COORDINATORS’ COMMENTS

The Horticulture educators have had numerous questions from Master Gardeners and the public recently about Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). It seems that there is much misinformation and misunderstanding of GMOs in the media. The public seems to be very adamant one way or the other, either in favor of or against GMOs. Please remember that no matter what your personal opinion is regarding GMOs- when you are in your volunteer role you need to present only researched based information. In order to clear up some misconceptions, educators Richard Hentschel and Candice Miller along with other experts in the field have prepared a fact sheet on the topic which defines terminology and gives some reference links for you to explore. The entire fact sheet has been reproduced on pages 3 and 4 of this newsletter.

Another topic of some interest this year is 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). 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. 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 or call 877-626-1650. To view the entire guidelines go to http://web.extension.illinois.edu/psep/facts/?PageID=15281

Monica David, Illinois Master Gardener Coordinator
JMG WORKSHOPS TO BE HELD AROUND THE STATE

Garden enthusiasts who would like to share their love and knowledge of horticulture with young people are encouraged to attend a University of Illinois Extension Junior Master Gardener training. The training will cover the basic goals of the program and review the excellent teaching curriculum for the course, as well as provide hands-on learning activities based on the curriculum. Trainings are open to MGs, teachers, parents, home school leaders and others interested in learning about JMG. The sessions will be presented by Monica David, Illinois State Master Gardener Coordinator, and Bill Million, Extension Specialist, 4-H Youth Development. Materials and program design, as well as how to start a Junior Master Gardener group will be covered. Cost for each workshop is $10 which covers lunch and hand-outs. Register online for these workshops at: https://webs.extension.uiuc.edu/registration/?RegistrationID=9665

March 6: 10 am to 3 pm, 4-H Center on the Coles County Fairgrounds in Charleston

March 7: 10 am to 3 pm, Sangamon County Extension Office, Springfield

April 2: 10 am to 3 pm, McLean County Extension Office, Bloomington

April 9: 10 am to 3 pm, Clinton County Extension Office, Breese

April 10: 10 am to 3 pm, Franklin County Farm Bureau, Benton

DOUGLAS TALLAMY TO BE KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT JUNE 13 MG AWARDS BANQUET

Please join fellow Illinois Master Gardeners and award winners at the June 13 awards banquet to be held at the iHotel in Champaign, IL. The day will feature the keynote address, the awards luncheon and optional Hort campus tours. More information about optional tours as well as registration will be in the May-June issue of Imagine.

Douglas W. Tallamy is currently professor and chair of the department of entomology and wildlife ecology at the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware, where he has taught insect taxonomy, behavioral ecology, and other subjects. Chief among his research goals is to better understand the many ways insects interact with plants and how such interactions determine the diversity of animal communities. Doug won the Silver Medal from the Garden Writer’s Association. He is the author of the very popular book Bringing Nature Home. Doug’s website may be found at www.PlantaNative.com

2015 SPRINGTIME IN HOLLAND & BELGIUM

Have you longed to visit the bulb fields in Holland during tulip season? Then join Master Gardener Coordinator Monica David to experience springtime in Belgium and the Netherlands. This trip will run the last week of April and the first week of May in 2015. The final itinerary and trip details will be posted in May.

The trip will begin in Amsterdam with visits to the famed Aalsmeer Flower Market, a private tour with a famous bulb producer, time to explore Amsterdam on your own and of course the amazing Keukenhoff Gardens. Keukenhoff has more than 7 million tulips, daffodils and hyacinths as well as pavilions featuring 30 alternating flower and plant shows. You will be there to visit in the height of bulb season! Leaving Amsterdam, the group will continue thru the Netherlands to visit the palace gardens of Het Loo; the Kroller-Muller Museum; and then 2 well known private gardens, Piet Oudolf’s personal garden and the De Wiersse Garden. Next up will be the 200 model gardens at Apeldoorn and then Kalmthout Arboretum before moving on to visit Belgium.

Belgium highlights include Peter Paul Ruben’s home and garden; Antoon de Clercq garden; the David and Alice Van Buuren garden; the Royal Greenhouse at the Palace in Laeken and Annevoie Castle. There will be free time to explore the UNESCO world heritage city of Bruges and also free time in Ghent.

If you wish to put your name on the list, email our travel agent Robyn Gulstrom at rgulstrom@comcast.net or 269-629-9248.
Genetically Modified Organisms

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) or Genetically Engineered Crops (GE Crops) have been in existence since the 1980s in China and the 1990s in the United States. They have been developed for and are widely used in the United States in agriculture. Most genes used are for herbicide, insect and viral disease resistance in crops, such as corn, cotton, canola and soybeans.

Most of the acreage of these crops in the continental United States is planted with GMOs. The estimates range between 75 and 90 percent of the acres grown. For example, papaya production in Hawaii depends greatly on GMO-based virus resistance to be successful. Approximately 75 percent of that crop is transgenic. Controversy continues regarding the safety and use of GMOs. However, research is ongoing, and the public is encouraged to read more on this subject and make logical decisions as to consuming products created from transgenic plants. There is no evidence that currently available GMO plants and products produced from them are unsafe for consumption. GMOs are prohibited in organic food products.

For an historical perspective on plant breeding, including GMO and related views, the following links can be helpful:

www.gmeducation.org/faqqs/
www.bostonreview.net/forum/pamela-ronald-gmo-food
www.nature.com/news/specials/gmcrops/index.html
www.gmeducation.org

Glossary (referencing vegetables)

Traditional Breeding
Traditional breeding is done by allowing two parent plants with the desired traits to cross-pollinate – either naturally or hand pollinated in a controlled environment. The seeds generated contain those desirable traits, such as yield, disease resistance, flower color, fruit size, fruit color, or growth habit. Those desirable traits are often closely associated with a number of other traits that also transferred into seeds that will be the next generation (F1).

GMO Breeding
GMO breeding involves plant breeding at the molecular level, working with DNA, genes and cells rather than whole plants. Plant breeders begin with a plant bred to have desired traits through traditional breeding techniques. Then, the plant breeder inserts a singular gene from an unrelated plant or organism, which will impart the new desired trait into the seeds produced, in addition to those traits already in place. It should be noted that disease-resistant genes in squash and apples have been transferred from one variety to another respectfully, by molecular means, and this also produces a GMO.

Examples of GMO Breeding Techniques*
Once a desirable gene has been located – for example a gene for herbicide resistance in the DNA of a microbe – the plant breeder moves that gene into the DNA of the crop plant being bred.
Genetic markers in this gene are used to ensure the new trait is successfully transferred by locating them again at the genetic level after the insertion of this genetic material has been made. One established method of transferring DNA uses a bacterium that has the desired trait inserted into its DNA, naturally transferring the trait to the crop plant being bred. Another method injects the desired trait directly into the plant cells, which is confirmed using the markers noted above. The cells are grown out to become plants, which are subjected to additional testing to confirm resistance in a field setting.

**Parent Lines**

Parent lines are bred by traditional methods, crossing and backcrossing, to provide a set of parents that when crossed to produce the first generation (F₁) can reliably guarantee that the desired traits are transferred into that offspring.

**F₁ Hybrid**

F₁ is the designation used to identify the first generation of plants produced by crossing two parent lines.

**Heirloom Seeds**

Heirloom varieties, which we have used for decades, flower and set seeds that usually come true-to-type when open pollinated. Heirloom seeds are commercially produced in a controlled setting to ensure true-to-type F₁ offspring. Heirloom seeds are not automatically considered organic unless grown in that manner.

**True-to-Type**

To be true-to-type, open-pollinated varieties or hybrids are uniform for important and obvious traits, such as appearance and vigor, and after seed production, the next generation of seed is consistent with the previous one. For hybrids, both parents have similar dominant traits, so when crossed, the F₁ generation will look like and produce flowers and fruit consistent with the parents. Examples include heirloom varieties and commercial breeding lines.

**Organic Seeds**

Organic seeds are produced using certified organic methods, including approved organic pesticides and other products.

**Hybrid Seeds**

Hybrid seeds are any seed cross-pollinated in a controlled or non-controlled environment, grown traditionally or using organic methods using parent lines. Hybrid seeds could be, organic or GMO/GE.

**Transgenic**

Transgenic is a term used to describe a plant that has its DNA altered by the transfer of a gene or genes from another species.

**Additional GMO Breeding Technologies**

*Additional methods are cell fusion, microencapsulation and macroencapsulation, and recombinant DNA technology, including gene deletion, gene doubling, introducing a foreign gene, and changing the positions of genes when achieved by recombinant DNA technology.*

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http://web.extension.illinois.edu/
IMPORTANT DATES

March 15: Spring into Gardening Day, Marshall-Putnam Extension Office, Henry. 9 to 11:30 am. Marshall-Putnam MGs will give sessions on Vegetables; Tomatoes; Strawberries; Hostas; Succulents and Raised Beds. $10. 309-364-2356.

March 15: Ready...Set...Grow, Sauk Valley College, Dixon. 8 am to 3 pm. A keynote presentation on Heirloom Flavor will be given by award-winning author, enthusiastic gardener and heirloom authority – Doreen Howard. Let her show you how to return to flavor with heirlooms. Other workshops include: Hands-on Hypertufa & Terrariums; Attracting Birds; Alternative Gardening; Small Fruits; Pollinators; Vegetable Gardening; New Plants for 2014; Herbs; Container Gardens and much more. Sponsored by the Carroll, Lee, Ogle and Whiteside County MGs. http://web.extension.illinois.edu/bdo

March 15: Gardener’s Day, Western Illinois University Student Union, Macomb. Sponsored by the McDonough County MGs. 309-837-3939.


March 22: Gardener’s Day, Morgan County Extension Office, Jacksonville. 9 am to Noon. Topics include Ornamental Grasses, Fruit Tree Pruning and Japanese Beetles. In addition there will be a rain barrel workshop in the afternoon for an additional charge. $10 per person. Sponsored by the Morgan and Greene County MGs. http://web.extension.illinois.edu/ccgms/ or 217-243-7424.

March 22: Gardening for Good, Rotary Botanical Gardens, Janesville, WI. Sessions include: “Urban Agriculture” by Eliza Fournier, CBG; “Lifelong Gardening” by Barbara Kreski, CBG and “Gardening for Your Own Good: Cultivating the Mind-Body Connection” by Cindy Berlovitz. $65 for general public. Box lunch is extra. http://rotarybotanicalgardens.org or 608-752-3885 x17.

March 28: Landscape Professional Stateline Conference, University of Wisconsin-Rock County in Janesville, WI. 8:30 am -12:30 pm. This half-day conference will provide arborists, landscapers, and other horticulture professionals up-to-date information from Extension Specialists from Wisconsin and Illinois. Presented in collaboration by the University of Wisconsin Extension and the University of Illinois Extension.

March 29: Gardeners Big Day, Dickson Mounds Museum, Lewiston. 8:45 am to 4 pm. Keynote speakers include Dr. Michael Wiant from Dickson Mounds Museum; Dianne Noland from University of Illinois and Ella Maxwell. Breakout session topics include: Iris; Medicinal Herbs; Shady Garden Respites; Monarchs; Tech in the Garden; Pruning; Food Preservation and Coneflowers Gone Crazy. Vendors and displays. Sponsored by the Fulton County MGs. http://web.extension.illinois.edu/fmpt/

April 5: Gardenfest 2014, McHenry County College, Crystal Lake. Keynote speaker is Amanda Thomsen, author of “Kiss My Aster: A Graphic Guide for Creating a Fantastic Yard Totally Tailored to You”. Classes include: Top 25 Herbs; Succulents; The Cottage Garden; Enhancing Your Curb Appeal; Drought Stress on Trees; Living Wall/Vertical Gardening and many more. Fee is $40. Sponsored by MCC and the McHenry County MGs. Visit www.mchenry.edu/gardenfest or 815-455-8764.

April 10: April in Paris, Cornerstone Baptist Church, Paris. 8:30am to 2:00 pm. Four exciting sessions including “New Plants for 2014” by Shane Cultra; “Using Garden Flowers in Decorating” by Tonya Sanders; “Vegetable Gardening in Small Spaces” by Jennifer Shultz Nelson and “Wicked Plants” by Jan Phipps. Fee of $25 includes classes, lunch and vendors. Deadline April 4th. Sponsored by the Edgar Co. MGs. 217-465-8585 or http://web.extension.illinois.edu/cce

April 12: Weekend Gardener, Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville. 8:30 am to 2:45 pm. Choose from 16 exciting workshops including Wildflowers; Growing with Natives; Shade Gardening; Pruning; Vegetable Gardening and more. Fee is $40 and includes lunch. Pre-registration is required. Call 618-939-3434 for more information.
2014 MG APPAREL NOW ON SALE

Now is the time to order your Master Gardener apparel and merchandise. Along with this newsletter (and posted on the website) is a sell sheet. We will still offer the old favorites such as patches, T-shirts, polo shirts and denim shirts. New items for 2014 include camp shirts, henley shirts, cardigan sweaters, ladies pullovers and more. All items contain an embroidered logo except for T-shirts and ladies tank tops which have screen printed logos.

The final date to order is April 11, 2014. All orders will be done online this year. No late orders will be accepted. All sales are final. Credit cards and checks will be accepted. Apparel will be shipped to your county office about 8 weeks after the April 11 deadline.

Go to the website for the sell sheet and to order at http://web.extension.illinois.edu/mg/news/default.cfm

2014 UPPER MIDWEST MASTER GARDENER CONFERENCE

The Scott County Iowa Master Gardeners have worked hard, lining up a fantastic program and tours for the Upper Midwest Master Gardener Conference June 25-28, 2014 at the Isle of Capri and Quad Cities Waterfront Convention Center in Bettendorf, Iowa. The theme for the conference is “Growing Along the River”, a reference to Master Gardeners’ common interest in growing and learning about plants, and the mighty Mississippi River, which not only flows by the conference facilities but also unites the states in the Upper Midwest region.

Nationally known speakers Lauren Springer-Ogden, Scott Ogden, Melinda Myers and Felder Rushing headline a host of talented presenters who will be teaching classes during the conference. In most cases, you’ll have a choice from among six concurrent sessions. But you won’t be sitting in classrooms the entire time. The conference includes tours of private gardens, Iowa State University horticulture demonstration and research sites, public gardens such as the Bickelhaupt Arboretum, Vander Veer Botanical Park, and Quad Cities Botanical Center, and behind-the-scenes tours of commercial horticultural operations.

The featured speaker will talk on these topics: “Plant Driven Design-Creating Gardens that Honor Plants, Place and Spirit” by Scott Ogden and Lauren Springer-Ogden; “Gorgeous Perennial Grasses” by Lauren Springer-Ogden; “Add a Little Star Power to Your Garden” and “Go Vertical” by Melinda Myers; “Garden Art: The Good, the Bad, the Unbelievable” and “Slow Gardening” by Felder Rushing.

There will be 26 different breakout sessions including Less Common Fruit; Invasive Insects; Trough Gardening; Buck Roses; Crabapple Cultivars for the Midwest; Out of the Ordinary Theme Gardens; 30 years of the Hotline; Houseplants; Bulbs; Bee Virus Research; Gardening in Challenging Conditions and many more.

Full conference information will be posted in early March at http://www.aep.iastate.edu/iowamg2014/

The Isle of Capri Casino has reserved a block of rooms in their North Tower for conference attendees. To receive the special conference rates ($95 for King, $105 for 2 doubles), reserve your rooms through this link: http://bettendorf.isleofcapricasinos.com/WMG0618.aspx. This link will also be available soon through the conference website.
2013 MINI GRANT SUMMARY
Following are descriptions of some of the Master Gardener projects which were funded in 2013 by mini-grants through the state Master Gardener office. Funding came from the 2012 silent auction held at annual state conference. Several projects will be highlighted in this Imagine and more summaries will follow in subsequent newsletters.

**MCKINLEY PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN- COOK COUNTY**
In January 2013 a group of passionate neighbors on the near southwest side of Chicago had big dreams for a new community garden in our neighborhood. All we had was an empty lot—and a lot of work ahead to make it happen. Thanks in large part to the University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener program mini-grant, the McKinley Park Community Garden raised enough money to break ground in April 2013, and the enthusiasm demonstrated by neighbors was overwhelming. We built 63 raised beds out of lumber and added six fabric raised beds dedicated to growing produce for St. Maurice Catholic Church food pantry, and Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church soup kitchen. We also delivered food to St. Andrew Lutheran Church, who then distributed it to older adults in McKinley Park who attend their church.

In our first season, our garden directly benefitted over 60 families as well as a steady stream of homeless, unemployed, or otherwise food insecure people who came through the food pantry and soup kitchen. Our garden provided nutritious food that might not otherwise have been accessible or affordable to our community members; it created and strengthened relationships among neighbors who might not otherwise have known each other, let alone worked together; it empowered residents who might not otherwise have felt they had the capacity to improve the health of their children; it connected people with the earth who might not otherwise have gotten away from the gritty hustle and bustle of city life; and it reminded us of our responsibility to care for the earth, when we might otherwise have considered it a job for others. Our garden grew vegetables but mostly, it grew better people.

Our gardeners reported the following due to their participation in the McKinley Park Community Garden:

- 100% ate more organic food
- 100% felt better about where their food came from
- 100% felt more involved in the community
- 96% spent more time outdoors
- 95% got more exercise
- 92% gained new gardening skills
- 91% encouraged family and/or friends to garden
- 91% shared extra food with other people
- 87% ate more fruits and vegetables
- 86% became more conscious about caring for the environment
- 65% spent less money on food
- 62% ate new kinds of food

**RUSHVILLE COMMUNITY GARDENS- SCHUYLER COUNTY**
Worms, fairy gardens, a butterfly habitat, stepping stones and living tunnels were used to WOW a new group of Junior Master Gardeners in Schuyler County. Master Gardeners met in the Community Garden with 14 youth for six weekly sessions. The Master Gardener Mini Grant was used to purchase worms for vermicomposting, WOW seeds (including swan gourds, wee bee little pumpkins, yard long beans, sunflowers,) stepping stone supplies and supplies for the fruit and veggie labs. Other supplies were donated, recycled or gifts of nature. Because of the fun experience the Junior Master Gardeners continue to “grow” meeting monthly with Master Gardeners.
2013 MINI GRANT SUMMARIES CONTINUED

COMMUNITY GARDENING - DUPAGE COUNTY

Master Gardeners in DuPage County would like to thank the State MG Advisory Board for the much appreciated support. We had a very successful year and were able to donate almost 6,000 pounds of fresh produce to local food pantries from our 3 community garden locations: The Heritage Garden in Downers Grove, Loaves & Fishes Garden in Naperville and a large garden at the Naperville Community Garden Plots.

**Heritage Garden, Wandschneider Park in Downers Grove** - The garden is behind the Downers Grove Historical Museum and is a lovely location as well as a fertile site for vegetable gardening. Because we are in a historical area we focus on growing heirloom varieties of vegetables as much as possible and practice sustainable gardening. Our garden benefitted from support provided through the mini-grant and as a result we were able to purchase a scale, fertilizer, plants, seeds, mulch and a new hose nozzle. We look forward to the 2014 growing season and hope for enough rain, moderate temperatures and continuing interest from people in our Heritage Garden.

**Loaves & Fishes Garden, Naperville** - Driven by the goal of Loaves & Fishes Community Pantry — ending hunger, empowering lives — a team of Master Gardeners garden in a plot on the grounds of the Kraft Foods plant in Naperville. The raised bed garden is enclosed by wood beams that lift the soil height 20 inches above the ground. This method, and funding from the mini-grant, allowed the gardeners to bring in 5,500 pounds of a rich soil mixture to improve crop production. Crop donations were 1.5 pounds per square foot, two times the average per square foot vegetable garden production.

**Naperville Community Garden** - A team of 28 Master Gardeners spent six months at Naperville Community Garden Plots growing 30+ varieties of vegetables for Loaves & Fishes. We conducted two Beginning Gardeners Workshops, scheduled through the Naperville Park District, and continued to interact with the 500 garden plot renters throughout the season. Although production during the regular season was down somewhat from last year’s bumper crops, two gleaning days boosted the total donations for the year to over 4,300 pounds! Thanks to funding from the mini-grant, we were able to purchase much-needed garden hoses and nozzle, seeds, transplants, stakes and fencing.

YELLOWJACKET VEGGIE GARDENING - WOODFORD COUNTY

Over 50 5th and 6th grade students at Riverview Grade School worked during the winter and spring to sprout vegetables (18 flats) in the classroom. Students participated in the Junior Master Gardener Lessons at least once a week. Master Gardeners came to the classroom for lessons every other week from February through May. After planting the seeds and starting the plants students designed, built, and installed the raised garden beds. They built and installed eight-four foot by foot beds. Students spend a few days in the spring transplanting the vegetables and tending to the garden before school was out. Students worked together to develop the layout and positions of the plants. Students even took soil samples to determine the best placement for the garden, as well as soil make up best for vegetable gardening.

The Yellowjacket summer camp took over care of the garden in June through July. Over 30 students ranging from 1st grade through 5th grade tended to the garden once a week for 3 hours. Students also participated in a Junior Master Gardener lesson each week. Students tasted the vegetables grown and took home the ripe vegetables to their families and friends. Students developed a list of preferred vegetables and started talking on their own about what they want to plant this spring.

Students are excited about planting this spring and have already asked when we will start planting. They wish they could work in the garden all year.
PEACE GARDEN- OGLE COUNTY

The Peace Garden, created & designed by Ogle County Master Gardeners, is located at the Ogle County Fairgrounds. It has become an educational destination in our county. The garden was given its name because of the shape - it looks like a peace symbol with the path that runs through it. One portion of the garden has been turned into a butterfly garden and the other a sensory garden. The garden is more than just a beautiful garden to be viewed; it has become a place for learning in our community. All plants are labeled and garden brochures are available that share further information about the plants. With the funds, we also started a Junior Master Gardener program with activities centered on the garden. Master Gardeners were trained on and used the “I Think Green” curriculum to teach children about worms, butterflies, and insects. The garden has been used for 4-H learning activities and tours were given during the fair. The I-Spy activity was fun for kids and adults and the insect hotel has been deemed “very cool” by visitors. Our plan is to continue to offer educational opportunities using the garden. The Master Gardeners of Ogle County would like to thank the State Master Gardener Advisory Committee for supporting our program and we will continue to share our knowledge in “Helping Others Learn to Grow.”

JUNIOR MASTER GARDENER CAMP- MONROE COUNTY

This project, which is available to youth ages 9-14 years, broadens their knowledge of horticulture and the environment, stresses the importance of understanding and following instructions, develops an ability to work with people of different ages, and provides community service to area senior citizens.

We acquired an abandoned nature garden, measuring 74’ long X 20’ wide, situated next to the County Annex Building in Waterloo, Illinois. It was decided to make raised beds so planting could begin as early as possible and to prevent erosion as the plot was situated on a hill side. Each child had an eight foot long garden plot separated by wooden markers with their name. The gardeners were educated about the nutritional value of the plantings, their care, and how to harvest. They planted lettuce, carrots, onion sets, peppers, radishes, onion bulbs, tomatoes and cabbages. The rest of the garden was planted as a group effort. Herbs and flowers were added; stressing the companion method of planting. To our delight, a pair of killdeer laid 4 eggs next to one of the gardener’s marker. It was an unexpected lesson of co-existing with nature.

The youth gardeners recorded their work, progress of their plants, and any other observations in a notebook after working in the garden each week. Fresh produce from the Junior Master Gardener garden was sampled when possible. We had presentations on hummingbirds, butterflies, DNA of strawberries, poinsettias and orchids, germination of seeds, and preserving produce. Building terrariums and wren bird houses were enjoyed by the youth. Our garden was featured on the local 2013 Garden Tour and the young gardeners were invited to be present to explain how they created their garden and maintained it. Produce from our garden went to the Waterloo Senior Nutrition Site in Waterloo, Illinois. Over 225 pounds of produce were donated in 2013.