



Imagine

Illinois Master Gardeners' Information,
News and Education

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Coordinators' Comments

Impact, Impact, Impact! Are Master Gardeners in Illinois making an impact on their communities? On the lives of children, the elderly, the handicapped and the incarcerated? On homeowners trying to develop environmentally friendly landscapes? On water and pesticide use in their communities? The answer is yes, yes and yes.

Master Gardeners and Coordinators know that your projects are making a difference but we need to be able to be able to convey these effects to others. When we do a good job of "telling our story" we create support among administrators, legislators, funders and the public we serve. In this article, I would like to let you know about several upcoming evaluation efforts.

The Consumer Horticulture National Committee (see the July-August newsletter), recently traveled to Washington DC to meet with the national program leaders in USDA. One of the goals of our meeting was to present a proposal to convene a group of interested states to develop tools and protocol for an in-depth evaluation of Master Gardener outcomes. After the protocol and tools are developed, all states will be invited to participate in state and county level evaluations as they feel appropriate. This will be a bottoms up approach. Each state and county may or may not use the tools as they see appropriate for their local situation. The collective input from participating states will be pulled together for a national report on Master Gardener program outcomes. We see this as a win-win situation at the county, state and national levels.

On a state level, we will begin using three new evaluation tools. First, new trainees will be asked to complete a short pre and post test. A set of questions will be administered to the trainees at their first class and then they will complete the same quiz on the last day of training. This is a very simple way to measure the knowledge gained during the training classes.

A second tool is a survey of interns about 1-2 years after they have completed their training. This instrument will allow us to gauge how interns have

changed their gardening practices as a result of taking the training and volunteering in the Master Gardener program. We also want to know if they have had a chance to use their new horticulture knowledge to teach others better gardening practices and how the program has helped to improve their skills for working with others. Participants will be sent a postcard and an email asking them to complete a simple online survey. For those of you who don't have internet access, a paper copy of the survey will be mailed at your request. This study will involve those who trained in 2006– so not all volunteers will be contacted. Please help us by taking part in this study if you are contacted.

Lastly, a very important tool which will be piloted around the state in 2008 is the MG online reporting system. For more information about the release of this project– please read the article on page 2. I am counting on everyone to help us with these projects as we seek ways to show our impact to others!

 Happy Holidays! Monica David

MG Retention Study

Kristin Huls, Program Coordinator from Hancock County will be conducting a statewide Master Gardener retention study as part of her graduate studies. The survey will be conducted after the first of the year but before gardening season begins. Kristin will send postcards and email notices to Master Gardeners who have elected to become inactive or to those who completed the training and then never volunteered hours. She hopes to find out why these folks chose to leave the program and how we could have encouraged them to remain active. Kristin will also include some currently active volunteers in the study to ascertain the reasons they remain with the program. The survey may be completed online but there will also be an option to complete a paper copy if desired. Your local MG coordinator will be notified of who was randomly selected to participate in the study. Please help us by completing the survey if you are asked to contribute. Kristin hopes to gain some valuable data to share with you on why folks leave the program and what we can do to increase our retention of volunteers.

New Master Gardener Reporting Database to go Live Statewide

The outreach of Master Gardeners (MGs) throughout the State creates a great story that too often goes untold. Several years ago, with the help of Jane Scherer, Extension Specialist, Urban Programming/Web Coordinator, I had the thought to develop a region-wide MG reporting data base. The spirit of the data base is to capture MG activities and be able to sort them in as many ways possible. The resulting reports are then custom tailored to provide activity information to anyone who needs them, including funders.

I also envisioned a data base that would do more than the few others that existed in different states at that time. The idea here was, if we are entering data anyway, why not also use it to manage our volunteers and their hours donated. In other words, to tell your individual stories better too!

So we did it.

Now, after much tweaking and 2 years of input from MG Coordinators and MG's in the northeast region it is a fully functional tool for all. I am also pleased to say that even initial "naysayer's" have been won over by its functionality and reporting prowess. Importantly too, there is much flexibility in its use. Some Counties have staff enter everything, some have MG's enter everything, and many are somewhere in-between. Individual needs and resources will dictate how you manage your system.

And speaking of "your" system we are pleased to begin offering this program to several counties in 2008, with the goal of having all counties eventually on board. I was at the Dekalb and Springfield State Master Gardener Coordinator's Meeting in mid-October to provide a preview and answer questions. Training will then be provided when it's launched in your County.

Susan Grupp
Extension Educator, Environmental Science
Visiting Project Coordinator, Master Gardener Reporting System

2007 Conference a Huge Success

A sincere thank you to the steering committee and the Master Gardeners of the WC region for an outstanding conference. The speakers, vendors, tours and the new photo contest all received rave reviews from the 383 attendees. Our keynote, Roger Swain was humorous and engaging and a real highlight of the conference. **The silent auction brought in \$4,618** to help offset costs of the state office. Thanks to all of you who donated items for the auction- your generosity is much appreciated. Forty three Outstanding award winners and nine Sustained Excellence awardees were honored at the banquet. Teamwork awards were given to nine county projects as well. Look for the listings in this newsletter. For a more detailed description (and pictures) of the award winners and teamwork projects- go to the MG website and look under the "Who We Are" heading. See you in Lombard on Sept 11-13 for conference 2008!

The Gardens of Ireland

A few spaces remain for the 2008 Master Gardener trip to Ireland. The trip includes two days of strolling through private gardens such as Helen Dillon's garden; Carysfort Lodge; Rathmichael Lodge; Carmel Duignan's garden; Corke Lodge and Anna Nolan's gardens. Free time is allotted on the tour to explore Kilkenny, Kilarney and Dublin.

Public gardens included on the trip are **Powerscourt House, gardens and waterfalls**- 45 acres of formal gardens, sweeping terraces, ornamental lakes and walled gardens; **Birr Castle Demesne**- winner of numerous gardening awards which includes the largest telescope in the world, tallest box hedge in the world and thousands of trees and shrubs; **Inacullin**- located on Garnish Island which is a garden of rare beauty; **Lakemount Gardens**- a garden for all seasons and regarded as a "flagship garden" of Ireland; **Ballymaloe**- a family run cookery school and garden, famous for its cuisine and hospitality; **Anne's Grove**- a supremely romantic garden laid out in Robinsonian style; **Lismore Castle**- 7 acres of castle gardens set within 17th century walls; **Altamont Gardens**- a garden with a strong emphasis on combining a plant collection with the natural landscape and **Mt. Usher gardens**- a collection of felicitous plantings on the beautiful site of an old mill.

Tour dates are June 2 to 12th, 2008. Tour price of \$3,949 includes airfare, hotels, local travel by private coach, all breakfasts and some lunches and dinners. Check www.extension.uiuc.edu/mg for complete information. It is imperative to reserve a spot as soon as possible because deposits will be sent to hold hotels and airfare in early November. For questions about the trip contact Robyn Gulstrom at 269-629-9248.

IDNR Resources Available

New Illinois Tree Trunks

Fall is a great time to study trees, and now you can access a new resource from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Division of Education to help you teach the topic: the new *Illinois Tree Trunks*! These lending resources "trunks" contain a variety of supplemental materials to help students from Pre-K through grade 10 in learning about tree-related topics. Items have been correlated to the Illinois Learning Standards and the Illinois Early Learning Standards. Trunk contents include 18 posters, seven activity kits, CD-ROMs, a video, field guides, tree cookies, DVDs, equipment, a plant cell model, a plant press, lumber samples, books and numerous activities, lessons and activity books. You can access both the complete content checklist and the list of 55 lending locations at <http://www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/education/CLASSRM/tree.htm>. Recommended loan time is two weeks. Contact the lending location nearest to you and make your reservation today!

Emerald Ash Borer Community Monitoring Poster

Visit <http://dnr.state.il.us/conservation/forestry/Urban/Index.htm> to see the new *Emerald Ash Borer Community Monitoring Poster*. You'll find images of this destructive insect as well as signs of its presence in ash trees.

Illinois Trees: Volume II Poster Now Available

The IDNR Division of Education has added another poster to the *Illinois Flora, Fauna and Culture Series* of posters. *Illinois Trees: Volume II* depicts the leaves and fruit of 20 tree species commonly found in the state. Species descriptions and other information are accessible on the back of the 24" x 36" poster. Order this item online at www.idnrteachkids.com. *Illinois Trees: Volume II* was made possible in part by a grant from the Illinois Conservation Foundation

Illinois' Insects and Spiders Resources Trunks

Students are fascinated by insects and spiders. Help them learn more about these creatures by borrowing one of the new *Illinois' Insects and Spiders* resources trunks produced by the IDNR Division of Education. Each trunk contains books, field guides, equipment, posters, CD-ROMs, life cycle models, observation containers and much more. There's also an Illinois-specific "Crime-Solving Insects" forensic activity. Targeted to grades K-6, the trunks can be borrowed from 30 locations throughout Illinois. For a list of lending locations, visit <http://dnr.state.il.us> then click on the "Education" button in the right side bar. On the next page, select the link to "Items for Loan."

U of I Horticulturist Grows a Billboard Salad

At some point in life, just about all of us have spelled something out on our plate with food. A University of Illinois Horticulturist has taken this concept to new heights -- spelling out the words "Fresh Salads" on a billboard advertisement using real, growing lettuce.



Greg Pierceall, advisor of the horticulture degree program for Chicago and a U of I professor, was first contacted by the Leo Burnett advertising company to ask for his assistance in creating the billboard for one of their clients, McDonald's Corporation -- the goal being to stress the fresh salads in their menu. The initial request from Burnett was about the feasibility of growing information in a vertical growing system. The growing system is patented by a company in Canada. "It's a framework that provides the vertical growth of plants, kind of like plant pockets or storage for shoes in a closet," said Pierceall. "It has specific soils, or in this case soil-less soils, to hold the moisture and allow the plants to grow." The plants for the billboard were grown by a local grower the Good Earth Greenhouses and Garden Center in Forest Park and growing facilities in Lockport, Illinois.

The billboard was mounted in Wrigleyville near the intersection of Addison and Clark streets. Pierceall said that the "shelf life" of the billboard is unlimited as defined by Mother Nature, and even she can't be pushed. "The ad agency wanted the billboard to be up this summer, but I told them it had to wait because lettuce is a cool season crop and would never be successful in the summer in Chicago. The seasonal nature of the plants defined the presentation timing and the eventual length of the presentation art."

The art concept of the billboard was that the lettuce would start out spotty and then grow to solid letters, but Pierceall said that the direct seeding presented flush letters right away. "They will get more pronounced and increase in texture and colors of the greens selected as time goes by," And if you're looking for truth in advertising -- "The actual plants we used on the billboard are a blend of mesclun greens that are used in the McDonalds salads," said Pierceall.

2007 Outstanding Master Gardener Award Winners

John Abts- Tazewell County	Sharon Gessaman-Macon County	Jim Rusin-Cook South Suburban Unit
Evelyn Arendt- Cook North Suburban Unit	Nancy Gmitro-Jo-Carroll Unit	Linda Schrader-Hancock County
Helen Barrett-Stephenson County	Ann Henson-Jefferson County	Jane Segalla-Winnebago County
Paul Barrett-LaSalle County	Ernie Henson-Jefferson County	Vern Shepherd-McLean County
Paula Bennehoff-Stephenson County	Ann Huetter-McHenry County	Jan Sickbert-Macon County
Bob Bishop-McLean County	Donna Hirsch-Cook South Suburban Unit	Marianne Stauffer-McLean County
Bruce Brown- Woodford County	Marilyn Holmes-Coles County	Rich Tobiasz-McHenry County
Beth Corrigan-DuPage County	Margie Karl- Peoria County	Marianne Venute-Vermilion County
Linda DeBruler-McHenry County	Pam Kowalczyk- DuPage County	Shirley Wennestrom- Stephenson County
Barbara June Dearing- Cumberland County	Darrell McMurray-Sangamon/ Menard Unit	Bobbi White-Macon County
Tony DiAna-DeKalb County	Kate Morecraft-Edgar County	Bonnie Williams-Peoria County
Richard Eick-Boone County	Carole Pinter-Stephenson County	Shirley Wilson-Sangamon/ Menard Unit
Suzann Erlenbush- McLean County	Fred Pitts-Lake County	Connie Zink-JoCarroll Unit
Judy Ernest- Boone County	Karen Reid-Cook North Suburban Unit	
Maxi Fitzjarrald- Moultrie/ Douglas Unit	Robert Resch- Cook South Suburban Unit	

2007 Teamwork Award Winners

Electronic Plant Clinic- Cook County	Sixth Grade Conservation Days- Macoupin County
Oak Forest Hospital Therapeutic Gardens- Cook South Suburban Unit	Growing Gardeners- McLean County
County Nursing Home Courtyard Project- DeKalb County	Plant-A-Row for the Hungry Volunteer Committee-Sangamon-Menard Unit
Easter Seals Therapeutic Horticulture- DuPage County	Children's Learning Garden- Tazewell County
Fairground Beautification Project-Lee County	

2007 Sustained Excellence Winners

Sharleen Bell- Sangamon/Menard Unit
Sharleen established the Flower Buds Junior Master Gardener® club and served as co-leader for six years. She was instrumental in forming a partnership between the Springfield Civic Garden Club & Extension.

Treasa Brookman- Jefferson County
Treasa was instrumental in bringing the Master Gardener program to southern Illinois and served two terms on the state advisory committee. Six years ago, she became the volunteer coordinator for Jefferson county and she manages both programming & volunteers.

Patt Caldwell- JoCarroll Unit
Patt was the first volunteer coordinator for the Jo-Carroll unit and continued in that role for three years. She started the Savanna Community Garden which has a Plant-a-Row component and led the beautification efforts for Savanna.

Alan Champ- Lake County
Alan was a member of the advisory committee for two years and helped to oversee the development of the demo gardens surrounding the Extension office. In 2005, Alan and two other MGs formed the plant sale committee which raised \$3700 for Lake County.

Trixy Corley- Piatt County
Trixy served as the volunteer coordinator from 1998 to 2003 and she directed all activities from school programs to newspaper articles to devising the Garden of the Month award. Trixy has been a long time coordinator of the Piatt Nursing home project.

Jan Fisher-Champaign County
Jan has served on the county advisory board for five years- one as president and two as vice-president. She has also served five years on the program committee and has been active on the garden walk committee and at the Idea Garden.

Shirley Hendricksmeier- Hancock County
Shirley was instrumental in organizing a booth at Bald Eagle Days in Keokuk with an annual attendance of over 1,500. Shirley has co-coordinated the landscaping project at Gateway Park, teaching youth about how to care for plants.

Heather Miller- Champaign County
Heather has played a key role in the County Garden Walk. She co-chaired the event in 2006 and used her photographic skills to create a booklet for attendees and albums for the homeowners. Heather has served as chair of the popular MG Idea Garden.

Ginger Ross- Tazewell County
Ginger served as MG president in 2006. Ginger co-led the effort to establish the C.B. Smith School Butterfly Garden where she worked with 280 students in designing & planting the garden. She was a key player on the Extension Council which was successful in passage of the county referendum.

MG Photo Contest Winners

The new digital photo contest was a huge success. One hundred and sixty two photos were submitted to the judges. The pictures were outstanding and the three judges (all professional or semi-pro photographers) had a rough time choosing among the entries. The winners in each of the four categories received a \$25 prize. Second and third place winners received a certificate. The twelve winning photos were used to create a 2008 IL Master Gardener calendar which may be downloaded from the IL Master Gardener website at www.extension.uiuc.edu/mg/

The collage/poster contest had thirteen counties participating. A panel of judges selected the Champaign County poster as the overall winner and their Master Gardeners received \$50 for use in county projects.

Category	Winner
Before & After	1st place- Trixy Corley Piatt County
	2nd place- John Miller Rock Island County
	3rd place- Ann Tice Champaign County
Plants	1st place- David Stern Winnebago County
	2nd place- Heather Miller Champaign County
	3rd place- Ann Tice Champaign County
People	1st place- Salena Kinser Boone County
	2nd place- Roxie DeShane Rock Island County
	3rd place- Heather Miller Champaign County
Wildlife	1st place- Tom James Clinton County
	2nd place- Ann Bentley Champaign County
	3rd place- Carole Cook-John DeKalb County

View the photo contest winners in a 2008 gardening calendar- available for download at www.extension.uiuc.edu/mg/

Illinois Specialty Crops and Agritourism Conference

The Illinois Specialty Crops and Agritourism Conference will be held January 9-12, 2008, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield, IL. Pre-conference workshops (concurrent) will be offered Wednesday, January 9 highlighting the use of “High Tunnels and Greenhouse for Extending Seasons and Increasing Markets,” and a second workshop on “Growing Grapes in Illinois.”



On Thursday and Friday, January 10-11, the conference will kick off with Charlie Touchett, Executive Director, North American Farmers Direct Marketing Association, as the keynote speaker followed by the traditional concurrent breakout sessions on fruits, vegetables, herbs, and agritourism with an additional track of programming on marketing, risk management, legal issues, and labor. Friday evening will feature a banquet followed by the announcement of the annual cider contest winners and comments from Andrew McCrea, Oscar-winning syndicated radio broadcaster.....popular author...farmer and rancher.”

Peach and apple production will take center stage of the fruit breakout sessions, but talks on insect management in brambles, strawberry production, and production and marketing of paw paws will also be featured. Topics in the vegetable sessions will run the gamut of vegetable weed management to production problems to marketing. Herb concurrent sessions will include topics on “Medicinal Herbs” by Andrea and Matthias Reisen; and “Teas and Herbal Health” by Kay Whitlock. Other herb-related sessions will cover the 2008 Herb of the Year, incredible edible flowers, herbal business development, season-extending herb production techniques, how to build an herbal website, to name a few.

To receive registration materials please contact Diane Handley at 309/557-2107 or handley@iflb.org. A detailed conference agenda can be viewed at www.specialtygrowers.org. The Crowne Plaza Hotel is reserving a block of rooms for \$79 per night plus tax. Please call the hotel directly at 217/529-7777 to make your reservations, and ask for the Illinois Specialty Crops Conference rate.

Buy Local- Eat Healthy Seminar

There has been a growing interest among farmers, consumers, and grocery chains to promote the growing and marketing of local foods. Locally produced foods are fresher, support local farmers, support the local economy, and provide greater food security. Join us for a local foods seminar entitled “Buy Local – Eat Healthy” on January 12, 2008 at the Crowne Plaza, Springfield, IL. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. followed by the program at 9:00 a.m. The seminar will be sponsored by Illinois Vegetable Growers Association, Illinois State Horticulture Society, Illinois Herb Association, Illinois Department of Agriculture, and University of Illinois Extension.

Chef Michael McGreal, Joliet Junior College Culinary Arts Department, will lead the morning session preparing delicious and exciting dishes that use fresh produce. Lloyd Nichols, Orchardist, Marengo, IL, will assist attendees with choosing the right produce varieties to satisfy their taste and purpose. Extension educators from University of Illinois will cover topics including: when to expect your favorite produce to be available, how to store and handle what you buy, meaning of an organic label, and how to use herbs and spices when preparing your favorite dishes.

Attendees will have an opportunity to meet local growers who supply local markets with fresh produce. Growers will have business cards, brochures, and other promotional pieces available to assist with locating fresh produce grown in your area.

This program follows the annual Illinois Specialty Crops and Agritourism Conference which will be held January 9-11, 2008 at the Crowne Plaza, Springfield. To review a detailed agenda, along with registration forms for both programs, go to www.specialtygrowers.org and find “Convention Update” and click on “More.” Attendees can pre-register by printing a registration form and sending it to Illinois Specialty Growers Association, 1701 Towanda Ave., Bloomington, IL 61701. If you have any questions, please call Diane Handley PH: 309-557-2107 or e-mail: handley@iflb.org.

2008 Training Sites

Location	Starting Date
Belvidere	January 31-Thursdays
Bourbonnais	January 8-Tuesdays
Champaign	January 29-Tuesdays
Chicago	January 16-Wednesdays
Decatur/Springfield	January 24-Thursdays
Effingham	January 16- Wednesdays
Edwardsville cluster	January 15- Tuesdays
Grayslake	January 11- Fridays
Macomb	January 23- Wednesdays
Matteson	January 9- Wednesdays
Marion or Murphysboro	January 17-Thursdays
Mt. Prospect	January 15 -Tuesdays
Peoria/Pekin	January 28- Mondays
Oregon	February 1- Fridays
Rock Island	January 24- Thursdays
Sycamore	January 30- Wednesdays
Online Training	January 14 to May 9

Please contact your local coordinator to attend these classes. Times, topics and instructors are listed on the state website at www.extension.uiuc.edu/mg/trainingschd.html

Important Dates

January 16-18: MidAm Trade Show and Workshops
McCormick Place, Chicago, IL. www.midam.org

January 19: Herb Day, Urbana Holiday Inn.

January 26: “A Winter Day in the Garden” conference, Zwermann Theatre, Lincoln Trail College, Robinson, IL. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Doors open at 8 a.m. The keynote speaker is Jon Carloftis – Making the Most of Where Ever You Are, with 4 other speakers including Danny Whitehurst – Spring in Bloom...The Art of Bulbs and Branches, Nancy Clifton and Dianne Noland. Registration fee is \$35 and includes coffee/snacks and lunch. Late registration fee \$40 after Jan. 11th. Sponsored by the Crawford County Master Gardeners and LTC. 618-546-1549. Flyer and registration form can be found at: web.extension.uiuc.edu/crawford/ under the horticulture & environment tab after Nov 30th.

February 19 & 20: Gateway Greening Industry Conference, Gateway Center, Collinsville, IL. 618-650-7050

September 11-13: 2008 Master Gardener Conference, Westin, Lombard.

Controlling Soil Erosion

Soil erosion from rain and wind produces water quality issues in streams, rivers and lakes, degrades soil quality, and affects human health. Forest Concepts LLC, a small business in Auburn, WA, developed an environmentally-friendly solution called WoodStraw, an innovative erosion control material made from sliced strands of wood that is tailor-made for use on forests, highway projects, watersheds and other natural areas.

Previous erosion control methods, specifically the use of straw, were hampered by lack of stability under windy conditions, possible introduction of noxious weeds, chemical residue from pesticides and short-lived performance. WoodStraw is heavier than straw, making it less likely to be blown away when exposed to high winds.

The patented WoodStraw brand wood-based erosion control material is highly effective. An American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers study in California and Washington indicated application of the WoodStraw product reduced erosion by 98 percent compared to bare soil. In addition, a field experiment by the USDA Forest Service in Colorado noted WoodStraw outperformed all other mulch treatments.

WoodStraw is naturally weed-free and long-lasting. Since its introduction, WoodStraw has achieved regulatory approval by the Washington State Department of Transportation for use on transportation projects across the state and is recognized by the Washington Department of Ecology as an effective erosion control material.

Research and scientific progress continue to shed light on new benefits of WoodStraw. The product is currently being evaluated to see how it would perform for wind erosion and dust control on construction sites and for controlling blowing ash on burned areas such as rangelands.

WoodStraw technology earned an AE50 award from the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers as one of the 50 most innovative new agricultural, food and natural resource technologies of 2006. This project received Phase I and Phase II funding from the USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) Small Business Innovation Research Program (SBIR) for developing and marketing this product.

Stacy Kish, CSREES www.csrees.usda.gov

Creating Habitats and Homes for Illinois Wildlife

What is your interest in wildlife? Do you watch, feed or photograph birds? Maybe you like listening to frogs in the spring. Or perhaps you just admire the beauty of the natural world. The University of Illinois is offering a new colorful book to instruct and encourage you to enjoy and conserve the rich wildlife legacy around you. The book will give you the know-how and confidence to plan projects that provide habitats and homes for wildlife and to sustain your work once it is complete. In clear, concise words and stunning imagery this book will guide your management of grasslands, woodlands, wetlands, croplands or your own backyard for the benefit of wildlife. This 212 page book sells for \$25 and is available from PubsPlus– ITCS Instructional Materials. Call 1-800-345-6087 or order online at pubsplus.uiuc.edu

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