

WIMGA



WISCONSIN MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION

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WIMGA Vision - The Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association will be the collective voice for the local Master Gardeners Associations and individual members in active support for their horticultural projects and services; build networks to enhance outreach, share ideas and promote projects; and help extend UW-Extension's educational role to the public.

Portage Co. MGV becomes Wisconsin Farmers Union President

By Alicia Razvi—Portage County MGV



In 2012, Alicia's husband Shabbar was battling Leukemia and recovering from a bone marrow transplant. His recovery required 100 days of isolation in which he could not be with their

three children. Alicia was still nursing their infant son, and therefore couldn't attend to anyone's care giving needs fully. "Being unable to care for everyone the way they needed me, and the sheer lack of control I had over life, led to lots of insomnia and anxiety." It was on one of those nights, that a small idea began forming in Alicia's heart. If she could take a seed, give it water, soil and sun, she could literally control the life of the plant and provide food for her family at the same time. "I realized I could take life, in my hands and control it, even a tiny bit. And that feeling of control gave me incredible hope."

That epiphany led Alicia to diving elbows deep into her little victory garden once the family moved home after the transplant. It also led her to obtain her Master Gardener certification, move to a 2 acre

ag-zoned property in Hull, WI and walk into her first Farmers Union meeting.

Wisconsin Farmers Union is a 115 year old advocacy group created to support the Family Farm. And you need not be a farmer to apply-- that and a beginning youth program is what drew Alicia to her first meeting. Quickly, Alicia took on the role of Secretary/ Treasurer of the local chapter and remained in that position for two years.

Within those two years, the Wisconsin Farmers Union and area small farmers took on a very significant role in Alicia's life. "Each winter, the Farmers Union holds a state wide convention that offers some education, and a large open meeting to discuss and adopt the Union's policy for the year. This display of democracy and respectful decision making on each and every line of the Farmers Union policy book, made an amazing impression on me." As Alicia moved forward in the group, that first convention served as a great jumping off point. In November 2016, Alicia was elected as the president of the Wisconsin Farmers Union -Wood/Portage/Waupaca



chapter. With her election, Alicia became the first female, Muslim chapter president in the National Farmers Union! It has led to attending Farm and Rural Policy Day at

the state capitol and in March 2017, attending her first National Farmers Union Convention in San Diego California.

As time marched on, farmer friends in the area were so welcoming and encouraging of Alicia's food-growing interests that the idea that she could take on the title 'farmer' felt more possible. In terms of education, Alicia has maintained her Master Gardener volunteer status since 2014, and took a sustainable farming course through the Farmshed in 2016, she worked on a local farm in exchange for vegetables last summer, she asked every question she could think of to every farmer who would give her a minute, and recently attended the MOSES conference in 2017.

In 2016, Alicia and her (healthy) husband Shabbar decided to take the plunge into small farming. They started a CSA farm-- Wooly Thyme Micro Farm--with 16 members on their two acres. This allowed them to grow vegetables, fruits and herbs for clients and send

'shares' home every other week with them. In their second year, they have signed 20 CSA clients, sell many dozen eggs each week and are growing chickens for meat this summer. "Becoming Micro-farmers on our tiny two-acre plot is hard work. But it is incredibly rewarding! The job gets me outside with my hands in the dirt, my family spends every weekend morning together in the garden - harvesting, cleaning and packing vegetables that we grew ourselves. Gathering eggs, feeding chickens, moving their fence, or handing bags full of vegetables to our clients -- it all brings me such joy. We have really come a long way in the five years since that middle-of-the-night-epiphany to grow food."



As the president of the local Farmers Union chapter, Alicia hopes to grow support -for and with -the Farmers and Farm Advocates in the community. The group holds monthly gatherings. They include-meetings, potlucks at local farms, state-wide convention, lobby day in Madison, and dinners/book discussions. To find out where they are meeting next, check out the Wood/Portage/Waupaca Wisconsin Farmers Union Facebook page.

The Learning Garden

By Tom Wentzel—Outagamie MGV

The Learning Garden's purpose is to live up to its name – it is to be a place to learn about gardening. Planning for this garden began in 2013 with installation in 2014. Each year we try something different, such as growing something we've never tried before like sweet potatoes, a surprising success, or artichokes, a not so successful crop. In the past we have demonstrated several crops/techniques such as square foot gardening, tomatoes, onions, country garden and cold frame gardening.

The Learning Garden consists of several beds with a different "theme" each year. Each of the beds is managed by a separate team. The point of this is that each team is responsible for a relatively small area that is not overwhelming. There are also a couple perennial areas. A grape arbor has been installed.

There were a couple clusters of grapes in 2016 so we are optimistic about a good crop this year. There is also the fruit area. We are trying a pair of columnar apple trees that get only 2' wide. Another technique is a plum tree trained on an espalier trellis. As an ornamental feature, we have a perennial bed that features deer resistant plants.

This year the new class will be given the responsibility of managing a couple of the beds. This is the first year that this has been tried so it will be a learning experience. In other beds, vertical gardening will be the featured technique and potatoes will be the featured crop.

If you would like to participate in this project or would like more information, contact Tom Wentzel twentzel@new.rr.com .

Save The Date!

Vicky Hopp—Conference Chair, Washington County MGV



The Washington County Master Gardeners would like to announce that the Wisconsin State Master Gardeners Conference will be held on October 13th and 14th, 2017. This event will be held at the West Bend Mutual Insurance Company Prairie Center, in West Bend. The Prairie Center is located on several acres filled with native plants, which are managed by one of our own Master Gardeners. There are several walking paths through the property.

Friday night's speakers will be Martine and Edgar Anderson of Door County. Martine and Edgar are the proprietors of Fragrant Isle, known as one of the Midwest's largest lavender farms. Their topic will cover the joys and challenges of "Growing Lavender in Wisconsin". Come and hear how they chose Washington Island as a good place for their lavender farm. Susan Carpenter will speak on inspiring prairie gardens and landscapes. A perfect topic for this location. Natural prairies have declined as construction continues to spread. Learn some ideas for replenishing these areas with your gardening skills.

Saturday will consist of several breakout sessions with a variety of speakers. Some topics to be covered will include the following: Bryce Ruddock will discuss a basic definition of permaculture, and how to design our gardens to help restore the habitat; Zannah Crowe from ZC Creations will speak on ways to create a refuge in your garden for our important, and at times struggling, pollinators; Noel Valdes of CobraHead will tell you how growing sweet potatoes and garlic in Wisconsin can be easy, as long as you can convince the plants that they are in Louisiana; Mike Maddox will guide us on how to use social media to promote the events with the Master Gardeners, and how to find

the most reliable information to help gardeners answer their questions; Laura Kahles will inform the group about mushroom gardening and forest farming in Wisconsin; Rob Charlier Anglim will reassure us how easy it is to grow succulents, and how we might suggest this to anyone who claims they have a "purple" thumb; Jamie Patton will guide us in ways to make our soil healthier so our garden can be healthier; and Carrie Hennessy will cover the topic of deer "resistant" landscapes. Many of us wonder if there is such a thing, since the deer seem to frequently change their minds about what they will not eat.

Meals made by the Prairie Center's top chefs will be available for additional cost. Several vendors will have items available for purchase. And there will be a silent auction with many garden items, or garden related items available for bidding. A block of rooms at Hampton Inn & Suites has been reserved at a special Master Gardener conference rate, please visit <http://hamptoninn.hilton.com/en/hp/groups/personalized/E/ETBWBHX-MGA-20171013/index.jhtml> for information.

Please plan to join us for this wonderful gardening experience at a beautiful location. Registration brochures will be available soon. More information will continue to be on the Washington County Master Gardeners' website at wcmastergardeners.com. We are also on Facebook, under Washington County Master Gardener Association.



Martine and Edgar Anderson,
Proprietors of Fragrant Isle

An Easy Way to Germinate Hard-to-Grow Seeds

By Tammy Borden—Outagamie MGV



My favorite plants to start from seed are sweet peppers — the Jimmy Nardello Sweet Italian Frying Pepper, to be exact. It's an heirloom variety that is long, slender, red, and incredibly delicious. I've been known to eat them directly off the plant.

But pepper seeds are notorious for being slow starters. Adding bottom heat to seeds planted in a growing mix dramatically increases the germination rate and decreases the time it takes for them to sprout. For the last few years, however, I have found a better method for getting my pepper seeds to grow.

Pre-germination. I heard about the technique from a fellow Master Gardener and did some online research, along with watching a few YouTube videos. The idea is simple: Generally, when a viable seed comes into contact with moisture and warm temperatures, it swells and begins to germinate. You can create this environment before planting them in soil. Here's how you can do it.

Step One: Wet a paper towel and wring it out. You don't want it sopping wet. Lay it out flat.

Step Two: Arrange the seeds about an inch apart on half the paper towel. Fold over the other half to cover the seeds.

Step Three: Place the folded paper towel inside a sealable plastic bag and write the seed information, date, and number of seeds inside.

Step Four: Place the baggie in a warm location — the top of a refrigerator or on a heat mat works well.

That's it. Check your seeds every couple days to see if there is any growth. You can hold the package up to the light where you may see the shadow of a small root emerging. But it can be difficult to see, so you can simply remove it from the baggie and fold back the corner. Do not allow the paper towel to dry out. If necessary, moisten it with a spray bottle.

Some seeds in the plastic bag will germinate more quickly than others, so be patient. The sprouted seeds will be fine if left until more of the others decide to catch up and send out a root as well. And if rootlets embed themselves into the paper towel, no worries, just gently tear the surrounding towel off along with the attached root and seed when you're ready to plant them.

Once your seeds have germinated with a small root, plant them at the same depth as you normally would in a moistened soilless mix. For peppers, that about 1/4". If they already have a little green showing, allow those tiny leaves to peek out above the surface of the mix and place under grow lights. Keep covered with plastic until they're established.

Another great use for this method is to test seeds for viability. If you have seeds that are a few years old and aren't sure they will grow, try this method to test if they'll sprout. It will take up less space and effort in the event the seeds are dead.

Many seeds other than peppers are good candidates for pre-germination including carrots, peas, parsley, cucumbers, tomatoes, eggplant, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and more.

Give pre-germination a try this year and see your success rate increase.



Iron County Farmers Market Terrariums

By Lynn Adams— Range MGV

On July 23, 2016, the Range Master Gardener Volunteers Janet, Helen, Judy, Kaye and Lynn planted free “make and take” terrariums with twenty children. The children first put in pea gravel, then soil and they were able to choose a sempervivum (a real plant) a fairy, or dinos, turtle, an insect, a rock and moss. The parents were given an instruction sheet that the sempervivum (Hen and chicks) could be kept in the house or planted outside. So many parents and other people thought what a great project.



The Hurley Dairy Queen donated the plastic sundae cups and Becky from Creative Spirits donated little dragonflies and flowers that were glued to little sticks. From this experience the MGV learned the DQ cups did not have a hole on the top and they were hard to drill out. This year they got the 4” McDonald’s plastic cups that have a hole in the top.

Here is a copy of the handout:

Dear Gardeners,

The little plant that looks like a cactus is a REAL plant, a succulent, called Sempervivum. It is affectionately called a "Hen and Chick". This terrarium does not need much care. Just a bit of water for the little chick once a week.

Sempervivum (*sem-per-VIV-um*) is a cold hardy, drought tolerant succulent that deer don't care to eat. They produce tight clumps that form interesting mounds.

The 'Hens and Chicks' will produce multiple “baby chicks” every growing season. You can leave them attached to the mother hen to fill in your outdoor garden planting, or you can remove the chicks and start a new planting elsewhere.

They grow really well outdoors in our zone 4, in the shade or sun.

We hope you enjoyed making your terrarium.

Pictures will be posted on the Range Master Gardener Volunteer Association Facebook page or this is our website: <https://rangemastergardenvolunteers1.shutterfly.com>



Gardening is about enjoying the smell of things growing in the soil, getting dirty without feeling guilty, and generally taking the time to soak up a little peace and serenity. ~Lindley Karstens, noproblemgarden.com

Two State Coordination Brings Rewards

By Lynn Adams—Range MGV



At the Bessemer VFW, Thursday evening, of January 19th, 2017 the Ironwood, Michigan and Bessemer, Michigan Chambers of Commerce had a recognition banquet.

Range County Master Gardener Volunteer Marlene Zaleski, called several of us to attend. The Bessemer Chamber wanted to recognize Marlene's flower project in the City of Bessemer and those who helped her.

Marlene's flower project in the City of Bessemer and those who helped her.

"Well, we were shocked when the chambers also recognized all the "Range Master Gardener Volunteers" as the "Organization of the Year" and thanked us for taking pride in our area, working with youth and mentioned a few of our projects in Gogebic and Iron County."

Range Master Gardener volunteers, Marlene and Ron Zaleski, coordinate the City of Bessemer planting project. Fifth graders from the Washington School planted a beautiful selection of annual flowers in 18 flower barrels and three gardens by the historic City Hall with annuals and perennials. The young gardeners were assisted by Ron and Marlene, the teachers, Cheryl Olson, Range Master Gardeners Kaye Johnson and Lynn Adams. Master Gardener intern Helen Slining



helped the day before adding soil to the flower barrels.

Students are always given a lesson on how to get the plants out of their individual small pots or the cell packs, how deep of a hole to dig for the roots, "tickle" the roots and then how to fill the hole in and pat the soil around the plant. Then the students take turns watering the flower barrels and gardens.

Range County MGV is a unique organization comprised of Wisconsin and Michigan Master Gardeners who live in Gogebic County, Michigan and Iron County, Wisconsin. Most of us **were** Michigan Master Gardeners but when the program stopped for a few years, then we asked the Wisconsin MG Assoc. to take us in and they did. Now we have more Wisconsin MG's than Michigan. But we were formed as the Range Master Gardener Volunteer Assoc. of Gogebic County, MI and Iron County, WI

Each member is a Michigan or Wisconsin certified Master Gardener. To achieve this certification, one must complete a course of study. In Michigan and Wisconsin, a MG must first contribute 40 volunteer hours the first year and then 24 volunteer hours a year and 10 continuing education hours. Currently RMGV has 19 certified members, 31 WIMGA members and contributed 855 hours as volunteers. WOW!



Statewide MGV Events

There are several Master Gardener Association plant sales happening this month. To find one near you go to the Master Gardener Program website at: <http://wimastergardener.org/events/?ezy=2017&ezm=5>. Several other events of interest are listed as well.



Treasurer's Corner

By Byron Hacker, WIMGA Treasurer—Calumet County MGV

Over the years, many Master Gardeners have questioned what happens to the dues of \$5.00 that they pay each year and other funds held by WIMGA. What are those funds used for and who decides how they are spent.

WIMGA supports and funds numerous programs that most of our members are unaware of – most notable is our WIMGA Newsletter that is published six times a year.

In the January issue, Larry Meiller and “Garden Talk” on WI Public Radio (WPR) was one of the featured articles. During the Fall and Winter Fund Drive on WPR, Larry Meiller and WIMGA has a challenge for matching funds.

For the past ten years, WIMGA has matched the challenge and has donated to WI Public Radio each year to support Larry and “Garden Talk.” In the first year of support, we donated \$1000 and that support has grown to the current level of support - \$5000. During each Fund Drive, Master Gardeners have donated funds and WIMGA has matched those funds.

The WIMGA Board of Directors feel very positive about supporting WPR and the “Garden Talk” Program.

Another area of support has been the WI Junior Horticulture Association and the National Junior Horticulture Association. In Wisconsin, we support the young people who qualify and attend the national conference each year in a different area of the nation. The conference was held in Erie, PA this past October and is scheduled to be held in Indianapolis, IN this October.

On the national level, WIMGA sponsors the “Writing in Horticulture” Contest, which includes Poetry, Creative Writing and Informative Writing in three separate age categories – age 10 – 14; age 15 – 18 and age 19 - 22. This past year WI had a winner in the Poetry, Creative Writing and Informative Writing categories. Cash awards are presented to the winners.

Young people from all over the United States attend this conference and participate in the many different contests, in addition to the contests that we financially support. Many of the contests do not require attendance at the conference. On a side note, the past president of NJHA is from Wisconsin and over the years, many youth from our state have held offices in NJHA. For more information on the National Junior Horticulture Association (NJHA), visit njha.org.

If you enjoyed reading about the accomplishments of MGV around the state know that we all would like to read about your organization. Send us your articles, newsletters or contact me with information. I am happy to write the article for you or edit what you have. Submissions and comments should be addressed to the WIMGA Newsletter Committee Chair:

Lynn Caine, dljed@charter.net.

Submission deadline for the July newsletter—May 26, 2017



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The Wisconsin Master Gardeners 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 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.

Visit the WIMGA Website at

<http://www.wimqa.org/>

