

North Country Gardeners

Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Co.

UW-Extension

Issue 7 , March 2001

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University of Wisconsin-Extension

Area Agricultural Agents Office

Spooner Ag Research Station

W6646 Highway 70

Spooner, Wisconsin 54801

(715) 635-3506 or

Toll Free 800-528-1914

Greetings

It's hard to imagine but before long we'll be outside, rakes and trowels in hand, working the soil and sowing the seeds that will bring countless hours of work and enjoyment into our lives. It's a wonderful time to look forward to, especially after what seems like a colder and longer than usual winter.

As we prepare for the upcoming gardening season keep in mind the average frost date for your area. I know last year's May 18th frost caught a lot of people by surprise. Our average last killing frost in Spooner is May 27.

Some of you may be wondering about our annual spring meeting. In the past we have met at the Spooner Ag Research Station in early March. This year, I'm encouraging those interested to meet at the Spring Garden Seminar sponsored by the Spooner Garden Club and Northwoods School Community Education. The seminar is March 17 starting at 10 a.m. at the Minong High School. See the article in this newsletter for more information.

As always I welcome your comments, suggestions, and written contributions if you have a talent for writing.



Happy Gardening,

Kevin Schoessow
Area Ag Development Agent

Apple Pruning & Grafting Workshops to be held April 17

Do you have an apple tree in the backyard that needs pruning? If you do, how do you start? Just which branches and how much do you cut out? What kind of shape should you end up with? Why should I prune in the first place? These and other practical techniques on fruit tree pruning will be discussed and demonstrated on April 17 at 4:30 p.m. at the Spooner Ag Research Station demonstration garden on Orchard Lane.

Later that evening, at 7 p.m. in the Spooner Ag Research Station headquarters building, we will be holding an apple grafting workshop. This hands-on workshop will allow participants to learn the art of combining twig wood (scion) with a rootstock. Grafting has long been used to propagate trees. In this workshop we will demonstrate several grafting methods and discuss how to improve your chances of a successful union. Each participant will graft his or her own scion twig to a hardy rootstock, which can then be taken home and planted. Several different varieties of apple scion twigs will be available along with a hardy dwarf type rootstock.

There is no cost for the pruning workshop. A \$15.00 registration fee is required for the grafting workshop. You must pre-register for both workshops by calling 715-635-3506 or 1-800-528-1914.

Research brief.....

Kevin Schoessow

Area Ag Development Agent

Researchers are developing flowers that last longer after they're cut:

American consumers spent \$9 billion on cut flowers in 1998, according to USDA statistics. But they might buy even more if they knew the flowers would last longer once they were cut. University of Wisconsin-Madison plant breeders are trying to address this issue by breeding cut flowers that hold on to their beauty longer. "Flower breeders have focused on the shape and color of flowers and on plant shape," says Dennis Stimart, a physiologist who studies ornamentals at the College of Ag and Life Sciences. "There's been no systematic work on breeding for plants whose flowers last longer after they are cut."

Currently, to extend the life of cut flowers, preservatives are often used. Some preservatives contain sugar, an anti-microbial, and chemicals that make the water more acidic; others such as STS (silver thiosulfate) and 8-HQC (8-hydroquinoline citrate) are health hazards, although they are still approved for use in the U.S. Stimart thought there ought to be a better way to extend the life of cut flowers without using chemicals.

To see if plant breeding might lead to longer-lived cut flowers, researchers began working with inbred snapdragon lines developed specifically for marketing as tall, cut flowers. By crossing long-lived and short-lived lines they have demonstrated that breeding could extend the life of cut snapdragons from 4 to 11 days. They believe by focusing on genetic traits that affect how long the flowers last after they are cut, rather than selecting genetic traits just for flower and plant color, will lead to new snapdragon varieties for the cut flower market--a market that is currently worth about \$40 million.

Participatory tomato breeding project begins

Kevin Schoessow

Area Ag Development Agent

We all want better vegetables better adapted to our northern garden conditions. The problem is that seed companies are not breeding varieties for this region. Jim Nienhuis and Bob Tomesh, UW Madison Department of Horticulture are beginning a tomato breeding project to do just that.

We are asking for volunteers to participate in this project. Volunteers will grow our tomato plants in their gardens and help with the development of a new variety. All you have to do is grow and evaluate the tomato plants we give you and provide some fruit from the best plant. From that fruit we will process the seed, save and raise it for next year's plants and further evaluations. After several years, though this selection process, we will have developed a variety adapted to our northern soils and climate.

One of the tomato varieties we will be using to start the project is Shasta. This is a hybrid variety that was developed by Campbell Soup Company to be early and have high solids and flavor. It was used to make fresh juice of exceptional flavor. Our goal is to identify the best individuals in this Shasta (F2) population and harvest seed for planting next year. Seed harvested from these F2 plants would represent an F3 family.

At a spring educational meeting all about tomato production, at both the Ashland (May 22) and Spooner (May 23) Ag Research Stations, the project will be discussed and the plants will be available for your garden. If you are interested in participating in the project, contact Tom Syverud, Ashland, at 715-682-7268 or Kevin Schoessow, Spooner, at 715-636-3506 so you can register and we know how many plants to start.

Calendar of Events

March 30-31, 2001 Wisconsin Master Gardener Annual Conference, Wausau.

April 12, 2001 Oriental & Asiatic Lilies, Darrel Roder, Rusk Co. Master Gardener; Barron Co. UWEX Office.*

May 19, 2001 Barron Co. Master Gardener Plant Sale, Rice Lake.*

July 28, 2001 Van trip to Lake Herriot Rose Garden, Minneapolis.*

* Sponsored by the Barron County Master Gardener Association. Call Catherine Walther at 715-537-6250 for more information.

Spooner Garden Club meets 4th Thursday of every month. Contact Merle Klug at (715) 635-6239.

Hayward Garden Club meets 2nd Tuesday of every month. Contact Carol Alcoe (715) 462-3213.

Burnett Garden Club meets 2nd Thursday of every month. Contact Kris Henning at (715) 463-5247.

Brown Bag ETNs

March 30 - Growing Saskatoons (serviceberries, June berries)

April 27 - Growing currants

May 18, June 23, & July 28 - 3-part series on solving plant problems

August 25 - Mulching

Wisconsin Gardener TV

April 29 - Back to Basics

May 27 - The Heirloom Garden, Part 1

June 24 - The Heirloom Garden, Part 2

July 29 - Topic to be announced

Public Radio Garden Show

Friday mornings 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. 88.3 on your FM radio dial.

The Yellow River shoreline restoration project was a success

Sheri Snowbank
Wastewater Specialist
Dept. of Natural Resources

This past year we accomplished a great deal on the shoreline restoration project at the Gov. Tommy Thompson Hatchery property in Spooner. A big thanks go out to our volunteers for all their hard work, without them this project would not be possible. During the coming year we have many more goals to meet and there are still many opportunities to continue helping.

Last Year: We planted approximately 4540 plants, shrubs and trees. This breaks down into:

Accelerated Area (~1/4 acre)
2500 plants of 16 species
250 trees of 13 species
370 shrubs of 10 species

Northern Grassland Area (~1/4 acre)
initially seeded with native grass
1400 plants of 15 species

We also hired a tree shovel that planted 19 clumps of shrubs and trees that had up to 2-3 inch diameters.

Two field days were held one for area 4th graders and the other for the general public. Many agree the 4th grade field day is the highlight of the project to date. The students passed through five different stations (planting, fishing, hatchery tour, crafts, and aquatic life). During the craft session the students created stepping stones that were recently set in a special path at the hatchery. They also learned proper planting techniques and caught a few fish and insects. Not only did the kids have fun, but they also went away with an understanding how the health of the lake and the land are tied together.

Many types of habitat structures were also constructed including large brush and



rock piles, birdhouses and tree drops were put into the water to provide cover for aquatic life. Finally, two coconut fiber logs, an alternative method of erosion control, were installed using a variety of techniques.

Results: By the end of our first growing season a few things are already apparent. The three methods of turf control (black plastic, herbicide and tilling) compared against a control plot showed similar results. They controlled early turf growth and reduced late season exotics by at least half. We believe the herbicide would have shown better results if time would have allowed us to apply later in the season.

The mulches (rye straw, marsh hay and city leaf mulch) result's showed greater variation. The marsh hay and rye straw worked well throughout most of the growing season, but a great deal of volume was lost before first frost. The mulch obtained from the city showed surprising results. Early on we thought this would be the winner, there was no unwanted plants and the plantings were all doing well... until we got hot weather and rain. The mulch then came to life with pumpkins, tomatoes, sunflowers, and all of the invasive plants we work so hard to control in our gardens like black nightshade, pigweed, and bindweed.

The stand out plants were the late bloomers like the asters, hyssop and sunflowers. It is a little to early to pick a spe-

cific tree or shrub, but the oaks showed great promise. We are looking forward to what the spring will bring.

The Future: During the coming year we plan on improving and adding to the present site as well as increasing the educational opportunities of the entire property. Some of the things we are planning on for the coming year are:

- Redo the prairie planting on the banks of the dam. Presently there is a severe knapweed problem
- Spot planting in areas we missed and finish the shrub display area
- Spot herbicide the city mulch area and try using wood bark mulch instead
- Label plants, trees & shrubs
- Put on another 4th grade field day for Spooner & Shell Lake Schools. We are looking for some new ideas for the stations.
- Perform a study on survivability of the plantings. Provide recommendations on the species that show the most promise.
- Produce educational signs & materials
- Design and plant a small butterfly garden

If anyone has any interested in helping or would like more information, please contact Sheri Snowbank at WIDNR, 810 W Maple, Spooner, WI 54801, 715-635-4131.

Zinnias for your flower garden

Sheri Snowbank
Master Gardener



Persian Carpet

Zinnias have always been one of my favorite flowers. I am in good company as they are also a favorite of hummingbirds and butterflies. Tried and true flowers Zinnias are easily grown thriving in just about any condition. In the past few years a wider variety of colors and shapes have been developed expanding their appeal to a wider audience. This past growing season I tried six different varieties. They were all planted from seeds Memorial Day weekend and other than weeding and occasional dead-heading were left to fend for themselves. All did well but I thought a few were real standouts.

- Mound O' Bloom – (Henry Field) Plants were about 3 feet tall. It was a profuse bloomer in a wide variety of colors. The blooms ranged from 3-4 inches in diameter.
- Persian Carpet – (Henry Field) One of my favorites with plants about 2- 2 ½ feet tall, but were more shrublike in appearance than a regular zinnia plant. The blooms were small 1½ - 2 inches but were bicolor yellow and orange/burgundy. This plant by far produced the greatest number of blooms.
- Swirl Mix – (Jung) My other favorite had plants approximately 3 feet tall. The large blooms 3-4 inches were striped combinations of either red and white or yellow and orange. There was also a tendency for white blooms.
- Mixed Striped – (Henry Field) This flower is very similar to the Swirl Mix with a few exceptions. The blooms were smaller 2-3 inches and had more of a mum shape. Instead of broad stripes like the Swirl Mix I would consider them more as speckled.
- Super Giant – (Jung) Advertised as having blooms 5-6 inches the largest one I grew was 4½ inches. The plants ranged from 3-3½ feet tall and had a wide variety of bloom colors and had both regular and cactus blooms.
- Crystal White – (Jung) I was a little disappointed with this variety. It was very slow to sprout and had a low germination success. Those that did grow had plants under a foot tall and had single white blossoms 1-1 ½ inches wide. While this isn't one that I would grow again in the garden it would make a very nice border plant.

Orders being taken for Master Gardener badges

Kevin Schoessow
Area Ag Development Agent

Master Gardener Name Badges can be purchased for \$5.25 each. The official name badge is white plastic with engraved green letter and the WIMGA logo. If you would like to order a name badge, send a check payable to UW-Horticulture for \$5.25 and mail it to Lorraine Toman, Spooner Ag Research Station, W6646 Hwy 70 Spooner, WI 54801. Make sure you indicate how you want your name spelled. All orders must be in by April 13, 2001.

Local Master Gardener Association planning meeting

There appears to be enough interest by area Master Gardeners to go ahead with a planning meeting on forming a local/regional Master Gardeners Association. The purpose of this meeting is to have an informal discussion about the Master Gardener Program and begin formulating a mission statement that describes why the group is forming and what the group hopes to accomplish.

There is a lot of great individual accomplishment being done; perhaps there is an opportunity to get more people involved through an association. We will be meeting on March 27, 2001 at 7:00 p.m. at the Spooner Ag Research Station. Please call if you cannot attend.

Resources Corner

Plants Not Favored by Deer (A3727) If deer have damaged your plantings in the past, you'll find this publication a helpful resource. It lists trees, shrubs, evergreens, vines, groundcovers, perennials, annuals, bulbs, ornamental grasses, and herbs that deer don't seem to bother.

Common & Glossy Buckthorn: A Major Threat to Wisconsin's Woodlands Invasive plants can crowd out native plants and change the composition of natural plant communities. This publication describes how to identify both common and glossy buckthorn and provides various control strategies for getting rid of either species.

Both of these publications are available from University of Wisconsin-Extension Publications. Contact your local Extension Office to order your copies.

Upcoming gardening seminar planned

Julie Hustvedt

Northwood School Community Education

Unusual plants, nurturing a garden organically, growing in the shade, and perennial garden maintenance will be among the topics covered at a local spring gardening seminar on Saturday, March 17.

Northwood School Community Education and Spooner Garden Club will host the seminar from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the school, located approximately four miles north of Minong on Hwy. 53.

We think it'll be a fun, informative gathering – and a good bit of inspiration as spring again makes us hunger to be in our gardens, or to create one.

Four sessions will be presented: *Maintaining a Perennial Garden*, taught by Arla Carmichiel, head gardener of the Noerenberg Gardens, which were recently featured on HGTV's "Secret Gardens in Minneapolis." The gardens, and her own, have been featured in *Country Home Country Garden*, *Midwest Living*, and other magazines. Her presentation will explore the design process and what it takes to have a thriving a garden through the seasons. *Potpourri of Gardening Ideas*, taught by Marilyn Saffert, member of the Rice Lake Garden Club. She will show how garden structures such as arbors, fences, and birdhouses can mingle with unusual annuals, perennials, bulbs, and flowering shrubs and trees. Marilyn has gardened in rural Rice Lake for 30 years, and she writes the weekly column "Scattered Seeds" for the *Rice Lake Chronotype*. *Battling the Bugs and Spots Organically*, taught by Theresa Depies. Her class will look at organic ways of controlling common pests and diseases of ornamental plants and vegetables. She and her husband own and operate an organic community supported farm near Springbrook. *Beyond Hostas: Gardening in the Shade*,

taught by Mike Heim. His slide presentation will illustrate unusual plants that light up shaded sites. He will also touch on the successful culture of native and exotic perennials, bamboos, and even palms. Heim, a science teacher at LCO Schools in Hayward, has an extensive garden and takes part in national research testing the cold hardiness of certain plants. The seminar's \$8 admittance charge (\$3.50 for seniors) includes lunch. Pre-registration is appreciated and can be made by calling the school at 715-466-2297.

Extend growing season with a portable field hoophouse

Kevin Schoessow

Area Ag Development Agent



If you're like most garden enthusiasts in the north, you are probably looking for ways to extend the growing season. The growing season this year will seem especially short if we have a cool wet spring--a good possibility considering how much snow pack is still on the ground. Most season extenders have one thing in common, they increase the heat units around the plant. Portable row covers, plastic mulches, and "wall o' water" are some ways to accomplish this. Another approach would be to build a portable field hoophouse.

Some crops that are well suited to this type of hoophouse include tomatoes, peppers, eggplants and melons – crops that need to be planted after danger of frost and that generally mature late in the growing season. Master Gardener Rodger Erickson

from Spooner is excited about trying the hoophouse in his garden this year. Rodger grows and sells produce and is always looking for way to get tomatoes, peppers and melons to mature and ripen earlier in the season.

According to Rodger, the hoophouse is constructed using 1" PVC pipe for the hoops and 6 mil polyethylene plastic sheeting for the cover. The hoops rest directly over the soil in the garden and are anchored using 18 inch pieces of rebar hammered 12 inches into the ground. An 18-foot length of PVC will provide a width of 10 feet and a height of 6 feet. Hoops are placed three feet apart. Twine holds the plastic sheeting in place. "It's a fairly simple and low cost way to help extend my growing season," reports Rodger.

More information on how to construct your own portable field hoophouses can be found at the Washington State Cooperative Extension website, <http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/eb1825/eb1825.html>.

Congratulations to the newest Certified Master Gardeners

Kevin Schoessow

Area Ag Development Agent

Eight people recently became certified Master Gardeners by fulfilling their requirements of the Master Gardener Program. In order to be certified not only must people attend the Master Gardener training and pass a written exam, but they are also asked to volunteer a minimum of 36 hours in community service. Volunteer hours are categorized into youth education, community education or support services. Recent certified Master Gardeners attended the training in fall of 1999 and completed their volunteer hours in 2000. Congratulations to **Carolyn Blake, Sue Donatell, Mary Ann Hable, Edward Jacobsen, Barbara Madden, Martha Rice, Renelle Sears, and Sharon Tarras.**

North Country Master Gardeners Accomplishment Report

Kevin Schoessow

Area Ag Development Agent

We currently have 28 members in our group (not a WIMGA-affiliated association), with eight recertified for 2001, seven newly certified, and some still in training.

In 2000 we volunteered	74 hours in youth education 123.5 hours in community education 536 hours in support services
and participated in	140 hours of continuing education



North Country MGs includes individual members from Burnett, Washburn and Sawyer Counties. We are not a formal association, yet. For the last several years we have been meeting as a group in early spring for a plant and seed exchange, group ordering of plants and some sort of educational program. Until recently we were a small group of MGs, but with the training in the fall of 1999 we gained several new dedicated individuals and have taken on a number of new projects. Since our membership is all as individuals many of us work independently on various projects in our communities. Kevin Schoessow, the Tri County Ag Agent publishes the North Country Newsletter, our official local MG newsletter.

Major Accomplishments or Projects:

1. Assisting Dr. Laura Jull, UW-Extension Woody Ornamental Specialist, with planting, weeding, and dead heading of flowers for the hardy shrub rose variety trial at the Spooner Ag Research Station.
2. Assisted DNR and UW-Extension staff with planning, planting and maintenance of shoreline restoration projects at the Yellow River Fish Hatchery in Spooner and the Crooked Lake boat landing in Siren.
3. Designed, planted and maintained various community beautification projects including; heirloom, herb and butterfly gardens for Fort Folle Avoine Historical Park in Webster, memory gardens at Washburn Co. Fairgrounds, welcome signs in Hayward, and Grantsburg, and perennial plantings at the National Vets Cemetery south of Spooner.
4. Provided a plant doctor's booth at the Washburn Co. Fair.
5. Several individuals are also very active in local garden clubs and 4-H projects, providing educational workshops, organizing garden tours, and providing leadership.

Highlighted Project: Flower and Vegetable Display Garden at the Spooner Ag Research Station

For the past several years we have been working with the Spooner Area UW-Extension Office and the Spooner Ag Research Station in helping plan, plant and maintain a flower and vegetable display garden. The purpose of the garden — which is open to the public and is part of a larger horticulture display at the station — is to display new and unusual varieties as well as those varieties more suited for our shortened growing season.

In the spring we met to plan the garden and select varieties. Many of the varieties we selected were All American Selection winners, but we also included many of our favorite varieties, and tried a few new ones. The garden also featured an early tomato variety trial, methods of control for Colorado potato beetle and colored carrot research. By mid June over 50 varieties of annual flowers and 68 varieties of vegetables and vines were planted. The next several weeks were spent weeding and making up labels for all those varieties.

Another project, which was part of the horticulture display area, was a hardy shrub rose variety trial coordinated by Dr. Laura Jull from UW-Madison. This replicated research variety trial will be evaluating winter hardiness, insect and disease resistance, and other traits of 20 varieties of shrub roses.

Our efforts in the display garden were rewarded throughout the summer as visitors to the research station viewed the garden. With the help of Extension, a display garden booklet was produced and made available to visitors. The highlight was the twilight garden tour. Over 120 people walked through the garden and listened to speakers from UW-Extension. Several MGs were also on hand to help answer questions.

In addition to the educational opportunities for local residents, the garden also produced over 20 grocery bags of vegetables that were donated to local food pantries.

Webster Community Garden awaiting adoption!

Kevin Schoessow

Area Ag Development Agent

Last year the Webster Community Garden project was started. The purpose of the project was to prepare and make available a parcel of land to residents of Webster for various gardening activities. The village of Webster approved and donated a 30 x 60 foot parcel of land located on Perch and Main Streets and provided water from the near by pump house. Local businesses and individuals donated labor and other materials and a garden was planted. The produce from the garden was shared with seniors and lower-income families in the Webster area. The local deer ate all the broccoli and cabbage!

This year the garden is looking for interested individuals, clubs or organizations that will take ownership of the garden plot and use it for a worthy cause. Perhaps as a community project to grow food for the hungry, or a group garden for 4-H or other youth groups, service organizations or church groups. Or maybe it just a place to grow additional vegetables you don't have room for in your own garden. If you live or

work in the Webster area and you would like to be involved with this year's Webster Community Garden Project, call Kevin Schoessow at 1-800-528-1914, or Karen Schmidt at the Burnett County Extension Office at (715) 349-2151.

Tree & shrub sale orders being taken

Kevin Schoessow

Area Ag Development Agent

The Washburn County Land Conservation Department, Shell Lake FFA and Spooner FFA are now taking orders for their annual tree and shrub sale. Wildlife shrub packets which include 12 plants are available for \$14.00. Packets of 25 four-year-old conifer transplants are for sale from \$13.50 - \$15.50. Red oak seedling 10 trees per packet are available for \$10.50. Fruit trees, flowering crab and red maples are also for sale as bare root transplants for \$22.00 each. Order as soon as possible--sales are on a first come first serve basis. Trees will be distributed at the Spooner Ag Research Station on April 20 and April 21, 2001. For order information call the Washburn County Land Conservation Dept. at (715) 635-2453.

Summer horticulture assistant needed

Kevin Schoessow

Area Ag Development Agent

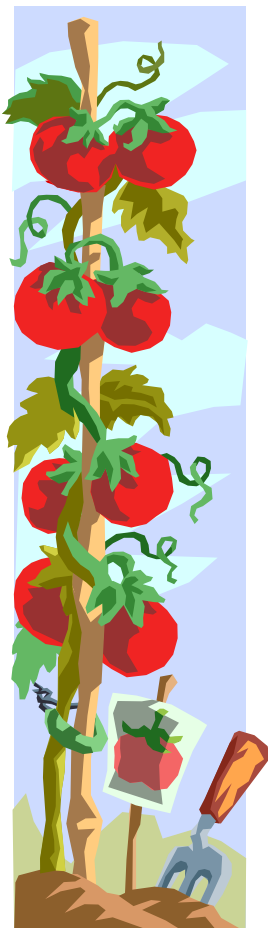
The University of Wisconsin-Extension Area Agricultural Agents Office located at the Spooner Ag Research Station serving Burnett, Washburn and Sawyer Counties is looking to hire a summer horticulture assistant. This person would help respond to home horticulture questions through office calls, office consultations, and site visits. Some time teaching and writing news releases will also be expected. Knowledge of pest control measures, diagnosing plant problems, plant and insect identification relating to gardens, trees, lawns, shrubs and household problems is required. Candidates should have experience in home horticulture and have successfully completed the Master Gardener Program or other training in horticulture. Strong interpersonal skills are a must. This position is for 20 hours per week beginning in May through mid-September.

For a complete job description, contact Lorraine at the Spooner Area UWEX Office at 635-3506 or 1-800-528-1914.

Volunteering Update -- There will be plenty of volunteering opportunities again this year for Master Gardeners of others interested. The following is a list of projects along with contact information:

Location	Project	Contact	Phone
Spooner Fish Hatchery	Shoreland Restoration	Sheri Snowbank	635-2101
Spooner Ag Research Station	Demo Garden	Kevin Schoessow	635-3506
Spooner Ag Research Station	Shrub Rose Experiment	Kevin Schoessow	635-3506
Spooner	Vets Cemetery	Merle Klug	635-6239
Webster	Fort Folle Avoine Garden	Kevin Klucas	866-8890
Grantsburg	Community Beautification	Kris Henning	463-5247
Hayward	Community Beautification	Carol Alcoe	462-3213
Hayward	Smith Pond City Park	Verna Warman	634-2854

Don't forget about helping the young and old with gardening projects. Consider working with 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs, Church groups, or Senior Citizens. Share the bounty by planting an extra row of vegetables and donating it to a local food shelf or senior center. Once you've been certified, you only need 10 hours of volunteer time per year plus 10 hours continued education.



North Country Gardeners Newsletter

A publication for gardening enthusiasts from the
Tri-County area of Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Cooperative Extension
United States Department of Agriculture
University of Wisconsin Extension
432 N. Lake St.
Madison, WI 53706

Official Business

Visit us on the web! You may find this newsletter and other useful information by visiting the website of the Spooner Ag Research Station. It has recently been redesigned and updated with new factsheets and program information: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/sars/index.htm>