Coordinators’ Comments

As we begin a new calendar year and a new Master Gardener program year, we reflect about the past and begin planning for the future. The University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener program had a great year in 2001, and we look forward to another outstanding year in 2002. Some of the “new” for 2001 –
- Plant a Row for the Hungry topped 100,000 pounds of produce collected!
- The Junior Master Gardener program was pilot tested and implemented in Illinois.
- The Master Gardener Core Course was pilot tested online (and is currently offered as an alternative to face-to-face training).
- Core Course learning objectives were adopted by the State Master Gardener Advisory Committee.
- State Master Gardener awards were expanded to include a Teamwork Award.
- Master Gardener apparel items were redesigned and choices expanded.
- The Annual Volunteer Agreement and Master Gardener wallet I.D.’s were implemented.
- New Master Gardener nametags were designed and distributed.

As you think about what Master Gardener projects you will volunteer for in the coming year, keep in mind that it is essential to clear any Master Gardener projects with your local Extension Unit Office before starting. There are several reasons for this requirement. First, as a Master Gardener, you represent University of Illinois Extension every time you are involved with a Master Gardener project. Your local Unit Leader and/or Master Gardener coordinator needs to be aware of all Master Gardener projects, and determine whether they fit the educational mission of University of Illinois Extension. And even if the project fits the mission of Extension, there may currently be insufficient resources (personnel, time and money) available to commit to the project right now. But do express your project ideas to your Master Gardener coordinator; your idea may be the catalyst to get a great project rolling.

Another major reason for getting approval for all Master Gardener projects locally is for your insurance protection as a volunteer. As noted above, any time you are conducting official Master Gardener duties, you represent the University of Illinois, and as such, you are covered under the University of Illinois’ tort liability protection. As a recognized University of Illinois volunteer, and with prior project approval, you are covered for recommendations and statements you make in your official capacity. If you don’t have a signed Annual Volunteer Agreement on file at your local Extension Unit Office, or if you are doing a project on your own without Extension’s approval or knowledge, you are not covered under the tort liability policy. So, protect yourself. Make certain you are “official” whenever conducting Master Gardener projects!

State Advisory Committee Chair, Dave Hinde expresses some of the financial concerns of the statewide Master Gardener program in his column this month. One possible way for us to cut some costs would be to e-mail this newsletter to those of you who have e-mail access. We would still provide a hard copy of the newsletter to those who don’t have the capability of electronic access. An advantage of an e-mail newsletter would be quicker turn around time for you. Bulk mail can sit in the post office for several weeks, whereas electronic mail is almost instantaneous. Let us know if you think an electronic version of Imagine is a good idea or not by sending your comments to master-gardener@aces.uiuc.edu.

Happy Gardening in 2002! Denny Schrock

IPM Course Available Online

The University of Connecticut has several horticultural IPM units for homeowners available free of charge online. If you have Internet access, you may want to check out their website at www.hort.uconn.edu/index.html. At this writing, eight units are available, ranging from management of cockroaches and ants to turf pests, weed control, and deer damage.
Important Dates


January 16-17: Illinois Specialty Growers Conference, Chancellor Inn, Champaign, IL. Contact Bill Shoeemaker at 630-584-7254.


January 26: Joys of Gardening, Freeport, IL. Sponsored by the Stephenson County Master Gardeners. 815-235-4125.


February 8-10: Midwestern Herb and Garden Show, Times Square Mall, Mt. Vernon, IL. Call 1-800-252-5464 or visit the website at http://communities.msn.com/idwesternHerbandGardenShow.

February 15-17: Garden and Home Show, Carbondale, IL. Contact David Bobell at 618-687-1727.


March 1, 8 & 15: Insect Management Series, 12:30-3:30 p.m., Presented via Latitude Bridge. March 1- Insect Ecology; March 8- Use of Insect Ecology in Managing Urban Pests; March 15- Applying Ecological Principles to Manage Insect Pests of Field Crops. Cost is $5.00/session per unit. Contact David Feltes at 309-792-2500 to reserve your units’ spot.

March 2: Gardener’s Palette, Quincy, IL. Sponsored by the Adams-Brown Master Gardeners. 217-223-8380.


March 9-17: Chicago Flower & Garden Show, Navy Pier, Chicago, IL. Call 312-222-5086 or visit the website at www.chicagoflower.com


March 16: Gardener’s Day, Western Illinois University Student Union, Macomb, IL. Sponsored by the McDonough County Master Gardeners. 309-837-3939.

March 16: Fruit Tree Pruning, Dixon, IL. Workshop includes hands-on training. 815-857-3525.


September 12-14: State Master Gardener Convention, Rockford, IL.

Plant-A-Row

Plant A Row for the Hungry was launched in 1995 by the Garden Writers Association of America, with the goal of helping to feed the hungry by establishing networks for donations of produce. Illinois Master Gardeners have responded to this need by planting and tending gardens to donate fruits and vegetables to local food banks, as well as assisting with the collection of produce. In 2001, over 100,000 pounds of produce was recorded from donation sites in Illinois. Thanks to all our Master Gardeners who contribute their time and energy to this worthwhile project. To date, here are the 2001 Illinois donation totals provided to us:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Total Donations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winnebago County</td>
<td>6280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dundee</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Illinois</td>
<td>28,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murphysboro</td>
<td>892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champaign County</td>
<td>26,827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peoria</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Chicago</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgeview</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, Will and McHenry counties)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plant-A-Row for the Hungry logo
Chairman’s Chat

One of the benefits of serving on the state MG Advisory Committee (and yes, there are some!) comes from meeting with people involved with the program throughout Illinois. In doing so, I’ve become aware of the wide differences that exist in the ways that MGs perform their services, and the ways in which local MG programs are organized and funded. At our November meeting we spent considerable time in discussing the needs of the MG program, and resources and funding (both locally and at the state level) occupied a good bit of that time.

As we all know, plants need water and nutrients in order to grow successfully, not just soil. The MG program has been “planted” in Illinois soil for many years, and has yielded bumper crops in many areas. However, many individual MGs and local units have struggled with inadequate funding, few ongoing or advanced educational opportunities, minimal reference materials, and the lack of ready access to Hort Educators, all of which I consider to be the necessary nutrients and moisture to promote strong growth of both MGs and the MG program.

At present, there is no direct state-provided funding for the MG program. The state coordinator (Denny) is paid by the university, but his assistant (Monica) is not. Neither the MG program nor the Junior MG program is a budgetary line item, either at the university or in the state’s budget. The cost of the annual conference is covered by the MGs who attend it, not by outside sources. As you can see, we’re largely self-supported.

Winter in Illinois is the time for reflection and anticipation, looking back to what grew well the prior season and planning for the coming one. I thought you’d like to know that the Advisory Committee is similarly involved. As you look through the incoming flood of seed and plant catalogs for 2002, a sub-committee of Mariellen Griffith, Jill Selinger, Tari Parr, Nancy King, Denny and me, will be looking into ways in which the MG program may be more assured of increased and continuing supplies of nourishment in the future.

If you have comments or suggestions (other than “Dave, your remarks are just so much fertilizer!”), please send me a message at dhinde@aol.com, with some reference to MG in the subject line.

Dave Hinde

Around the State

Congratulations to Melissa Kaye and fifteen Chicago Master Gardeners who helped to turn a long skinny strip of abandoned land from a meeting place for drug dealers to a neighborhood garden/park. The project was part of the national Christmas in April (CiA) project which seeks to rehabilitate homes in low-income neighborhoods to make them “warm, safe and secure”.

The Master Gardeners worked with CiA to help community members learn gardening skills. They initiated a seed starting class in the elementary school adjacent to the property, helped the children with trash pick-up and taught neighbors how to maintain the garden.

This community gardening project has received the top prize of $5,000 (The Good Neighbor Gardening Award) from the Scott’s Fertilizer Company. Melissa will be working this coming spring with the project coordinator, Mrs. Woodson to select plants for the garden. The group has received many donations from nurseries and corporations as well as lots of community support.

Spotlight on...Jefferson County

Jefferson County Master Gardeners may be small in number but they are mighty in spirit. This busy and active group is involved in “giving back to their communities” in a big way! In 2001 members worked at a home health care facility, Addus, helping patients to design and grow a small vegetable garden. Master Gardeners helped the Herbs for Health and Fun Club with programs for the Midwestern Herb show. This group presents many programs for local civic groups and plans to offer talks on soil testing, fertilizers, seed starting, plant propagation and vegetables this coming spring. These gardeners are happy tending their display gardens and have members that specialize in water gardening, old roses, vegetables and tree fruits.

2002 European Trips

Join fellow Master Gardeners for an exciting experience in Holland, England and France. The trip will tentatively depart May 13 and return May 27. Estimated price for this trip is $2,700 per person. Featured stops will be the 2002 Chelsea Flower Show, Versailles, Giverney, Hampton Court and the Floriade (world hort exhibit).

A second trip to Amsterdam, Germany, Switzerland and France will feature the Floriade as well as a Rhine River Boat trip, gardens and sightseeing in Zurich and Lucerne, tours of over a dozen gardens and free time in Paris. The trip is scheduled to depart July 13 and return July 27. The price for this trip has not yet been finalized. Contact David Williams at 217-333-2126.
Herb Day 2002

Herbal experts from around the country will highlight this year’s Herb Day 2002 to be held on Saturday, January 19th, at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center in Urbana, IL. Noted presenters include: Susan Belsinger, well known garden and cooking author who will present “Entertaining from the Herb Garden”; Daniel Gagnon, of Herbs Etc. in Santa Fe, NM will give an update on the state of medicinal herbs; Tina Marie Wilcox of the Ozark Folk Center will talk on the historical usage of herbs in the Ozark Mt. area; Colleen Dodt from Herbal Endeavors in Michigan will present a talk on aromatherapy and Diane Noland from the Univ. of IL. will demonstrate how to entertain from the herb garden. A retail area with many books, herbs and equipment will also be featured that day. The cost of registration, including buffet lunch is $35 per person. Lunch reservations must be received by January 11, 2002. To register or for more information call Carol Preston at 217-333-7738.