteer opportunities. Currently I am looking for:
1. Presentations: Poplar Creek, a garden center in New Berlin, is looking for speakers throughout the summer. If you can refer back to past e-mails, a calendar was attached that extended through the summer. Poplar Creek would like to have a variety of topics from aquaponics to vegetable gardening. Consider teaming up with another MGV...sharing preparations and knowledge.
2. Presentations: Wehr Nature Center in Franklin is hosting an educational program, Wehr Naturally. The nature center would like speakers in July and August. Any gardening topic that you would like to share with the public is welcomed.
3. Booth: AO Smith Wellness Fair on March 16, 2016. The topic is general vegetable gardening with some emphasis on container vegetable gardening. This event runs from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

*Call Nancy Lehrer at 414 256-4661 or e-mail nancy.lehrer@ces.uwex.edu for more details or if you are interested in any of these opportunities!

Continuing Education:
Throughout the year, our In-House Education Committee provides many opportunities for you to get your 10 Continuing Education hours. If, however, your calendar fills so fast you can’t seem to make the scheduled programs, try The Larry Meiller Show on Wisconsin Public Radio. “Garden Talk” is on every Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., with a repeat airing on Saturday at 7:00 a.m. Tune in to WHAD FM 90.7.
• All shows are archived so you can sit and enjoy the program when time allows.
• Please Note: The speaker must be a University of Wisconsin specialist or educator for this program to count for CE hours.
• WPR website lists the scheduled speakers so you can plan ahead or check out the speaker and topic, www.wpr.org/ Have a great spring!
Doing Diagnostics Differently in Milwaukee
by Sharon Morrisey, UWEX-Milwaukee County Consumer Hort. Agent

Beginning in 2016, in Milwaukee County we will be doing diagnostics differently. It is time to adjust the way we help people get plant questions answered to match the way people seek out information in the digital age. That includes all forms of communication technology and greater flexibility to fit into the mode of instant access.

Greater flexibility of our services also means more flexibility for volunteers who want to help. If you have not volunteered to help with the Hort Helpline in the past because you weren’t available weekday mornings, now there will be opportunities to do it whenever it’s convenient for you.

I find that MGVs crave learning and this really is the best way to do it! Helping answer people’s questions about plants and gardening is inarguably the best way to learn more yourself.

Here’s how it will work. There will no longer be set hours for people to call the Horticulture Helpline in Milwaukee County so there will also be no set hours for MGVs to help answer those questions. Instead, residents can submit their questions anytime by voicemail or e-mail. Then, MGVs that are Plant Health Advisors (PHAs) can handle them when it’s best for them. The PHAs will not be required to come to the office to do it, either. Voicemail and e-mail can be accessed from any phone or computer. Most of the resources of the UW-Extension for answering plant questions can also be accessed on the internet. So, technically, you can volunteer at home at midnight in your jammies!

For our clients, there will still be options for a personal touch. Voicemail messages will be returned in person by an MGV at a time that could possibly be more convenient to the caller, too. MGVs can either use their own phone or come into the office anytime during business hours. The latter also allows them to use the references and publications binders in the Hort Helpline office to search for information if they prefer. While they’re there, volunteers who come to the office can help analyze the few plant samples that still get dropped off at the office.

MGV PHAs at Boerner Botanical Gardens will still be there to assist people face-to-face from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday either in the lobby of the Education Center or the UW-Extension Hort Center there. Those hours could be expanded and include weekends if there are enough PHAs to do so. Samples can be brought in by residents, too, for the PHAs to examine.

Because we know that more and more people use the internet to find information about almost everything, we will focus our website on helping people learn how to do better internet searches to get more accurate information in addition to answering plant questions personally. They will learn the advantages of using university research-based information and be directed to UW-Extension resources.

We know the power of social media, too. So, we will use it to share information with people about seasonal plant and garden issues. Scheduled messages about recurring insects and diseases sent at the exact time people are experiencing them personally could preempt their search for that information and possibly finding wrong answers.

Coordinating it all will be a part-time staff person we plan to have on board by early to mid-April. Watch for the position announcement soon.

With all of these options, more MGVs than ever should be able to find a place in plant diagnostics that suits them. Training will be offered on either a Saturday or a couple of weekday evenings to accommodate the schedules of more MGVs.

We will need teams of volunteers to answer e-mails, to respond to voicemails, to post to Facebook and other social media platforms and to help us redesign the website. For those who enjoy the face-to-face discussion with fellow gardeners, the PHA team at Boerner will be a perfect fit. Some volunteers could even take out the UW-Extension Garden Cart into the Gardens to talk to visitors.

If you have been a PHA in the past, please contact me, with what role you wish to play in the new way of doing diagnostics (Sharon.morrisey@ces.uwex.edu).

If you have never done diagnostics before but think one of the components mentioned above seems right for you, contact me. In your e-mail, tell me what role you think you could play and let me know the best time for you to participate in training sessions (Sharon.morrisey@ces.uwex.edu).

Nationwide, Extension has been answering people’s plant questions for over one hundred years and doing it pretty much the same way. Letters with pressed leaves or squashed insects are rare now. Even office visits and phone calls have decreased. People’s lives have changed but their need for reliable, research-based answers has not. It’s time we do things differently.
Waukesha County Diagnostics Stay the Course
by Kristin Krokowski, Commercial Horticulture Educator, UW-Extension Waukesha County

Diagnostic services will stay unchanged for Waukesha County UW-Extension in 2016. We will continue to offer diagnostic services in three primary ways: in office samples, call in phone service and e-mail.

The Waukesha County Horticulture Helpline is generally staffed 3 to 4 days a week April through October. Plant Health Advisor Master Gardener Volunteers answer phone calls and e-mails from 9:00 am - noon. As the helpline manager, I do my best to provide support to these volunteers when I’m in the office. They are also able to forward anything (or anyone) too difficult to me for an answer. I also handle all in person samples and questions at the office so that volunteers can focus on the phones and e-mail.

If you have a mind for facts and enjoy sleuthing, we could always use another volunteer in the office. All of our volunteers are mentored by one of our top notch Plant Health Advisors until everyone is comfortable with your ability to handle calls and e-mails on your own. We do however ask that you train in the office. It’s important for us to be sure that volunteers are answering with accurate research based information. We also want all e-mails and phone calls to come from our office to prevent problems with our volunteers using personal phones and e-mails. Once some people have your number or e-mail it can be difficult to shake them.

Spring will be here soon (at least according to a certain groundhog I know) so if you’d like to answer plant and insect questions, or have a question that you would like answered, the Waukesha County Horticulture Helpline may be the place for you. If you are interested in becoming a Plant Health Advisor in Waukesha County please e-mail at kristin.krokowski@uwex.edu or call 262-548-7768.

Trips and Tours
by MGV Doris Fons, Trips and Tours Chairperson

Our first trip of the year will be on Friday, March 18th to the Chicago Flower And Garden Show. The registration deadline was on February 2nd. Even though the bus is full at the present time, don’t hesitate to sign up as there may be cancellations. If you were confirmed for the bus, you will be receiving a letter with all the information for that day.

We will be going to the home of Jerry Nelson of Classic Gardens on Wednesday, June 1st. Stay tuned for further information on a vegetable topic for this year. We will also see how the vineyard is progressing and tour his yard of many special trees, shrubs and other plants. Watch for registration information in April.

On Friday, July 22nd, we will be heading to Olbrich Botanical Gardens followed by a stop for lunch before we visit Epic Systems in Verona, WI. This will be a wonderful tour and we are hoping for a beautiful day to enjoy these great gardens.
South East Wisconsin Master Gardeners

Editors:
Sandy Manning | sandymanning@gmail.com
Janet Wintersberger | jwintersberger@wi.rr.com
Ann Weronke | aeweronke@earthlink.net

Grow with us

Check out our website
http://fyi.uwex.edu/sewmg

Contact Information

For more information:

Calendar Hotline (MGV Hotline) 414-256-4666
On the Web
http://fyi.uwex.edu/sewmg/
Sharon Morrisey (Consumer Hort. Agent, Milwaukee) 414-256-4660; sharon.morrisey@ces.uwex.edu
Ann Wied (Consumer Hort. Educator, Waukesha) 262-548-7788; ann.wied@ces.uwex.edu
Betsy Vokac (Program Assistant) 414-256-4672; elizabeth.vokac@ces.uwex.edu
Nancy Lehrer (Volunteer Coordinator) 414-256-4661, nancy.lehrer@ces.uwex.edu
Milwaukee County UW-Extension Office
9501 W. Watertown Plank Rd. Building A, Wauwatosa, WI 53226
Waukesha County UW-Extension Office
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.