Greetings

Greetings from the North County Master Gardener Volunteers!

It has been a busy year for our NCMGV association. We have used the 2018 All-America Selections theme of “Get Social in the Garden” to inspire our many activities. This not only involved getting more active on social media but also helped us design our AAS garden at the Spooner Ag Research Station Teaching & Display Garden. Here is a sampling of what we have been up to this season.

Each of the eight AAS garden plots has a “social” theme, including Bee Social at the Beestro Barden, Country Fair, Playground, Phone a Friend, Bee Happy Tea Garden, Stars and Stripes Forever, and Flowers to Friends and Family. The perennial garden which is now a Monarch Way Station with many pollinator-friendly native plants is thriving! New benches and arbors have been installed. We had many monarch caterpillars on the milkweed and many other butterflies and pollinators. Check the mailboxes at the garden for various garden maps and handouts.

We had a successful plant sale in May with tomatoes and peppers available as well as a new item. Keeping in mind our efforts to promote pollinator-friendly gardening, we sold packs of six varieties of pollinator flowering plants. They span the whole season with plenty of nectar and pollen for the bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. Those packs sold out very quickly!

June brought the completion by 10 enthusiastic new MGVs of our spring 2018 Master Gardener Volunteer training. They are already actively participating in and bringing fresh ideas to our many activities.

Our “Kids in the Garden” program for children and youth began in June and ended in August in the Teaching & Display Garden.

Our July 17 “Meet Me in the Garden” event at the teaching gardens had the theme of “Tips, Tricks, Truth, or Myths.”

In keeping with our Get Social in the Garden theme our group had the pleasure of having our July 26 monthly meeting at the home of Katie Childs, and we toured the farm and gardens of Marilyn (MGV Barron county) and Paul Saffert on July 30.

Our annual big event, the Twilight Garden Tour, is Tuesday, August 14 from 4:30 to 7:30 PM. In case of rain we will meet in the Ag Research Station auditorium. We have three wonderful speakers scheduled plus many demonstration and displays with various community groups involved. There will also be vegetable tasting, wine tasting, and Master Gardeners and interns from UW available to explain what is in the gardens.

We will begin to wrap up our season with a Saturday, September 8, Meet Me in the Garden event at 10 a.m. in the Teaching & Display Garden. The theme for this event is “Harvest, Seed Saving, and Fall Clean-up.” Extra produce from our vegetable gardens may be available as well.

Master Gardener Volunteers will be hosting a geocaching event at the teaching gardens on Saturday, September 7. While the events described above are some of our “main events,” there have been numerous individual MGV projects and activities going on as well.

Our fall potluck for MGVs is going to be on September 27 along with our annual meeting. We hope to see many Master Gardener Volunteers there!

Kevin Schoessow                   Donna Amidon
UW-Extension Ag Development Agent  President
kevin.schoessow@ces.uwex.edu       North Country Master Gardeners Association
One of the region’s premier summer gardening events, the 20th annual Twilight Garden Tour, will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 14, from 4 to 7:30 p.m.

Hosted by the University of Wisconsin Extension, Spooner Agriculture Research Station, and North Country Master Gardener Volunteers, it will feature university speakers, demonstrations, displays, food tastings, a walking tour of the Seed to Kitchen Collaborative, an organic vegetable variety research trial partnership between nationally recognized plant breeders, chefs, and local growers.

The venue for the Twilight Garden Tour is the award-winning Teaching & Display Garden.

Speakers will be Mike Maddox, UW Master Gardener Volunteer program director; Erin Silva, UW-Madison organic agriculture specialist; and Julie Dawson, UW-Madison Urban & Regional Food Specialist.

Master Gardener Volunteers and invited speakers will be available to answer gardening questions and identify plant, insect, and disease samples.

The Teaching & Display Garden is an official All-America Selections (AAS) display garden featuring both flowers and vegetables, and it has earned multiple awards in the National Landscape Design contest sponsored by AAS.

The garden also includes organic vegetable gardening, a children’s garden, container gardening, table and wine grapes, fruit trees, and the newly renovated Monarch and Pollinator Sanctuary perennial garden.

As in the past the educational event is free.

The Teaching and Display Gardens are located on Orchard Lane, one mile east of Spooner on Hwy. 70.

For more information contact Kevin Schoessow, 715-635-3506 or 800-528-1914; spooner.ars.wisc.edu; or facebook.com/spoonerag.

Meet Me in the Garden will end growing season with sharing tips on harvesting, seed saving, and clean-up

By Sue Reinardy

We will be meeting in the garden on Saturday morning, September 8, at 10 a.m., and all are invited for a program that will focus on harvesting, seed saving, and clean-up.

Learn tips on when produce is at its peak for harvest and how to store properly. Several types of seed saving techniques will be demonstrated, and there will be checklists for fall clean-up. The garden will still be at its peak to enjoy.

University of Wisconsin-Extension Master Gardener Volunteers will share their tips gathered through experience and university-based research.

The Display and Teaching Gardens can be found at N5264 Orchard Ln., located 1 1/2 miles east of Spooner on Hwy. 70 or a half-mile west of the Hwy. 70/53 interchange.

Bring your own chair for the Meet Me in the Garden Series.

In the case of inclement weather, programs will be held at the Station Building at W6646 Hwy. 70, Spooner.
By Sue Reinardy

On a warm summer’s evening on July 17, a group of gardeners shared their tricks at the Spooner Agricultural Station Teaching & Display Garden. Of course, the garden was the highlight, but there is a sampling of the take-aways from the program.

**Cut flowers**

Take a bucket of clean, cold water when cutting flowers for bouquets and let them rest a bit in a cool spot before putting into an arrangement.

Take all foliage off the flower stem that will be contacting the vase water.

Keep vases and pruners clean with a mild solution of bleach to water (one part bleach to nine parts water will do the trick).

Woody stems can be hammered at the base to allow more uptake of water.

A great resource: *Floret Farm’s Cut Flower Garden* by Erin Benzakein (available at the library).

**Garden photo techniques**

Best times to take pictures is early morning or near sunset or on a cloudy day; avoid bright sunshine at mid-day.

Get up close or from a different angle.

Shoot when the plant is in prime condition.

For a dewy appearance, use a spray bottle of water.

**Vegetable garden**

Tomatoes can be pruned to provide more air circulation and encourage growth.

Mulch, mulch, mulch. Not only does it prevent weeds, it retains moisture and provides protection from soil-borne diseases splashing on the plants.

**Phenology**

Phenology is the study and observation of seasonal events and their correlation to plant, insect, and animal life.

Some guides: Plant beans, cucumbers, and squash when lilac is in full bloom; transplant peppers and tomatoes when daylilies start to bloom or lily of the valley plants are in full bloom; apple maggot moths are at their peak when Canada thistle blooms.

Resource: Wisconsin Phenological Society

(people.uwm.edu/wisconsin-phenological-society/)

**Truth about pollinators**

Go native, have a goal of 50 percent of the landscape being native to the area.

Pick a sunny spot and plant in big patches so pollinators can go from plant to plant easily.

Choose a diverse mixture of plants that bloom from beginning to the end of the season.

Be a little messy. Many species use old stems, branches, and logs for shelter.

Avoid use of pesticides and herbicides which can kill pollinators.

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**Visit us on the Web!**

This newsletter and other useful information are online at:

[spooner.ars.wisc.edu](http://spooner.ars.wisc.edu)
[facebook.com/spooneraq](http://facebook.com/spooneraq)
By Roseann Meixelsperger

Kids in the Garden was introduced in June 2018. Our goal is to inspire kids by teaching them about gardening and the birds and bugs that surround the garden. The North Country Master Gardener Volunteers had set a goal to have a Children’s Garden incorporated into the Teaching and Display Gardens many years ago. This year, the raised bed garden area has been dedicated to making that goal become a reality. The decision was made to offer the program at no charge, as part of our overall mission.

The children have planted flowers and vegetables in the beds in spring, and as they become ready for harvest, they taste them and talk about how to use them. For each class, we plan a hands-on learning experience, a story about the gardening topic, and a snack and beverage.

In June, we had two programs – one on “Planting our Garden and Construction of a Bug Condo.” The kids loved catching bugs with their insect nets and then placing them on a tarp to examine and learn about what bugs they had caught. At that time of year, even some dragonflies were caught. All were then released back to their homes.

The other session was on “Composting We Go and Magical Hummingbirds.” The kids learned about how to make compost, and why it’s important. They also learned many interesting facts about magical hummingbirds, the only birds that can hover and fly backwards.

In July, we also had two programs – one on “Looking Down the Wiggly Worms Hole” and the other on “Marvelous Monarchs and Pollinators.”

During the first session, the kids again had composting reinforced and planted basil in a self-wicking container repurposed for that task from 2-liter bottles.

During the pollinator session, the kids pretended they were pollinators, and “pollinated” our wooden sunflower photo stand. They also learned about how bees pollinate and make honey, and the lifecycle of the monarchs.

In August, our children’s program sessions will wrap up with “Apples, Apples, Apples and Painting Friendship Rocks.” The kids will learn about apples and what lives inside some of them. We will paint Friendship Rocks, and the kids have the option to take them home or hide them in the gardens. This will be our final gathering before school starts.

Nearly all our Master Gardener Volunteers contributed to making this program a success by donating supplies needed for the program. Our Children’s Garden Committee members are: Roseann Meixelsperger, Russ Parker, and Mark Fox.

Special thanks to our Kids in the Garden presenters: Russ Parker, Mark Fox, Shelbi Jentz, Nikki Halverson, and Kevin Schoessow.

Thanks to our Story Walk readers: Cheryl Pippin and Jeri Bitney.

Thanks to our “treats” provider:
Interns are major help in garden

We were fortunate to have two energetic interns this year, both students at UW-River Falls majoring in crops and soil science. Mitch Shellito and Kenzie Tingo have teamed up to plan, organize, plant, and maintain the vegetables planting area, as well as assist MGVs with other tasks in the Teaching & Display Garden.

They also are tour guides to garden visitors and have assisted with our Meet Me in the Garden and the Kids in the Garden educational programs.

They have also assisted with other projects on the Station including the Seed to Kitchen vegetable variety research trial, corn, soybean, and alfalfa research, and in answering questions on horticulture and agronomy.

Here is what Kenzie had to say about her intern experience.

Kenzie’s look back

As a total overlook of the summer I don’t even know where to begin with the things I’ve learned while working in the garden these past couple months. I’ll admit there’s a lot of hard work that goes into this display garden, more than I thought going into this summer. From that though I’ve learned what it truly takes to make a garden pop, from the long hours weeding and tilling up the beds, to planning and planting the seeds.

Funny thing is, once the planting is done and you’re eagerly waiting for all your hard work to start growing … the work is far from done. You now have long hours watering, still weeding, pruning, and harvesting.

The sense of accomplishment you have when your garden is blooming with beautiful flowers, fruits, and veggies is absolutely amazing.

It simply amazes me what a plant can produce, but with all these wonderful things blooming you also run into some “disappointments.” What I mean by that is you go ahead and plant something and it may not grow as well as you would have liked or thought because it was stunted by something that may have made that plant unhappy.

There are numerous reasons a plant doesn’t produce, that’s where you take that in and look at the things you may have done wrong and could have changed and learn from it!

All in all I’ve had a very happy and fun experience in the garden. I look forward to coming to work every day, and what better way to brighten up an early morning at work than to walk out and see all your hard work growing and thriving!

Every single one of the Master Gardeners I’ve worked alongside has been amazing and so helpful with teaching me along the way. As well as the help from my fellow intern, Mitch Shellito, he has been an absolute pleasure to work with and has taught me so many things and I can’t thank him enough.

From the good days to the “bad days,” this summer has been amazing, and I would do it all over again in a heartbeat, it has been an absolute pleasure.

Kids in the Garden

From page 4

Roseann Meixelsperger. Thanks to our registration and treat and vegetable tasting distribution: Joanna Bernat and Carla TePaske. Thanks to our registration coordinator: Lorraine Toman. Thanks to our communications coordinator: Vicki Gee-Treft.

Our brochure for Kids in the Garden has been publicized on our website and Facebook page. We have requested the local newspapers to put our schedule in the “community events” sections of their publications. We have posted the brochure in our communities. We are planning on presenting our program to the school teachers in the spring of 2019 to try to reach more children.

This is our first “learning” year for the program. After each session we would debrief with an After-Action Report, indicating what worked and what didn’t. We’ve improved our program based on our assessments. We started out with only about four kids showing up for a session, and one time no kids showed up! That led to texting the parents a few days before the sessions to remind them about the dates, topics, and times. At our last July session, we had 13 kids participating. We plan to offer the session again in 2019, and if you are interested in participating, please contact Lorraine at the Station and she will relay that info to our children’s program committee.
Ten graduate from Master Gardener training in 2018

By Sue Reinardy

A group of gardening enthusiasts have completed a three-month course through the University of Wisconsin Extension to become Master Gardener Volunteers. The graduates represent communities in Washburn, Polk, and Barron counties.

According to Kevin Schoessow, UW-Extension area agriculture development educator, “The new Master Gardener Volunteers will assist UW-Extension in delivering programs that address community needs related to horticulture and gardening such as increasing food security through gardening, assisting school garden programs to promote science awareness and nutrition in kids, or facilitating gardening projects at schools, libraries, and other public and tribal community sites.”

The new Master Gardener Volunteer trainees rated their experience as very favorable with comments such as: “Learned so much. I already used my knowledge on plants I have at home, I’d like to get out, learn more and share. What sticks out is the new resources and places to visit that I was unaware of before. Thank you so much for this incredible experience – I’m excited to be part of the group.”

Their confidence level on gardening subjects went from no/low confidence to moderate/high confidence almost uniformly.

A certified UW-Extension Master Gardener Volunteer participant completes 36 hours of initial training, passes a final exam, and completes a minimum of 24 hours of volunteer service each year.

The training was held on Tuesday evenings at the Spooner Agriculture Research Station and involved a different horticulture subject each week, such as: Annual, Perennial and Native Plants, Fruits and Vegetables, Weeds, Wildlife, Soils, Insects, and Plant Diseases. Participants learned from a wide range of instructors from University of Wisconsin, UW-Extension, Master Gardener Volunteers, local experts, and through online materials.

Planning for a new training program will start soon for 2019. If you are interested in learning more about gardening and joining the Master Gardener Volunteer program, contact the UW-Extension area office at the Spooner Agriculture Station to be added to the contact list.

The UW-Extension and Master Gardener Volunteers from Burnett, Sawyer, and Washburn counties sponsor the Master Gardening Volunteer Training.

For more information, visit north-countrymgv.org/training or contact Kevin Schoessow at 715-635-3506, 800-528-1914, or key-in.schoessow@ces.uwex.edu. Or contact Sue Reinardy, UW-Extension Master Gardener Volunteer, 715-462-3361 or sreinardy@centurytel.net.
Three Sisters Garden: An ancient Native American gardening practice is rekindled

By Donna Amidon

If you visit our Master Gardener Volunteer Teaching & Display Garden on Orchard Lane by the Ag Station outside of Spooner or the gardens at Forts Folle Avoine between Webster and Danbury, you will see examples of the Three Sisters Gardens.

While there are different ways to plant these, the main thing is to include corn, pole beans, and squash which are “companion plants.” Each plant has a role in the support of the other plants. The beans put more nitrogen into the soil, which benefits the other plants. The corn supports the bean vines as they grow upward. The squash grows between the corn and beans, acting as a “mulch” to keep weeds at a minimum and help prevent erosion.

The Three Sisters Gardens are a style of gardening that Native Americans have used since before Europeans arrived on this continent, and there is some spiritual belief behind the practice. It is still used today by some Native Americans throughout the continent.

Some feel that the plants yield more corn with this method. Growing together, the plants tend to be stronger and able to resist damage from storms and pests. They are usually planted in mounds rather than rows.

If you visit Forts Folle Avoine you will see the corn in four round areas with the beans growing up through the corn stalks and the squash vines covering the soil around them. If possible, it is good to use heirloom seeds.

At the Forts garden I have used Cherokee Trail of Tears beans, Native or Indian corn, and various types of squash seeds, including Geta Okosomin, which is an ancient Native American squash.

So come and visit our Teaching & Display Garden in Spooner or the historical Forts Folle Avoine which is a replica of the fur trading forts and Indian village that were located on that site back in the 1800s. It is located on Cty. Rd. U west of Wisconsin Highway 35 a few miles north of Webster.

You will not only see various styles of gardening at both sites but you will also sense the serenity of each area. You might even sense the spirit behind this Native American gardening practice.

MGVs need to file their timesheets by September 15

By Sue Reinardy

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered this gardening season. There is one more clean-up activity for all Master Gardener Volunteers to complete: Fill out your 2018 timesheet and send it to the Spooner office.

Here are the steps:

- Download a copy of the current timesheet from wimastergardener.org/about-hours/.
- List your volunteer activities and continuing education hours. MGVs will be recertified who have completed at least 24 hours of youth education, adult education, or community service and 10 hours of continuing education. Even if you miss a year you can recertify if you complete the hours the next year.
- The volunteer year is October 1 through September 30. However, since we need to submit reports before September 30 – you can either anticipate or report them the following year.
- Email the completed timesheet by September 15 to kevin.schoessow@ces.uwex.edu or loraine.toman@wisc.edu or mail it to:
  - Kevin Schoessow
  - Spooner Area UW-Extension
  - Spooner Agriculture Research Station
  - W6646 Hwy 70
  - Spooner, WI 54801
- Our contributions are important to our communities, and as government resources continue to be stretched, reporting these services helps the Master Gardener Program be accountable to decision makers.

“This is a government-funded program, with UW-Extension, and as with any other public-funded program we have to show taxpayers how their money is being spent and any returns on their investment,” said Wisconsin Master Garden Program Coordinator Susan Mahr. “All of the contributions of MGVs throughout the state are compiled annually in an annual accomplishment report that documents the contributions of MGVs in their communities and the value of that service to the public. The more accurately we can portray the program, the better.”
Pollinator-friendly gardens can create one potential problem for gardeners: stinging bees and wasps. While gardening for our local Burnett Medical Center, Continuing Care Center, I accidentally stepped on a ground bee nest. Ground bees are not usually aggressive but when one steps on their nest, they behave like anyone defending their home.

Lucky for me the continuing care center is attached to a clinic and hospital, so when six bee stings caused me to become dizzy then break out in hives everywhere on my body and nearly pass out, I was able to stagger inside.

My boss got a wheelchair and whisked me down to the Emergency Department where I was injected from an EpiPen and put on an IV. My significant other was called, and he hurried in to sit with me while hives popped out all over my face, arms, and torso; my face swelled up; my heart rate surged; and I struggled not to shake all over. The doctors seemed unconcerned that I was actually having a serious anaphylactic episode – my throat was not swelling shut.

Most likely my reaction to the stings was exacerbated by my dehydrated and exhausted state. I'd been working out in the heat all day, and while I stopped every few hours to drink down a big glass of water, it was very dry, sunny, and windy out – perfect weather for sucking all the moisture out of a person. This may also have accounted for some of the aggressiveness of the bees.

I was sent home with a prescription for my very own EpiPen. Luckily I had insurance that covered this as they can be quite pricey and expire in one year or so. I filled the prescription, kept one pen in my car and one at home in the medicine cabinet. Three years later, after the pens were well expired, I had occasion to be stung by one wasp. I was at the dump, a three-mile drive from home in my pickup truck. No EpiPen. And I hadn’t brought my phone. My finger started swelling and itching immediately. I figured, one sting, I'd go home and see what would happened.

My SO thought I should go to the ER, but I took a few Benedryl and waited. My whole hand and a third of my forearm swelled up and itched like crazy, but no other hives and no facial swelling. Had I again been stung multiple times, I definitely would have gone to the ER. And lucky for me, our medical center is only a few miles away. (Some people who are allergic to stings must go get medical help immediately with only one sting!)

I dabbed the finger with apple cider vinegar which helped with the welling. Later, when I was not so concerned with spreading the toxin, I ran very hot water over the whole hand, which took care of all the itching. Over the next three days the swelling subsided.

Stinging critters have not kept me out of the garden. As I grow older, I try to be more careful about dehydration and exhaustion, and I definitely keep an eye on the bees and wasps busily gathering nectar and spreading pollen on their way.