



Newsletter

WISCONSIN MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

Dwindling Numbers for an Iconic Insect: Moving Beyond the Documentation of Declines

— Dr. Karen Oberhauser, Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology, Univ. of Minnesota

Almost everyone recognizes the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). This iconic insect can be seen throughout the continent in summer. It has been designated at the state insect or butterfly in seven US states, was the subject of an IMAX movie, *Flight of the Butterflies*, and even entered politics in 2014 when the presidents of the U.S., Mexico, and Canada agreed to create a working group to study ways to protect this insect that lives in all three countries.

Monarchs have a complex life cycle. You probably already

know about the individual life cycle of this butterfly, going from egg to larva—the caterpillar that lives only on milkweed plants—to pupa to adult. But this insect also has an annual population cycle that involves migration from overwintering sites in the oyamel fir forests in mountains in Central Mexico north into the U.S. and Canada during the spring and summer, and then a fall migration to its winter habitat. Monarchs have up to four generations each summer. The last generation of the year goes into “reproductive diapause” and instead of laying eggs migrates south, flying 2,000 to 3,000 miles back to Mexico. Butterflies in this migratory generation remain in Mexico from early November through mid-March, and then return to the southern U.S. Both males and females migrate north, and mate at the end of the winter and throughout their migration



and breeding period in the southern U.S. Their offspring emerge as adults in April, and continue the north- and eastward flight into the northern U.S. and southern Canada. After three more generations, the final generation starts the cycle over, returning to Mexico. Another population lives in the western U.S., migrating to sites along the coast of California. While these two populations are fairly distinct, we know that there is some genetic interchange; tagged individuals from southern Arizona have been recovered in both the Mexican and California wintering sites.

Why do monarchs undergo this long and arduous journey? They are basically tropical butterflies, which cannot survive

— continued on page 2

inside

- Grant Reports ----- 3,4
- Director Nominations - 5
- Grant Applications ---- 5
- Hours Reminder ----- 5
- Resources ----- 6
- Web Help Needed ----- 6
- Events ----- 7
- Contacts----- 8

Monarchs

Continued from Page 1

our cold winters, but have evolved to take advantage of the larval food resources over the huge area of the North American continent outside the tropics through migration. This dependence on different habitats makes monarchs even more vulnerable to habitat destruction and climate change than many other animals.

Monarchs are an incredibly interesting organism, existing in a mosaic of rare and pristine, and common and disturbed habitats shared with many other species. Their migration is an unmatched biological phenomenon which scientists have been researching for decades, but we still have a lot to learn about them.

Awareness of the monarch's life cycle and habitat requirements is an important step in the conservation of this insect. This species and its migration are dependent upon conservation of habitats in all three North American countries.

Despite our interest, monarch numbers are declining. There are many reasons for this decline.

Because all the migrating monarchs are concentrated in just a few locations during the winter, they are especially vulnerable to harsh weather and to human activities that disrupt or destroy their overwintering habitat. The Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, established in

1986, protects seven of the sites where the monarchs overwinter. Illegal logging in the reserve has been dramatically reduced, but warmer or cooler temperatures in the mountains due to global climate change affects the butterflies' survival.

Milkweed and flowering plants are needed to assure the long term health of monarch butterfly populations. A big reason for the decline of monarch populations is the dramatic increase in farmland in the Midwest planted in herbicide-tolerant soybean and corn. This has enabled farmers to wipe out the milkweed that used to support large monarch



populations. Coupled with rapid expansion of farmland, the monarch's food supply has been greatly reduced, leading to far fewer butterflies than in the past.

What Can You Do?

As a MGCV, you are in a unique position to educate the public about this interesting insect, its precarious situation, and the need to provide plants to support it.

- Try to include milkweeds — including butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*), and common milkweed (*A. syriaca*) — and nectar plants in both your personal garden and MG project gardens to help offset the loss of breeding habitat. There are many other interesting milkweed species that can be grown in Wisconsin; anything with the genus name *Asclepias* will attract monarchs to your gardens! In demonstration gardens use signage to indicate the importance of these plants to the butterfly. Whenever possible use native plants from locally-sourced seed.
- Plant a monarch Waystation and register it with Monarch Watch to show that you are contributing to monarch conservation. You can

— continued on page 3

For More Information

- **MonarchWatch** (including Monarch Waystation Program)
www.monarchwatch.org/
- **Monarch Joint Venture**
www.monarchjointventure.org/
- **Monarch Butterfly Fund**
monarchbutterflyfund.org
- **The Xerces Society**
<http://www.xerces.org/monarchs/>
- **Pollinator Plants of the Central US: Native Milkweeds**
www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Milkweeds-of-Central-US_plus-vendors_XercesSociety.pdf

Monarchs

Continued from Page 2

purchase a weatherproof sign that identifies your monarch habitat as an official Monarch Waystation, which is a great way to showcase MG plantings at public sites. Then add your site to the Monarch Joint Venture “success stories” map.

- Encourage local or county land managers to avoid



mowing ditches when monarch larvae might be present, or advocate for limiting insecticide spraying at the local, state, or national level.

- Support organizations that are working to preserve monarchs and pollinators. You might want to get involved in a monarch citizen science program and contribute data that will help improve our understanding of monarch biology, distribution, and abundance which are vital to monarch conservation efforts. If you have more

money than time, consider a contribution to conservation organizations like the Monarch Joint Venture, Monarch Butterfly Fund, or other organizations that work on land preservation, restoration, or protection.

Although we may never see a return to the large numbers of monarchs that were common a decade ago, this insect can be preserved for future generations to enjoy by working to maintain public interest in monarchs and doing all we can to conserve the remaining populations.

grant reports

Kids' Garden Thrives with New Tools and Supplies

—by Sue Zimmerman, Jefferson Co. MGV

What a difference one year made in the Kids' Garden located next to the Activity Center in Lake Mills, WI. During the 2014 growing season, the program begun by 2 Jefferson Co. MG's, struggled because it depended on community donations for supplies. But with a \$250 WIMGA educational grant, MGVs were able to purchase not one, but two 4-wheeled carts; sturdy kid-sized tools (garden rakes, hoes, shovels, a spade, garden fork, hand tools), and garden soil and straw bales. After the kids mapped out rows of vegetables, herbs, and flowers in a planning session, they helped move a donated truckload of soil to the raised beds using the new

carts. Students were encouraged to bring in seeds to plant their favorite vegetables. The tools provided by the WIMGA grant were an important part in keeping the 40+ kids engaged in the process of planting. Straw bale gardening techniques also challenged student thinking about alternative methods of gardening.

With interest in gardening growing not only among kids but also in the community, the Activity Center of Lake Mills' Board recently said “that the community has taken notice of



the garden and that it is an asset to the community.” The straw bales have piqued interest as a potential alternative gardening method — the students are seeing one advantage already; the rabbits are not eating the plants planted in straw, but they are snacking on the plants in the ground.

Laptop Enhances Education

—by Andy Heren, Eau Claire Area MGV

This year the Eau Claire Area Master Gardeners moved into the electronic age with their new laptop computer purchased with a \$400 WIMGA educational grant. To begin with, it was used primarily at their “Ask a Master Gardener” booth at the Saturday Farmers’ Market in Phoenix Park in Eau

Claire. In the past MGVs had to rely on whatever printed resources had been brought to the booth or else take questions and get back to people after they went back to the office to look up information. With the new laptop they are able to look up pictures or information right away to help the public.

In addition to the Farmers’ Market they will be using it at their monthly educational presentations, which are open to the public. They also purchased a projector with their own funds, so now they don’t have to rely on Extension staff being present at the event in order to use their equipment.

More Than A Sign to Engage, Educate Visitors

—by Jerry Robak, Winnebago Co. MGV

The Winnebago Co. MGA has developed many of the gardens surrounding the Octagon House in Neenah, an historic home built in the 1850’s. There are over 1500 visitors annually, and although many have noted how wonderful the gardens look, they are not always aware of the historical significance of the design and plant material and that the gardens were installed and maintained by MGVs. Their \$400 WIMGA grant was used to purchase a sign to describe the history of the House and the surrounding gardens.

What they got instead of a traditional sign is really an outdoor message board that allows them to easily change the information displayed as plants and programs change from year to year. It was installed this spring.



This year one of the beds in the Kitchen Garden was planted with plants known to be used medicinally during the civil war period—to coordinate with the new exhibit inside the House on Neenah’s involvement in the

Civil War. The sign has a list of the plants and their uses, as well as a caution that although there is historical evidence of these plants being used as medicines, there is no scientific evidence of their safety and effectiveness.

Banner Attracts the Public at Area Events

—by Vicky Hopp, Washington Co. MGV

A new 6 foot tear drop banner with the UW-Extension and Washington Co. MG logos—purchased with a \$250 WIMGA grant—increased foot traffic to the Washington Co.

MGA’s booth at the West Bend Farmer’s Market and to the booth and display gardens at the Washington Co. Fair. The colorful banner blowing in the wind attracts attention

and helps people find their displays. It will also be used at other large events to increase interaction with attendees and promote UW-Extension and its resources for gardeners.

Become a WIMGA Board Member!

Are you interested in becoming more involved in the MG program beyond your own local association and helping MGVs throughout the state?

Elections are held every year to select one Wisconsin MGV to serve a 3 year term as an At-Large Director on the WIMGA Board (3 of the

15 Directors are At-Large; the remaining 12 are selected from the Local Reps in each of the 6 Districts). The At-Large Directors represent all MGVs in the state (not just those of their own association). They are expected to attend the monthly Board meeting (by teleconference) and serve on

WIMGA committees.

The Board is now soliciting nominations for this position. Only certified MGVs are eligible. Nominees must submit a short bio (preferably by email) to Susan Mahr by December 7 to be included on the ballot that will be published in the January newsletter.

WIMGA Educational Grants Due October 1

The WIMGA awards small grants annually to MG Associations to aid their efforts in community education. Over the years MGAs have used this money in a variety of ways to further the educational mission of the MG program. Read about just a few of the projects that received awards last year on pages 3 and 4 of this

newsletter. Additional projects will be profiled in subsequent issues.

Applications for each of the 3 levels of funding (\$100, \$250, \$400) are due by October 1 (postmark date). Applications must be submitted by Associations (NOT individual MGVs). The complete rules are posted on the MG website

under WIMGA, Educational Grants (wimastergardener.org/?q=EducationalGrants) and you can download application forms from there.

Mail applications to the WIMGA Treasurer, Byron Hacker (address on page 8) (electronic applications will not be accepted).

mg program

Time to Turn in Your Volunteer Hours!

It's that time of year again — time to turn in your MG volunteer hours record sheet!

The deadline to submit hours to your local recordkeeper is **October 1** (or earlier in some counties). The local person only has a short period of time to collate all of the local records and send that in to the MG Program Office. It is important to keep track of and turn in your volunteer service AND continuing education hours, both to help UW-Extension

show the value and importance of the MG program (essential in this era of budget cuts and scrutiny of government programs) and for your own benefit. Remember that only certified MGVs receive the monthly MG Program Office newsletter, the *Volunteer Vibe*, and other notifications about Level 2 training and other special opportunities. If you didn't do enough to recertify but still intend to be active next year and want to get the *Vibe*, you will

need to complete and submit an exemption request form which you can find on the MG website (wimastergardener.org/?q=MGVtimesheets) or from your local UWEX office.

Please turn in all your hours on time (even if you have until next year to complete your initial requirements) so your efforts will count in the annual report and you can be recertified for 2016! Some programs are for certified MGVs only, so don't be left out!

gro getter™ App

Last fall a nursery owner recommended at an industry meeting that wholesalers should put their resources into an app rather than expensive catalogs — so when he is out in the field he can immediately



pull up information rather than carrying catalogs in the truck or waiting to get back to the office. There are ID apps out there for trees, but nothing with care information. Now an industry leader has developed such an app for herbaceous plants. The gro getter™ app from Ball Seed is take-it-with-you plant information, photos and culture for any horticulture crop in their printed catalogs. Eileen Nelson, UWEX Horticulture Marketing Specialist downloaded this app and reports that she can see it becoming a very valuable resource.

The official promos state that “the gro getter™ app puts thousands of plants in your pocket! This mobile catalog companion and plant search tool is an industry first for commercial growers and retailers. It provides take-it-with-you access to more than 6,000 plant varieties available in the United States and Canada from the world’s leading breeders. Search new varieties and tried-and-true annuals, perennials, vegetables and shrubs. Get plant info where you need it, when you need it most.”

The app has multiple filters to help you find specific plants, each with pictures and plant culture. Once the app is downloaded, no internet connection is needed to access the information. It also includes note-taking tools, favorites lists, and lets you share through email. Seasonal and new product updates will be available to users throughout the year.

The gro getter™ app is available for Android, Apple and Windows phones and can be downloaded at www.grogetterapp.com/

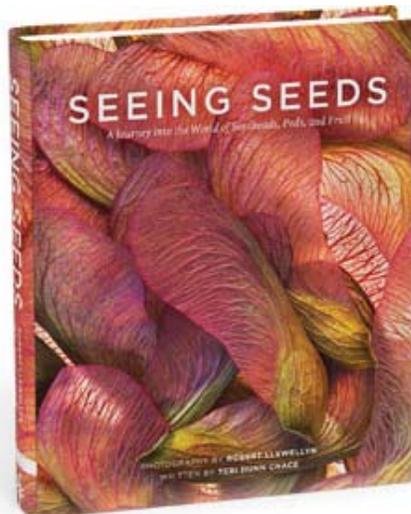
New Book on Seeds

Just in time for fall, explore the world of seeds in the new book *Seeing Seeds: A Journey into the World of Seedheads, Pods, and Fruit* by Robert Llewellyn and Teri Dunn Chace. Published in August 2015 by Timber Press, this book explores the dazzling beauty of seeds, seedheads, and pods that sometimes even surpasses that of flowers. Bitter melon seeds resemble a handful of rubies. And butterfly vine seeds look exactly like those delicate insects captured in mid-flight.

Seeds also come with fascinating stories. Lotus seeds sent into orbit by Chinese scientists came back to earth mysteriously altered. And fava beans can cause the debilitating condition known as favism, but they combat malaria.

Got Web Skills?

The WIMGA is beginning to develop a new website and is looking for a few talented MGVs to help with planning, implementation, and/or maintenance. If you are an experienced web designer or webmaster and would like to use your skills as MG volunteer service, contact one of your WIMGA Directors (wimastergardener.org/?q=WIMGADirectors) for more information.



Written in layman’s terms, this 284-page hardcover book explains the importance of seeds, how they are formed and dispersed, why we are so dependent on them, and how they fit into the environment. With extraordinarily beautiful photos, *Seeing Seeds* will take you to strange and wonderful places. When you return, it’s safe to say that you’ll never look at a seed the same way again.

events

See the MG website for more events and details

September 2015

 **2**
Autumn Perennials
Boerner BG, Hales Corners, WI
Garden walk with Zannah Crower,
6-7:30. \$5. (414) 525-5653.

 **8**
Organic Vegetable Field Day
Verona, WI
West Madison ARS. (608) 262-2257.

 **9**
Herb Garden Glory
Boerner BG, Hales Corners, WI
Garden walk with staff horticulturist,
6-7:30. \$5. (414) 525-5653.

 **10**
Comm. Garden Workshop
Madison, WI
At Troy Community Gardens, 5:30-
7:30. Call Devon at (323) 578-6164.

 **12**
Lavender Seminar
Fort Atkinson, WI
By Jefferson Co. MGA, 9-12:30. Free,
but reg. required (920) 563-7769.

 **12**
Taste of the Garden Door
Sturgeon Bay, WI
By Door Co. MGA, 1-4 at Peninsular
ARS. kjjrv1@gmail.com

 **13**
Orchid Growing for Wimps
Olbrich BG, Madison, WI
Book author discusses easy care
orchids, 1:30-3. \$15. (608) 246-4550.

 **15**
Italian Heirloom Vegetables
Olbrich BG, Madison, WI
Garden walk and lecture, 6:30-8:30.
\$15. (608) 246-4550.

 **16**
Loving Lavender
Rotary BG, Janesville, WI
With MGV Cheryl Rezabek, 6:30-8.
\$10. (608) 752-3885.

 **20**
Native Gardening Conf
UW-Arboretum, Madison, WI
Workshops, tours, keynote talk, 8:45-
4:30. \$60 by Sept 10. (608) 263-7888.

 **22-25**
Internatlional MG Conf
Council Bluffs, IA
See website [mastergardener.unl.edu/
imgc2015](http://mastergardener.unl.edu/imgc2015)

 **23**
Grasses & Sedges
Olbrich BG, Madison, WI
Garden walk with Jeff Epping focused
on how to use these plants in gardens,
5:30-7. \$15. (608) 246-4550.

 **26**
MGV Seed Saving Workshop
Ellsworth, WI
Only for certified, intern MGVs, 9-12.
\$15. Peg at p.wastell@gmail.com.

October 2015.....

 **3-4**
African Violet Show - Sale
Lomira, WI
Sat 10-5, Sun 9-3 at Trinity United
Methodist. Free. (920) 426-3764.

 **14**
Gardens for Hummingbirds
Olbrich BG, Madison, WI
Learn about encouraging these birds,
6:30-8:30 \$15. (608) 246-4550.

 **17**
Fall Seminar
Marshfield, WI
By Wood Co. MGA, 8:30-noon. \$10.
Register at (715) 421-8440.

 **20**
Rain Gardens
Olbrich BG, Madison, WI
DIY rain gardens, 6:30-8:30. \$15.
(608) 246-4550.

 **22**
Wintering Tender Perennials
Olbrich BG, Madison, WI
With author Janet Macunovich, 6:30-
8:30 \$38. (608) 246-4550.

 **28**
Bulbs in the Landscape
Rotary BG, Janesville, WI
With Mark Dwyer, 6:30-8. \$10. (608)
752-3885.

 **28**
What's Bugging Your Tree?
Olbrich BG, Madison, WI
learn about common insects and
diseases of WI trees, 6:30-8. \$15.
(608) 246-4550.

Invasive Plant and Earthworm Workshops

These one-day workshop hosted
by UWEX and WI DNR will focus
on identification, regulation
and management options for
common and not so common
invasive plants and earthworms
in Wisconsin, with an urban forest
emphasis. The event includes
both classroom instruction and
outdoor demonstrations from
8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Cost varies depending on
location, and includes lunch.
Contact the Extension county
office responsible for each
location to register for the event.

Sept 15 — Oshkosh
J.P. Coughlin Center
Contact: winnebago.uwex.edu/
920-232-1970

Sept 16 — Green Bay
Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary
Contact: www.browncountyextension.org
920-391-4610

Sept 17 — Menomonie
Dunn County Judicial Center
Contact: stcroix.uwex.edu
715-531-1930

Sept 22 — Clinton
Turtle Creek Parkway
Contact: rock.uwex.edu
608-757-5696

Oct 1 — Waukesha
Retzer Nature Center
Contact: waukesha.uwex.edu
262-548-7787

Oct 2 — Stevens Point
County Annex Bldg. & Schmeekle Reserve
Contact: portage.uwex.edu
715-346-1316

Planning Ahead

 **Feb 21-March 1, 2016**
MG Tour to Costa Rica

Immerse yourself in the rainforest and
other tropical habitats as we learn
about tropical flowers, ecological
systems, and horticultural production.
\$2995 + airfare. Questions, contact
Susan Mahr at (608) 265-4504 or
Mary at (573) 881-6316 to register.



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September 2015 Newsletter

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The Wisconsin Master Gardener Association Newsletter is published 6 times a year (January, March, May, July, September and November) dedicated to providing horticulture education and information about the Master Gardener program to state association members. The newsletter is compiled and published in the Horticulture Department at the UW - Madison.

Articles, artwork and ideas are welcome, but final selection and editing are the responsibility of the editorial staff. Submissions and comments should be addressed to the MG Coordinator.

Visit the Wisconsin Master Gardener Website at
<http://wimastergardener.org>