

# Illinois Master Gardener IMAGINE

INFORMATION ♦ NEWS ♦ EDUCATION



Volume 13 No. 3  
May-June 2012

## COORDINATORS COMMENTS

Welcome to all of our new interns who are just finishing up their classroom work and beginning their volunteer experiences. Those of you who are “veterans” to the program may remember this overwhelming feeling of newness to the program, to the other volunteers, to the staff and to the volunteer projects. In order to help these “newbies” feel welcome and for them to have a successful Master Gardener career it is important that you as veterans mentor them- either formally or informally. Some of our county programs have very successful mentoring programs in place- if you are not one of those counties please consider either setting up a mentoring program or taking a new intern “under your wing”.

A study about mentoring new Master Gardeners in Florida was published in the Journal of Extension (JOE) in 1999. Data gathered in the program before mentoring was established showed intern drop out rates of 17%, 26% and 27% over a 3 year survey period. After a mentoring program was established the drop out rates for new interns fell to 2%. Survey results focus on friendship gained from the program as the most important factor. In this study, mentors were active Master Gardeners with 100+ hours of service who attended a mentor training and then established and continued contact with their mentees before, during and after training.

The benefits of mentoring new volunteers are great- for the volunteer, the mentor and the Master Gardener organization. Mentors will have satisfaction from helping others; enhanced knowledge and greater commitment and motivation for the program. The new volunteers will have enhanced learning; positive influences on their attitude; guidance through procedural obstacles and improved results from challenging their assumptions. The organization benefits from better retention of membership; more productive volunteers and increased involvement by volunteers.

A nice overview of the Alabama Master Gardener mentoring program may be found online at- <http://www.aces.edu/mg/documents/MGMentoring-ModelsandSuggestionsMay2010.pdf>. According to this model Successful Mentors will: always listen first, then advise; are approachable by email or phone; initiate contact at least twice a month; share their experiences with the volunteers; invite the interns to special events; volunteer together with their intern; maintain an open mind and learn from each other; maintain confidences and are an intermediary if an intern has a problem like illness or family challenges. Take the time this spring to consider how a mentoring program- either formal or informal might benefit your local Master Gardener group.

Monica David, University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener Coordinator

## YOUR HELP IS REQUESTED FOR A MASTER GARDENER IMPACT STUDY

It is important to the Illinois Master Gardener program to show stakeholders that we are having an impact thru our training and with educating our clientele. One way to achieve this goal is to gain information through a survey of our volunteers. I am requesting your participation in an online survey to evaluate some of the things you may have learned as a result of your Master Gardener training and also what you may have shared with clients in your volunteer work. **At this time I am only asking those who took training in either 2009 or 2010 to participate in the survey. Please do not take the survey if you trained in another year.** Your answers will be absolutely confidential and your contact information will not be recorded. Please access the survey online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MGTM2012>. The survey should only take about 10 to 15 minutes of your time. **The survey will close on June 1.** Thank you very much- your participation is appreciated.

## **NEW! PLANT SALE GUIDELINES FOR MASTER GARDENERS**

Below are the IDA regulations for the sale of plant material by Master Gardener volunteers.

### **Definitions of plant material:**

**Nursery stock** includes but is not limited to: woody plants such as trees and shrubs, including Christmas trees; herbaceous perennials; sod and perennial herbs such as sage and tarragon.

Plants such as vegetables, houseplants and annual bedding plants, such as petunias, geraniums, etc. are not considered nursery stock.

### **For Master Gardeners engaged in Extension sponsored activities:**

1. Plants sold one time per year as a fundraiser for U of I Extension: For U of I Master Gardeners who are digging plants out of their yards and donating them to a U of I fundraiser – NO license is required. This includes any type of plant material- nursery stock or vegetables, houseplants or annuals. If Master Gardeners are selling plants donated by a licensed greenhouse or nursery- NO license is required.

2. Plants sold MORE than one time per year as a fundraiser for U of I Extension: This is for Master Gardeners who are having a plant sale more than 1 time per year or have a booth at a Farmer's Market, Garden Walk or other event that occurs more than 1 time per year. The Master Gardeners may NOT sell any materials listed as nursery stock (see above) but may sell vegetables, houseplants and annual bedding plants.

### **For Master Gardeners selling plants on their own- ie outside of Extension activities:**

1. Master Gardeners who advertise and sell their own plants on *Ebay* or *Craig's List* on an ongoing basis must have a Nursery license (see below).

2. If a Master Gardener is running a landscape design business (separate from Extension) and as part of their business they provide plants to the customer they would be considered a Nursery Dealer and are required to have a license.

### **How to obtain a Nursery or Nursery Dealer license from IDA:**

**Nursery license-** This license would be needed if you grow the plants you sell.

An application for a Nursery license may be downloaded from the IDA website at:

<http://www.agr.state.il.us/pdf/nurserymencertification.pdf>

This license will include a nursery inspection fee based on acreage.

**Nursery Dealer license-** This license is needed if you sell plants grown by others.

An application for a Nursery Dealer license may be downloaded from the IDA website at:

[www.agr.state.il.us/pdf/nurserydealerregistration.pdf](http://www.agr.state.il.us/pdf/nurserydealerregistration.pdf)

The license costs \$50, per each location where plant material will be sold. Please note that the address of each location must be listed on the form. On the form be sure to check Retail Outlet or Landscaping in the center of the page, sign the form, date and return with the fee to IDA.

### **To find out if a nursery is licensed check the IDA site:**

<http://www.agr.state.ili.us/Environment/nursery/>

## **IMPORTANT DATES**

### **July 14: DeKalb County Master Gardener Annual Gardenwalk and Plant Sale.**

Eight unique gardens have been chosen for this years event, as well as a Point of Interest. The BIG plant sale will include a Garden Boutique and a Master Gardener Help Desk. Tickets are \$10 in advance or \$12 on the day of the event. The plant sale will be held at the DeKalb County Center for Agriculture, 1350 W. Prairie Dr., Sycamore. 815-758-8194. <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/dekalb/gardenwalk>

### **July 14: McHenry County Master Gardener Garden Walk.**

The walk features eight public and private gardens in NW McHenry County as well as the Demonstration Garden at McHenry County College (MCC). Three educational opportunities will be offered at the Demo garden: Prairie/Native Gardening; Butterflies and Perk up Your Garden with Coffee. Advance tickets are \$12- call 815-455-8588.

Two weeks before the walk-tickets will be mailed with a map. Tickets are available the day of the walk (\$17) at MCC. Plants will be on sale at the Demo garden while supplies last. For information call 815-479-7570 or email- [conferencecenter@mchenry.edu](mailto:conferencecenter@mchenry.edu)

## SPRINGTIME IN SCOTLAND-CASTLES, GARDENS AND HIGHLANDS

MAY 19-JUNE 1, 2013

Join Illinois Master Gardener Coordinator Monica David to explore the hidden treasures of Scotland. We will visit public and private gardens and enjoy the scenery and history of the majestic highlands, mysterious lochs and historic castles.

The non-garden activities on this trip include: leisure time in Inverary, Perth and Edinburgh; a day trip to explore the highlands and lochs; a boat trip on Loch Ness to look for “Nessie”; a tour of Edinburgh Castle; a visit to a local distillery to learn about the making of the famous Scottish male whiskey and a stop in St. Andrews- a medieval coastal town and the international home of golf.



The trip will feature both public and private gardens- about 16 gardens in all. We will view stunning private gardens such as **Glenarn Gardens**- known for its collection of rhododendrons; **Dochfour House**- ancestral home of the Baille family on Loch Ness; **Glenbervie House**-with its fine Victorian conservatory; **Cambo House Gardens**- best known for its secret garden and

naturalistic plantings; **Branklyn Gardens**- the finest two acres of private garden in the country and **Glendoick Gardens** which was recently included in the list of Europe’s top 50 gardens.

Castle gardens included on this tour are **Inverary Castle and Gardens**-a Palladian and Gothic-style castle with 16 acres of formal gardens and woodland; **Cawdor Castle Gardens**- with a famous walled garden, year round flower garden and wild garden; **Carthes Castle Gardens**- best known for its colorful borders; **Drummond Gardens**, an exceptional formal parterre garden and **Mount Stewart**- an outstanding example of grand domestic architecture and lovely gardens which include a rock garden, a Pinetum, a kitchen garden and a contemporary garden. The tour also includes a night visit to the **Cruickshank Botanic Garden** led by the head gardener and finishes with a stop at the **Edinburgh Royal Botanic Gardens**. Check the full itinerary for all the details and garden descriptions: <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/mg/events/default.cfm>

Tour cost is \$3549 per person twin share. Single supplement is \$850. Airfare not included.

Contact Robyn Gulstrom for more information or to hold your spot: [rgulstrom@comcast.net](mailto:rgulstrom@comcast.net) or 269-629-9249.

## ILLINOIS FARM TO SCHOOL SURVEY

The purpose of this survey was to gather baseline data for the Illinois Farm to School network so that efforts to increase the procurement of local foods in Illinois schools can be focused on areas where there is much need and demand for assistance. In addition to gathering data from parents, teachers, farmers the organization examined a key group of stakeholders called “Decision Makers” in this report (superintendents, principals and food service directors/managers).

The majority of Decision Makers (75%) report that their schools are not purchasing local foods. Most concerning is that 75% of these respondents indicated that sourcing local foods is not a priority for their schools/districts. Less than a quarter of Food Service Directors (18%) said that sourcing local foods was a priority for them. In addition, very few Decision Makers report that a primary or secondary motivation for purchasing locally grown foods is to support wellness initiatives.

Decision Makers report that two of the major barriers for purchasing locally grown foods are budgetary constraints and finding farmers who can provide foods for their school lunch programs. Similarly, Farmers suggested that two issues that must be addressed for them to consider selling directly to schools are pricing and the lack of information about how to sell to schools. Only 3% of the Farmers participating in this study supply food to schools, but over 80% of Farmers are interested in selling to schools. Sixty-one percent of Parents reported that their child(ren) participate in the school meal program at least once a week. However, more than 55% of Parents say they are dissatisfied with the nutritional quality of food served in the school meal program.

To view the entire survey and for more information , view the website at- <http://www.farmtoschool.org/IL/>

# MG CONFERENCE 2012

SEPTEMBER 6-8

HOLIDAY INN CRYSTAL LAKE CONFERENCE CENTER,  
CRYSTAL LAKE IL



The University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners from McHenry and Lake Counties invite you to join them at the 2012 Illinois Master Gardener Conference. These volunteers have chosen "Our Common Ground" as a theme. Join fellow Master Gardeners as they explore their common

interests in promoting good environmental practices, using sustainable practices in their home gardens and promoting healthy local foods.

Our keynote speaker will be the nationally recognized leader of organic gardening- **Eliot Coleman**. Eliot has more than 40 years of experience in all aspects of organic farming, including field vegetables, greenhouse vegetables, rotational grazing of cattle and sheep, and range poultry. He is the author of *The New Organic Grower*, *Four Season Harvest* and *the Winter Harvest Handbook*.

## **Registration opens May 1st!**

**View the conference information and register at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/mg/conference2012/default.cfm>**

Full registration- \$145 per person (MG, staff, adult guest)

Single Day registrations (Friday or Saturday)- \$75

Awards banquet - \$30

All day tours (including lunch) -\$58

Half day tours- \$20

Full registration includes all classes, handouts for your sessions, breaks, 2 lunches and the opening Thursday night reception. **Registration closes August 20.**

**No late or onsite registrations.**

**Lodging:** A block of rooms is being held at the rate of \$80/night. Call the Holiday Inn at 815-477-7000 or reserve a room online by visiting the MG conference website. Room block will be held until Monday August 6th. [www.hicrystallake.com](http://www.hicrystallake.com)

## CLASSES AND CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

### **Thursday September 6**

All day tours depart at 8:00 a.m., return at 4:30 p.m.

Morning tours depart at 8:00 a.m., return at 11:30 a.m.

Afternoon tours depart at 1:00 p.m., return at 4:30 p.m.

**5:30 p.m. Opening Reception**

### **Friday September 7**

**6:30- 7:30 a.m.** Yoga Class

**7:00 a. m. to 7:00 p.m. Registration**

**8:30- 10:00 a.m.** Keynote Address

*"Nothing is Impossible: The Future of Organics"*  
by Eliot Coleman

**10:00 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. Vendors**

**10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**

*Growing Grapes in Illinois*- Bill Shoemaker

*Tropical Punch*- Greg Stack

*The Right Shrub for the Right Location*-Kelsay Shaw

*Eat the Weeds*- Deborah Lee

*Composting 201*-Zach Grant

*Creating a PowerPoint*-Rick Sanders

**12:00 p.m.-1:30 p.m. Lunch**

**1:30 p.m.- 3:00 p.m.**

*Four Season Harvest*- Eliot Coleman

*Building a Fairy Garden with Miniatures*- Jo Malin

*Designing Custom Lawn Care Programs*-  
Bruce Spangenberg

*Ornamental Invasives*- Cathy McGlynn

*The Thorny Side of Roses: What About Those Pests  
and Diseases*-Tom Soulsby

*Bee Keeping 101*- Larry Kregel

**3:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m.**

*Quality Lawns with Minimal Chemical Use*-  
Bruce Spangenberg

*Organic Gardening: Crop Rotation and Companion  
Planting*- Rich Tobiasz

*Medicinal Herbs*- Deborah Lee

*There's Lots to Know About Hostas*-Tom Michiletti

*Wine Making 101*- Steve Deberg and Don Schellhaass

*Mushroom Culture*-Joseph Krawczyk and Mary Ellen  
Kowack

**5:30-6:30 p.m. Cash bar**

**6:30- 9 p.m. Master Gardener Awards Banquet**

## **Saturday September 8**

**6:30- 7:30 a.m.** Yoga Class

**7:00 a. m. to 12:00 p.m. Registration**

**8:30- 10:00 a.m.** General Session

*"Isn't Horticulture Already Green?"* by Rory Klick

**10:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m. Vendors**

**10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**

*From the Ground Up- Starting a Community Garden-* Rory Klick, Melonnie Hartl and Wendy Warden

*Heirlooms in the Garden-* Diane Ott Whealy  
*Culinary Herbs: More Than Annuals-* Chuck Voigt  
*Using Native Trees to Provide Diversity in the Landscape-* Sharon Yiesla

*Insect Pest ID and Control: A Baker's Dozen-* Rick Weinzierl

*Hands-on Workshop- Bonsai-* Cat Nelson

**12:00 p.m.-1:30 p.m. Lunch**

**1:30 p.m.- 3:00 p.m.**

*Insect Pest ID and Control: A Baker's Dozen-* Rick Weinzierl

*Restoring Large and Small Plots with Native Plants-* Steve Apfelbaum

*A Seed Saving Primer-* Shannon Carmody

*The Best New Plants of 2012-* Kim Hartmann

*The Backyard Fruit Tree-* Rich Tobiasz

*Hands-on Workshop- Vermicomposting-* Chris Scheiff

**\*\*\* For class descriptions and speaker bios please visit the website!**

## **SILENT AUCTION**

We need your help to make the 9th annual Master Gardener Silent Auction a success. We are looking for donations of artwork, sculpture, paintings, books, garden tools, garden gifts, etc. The profits from the auction will be used to fund the annual Master Gardener mini-grant program. You may send your donation to the McHenry County Extension Office or bring it to the conference registration desk at the Holiday Inn but please contact Monica David at modavid@illinois.edu BEFORE THE CONFERENCE to let her know WHAT YOU WILL BE DONATING.

## **CONFERENCE TOURS**

Thursday September 6

**All Day Tours** (include lunch) 8:00 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.

**Tour 1:** *Commercial composting; environmental achievement, organic farming*

This tour includes stops at Midwest Organics, Lake County Central Permit Facility and Tempel Farms Organics.

**Tour 2:** *Hosta extravaganza, abundant vegetables, sesqui-centennial farm*

This tour visits Al's Auto Body and Arboretum, Harvard Growing Together Garden and the McEachran Homestead.

**Tour 3:** *Historically significant Lake Michigan estates*  
Visit the Crab Tree Farm, Craig Bergmann Home and Studio, Mettawa Manor and Forest Park Beach.

**Tour 4:** *Historically significant Lake Michigan estates #2*  
Visit the Posy Krehbiel Estate, Mettawa Manor, Craig Bergmann Home and Studio and Forest Park Beach.

**Morning Tours** 8:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

**Tour 5:** *Market Day founder, wholesale nursery*  
Tour features Cherry Lane Farm and HOFFIE Nursery.

**Tour 6:** *Quaking bog, stunning flowers*  
Visit Volo Bog State Park and the McHenry County MG Demonstration Garden.

**Afternoon Tours** 1:00 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

**Tour 7:** *Unrivaled conifers, community garden, ecology campus*

Tour includes Rich's Fox Willow Pines Nursery, McHenry County MG Rotary Garden and Loyola University Retreat and Ecology campus.

**Tour 8:** *Restoration projects, bird watching*

This group will visit Baker Lake and the Citizens for Conservation.

## **Pre or post conference tours**

**Nippersink Creek Kayaking Tour**

September 5- 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

September 9- 8:00 a.m to 12:00 p.m.

**\*\*\*For complete tour descriptions visit the website.**

## MAKING PESTICIDE APPLICATIONS IN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

Here is a reminder on the regulations about applying pesticides on public property.

### Do I Need a License?

If you are applying pesticides on land that you do NOT own such as a school or park, you must have a license. If you own the land or if you rent/lease the land such as a community garden plot, you need a license only if the pesticide you apply is a Restricted Use Pesticide (RUP). Restricted Use Pesticides will be clearly marked at the top of the product label on the container; you must be licensed to buy RUP products.

**General Use Pesticides** (GUP's) such as most of the products sold in garden centers or home improvement stores do not require a license unless they are applied to someone else's property.

**Organic pest killers** are still classified as pesticides by the US-EPA. If a product makes pesticidal claims, it needs to be registered with the EPA and will have a registration number on the label. Certain minimum risk pesticides do not require Federal registration. EPA's "25b list", which includes garlic and garlic oil, can be found at [http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/biopesticides/regtools/25b\\_list.htm](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/biopesticides/regtools/25b_list.htm). Illinois has the right to require registration of these products regardless of whether the US-EPA has required registration. If it does, you may still need a license to apply depending on where it is applied. You can search for active ingredient registration at <http://www.agr.state.il.us/Environment/Pesticide/productsearch.php> or call the Illinois Department of Agriculture (numbers given below).

While **home remedies** may sometimes work, many have not been tested for effectiveness or safety. They commonly cost more than labeled, registered pesticides which have been tested for human health and environmental safety. To avoid potential problems, stick to approved pesticide products and do not recommend home remedies to clients.

**Fertilizers** are not pesticides and do not require any type of license to be applied. Keep in mind that weed and feed products contain herbicides which are pesticides.

### What type of license is needed?

Below are some situations:

\*If you own the land, a Private license is needed only if you apply a restricted use product.

\*If you do not own the land and pesticides are applied for hire (the exchange of money), a Commercial license is needed.

\*Where no money is exchanged for application, a Commercial "not-for-hire" license is needed; this probably is the case for most community gardens.

Licenses are tied to a specific type of application, or category. For example, someone could have a Commercial not-for-hire license to apply pesticides to vegetable crops.

### How do I get licensed?

You will need to take the General Standards exam (100 multiple-choice questions) and score at least a 70%. This will qualify you to become licensed as a pesticide "operator". Once you qualify, you must submit a completed license application form along with the appropriate licensing fee. However, at least one person from your school or community garden will need to go one step further and become licensed as a pesticide "applicator". Operators work under the direct supervision of the applicator. An operator can become an applicator by scoring at least a 70% on an appropriate category exam (50 multiple-choice questions) and applying for licensure. There are various categories including Turfgrass, Ornamentals, Fruit, and Vegetables, and Rights-of-Way; each is a separate exam. Because your entire range of pesticide use must be covered by the categories on the applicator's license, this could mean taking several exams. There is no charge to take any exam, however study materials and training clinics which can aid in passing the exams, are offered by University of Illinois Extension for a fee. There are fees for the actual license. For more information, please visit [www.pesticidesafety.illinois.edu](http://www.pesticidesafety.illinois.edu) or call 877-626-1650.

To view the entire guidelines go to <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/psep/facts/?PageID=15281>

## NEW INVASIVE SPECIES RESOURCES

eXtension has just released a new website on Invasive Species which was put together by the Invasive Species Community of Practice. This community wanted to prepare resources which could be used by Master Gardeners to inform the public. The first thing they did was to do a survey of Master Gardeners from across the country. Volunteers responded that good images of invasive species as well as information pages were needed to educate others. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), Ask an Expert(AeE) and invasive species mapping were also included.

This website: [http://www.extension.org/invasive\\_species](http://www.extension.org/invasive_species) has lots of resources for you to use. It is really a clearing house of research-based information on invasive species.

Included on the website are:

- land-dwelling invasive species profiles
- aquatic invasive species profiles
- brochures, pamphlets, fact sheets, field ID cards
- videos
- a link to Bugwood images
- invasive species online webinars
- botanical glossaries



Garlic Mustard



Purple Loosestrife

## WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO REPORT THE OCCURENCE OF AN INVASIVE SPECIES?

Certain basic information requirements are common to most invasive species reporting systems. Gather and provide as much of the following information as you can:

- Location of the invasive species. Provide Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates if possible. If doing so is not possible, provide an address, or describe the position relative to the nearest crossroads or easily identifiable landmark. Also, identify the town, county, and state.
- Name of the invasive species. Include the common name, and the scientific name if you know it. If the invasive species is a pest, identify the host species (for example, the type of tree on which you saw an invasive insect).
- Date you saw the invasive species.
- Your name and contact information.
- Photographs of the invasive species. Always take pictures if you can do so without risk to yourself or others.

### How and Where to Report Information

Because many kinds of invasive species exist, varied reporting methods exist too. Report infestations of invasive plants to the Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System (EDDMapS): <http://www.eddmaps.org>. Follow the step-by-step instructions for entering information into the EDDMapS online form.

Report non-native aquatic species to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Nonindigenous Aquatic Species (NAS) database. You can submit a report electronically at <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/SightingReport.aspx>, or report by phone by calling 877-STOP-ANS. Examples of non-native aquatic species sightings are seeing non-native fish while boating, catching a non-native fish while fishing, or seeing non-native mollusks or crustaceans while boating or fishing.

Report a pest or disease of a plant or animal to the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS): [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/services/report\\_pest\\_disease/report\\_pest\\_disease.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/services/report_pest_disease/report_pest_disease.shtml). Examples of pests or diseases of plants or animals are a non-native insect infestation in a field or garden, a disease infecting a herd of animals, or a disease infecting crops. (Also, you can use this source to ask a question related to animal and plant health or regulations.)

If you have problems reporting invasive species to any of the groups above- contact a U of I Extension educator.

## FINDINGS PROVE *MISCANTHUS X GIGANTEUS* HAS GREAT POTENTIAL AS AN ALTERNATIVE FUEL SOURCE

Concerns about the worldwide energy supply and national, environmental and economic security have resulted in a search for alternative energy sources. A new University of Illinois study shows *Miscanthus x giganteus* (*M. x giganteus*) is a strong contender in the race to find the next source of ethanol if appropriate growing conditions are identified.



*M. x giganteus* is a bioenergy crop that can be grown to produce ethanol. The study investigated the establishment success, plant growth and dry biomass yield of the grass. Tom Voigt, lead scientist and associate professor in the U of I Department of Crop Sciences, said the overall goal is to promote biomass yield per acre for ethanol production using the fewest inputs with no environmental damage.

Researchers compared establishment and growth rates, and biomass yield at four locations over the past three years to identify regions best suited for the grass. Data was collected at sites in Urbana, Ill.; Lexington, Ky.; Mead, Neb.; and Adelphia, N.J. The study is part of the Department of Energy-funded North Central Sun Grant Feedstock Partnership Project.

The growing conditions were adequate at each location in different years. However, late planting and extreme winter temperatures during 2008 affected establishment rates at the Illinois site. Lower yields occurred at the New Jersey site in 2010, which could be attributed to the site's sandy soils and warm, dry weather conditions in that year.

“For the most part, we found that *Miscanthus* responds to sites in which water is adequately available,” Voigt said. “The combination of warm temperatures and adequate precipitation spread throughout the growing season creates ideal growing conditions.”

Voigt said the study increased researcher's understanding of how different environments impact *M. x giganteus* growth, development and biomass yield. In addition, they discovered positive environmental impacts. Nitrogen fertilizer had no significant effects on the grass's biomass yield in season two or three at any site. *M. x giganteus* also promotes erosion control as the perennial forms a large mass of roots underground.

“We are trying to develop a recipe for management practices that can be used by farmers interested in growing the grass,” Voigt said. “We want bioenergy crops to find their way into more marginal settings where ground is less easy to work with. *Miscanthus* can work where food crops can't.” Voigt said the results of the study are positive and prove that energy crops have great potential as alternative energy sources.

This study, “*Miscanthus x giganteus* Productivity: The Effects of Management in Different Environments” was published in GCB BIOENERGY Volume 3, Issue 6, December 2011. Researchers included Matt Maughan, Germán Bollero, D.K. Lee, Robert Darmody and Thomas Voigt of the University of Illinois; Stacy Bonos, Laura Cortese and James Murphy of The State University of New Jersey; Roch Gaussoin and Matthew Sousek of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln; David Williams and Linda Williams of the University of Kentucky; and Fernando Miguez of Iowa State University. Funding was provided by the Department of Energy.

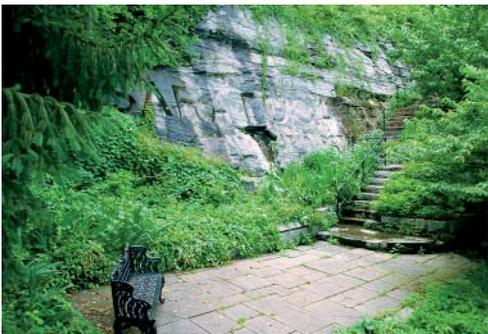
Voigt is also principal investigator for the Feedstock Production Agronomy Program at the Energy Biosciences Institute (EBI) located in the Institute for Genomic Biology. The EBI is a biofuels research consortium that includes the University of Illinois, the University of California at Berkeley, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, and funding agency BP.

Jennifer Shike, U of I ACES Media Communications Specialist

## THE “MASTER GARDENER” OF WEST POINT

For the past two years the cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point, along with local volunteers and faculty members have been restoring the campus garden overlooking the Hudson River. One of the oldest gardens in the United States, it was built in 1778 by Thaddeus Kosciuszko, the chief engineer commissioned by General George Washington to design and build the fortifications at West Point during the Revolution. Although he was on a tight deadline to design and build fortifications to protect the Colonies supply chain along the Hudson River, Kosciuszko felt it was important to create a quiet place for “rest and repose”, so he made the garden a priority.

With his own hands, Kosciuszko built garden steps, a circle of rocks planted with flowers that reminded him of his Polish homeland and a fountain built upon a natural spring. The engineer meant for this garden to be a place of contemplation in the midst of great pressure and chaos. While the garden has been restored at various times over the past two centuries, it had fallen into disrepair in recent decades. For 20 years, erosion had blocked the garden’s connection to Flirtation Walk, a historic rocky foot trail that follows along the bank of the Hudson River. So with the help of West Point Cadets and others, Betsy Blakeslee volunteer project manager for the garden has led a restoration that leaves the garden in full bloom with fixtures repaired and the Flirtation Walk open again. Today you can see cadets making phone calls, socializing



in the garden and professors holding class there as well.

While Kosciuszko’s garden continues to provide enjoyment

for cadets and visitors, the garden is not Kosciuszko’s only contribution to American history. He lobbied hard for the establishment of a U.S. Military Academy in America and was instrumental in the Colonies’ victory in the Revolutionary War. A Polish-Lithuanian, Kosciuszko was born in Poland in 1746 and trained as a military engineer at the Royal Academy in Warsaw. He fled his home country when he was sentenced to die for falling in love

with a woman who was considered above his station. He was studying in Paris when the Revolutionary War broke out and became enamored with the idea of freedom and liberty for all people. He came to America and “literally showed up on Benjamin Franklin’s doorstep” said Alex Storzynski, executive director of the Kosciuszko Foundation. He began serving as a volunteer in the army but within a few months Congress commissioned him as the Army’s head engineer. He first fortified the city of Philadelphia. While in PA he read the Declaration of Independence and sought its author Thomas Jefferson and the two became great friends.

Thaddeus developed a reputation as an excellent engineer and he fortified military camps along the Canadian border, repaired Fort Ticonderoga in New York and helped develop the strategy that led to the defeat of the British army at Saratoga. This was the turning point of the war.

After the victory at Saratoga, George Washington appointed Kosciuszko to improve the army’s defenses at West Point. His plans were quite valuable and it was Kosciuszko’s plans for West Point that Benedict Arnold tried to sell to the British. He was instrumental in determining West Point’s future as home of the United States Military Academy. On July 4th, 1828 the academy dedicated a monument to Kosciuszko for his service to America during the War of Independence.

After seven years of service, Thaddeus was awarded the rank of brigadier general in the Continental Army and received American citizenship and a grant of land in Ohio.

When the war ended, Kosciuszko went back to Poland to pursue freedom and liberty for his own people. However when he left America, he left his salary with Thomas Jefferson (about \$15,000) instructing him to use the money to purchase and free slaves. He became a national leader and defender of Poland against Russia, Prussia and Austria earning him secular sainthood among his countrymen. Today at West Point, Kosciuszko’s Garden is a living reminder of the patriot and his contributions to American liberty and freedom. Kosciuszko’s garden was truly an example of an early U. S. “healing garden”.

Based on the article by Nancy Mann Jackson, *American Spirit*, January/February 2012

## US COMPOST COUNCIL LAUNCHES CONSUMER COMPOST USE PROGRAM

The new program consists of three labels for compost use: 1) Trees & Shrubs 2) Flowers & Vegetables and 3) Lawns.



Each is identified by an easily recognizable logo that certifies that this material has met STA standards – that’s the US Composting Council’s Seal of Testing Assurance. In the future they plan to add QR codes for customers, too. (QR codes are those funny looking boxes that smart phones can scan and then take you to a website or application.)

The US Composting Council was organized in 1990 to support projects that promote the recycling of organic materials because, as they say in their vision statement, this is “central to achieving healthy soils, clean water and a sustainable society.” They established the STA Standards in 2000 to assure end-users that the materials or “feedstock” had been properly and completely composted according to best-practice-methods – a seal of quality. This STA seal of approval, accompanied by the testing results, has been available to large scale or bulk end-users or professional users, like landscapers, but not readily available or understandable by home consumers buying either in bulk or through a hardware store. The new labeling program addresses this problem by making the identification of quality, tested materials readily available and understandable to home consumers.

Now compost can be purchased at landscape supply centers, nurseries and building supply centers in bulk or packages around the country with the USCC seal of Testing Assurance or STA Consumer Compost Use labels. Specific guidelines and requirements for compost labeling

This program was needed to assure the consumer that compost:

- 1) Meets EPA guidelines for pathogen reduction and heavy metal concentration
- 2) Is mature and stable enough to be used for horticultural applications with no potential damage to plants
- 3) Produced by a state permitted facility, which can also request the compost manufacturer’s Compost Technical Data Sheet showing the test results and feedstocks used.

Along with the new Consumer labeling program, the USCC is also launching a ‘Strive for 5%’ campaign encouraging folks to achieve a goal of at least 5% organic matter in their soil for a healthier, more sustainable world for ourselves and our children. Grow green!

By Connie Schultz, NC Master Gardener on the EMG national blog at <http://blogs.extension.org/mastergardener/>

