

Master Gardener Conference 2015
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Master Gardeners

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2015 Illinois Master Gardener Awards



September 18
Regency Conference Center
O'Fallon, Illinois

**Self Help Garden Club
(Whiteside County)
Diane Garcia, Cheryl Christianson,
Wolfgang Schmidt**

The Self Help Garden Club serves developmentally delayed adults living in group homes and/or on their own in the community. The goals of this project are to educate these consumers on food production and to increase their awareness of healthy eating. The Master Gardeners worked at Self Help to improve existing raised bed gardens and provided expertise to club members. Members learned how to amend soil, plant seeds, water and harvest. The program was held weekly from June to September. A care and cooking component was added in 2014 with the assistance of the SNAP ED educator. The expansion of the gardens to include herbs and cool season produce in traditional row gardening, as well as teaching members how to safely prepare and serve fresh produce has contributed to this projects continued success. The project began in 2013 with 12 participants and has expanded to 18 in 2014.



2015 marks the 40th anniversary of the University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener program. We gather tonight to honor the extraordinary efforts of all the Master Gardeners who have dedicated themselves to bettering their communities and the lives of others through sharing their knowledge of horticulture. Over the past 40 years our program has grown and expanded as we have developed creative and relevant ways to “Help Others Learn to Grow”. The challenge we face over our NEXT 40 years is to help Illinois citizens conserve our natural resources, garden in an environmentally friendly manner, strive to manage invasive pests and learn how to produce healthy food for our society.

Tonight, we are pleased to recognize eleven Teamwork Projects and 54 individuals for their superior contributions. Strong individual effort was shown by our State Outstanding Master Gardeners, for the leadership and service they provide to Master Gardener programs. Fewer than 2% of active Master Gardeners in the state receive this award annually. Superior effort is also highlighted through the Sustained Excellence Award winners, previous State Outstanding Master Gardeners, who continue their dedication and commitment to our goals. The Master Gardener Teamwork Award recognizes groups of Master Gardeners who work together to accomplish a common goal for the betterment of their communities. We are also pleased to announce three International Search for Excellence Winners.

Please join me in congratulating the 2015 award winners and Happy 40th anniversary to us all!

Monica David

Outstanding Master Gardener Award Winners

Helen Adorjan	Carol Lontai
Bonnie Altenburg	Kathleen Madej
Lorene Benbow	Ella Maxwell
Anita Boomgarden	Michael McClymont
Tammy Bottiglierio	Susan Mendenhall
Fran Cihak	Kathy Michel
Letha Clark	Donna Moravec
Jill DeGraw	Mary Jo Novak
Mary Dellorto	Jacqueline Peeler
Mary Dickinson	Kathy Phillips
Lisa Garber	Marge Prideaux
Sterling Garnto	Jim Schmidt
Diane Grottola	Paul Schultz
John Grygiel	Colleen Seiffert
Patty Harrer	Linda Simpson
Jan Hetherington	Anthony Soskin
Walt Holling	Laura Spang
Shirlee Iverson	Dayna Stevenson
Jan Jetel	Carolyn Therriault
Lynn Kendrick	Mattie Wallace
Michaela Kent	Danny Weatherspoon
Gay Kyle	Judy White
Brenda Larson	Marianne Zito

Freeport Roundabout-A Slice of Native NW Illinois (Stephenson County)

**Fran Cihak, Lynn Czech, Danny Dannhorn,
Jill DeGraw, Shey Lowman, Wes Robinson**

In March of 2014 the Stephenson County Highway Department requested that local Master Gardener design a plant layout for a traffic roundabout. The team selected plants adapted to the site which were salt, drought and wind tolerant. Using regionally native plants, 2,872 native grasses and forbs, 7 native shrubs and 21 native cultivar shrubs were planted. This was truly a county partnership with the County Board approved funding for the project; the Freeport Park District providing wood mulch; the Citizens State Bank providing access to their water hydrant and the Rural Fire Department using their water truck to water the plantings. The activities of the Master Gardeners stimulated many questions which were referred to the local Extension office.

Kennekuk Atwood House and Herb Garden (Vermilion County)

**Debbie Andrews-Bryant, Donna Bartimac, Deb Dyar,
Harry Bogen, John Bukowski, Val Gilbert,
Cathern Hart, Jan Hetherington, Julie Hughes,
Tammy Kelley, Marie Lietz, Marjorie Loggins,
Kasi Mitchell, Cheryl Nicholson,
Nancy Smith, Judy Story**

The Atwood House was built in 1892 and relocated to the Kennekuk County Historic Park in 2001. Master Gardeners work with Conservation District staff to provide conservation education to all age levels. The herb garden is used as a teaching tool where smell, touch and taste contribute to their experience. The volunteers work with the historical interpreter to select plants and herbs which would have been used in the late 1800s. The Atwood House garden contains perennials, a vegetable garden and an old-fashioned grape arbor. In 2013 the volunteers donated over 1,000 lbs. of produce from the garden to Plant a Row for the local food pantry.

**ISU Horticulture Center Herb Garden
(McLean County)**

**Susan Mendenhall, Chris Kraft, Sharon O’Neill,
Lucy Kelly, Trish Morrison, Carolyn Erwin,
Diane Boeck, Judy Hines, Sue Stroyan**

McLean County Master Gardeners formed a partnership with Illinois State to create an herb garden at their Hort Center. The Center draws citizens from all over the county to view the children’s garden, conifer garden, vegetable garden, prairie, flowers and shrubs. The volunteers created the overall herb garden design to showcase four quadrants with different themes. The main goal of the garden is to educate the public about herbs- planting, maintaining, and use of herbs in cooking and art work. Over 250 visitors toured the garden during the annual Autumnal Festival. Each year one of the quadrants will follow the Center’s annual theme and this year showcased plants used in making dyes for clothing, paper and ink. Students and local artists use the quadrant for their projects and one artist made a presentation for Master Gardeners.

**Homestead Garden Spin Club at Wildlife Prairie Park
(Peoria and Tazewell Counties)**

**Carol Cihla, Linda Nash, Jennifer Bass, Gay Kyle,
Emily Jacobs, Lee Maki**

The Wildlife Prairie Park’s Homestead Garden began in 2010 with a goal of teaching families to garden as well as to raise vegetables and fruits that the park’s animal department could use to feed the animals. The project has since developed into a 4-H special interest club. The youth range in age from 7 to 18 years old and often siblings and parents help in the garden. Master Gardeners work with the youth in the planning, planting and maintenance of the garden. Youth attend a minimum of seven educational sessions throughout the year. In 2014 the youth harvested 300+ lbs. of vegetables for the animals- bison, elk, cougars, bears, fox and domesticated farm animals. Some of the club members provide talks and demonstrations for park visitors and other groups.

Helen Adorjan (Chatham, Springfield County)

Helen has chaired the Identification plot in the Demonstration Garden since 2012. She assisted with the layout and design, plant selection, planting and general care of the garden as well as coordinating work schedules. Helen has also created a Plant -A-Row brochure for farmers markets & the state fair.

Bonnie Altenburg (Barrington, McHenry County)

Bonnie currently chairs the Garden Walk with two other Master Gardeners- a team called “the girls” by fellow volunteers. She coordinates 80 plus volunteers for the day of the event. Bonnie has also been active in the Speakers Bureau, the Trips and Tours committee and the state conference planning team.

Lorene Benbow (Watseka, Ford-Iroquois County)

Lorene is co-chair of the Ford-Iroquois Master Gardeners and is an effective leader. She also coordinates the production of the annual Idea Garden scrapbook. Lorene co-chairs the Native Plants section of the Idea Garden where she works hard to showcase new and innovative uses of native plants.

Anita Boomgarden (Chatsworth, Ford-Iroquois County)

Anita has served as secretary of the Ford-Iroquois Master Gardeners for many years. She shows tremendous follow through by helping to record and complete minutes of each meeting. Anita serves as chairperson of the Butterfly Garden in the Idea Garden which educates about pollinators and butterflies.

Tammy Bottiglierio (Naperville, DuPage County)

Tammy leads an enthusiastic group each year at the Loaves & Fishes Community Pantry- Day Without Hunger where over 400 people plant a vegetable to take home and kids learn about Squirmin Herman. She is team leader for the Western DuPage Special Recreation Association where students do hands-on lessons at a local high school greenhouse.

Fran Cihak (Freeport, Stephenson County)

Fran was a leader for the Rain Garden Demonstration project where she helped with plant selection, layout of the garden, installation & educational programming. She was also instrumental in the Freeport Roundabout display gardens and she led the effort to select and install native salt tolerant plants.

Letha Clark (Industry, McDonough County)

One of Letha's talents is to identify a problem and then generate ideas and solutions. In order to increase visibility for the program, she partnered with Hy-Vee on several projects. Letha led the efforts for the annual Gardener's Day, making this the most successful one yet.

Jill DeGraw (Freeport, Stephenson County)

Jill stepped into a leadership role for the Roundabout demonstration garden where she researched plants, helped plan the garden and assisted with installation. She is a founding member of the Bookworms Book Club. Jill spent many hours last year compiling the county MG history.

Mary Dellorto (Downs, McLean County)

Mary quickly became involved in a management role after training, joining the Client Services and Member Relations Committees. She served on the planning committee for two state conferences- Effingham in 2009 and Champaign in 2011. Mary was elected to the position of treasurer in 2014.

Mary Dickinson (Loda, Ford-Iroquois Counties)

Mary is a natural leader and this is evident in her role as co-chair of the Ford-Iroquois Master Gardeners. She is the chairperson of the Idea Garden and has logged over one thousand hours since her internship. Mary is also a member of the Speakers Bureau.

Lisa Garber (Germantown Hills, Woodford County)

Over the past 3 years, Lisa has served as secretary for the Woodford County Master Gardeners. She stepped in to serve as president when the president could not attend. Lisa has also been active at the Illinois Central College Demo Garden, Gazebo Garden and Hosta Garden.

Sterling Garnto (O'Fallon, St. Clair County)

Sterling has become the lead on the O'Fallon Community Garden project. The garden donated 3000 pounds of produce in 2014 to local food pantries. He mentors and teaches gardeners who rent the plots. Sterling is also on the unit Leadership Committee and spends many hours on the Helpline.

**Healthy Gardening Food Pantry Project
(Marshall-Putnam County)**

**Barb Dahlbach, Sharon Gallup, Debbie Skowera,
Pattie Ong, Vicki Thomas, Rita Simpkins,
Dave Dunagan, Bob Brandner, Melinda Stephenson**

This project was an outreach program to benefit and aide in educating and assisting 18 rural communities on the health benefits of home gardening with the focus being on those in need at local food pantries. Phase 1 began with Master Gardeners teaching basic vegetable gardening classes in 5 different locations. Phase two involved distributing containers, plants, seed and soil to people at all 5 food pantries. 209 families were able to receive supplies and this was made possible by donations from local businesses. Phase 3 involved a "Harvest to Your Table" class with easy to prepare recipes using produce grown in the gardens were taught. The team even hosted a live demonstration for the preparation of kid-friendly and healthy meal ideas.

**Discovery Garden
(McDonough County)**

**Fred Adair, Brenda Allison, Lynda Boomer,
Letha Clark, Margaret Johnson, Penny Lawyer,
Evie Reusch, Jane Reynolds, Claudia Scott,
Carol Sims, Janet Sowers, Eun Stidd, Kathy Veroni**

In 2013 a small garden committee met to begin planning and developing the Discovery Garden on the Extension grounds. This garden is made up of 18 individual gardens including a front window garden, sedum garden, bulb garden, daffodil and daylily garden, rainbow garden, butterfly garden, sod test garden, front sign garden, shade garden, hummingbird garden, ornamental grasses garden, test plots, nursery garden, sun garden, fruit trees garden, hydrangea garden, a Chief garden for natives and a high tunnel garden. These gardens show the public best gardening practices and successful varieties and allow visitors to enjoy nature. Roots and Shoots, a program for 3-7th graders assists with the garden.

Vermicomposting in the Classroom

(Jo Daviess County)

**Linda Helgeson, Don Klinger, Laurie Gothard,
and Sharon Cahill**

This team of Master Gardeners have been implementing Vermicomposting in the Classroom since Earth Day 2013. The team travels to one elementary school per year bringing hands-on materials for 3rd graders to experience, learn about and create compost bins with red worms. There are six school districts in JoDaviess County and to date three have been visited with over 150 children reached. The program consists of a short interactive PowerPoint to teach about worm anatomy and creating compost. The students create their own mini-worm bin out of plastic cups which they can take home to manage. Some groups build a larger bin for the classroom. Additional handouts and resources are provided. This project has resulted in notoriety for the Master Gardener program as well as educating youth about soil health and growing food in a healthy manner.

The Gardens at SIUe

(Madison-Monroe-St. Clair Counties)

**Mary Blackburn, Barbara Edmonds, Julie Farris,
Alan Funk, Bill Hanke, Pat Harmon, Barbara Hunter,
Bill Klunk, Chris Krusa, Sue Mersinger, David Moody,
Ellen Nordhauser, Betty Schiller, Rita Skau,
and Marian Smithson**

The Gardens at Southern Illinois University- Edwardsville are a local gem but were threatened by the current state budget situation. Unit 22 Master Gardeners took over the planting and maintenance of these gardens as well as educational efforts. In 2014 volunteers donated over 900 volunteer hours to plant and maintain the Shakespearian Garden, the Presidential Walkway, the Prairie Portal and a butterfly garden. Over 500 annuals were grown in the college greenhouse to plant the Presidential Walkway. Master Gardener regularly teach Boy and Girl Scouts about herbs, flowers and insects. Tours & demonstrations for the public are also offered. 22

Diane Grottola (Springfield, Sangamon County)

Diane has provided leadership to the Dean Home Heirloom Vegetable Garden at the Lincoln Home National Park. She worked on garden design, garden management, recruitment, training and scheduling of 50 volunteers. Diane has also served on the unit Advisory Committee.

John Grygiel (Danville, Vermilion County)

John is a long-time volunteer with over 2,374 hours recorded. He took over as chair of the Tuesday Night classes. John selected new committee members and found great speakers which brought new life to this project. John was also chair of the Veterans Affairs Greenhouse for over ten years.

Patty Harrer (Elgin, Kane County)

Patty's energy and enthusiasm served her well as she took the lead at the Idea Garden by organizing planting and tending of the garden as well as leading weekly work days. Patty now tends the Sherman Garden demo beds and provides classes to first year community gardeners.

Jan Hetherington (Danville, Vermilion County)

Just a year after becoming active, Jan became the Vermilion County secretary. She is also the Garden Walk committee secretary as well as a garden head for the event. Jan came up with the idea to use old mini-blinds for plant labels. She was also co-chair of the Plant Sale committee for two years.

Walt Holling (Geneseo, Rock Island County)

Walt and his wife became the presence of Extension in Geneseo by creating a gardening project with the residents of Woodbridge Assisted Living. He served as technology chair for Nursery School and at the state conference. Walt created a PowerPoint to publicize upcoming programs in the unit.

Shirlee Iverson (Shannon, Stephenson County)

Shirlee's natural affinity to make friends led to creation of a Bookworms Book Club. She reviewed a huge selection of gardening books and presented a program called "Reading Between the Leaves". Recently Shirlee joined with a group to ID trees at the Don Opel Arboretum on the Highland Community College campus where the office is located.

Jan Jetel (Richmond, McHenry County)

Jan is very creative and uses her talent as co-chair of the newsletter "Dirt" where she is responsible for most of the graphics. Jan co-chaired the annual Garden Walk. She organizes home owners, staff at the junior college and all of the volunteers including the plant sale committee.

Lynn Kendrick (Mattoon, Coles County)

Lynn has served on every committee in her county. As a former teacher she loves working with youth in the school youth program and with 4-Hers as a fair judge. Lynn has assisted with every Master Gardener training held over the years. She was responsible for the new member notebooks.

Michaela Kent (Bloomington, McLean County)

Michaela has used her corporate experience as chair of the Client Services Committee where she led efforts to revamp the Help Desk and to help make the volunteers more comfortable and effective in their work. She has been on the advisory committee for two years.

Gay Kyle (Manito, Tazewell County)

Gay and her late husband Earl spearheaded Manitos American Legion Forman Park plantings to memorialize local veterans. Gay has served as a judge for 4-H and county fairs in several counties for over 10 years. She is also involved with the popular Plant Bingo and with training.

Brenda Larson (Westville, Vermilion County)

Brenda is detail oriented and provided accurate and objective minutes as secretary of the her group. She was chair of the Vermilion County Nursing Home project for several years. Brenda improved the perennial garden and helped to engage the residents and urge them to become involved. She planted vegetables in the garden to help improve their nutrition.

Carol Lontai (Peoria, Peoria County)

Carol chose a program close to her heart and provided leadership to the Greenway Garden project. Carol furthered this project by adding a Plant A Row component and she spent hours mentoring gardeners on vegetable growing. She has been president of the local group for two years.

**Trial Plants and Greenhouse Coordinators
(Champaign County)**

Jimmie Nell Duden, Judy Fraker, Ann Tice, Patty Stofel

In 2002 Champaign Master Gardeners requested to work with seed and horticulture companies to obtain donated plants for trial evaluation. The Trial Plant Coordinators work with their community garden chairs on selecting appropriate trial plants which fall in line with their garden designs. The team receives the donations, catalogs them and places them in greenhouses at Parkland College. Usually about 100 plants are donated which then require planting, fertilizing and transplanting until they are moved to their final planting spaces in the Idea Garden and Community Gardens throughout Unit 13. Once planted, the trial plants are observed and documented throughout the growing season. At the end of the season, the Coordinators make a final report of the plant's successes and failures to the companies.

**"Trees are Terrific" Arbor Day Programs
(Cook South Suburban)**

**Maureen Guger, Allen Guger, Mary Welke,
Sue McCarthy, Beverly Gehrt, Nancy Fiesler,
Marilyn Allen and Barbara Killelea**

Eight Master Gardeners contributed 272.5 volunteer hours presenting 23 "Trees are Terrific" Arbor Day programs from 2009 through 2014. The volunteers adapted the Extension website Trees are Terrific to become a face-to-face and hands-on program for pre-K through 1st grade at nine separate schools. This program introduced the schools to U of I extension web resources as well as helped municipalities earn 4 points towards Tree City USA designation. 2,177 students in nine schools actively participated and in most cases repeated the program in multiple years. The program goals were to help children aged 5-8 gain an appreciation of trees; observe trees in their everyday lives and develop an interest in further exploration of the wonders of trees.

Teamwork Award Winners

Trial Plants and Greenhouse Coordinators
Champaign County

“Trees are Terrific” Arbor Day Programs
Cook South Suburban

Vermicomposting in the Classroom
Jo Daviess County

The Gardens at SIUe
Madison, Monroe, St. Clair Counties

Healthy Gardening Food Pantry Project
Marshall Putnam County

Discovery Garden
McDonough County

**Illinois State Horticulture Center
Herb Garden**
McLean County

**Homestead Garden SPIN Club at
Wildlife Prairie Park**
Peoria and Tazewell Counties

Freeport Roundabout
Stephenson County

Kennekuk Atwood House and Herb Garden
Vermilion County

Self Help Garden Club
Whiteside County

Kathleen Madej (Lombard, DuPage County)

Kathy has shown great leadership on several projects, most notably her work with the Easter Seals children. She worked with the Easter Seals administration to create quality teaching time with the kids, secure funding and help with staff maintenance. Kathy is also a great mentor to new interns.

Ella Maxwell (Washington, Tazewell County)

Ella is a true leader- serving her group as president, VP and treasurer. She is respected plant expert and resource. Ella is a much sought after speaker at ICC Lawn and Garden Day, Bradley OLLI program, Gardeners Big Day, Lawn and Garden Day, club meetings, Growing ProHort and many more.

Michael McClymont (Waterloo, Monroe County)

Mike does not have the word “no” in his vocabulary. One of his biggest projects is the Junior Master Gardener camp. He helps take care of the garden and teaches many of the lessons including seed starting and growing vegetables. Mike created a large public bulletin board for the Farmer’s Market.

Susan Mendenhall (Bloomington, McLean County)

Susan loves the opportunity to teach others about gardening. She has been the lead on the Homes of Hope project- teaching disabled adults to implement healthy living by planting vegetables. Susan has also chaired the Herb Garden at ISU where she led volunteers in designing and planting the garden.

Kathy Michel (Bryon, Ogle County)

Kathy has participated in many projects but she really ‘shines’ as a mentor to new trainees. She took the initiative to start a year round Horticulture Therapy program last year and she researched and created engaging lessons for residents at Oregon Living and Rehabilitation, and the Village of Progress.

Donna Moravec (Normal, McLean County)

Donna has an impressive volunteer record for McLean County. She is chair of the Member Development Committee which is heavily involved in the selection and training of new Master Gardeners. Donna also co-chaired workshops at Sarah’s Gardens which enabled local Girl Scouts to earn their badges. 9

Mary Jo Novak (Du Quoin, Perry County)

Mary Jo is responsible for growing the Perry county group to its current status. Her ideas and leadership resulted in two state teamwork awards- one for the Lasagna Garden and one for the Seed Library. Her love of teaching is evident when she helps organize the Conservation Fair for K-5 students.

Jacqueline Peeler (Springfield, Sangamon County)

Jackie is a leader but she also does well as a team player. She served as co-chair of the ID garden where she is involved in design, planting, labeling, volunteer meetings and schedules as well as education in the garden. Jackie is active on the Help Desk and she mentors new interns.

Kathy Phillips (Canton, Fulton County)

Good things are “Growing” in Fulton County because of Kathy! She has taken the lead on planning the Gardeners Big Day event for over 240 people. She is also responsible for the presenters AV needs as well as designing the brochure. Kathy also leads the gardens at the Clayberg Nursing Home.

Marge Prideaux (Danville, Vermilion County)

Marge’s passion is the Douglas Discovery Garden and she is the glue which holds this project together. She is the liaison with partner “Keep Vermilion Beautiful” as well as managing the garden and volunteers who work there. Marge is a co-chair of the Danville Library’s Children’s Garden Club.

Jim Schmidt (Normal, McLean County)

Jim jumped in immediately and took a leadership role after training. He chairs the Member Development committee and plans trips for the group including the Quilt Garden Tour and the Glorious Garden Getaway to Ohio and Pennsylvania. Jim also provides direction for the Home, Lawn & Garden Day.

Paul Schultz (Lansing, Cook South Suburban)

Paul’s positive leadership and management skills have helped fulfill the Master Gardener mission. He is a co-leader of the Village of Thornton Farmers’ Market and a senior volunteer at the Sand Ridge Nature Center where he helps in planning and sharing his garden knowledge.

Rain Garden Living Laboratory (Lake County)

Lake County will take home the second place award in the Demo Garden category. The Rain Garden Living Lab is a unique project between the county government and Extension based on a 1/2 acre rain garden located at the Lake County Central Permit Facility in Libertyville. The Master Gardeners created an innovative plan to develop a learning lab with educational materials to promote rain gardens as a tool for storm water management. The project team used multiple strategies including teaching homeowners to assess their properties for run-off and consider installing a rain garden, as well as creating a Living Lab for them to see native plants in a rain garden. Educational information such as weed ID sheets, planting designs, and instructions for creation of a rain garden were produced. Master Gardeners also mentored staff in managing weeds and good cultural practices for garden maintenance. Employees and home gardeners consider the Living Lab the “Crown Jewel” of Lake County.

Educational Programs at Sarah’s Garden (McLean County)

The second place award in the SFE award category of Innovative Project goes to the McLean County Master Gardeners. Sarah’s Garden is an original, restored 142-year old garden n at the David Davis State Historic Site in Bloomington. The volunteers partner with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and the David Davis Mansion Foundation to restore and care for the garden as well as to deliver educational programming, tours and outreach. The collaboration resulted in ever-expanding learning opportunities for the public as well as restoration of this historic 1/4 acre flower garden as a living museum. The garden was recreated to an 1872 creation with 7 original plants and 70 documented heirlooms. The garden is open April to October for work sessions, youth programs and group tours. The youth programs reached 532-3rd graders in 2014; 141 girl scouts for flower badges; a new pilot on Art and Architecture as well as 4-H youth club summer sessions. Seven community events which featured tours and education in the garden at the mansion included Glorious Garden Festival; Civil War Days; The Barn Quilt Tour and an Antique Car Show.

International Search for Excellence Awards

Search for Excellence is the recognition program for Master Gardener volunteers throughout the USA and Canada. SFE has seven categories in which Master Gardeners can demonstrate their outstanding contributions to their communities. Later this month at the International Conference in Council Bluffs, Iowa three Illinois projects will receive international recognition. Macon County is the first place winner in the Workshop or Presentation category. Lake County will receive second place in the Demonstration Garden category and McLean County will receive a second place in the Innovative Project category.

Secrets of Great Tomatoes (Macon County)

Macon County Master Gardeners will receive a prestigious first place award in the Workshop Category. Starting in 2005, Macon County Master Gardeners began teaching the public how to grow great tomatoes in a demonstration garden during two minute segments at a local T.V. station. Besides showing how to plant, grow, harvest and use tomatoes, many different cultivars of tomatoes were grown so that T.V. viewers would have insight on the wide range of cultivar choices available. However, T.V. station support for the demonstration garden diminished. One-sided interaction to an unseen public unable to respond and ask questions was limiting as well, so the MGs decided to expand the two minute segments into full presentations and workshops. From this beginning grew “Secrets of Great Tomatoes”, a year-long learning and hands-on program that culminates with a public offering to taste at least 40 cultivars of tomatoes each year! The goal of the “Secrets of Great Tomatoes” program is to teach methods of growing great tasting tomatoes. There are four types of activities given throughout the growing season; lectures on growing tomatoes; selling heirloom tomato plants at the annual plant sale; a hands-on workshop making tomato cages and of course tasting the tomatoes!

Colleen Seiffert (Collinsville, Madison County)

Colleen is a very hardworking volunteer. She has served as project leader at the Open Gate Demo Garden in Drost Park for over five years. She is also an active member on the Unit Leadership Committee as well as the Madison County Extension Education Foundation.

Linda Simpson (East Peoria, Woodford County)

Linda embodies the concept of a lifelong learner and she has assisted kids and adults to get hooked on gardening. Linda is a driving force behind the Germantown Hills Middle School Garden as well as a 4-H planting program. She visits many of the 3rd grade classrooms in the county.

Anthony Soskin (Champaign, Champaign County)

Tony is incredibly insightful and always sees opportunities for growth and improvement. He has held several leadership positions including Garden Walk Ticket/Marketing chair; Crisis Nursery Co-chair and Advisory member at large. Tony redesigned the ticket sales for the Garden Walk.

Laura Spang (Batavia, Kendall County)

Down to earth and energetic both describe Laura. She heads up a team who works on the Farnsworth House Plant ID project and the group is working towards producing a pamphlet for the visitors and binders for the docents. Laura also heads up the Extension Office Gardens Committee.

Dayna Stevenson (Dunlap, Peoria County)

In three years with the program Dayna has served as vice-president and has become a driving force in the major undertaking of creating the Butterfly Habitat at Wildlife Prairie Park. She was responsible for planning monthly educational events and stepped up to assume the president’s role when needed.

Carolyn Therriault (Amboy, Lee County)

Carolyn’s love of gardening has made her a huge asset to the program. She has played an important role in the annual plant sale – everything from seed starting and planting to setting prices, organizing displays and answering customer questions. Carolyn is a frequent expert on the Amboy Hot line.

Mattie Wallace (Danville, Vermilion County)

Mattie has been called a ‘force of nature’ by her fellow volunteers. She has given great energy to the Center for Children’s Services where she rejuvenated the garden and led the volunteers to create a peaceful courtyard where counselors take children for therapy. Mattie also developed a curriculum for a summer program at the Kids Development Institute.

Danny Weatherspoon (Milan, Rock Island County)

Danny brings a level of professionalism to any project he works on. He currently serves on the State Extension Advisory Council and on the Unit 7 Extension Council. Danny has also been the leader for five years for the Arrowhead Ranch project which is a residential facility for troubled youth.

Judy White (Taylor Ridge, Rock Island County)

Judy brings a smile and happy demeanor to everything she does. She has served as county president for two years and turned the board into a forward looking planning committee. Judy was involved with state conference planning and has served as a mentor to numerous new Master Gardeners.

Marianne Zito (Inverness, McHenry County)

Marianne is an organizer and sees things that others might miss. She co-chairs the annual Garden Walk by coordinating with 80+ volunteers, home owners and the community college staff. Marianne is currently co-chair of the Trips and Tours committee.

Bobbi White (Macon, Macon County)

Bobbi is a natural leader due to her quiet confidence and easy going manner. She served as a co-chair for the Garden Walk Committee and as president of the advisory board, both in exemplary style. Bobbi streamlined the Garden Walk lunch delivery as well as ticket taking and garden chair responsibilities by being a practical decision maker. She is currently re-writing cumbersome instruction sheets for the committees in order to alleviate the volunteers stress. As the past president of the advisory board Bobbi initiated a fun retreat for team building exercises.

Dixie Krisher (Glasford, Peoria County)

Dixie exemplifies an award winner because of her positive attitude, active engagement and willingness ‘to go the extra mile’. In 2008 Dixie was elected recording secretary of the Peoria group where she prepared meeting minutes as well as submitting summaries to the county newsletter. She also assumed co-chair responsibilities for the therapy gardening project at Bel-Wood Nursing Home. She was instrumental in meeting with the staff to create better programming for the residents and increase the number of residents using the courtyard garden.

Carol Miller (Danville, Vermilion County)

Carol has built an impressive body of volunteer work over seven years and she is a true team player. As co-chair of the silent auction and raffle room, Carol has led volunteers for many years and handles all aspects of this job with grace and diplomacy. She has been instrumental with the Tuesday Night Classes where she helps to find speakers that will be educational and bring in lots of attendees. She instituted a class on ‘Backyard Chickens’ which was extremely well attended even though her fellow volunteers were skeptical. Carol has volunteered 673 hours since 2013.

Anne Nadakavukaren (Bloomington, McLean County)

Anne is very comfortable and competent in leadership roles. She offered valuable insight into organizational development by helping draft bylaws and introduce updates to the advisory council. Anne has led several committees including the Outreach and Public Relations committee. She gave her time and expertise to the Sarah’s Garden project by propagating many of the heirloom plants and holding classes for the public. As a retired professor Anne is a great instructor for classes with children, at the annual Home Lawn and Garden Day and at many community venues.

Sustained Excellence Award Winners

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Phil Adams | Don Kniepkamp |
| Linda Anderson | Chris Kraft |
| Ellen Culver | Dixie Krisher |
| Glenn Fanter | Carol Miller |
| Penny Feehan | Anne Nadakavukaren |
| Barbara Hedden | Bobbi White |

Phil Adams (Peoria Heights, Peoria County)

Phil became a Master Gardener in 2006 and received the Peoria Master Gardener of the Year award in 2009. Since receiving the state Outstanding award he has given over 1,295 volunteer hours. Phil’s primary focus has been the ICC Tri-County Demonstration Gardens where he has helped with the Prairie renovation; added 2 bee hives; coordinates the work in 13 planting areas and is leading the renovation of the Japanese Garden. He organized a series of lectures and tours at the Demo Garden as well as a multi-week gardening class for Bradley’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.

Linda Anderson (Crete, Cook South Suburban)

Linda is a dynamic and dedicated Master Gardener who will think outside the box. She noted that the office receives many questions about problem bees which are really problem wasps. She created two presentations on bees which she presents at many venues as an important leader on the Speakers Bureau. Linda mentors both new and experienced Master Gardeners on interacting with the public at the Ask a Master Gardener desk. She also presents numerous programs on worm composting and she incorporated a hands-on ‘starter kit’ by creating a new worm bin at each presentation.

Ellen Culver (Bloomington, McLean County)

Ellen is the personification of organization. She just completed a two-year term as secretary to the advisory committee and was recently elected President of the group for 2016. Ellen was chairperson of the Program Committee for the Home, Lawn and Garden Day for 2013 and 2014. For this job she organized committee meetings, contacted speakers and arranged for keynotes. In Sarah's garden at the David Davis Mansion, Ellen is a mentor for interns. She is also on the leadership team that develops programs, provides maintenance and she delivers programming to youth at the garden.

Glenn Fanter (Kilbourne, Mason County)

Glenn works incredibly hard to instill a love of gardening and pollinators in the lives of others. He gives beekeeping and bee talks to school groups, civic groups and state and national beekeeping groups. Glenn created the Mason County Bee Club which has attracted folks from nine counties and he helped lead "Buzz Through Western Illinois" trip for over 50 participants. He is a leader of a local Junior Master Gardener group which plants gardens at the county fairgrounds. Glenn has taken his group to learn how to tap trees in Springfield and he hosts an annual wiener roast for the kids.

Penny Feehan (Bloomington, McLean County)

Penny likes to encourage others to reach their full potential and she is a positive role model. She has shown her leadership by serving as president and past president on the Advisory Committee for 6 years. While president, she initiated "field trips" for quarterly meetings, holding them at Hort sites throughout the county. Penny also oversees the very active Junior Master Gardener program, leading volunteers who present the program at three different sites. She has taught classes on stepping stones and bird feeders to the JMgers as well as assisting with the preparation and planting of the youth gardens.

Barbara Hedden (Springfield, Sangamon County)

Any task that Barb takes on is completed in a thorough manner. She had the Idea to hold an Herb Plant Sale and has chaired this event for five years in conjunction with the Springfield Civic Garden Club. Barb has provided guidance for the Shed Sales and she has co-chaired the event four times. This involves directing about 70 volunteers as well as overseeing planning meetings, pricing of items and promotion of the event. Barb loves to share her knowledge of herbs and has worked to educate fairgoers about herbs at the State Fair. She has presented two public programs on herbs.

Don Kniepkamp (Belleville, St. Clair County)

Don is a pillar in his local Master Gardener program. He has become the spokesman for the Henry White farm and has provided volunteer leadership at the site for twenty years. Don has partnered with the Illinois Dept. of Agriculture along with various conservation groups to provide educational programs at the site. He has also coordinated research projects such as a rose study, Ball seed trial and a bird inventory. Don leads school, youth and university tours at the site. He still finds time to help with the annual garden tour and planting containers in downtown Belleville.

Chris Kraft (Bloomington, McLean County)

Chris brings encouragement, a positive focus and a helpful hand to her volunteer work. She provided leadership in 2011 and 2012 for the annual Home, Lawn and Garden Day, working with 12 committees and 90% of the McLean County Master Gardeners in providing educational classes to 250 attendees. In 2013 she stepped up to chair the Vendor committee and taught two workshops. Chris provided leadership on the Master Gardener advisory committee in 2011-2012 as Outreach Events chair and then president-elect. She was the advisory council president for 2013-2014.