



# Imagine

Illinois Master Gardeners' Information,  
News and Education

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## Coordinators' Comments

Now that we have completed the 2003 training classes, I would like to welcome 700+ new Master Gardener Interns who have successfully completed the classroom portion of their Master Gardener training. Fifty-five online participants will complete their computer course in mid-May. Most of the interns are now involved in projects to fulfill their 60-hour volunteer requirement to become active Master Gardeners. We look forward to the energy and ideas they bring to the Master Gardener program.

There has been much publicity in the media recently about budget concerns for the University of Illinois and Extension. Although the program itself carries a strong commitment from the University and Extension, often the public is unaware of the outstanding contributions made by our volunteers. For example, in 2002 Illinois Master Gardeners donated a total of 119,666 volunteer hours and recorded 29,970 cont. education hours (57 Extension units reporting). In terms of the value to Extension and the public we serve, this equals \$1.92 million dollars. This is truly an impressive figure! Please take the time to tell others in your community about what you do and the contributions you make. Extension administration is also urging all volunteers (including Master Gardeners) to write their legislators and the governor about how proposed budget cuts would affect their local extension programs. Contact your local unit youth educator or unit leader for information about writing to your legislators. I fear if we don't toot our own horns- nobody else will!

Lastly, the Washington State Master Gardeners are hosting a Founders Day Celebration in July. This is to commemorate the 30 year anniversary of the MG program. For a history of the program as well as information about the celebration- check the website at <http://mastergardener.wsu.edu/founders/fd.html>

 Monica David

## State Master Gardener Awards Nominations

It is time once again to honor exceptional Master Gardeners for their dedicated service to the University of Illinois Extension. There are three categories of state awards: State Outstanding Master Gardener, Sustained Excellence Award and the Teamwork Awards. The State Outstanding Master Gardener Award is for currently active Illinois Master Gardeners who have completed at least 180 hours of volunteer service. The Sustained Excellence Award is for previous winners of the State Outstanding Award. Nominees for this award must have completed at least 4 years as Master Gardeners and have contributed 300 hours of service since receiving the previous award. The Teamwork award is to recognize Master Gardener groups who have implemented outstanding or innovative programs in their local units or communities.

Nomination forms for these awards are available in unit offices. If you think of someone who is deserving of these awards, ask your unit leader, unit educator or Master Gardener Coordinator about nominating that person for one of these awards. Awards will be presented at the State Master Gardener Conference, Sept. 18-20 in Lisle. **Nominations are due to the state office by June 27, 2003.**

## Openings for Master Gardener Advisory Committee

Master Gardeners are needed to fill two spots on the Master Gardener state advisory committee. Terms of service are concluding for representatives from the Southern and Northwest regions. The advisory committee plays a key role in determining state policies as well as the future directions of the Illinois Master Gardener program. If you are interested in serving on this committee, please request an application from the state Master Gardener Office. **Applications are due July 15<sup>th</sup>** and the 3-year term begins September 1, 2003.

## Chairperson's Chat

Congratulations to all the gardeners who have completed the 2003 Master Gardener Classes. That's quite an achievement. You have received a University of Illinois Master Gardener Intern certificate and will continue on to the internship portion of the program. To complete the Master Gardener training you had to be dedicated, in that you had to take the time for classes and study.

This is the time of year when there are many Commencement ceremonies taking place, students graduating from years of study. Commencement means "the beginning, not the end." The studies have ended but now there is the beginning of a new phase in life, new things to study and review. For Master Gardener trainees, you are now beginning your Internship, learning what it is like to be a Master Gardener. The title implies that you will become a "Master" at gardening. However, very few of us will ever earn the honorable title of "Master." We may master some skills and knowledge but to be a true "Master" it would take several lifetimes.

Just what is an Internship? It involves "on the job training" involving practical experiences where you can apply all your knowledge and skills that you learned during the Master Gardener classes. You will learn to use the "Hot line" and answer questions for the public who call or walk in. You will learn to use the microscope and identify pests or diseases. You may be asked to present a talk on gardening or work with seniors in a horticulture therapy program activity. You will find yourself involved in all kinds of volunteer activities representing the Master Gardener Association. Wear your shirt, hat or badge proudly.

Commencement can also apply to our gardens. We have completed the winter season of planning and studying the changes that we wish to make in our garden. Now comes the time to put our careful study and plans into action. You may find yourself in the garden sowing seeds and transplanting seedlings. Or, you may have designed a new area in your garden and are in the midst of transplanting bushes, trees and perennials.

Some Master Gardening tips are: water transplants with a starter fertilizer that is high in phosphorus. Set out an early variety of tomato transplants. Wrap the

stems with aluminum foil to frustrate the cutworms. Continue thinning your first plantings of beets, carrots, lettuces, onions and radishes. Pinch off to keep from disturbing roots of neighbors. Nothing benefits from crowding. Keep new nursery stock and newly transplanted shrubs and trees well watered. They are establishing new root systems and need all the help they can get. Examine your roses, spirea, privet and other plants especially favored by aphids. Control with a hard water spray until the ladybird beetles come to the rescue. Harvest your peas as the pods fill. When the plants no longer flower cut the vines at ground level, leaving the roots with their nitrogen-fixing root nodules to enrich the soil. Don't let up on weed control. Pull, hoe or cultivate—whatever it takes, but don't use herbicides among food plants. And finally, enjoy your garden and the fruits of your labor.

 Mariellen Griffith

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## Foam Mulching System for Vegetables



A recent study by University of Illinois researchers, John Masiunas and Elizabeth Wahle, was conducted to evaluate a new type of mulch. The foam mulch can be applied as an aqueous mixture of cotton and cellulose fibers, gums, starches, surfac-

tants and saponins and dries to a one inch thick mat. Foam mulch has the advantages of being able to degrade into the soil without requiring disposal and it overcomes the difficulty in applying natural mulches. The objective of this study was to determine the effect of foam mulch and its color on weed control and yields of basil and tomatoes. The foam mulch maintained its integrity for the entire growing season and provided weed control comparable to black plastic mulch.

Foam mulch color did not affect weed control as all the colors tested did not allow light penetration and served as a physical barrier impeding weed emergence. Mulch color affected early, ripe fruit and total yield of tomato. Yields of tomato grown in blue foam were the highest while yields in black foam mulch were comparable to those in black plastic. Currently, foam mulch is being commercialized for use in the home landscape.

(*HortTechnology*, April-June 2003)

Visit the IL. Master Gardener website: <http://www.extension.uiuc.edu/mg>

## Spotlight on....

# JoDaviess & Carroll County Master Gardeners

The Jo-Carroll Unit is located in northwest Illinois, bordered on the west by the Mississippi River and on the north by Wisconsin. All of Jo Daviess County and a portion of Carroll County escaped the leveling effect of the Wisconsin glacier which contributes to the natural beauty of the area with wide valleys, narrow gaps, cliffs, bluffs palisades, and gently sloping farmland. It also leads to a number of gardening challenges because of the diversity of the soils which range from limey, clay, darn good or sandy. The official hardiness zones are 4b to 5a; however, several of the north facing caves in JoDaviess contain arctic flowers and many gardeners take advantage of microclimates and successfully grow Zone 6 plants. The most useful tools a Jo-Carroll Unit gardener can have are a sense of humor and an adventurous spirit.

The Unit currently has 34 Active Master Gardeners and Interns, up from six in 2000, serving a total population of less than 40,000. The unit works together on an annual Horticulture Heaven gardening workshop, held in mid-March; but separately to meet the needs of clients in the individual counties.

### JoDaviess Master Gardeners

We have experienced a tremendous growth in JoDaviess, expanding from five in 2000 to twenty-two in 2003. The increase in number has allowed us to take on several new and exciting projects in our area. The JoDaviess help desk is active for a county of its population, with over 150 calls for 20,000 people. From late April to October, we have Master Gardeners in the office to answer questions three days each week. However, calls come in all year around, and these questions are answered by those whose have the most expertise in the area of interest.

The Plant a Row for the Hungry is active in JoDaviess, but with a different twist. Our garden is behind the Galena Historical Museum, and it is also a historical renovation of their gardens from the 1850s. Galena is built into the steep hills, and the garden is perched on the hill behind the museum. There are six tiers that step up the hill, each tier is ten feet wide, and 200 feet long. One tier is planted currently, with plans to renovate each tier as resources permit. Eventually, the gardens will include fruit trees, vines, and fragrant

flowers in addition to the vegetable gardens. In 2002, the garden produced over 250 pounds of crops for the Galena food pantry. We have several requests for a presence at garden walks and local events. There are two Junior Master Gardener programs in the county, one at Scales Mound and the other at Galena.

*✍* Madelynn Wilharm, JoDaviess Volunteer Coordinator

### Carroll Master Gardeners

Carroll County too has experienced a growth in the Master Gardener Program, from one active person at the beginning of 2000 to a total of 12 in 2003. Our help desk is open two days a week from late April to the end of September and averages 120 calls per year from a population under 17,000.

We have a very strong Junior Master Gardener program ongoing at the Shannon Middle School which is a part of the Eastland School District. An average of 30 students have met for an hour each week since early 2002. Two more programs, one in Savanna and one in Thomson, are in the planning stages.

Master Gardeners have helped with a number of beautification programs in the county including the Mt. Carroll Cemetery entrance, two small gardens at the Carroll County Historical Museum located in Mt. Carroll, and plantings around the signs at the Extension Office. These are ongoing projects.

New projects currently in the planning stages this year include creation of a green space and gardens at the entrance of the Bike Trail into Savanna, plantings around the historic Community Building in Mt. Carroll, and a butterfly garden at the newly constructed K-8 school in Savanna. The group has made its presence known through help with the Savanna Garden Walk last year, presentations to various groups throughout the county, and a recent "Ask the Master Gardener" meeting at the Lanark library.

*✍* Patt Caldwell, Carroll County Volunteer Coordinator

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## MG Stepping Stones

Tazewell County Master Gardeners are selling stepping-stones with the Master Gardener logo. The stones are 15 in. by 15 in. and are made of solid concrete, weighing approximately 30 lbs. each. The stones are available in natural (gray) or willow green at a cost of \$40 a stone. The very strong and able-bodied Tazewell MGs have agreed to deliver them to county extension offices if 5 or more stones are ordered. Please contact Judy Keen ([jak@mtco.com](mailto:jak@mtco.com)) or Donna Cothrell ([dkcothrell@hotmail.com](mailto:dkcothrell@hotmail.com)) for information.

## Elm Disease Bacterium Identified

During the last decade, over 1,000 mature American elms mysteriously died in Illinois. Scientists at first suspected that the elm yellows plant pathogen was to blame because the disease syndrome so closely resembled that disease. Elm Yellows has been found extensively in eastern and Midwestern states but has been absent from the northern third of Illinois. Initial tests for Elm Yellows disease were inconclusive. Scientists from the Morton Arboretum and the Molecular Plant Pathology Lab in Maryland used a new tool to detect pathogens from the elm bark. Dr. Ing-Ming Lee discovered a new subgroup of phytoplasma which was unrelated to the phytoplasma which causes Elm Yellows. The carrier of this disease is believed to be a transient insect coming in from another state. Dr. Lee hopes to locate the leafhopper vector, determine its species and find its origin. (*Agricultural Research*/, January 2003).



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