

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



Fall Master Gardener Program Focuses on Herbaceous Ornamentals – Mike Rankin

A 24-hour, four-week educational program focusing on herbaceous ornamental plants was offered this past fall to broaden the knowledge base of Fond du Lac County Master Gardeners and other individuals. Nine different speakers gave presentations dealing with the selection, adaptation, growth, and cultivation of herbaceous ornamentals, a broad class of plants consisting mainly of annual and perennial flowers. The 52 people who attended the program will now take the information they learned and apply it to their own home situations and/or put their new found knowledge to use in the community. Several examples of comments made on the program evaluation are presented below:

- “I will start to incorporate in my garden the many new varieties of flowers discussed.”
- “The new natural methods of disease control are just what I was looking for.”
- “Very informative. Now if only I can retain half of the information.”
- “Great information about the types of container garden design and the ingredients to put in containers.”
- “Gained a lot of knowledge about weeds that I can pass along to our clients.”



Well Water Sampling Program – Diana Hammer Tscheschlok

In November, UW-Extension organized a well water sampling program in collaboration with the Rising Sun Grange and the Towns of Springvale, Waupun, and Chester (Dodge County). About 85 samples were returned, with 27 coming from Springvale and 41 from Waupun. 68 people attended an educational event with Groundwater Specialist Kevin Masarik on December 11th to receive their sampling results and learn what they mean. Most results were typical for this region of the state.

- 20% of samples came back positive for coliform bacteria, but no E. Coli was detected in any well. Coliform bacteria occur naturally in the soil and when found in well water can indicate a structural problem such as a loose well cap or cracked casing.
- 13% of wells sampled had elevated nitrate levels, but only one well exceeded the safe drinking water standard for nitrates. Agricultural fertilizers, lawn fertilizers, leaky septic systems, and/or animal waste all release nitrogen into the soil. High nitrates in water occur when nitrogen is released in larger concentrations than the soil and plants can use.
- Evidence of Triazine, an ingredient in a commonly used corn herbicide, was detected in only two wells at very low levels. This is good news!
- Arsenic was detected in 65% of the 60 wells that sampled for it. However, only five wells exceeded the safe drinking water standard. Arsenic occurs naturally when two specific layers of bedrock meet. When arsenic is exposed to air through well drilling or lowering of the water table, it is released into the water. People who detected small amounts of arsenic in their water should monitor this in coming years since the levels can increase over time. Every well should be sampled at least once for arsenic.

Remember, it is important to sample your well water at least for bacteria once every 15 months. Contact the UW-Extension office for more specific information about the water in your township, how you can sample your water, and how to arrange a water sampling event in your area.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES



Reducing Negative Impacts of Divorce on Kids – Nan Baumgartner

Research tells us that it is not the divorce or separation per se that determines a child's adjustment. Instead, a child's ability to adjust successfully has more to do with being able to maintain a close, personal and supportive relationship with both parents and having parents who can cooperate with one another in a non-conflictual way. Each month, Fond du Lac County Family Court Services and UW-Extension help approximately 30 separated and divorcing parents understand the changes that affect them and their children when going through the divorce process.

We teach co-parenting skills so parents can begin to renew and strengthen their parenting skills separately, yet in harmony, for the best outcome for their children. The greater the level of cooperation between parents, the better the adjustment for children and the fewer long-term problems. In end of session evaluations, parents attending the co-parenting program indicate they will use cooperative skills that are taught in class, such as “I” messages, not talking negatively about the other parent to the child, and helping the child to have a close relationship with the other parent.

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