

Fond du Lac County Master Gardener Volunteers 2007 report

As part of our Gardening for All Ages, junior master gardeners were recruited from the local Boys & Girls club. Meetings were held at the UW center on various educational projects. A total of 58 kids were involved at various seminars/projects during the summer.

Free Spirit Sensory Garden is located east of Fdl on Highway 23. Free SPIRIT Riders, Inc. provides therapy to disabled children and adults by having them ride horses with the assistance of horse handlers. The indoor arena allows for a controlled environment and gives riders comfort. An outdoor garden area was developed in 2002 with the assistance of Wisconsin Department of Corrections minimum-security inmates. Every Wednesday throughout the spring and summer 7 to 10 individual's plant, water, weed, maintain, and improve the annual flower gardens, trees, shrubs and perennials. A gazebo with seating allows individuals a rest area beside a small stream and pond area. Water plants such as lilies provide visual interest. The garden provides disabled persons and their family's areas to stimulate each of the senses including touch, taste, smell, sound, sight, and humor. A butterfly area is located on the west end and a bird sanctuary is found on the east side. The Fdl master gardeners fund an annual budget of over \$1000. The free spirit garden won a county beautification award in 2004. For more information go to www.FreeSpiritRiders.org

Day in the Garden was a cooperative venture with Calumet County this year. Members from both groups contributed to the success of this year's seminar. Speakers for the day were: Jim Beard with the topic Landscape Design, Betty Adelman talked about Heirloom Plants, Jackie Johnson & Cindy Hermsen discussed Herbs 101, and Barbara Adrewjeski discussed Orchids made easy. The 88 participants also enjoyed a buffet lunch include with the seminar fee.

Members assisted with Prairie Fest held on July 28 at the UW Fdl Campus. Erika Jensen and Connie Ramthum gave tours of the prairie. Our MG members gave an educational seminar on constructing rain gardens. Displays, musical performances, vendors, along with kite flying and concession stands provide good entertainment for those attending. An estimated 220 people enjoyed the exhibits. Fdl MG provides an annual donation of \$1000 to continue the development and maintenance of the UW campus prairie.

Fond du Lac community gardens were established in 2000 and are coordinated by Patty Percy. Several members assist with set up and clean up of the over 6 ½ acres used by over 100 families. Rent for plots varies by size; a 20X20 plot is \$15.00 for the season. A 20X40 plot costs \$20.00. Various groups within the community use the plots for education and therapy. Hmong families depend on the garden to grow ethnic produce and sell at local farmers markets as well as food to eat. During the clean up on October master gardeners and Jr. Master gardeners harvested over 550 lbs of produce that was given to the local food pantry. The master gardeners assist first time gardeners with questions and how to do it demonstrations. A demonstration plot is also available to provide information about vegetables.

Our annual plant sale included both annuals and perennials this year. It was held on May 26th at the UW Fdl campus in the art building. This is our major fundraiser and this year we achieved an all time net sales of \$4649.00.

There are 74 active volunteers in our association, including 45 recertified for 2007, and many additional people who work with us and take educational training from other counties. We had 41 WIMGA members this year.

In 2006-07 we documented the following: 217 hours in youth education, 129 hours in community education, 3463 hours in support services, 1511 hours of continuing education.

Our County Extension maintains a MG website and we produce and mail a member newsletter along with additional information about training in January. Our local representative and committee/project chairpersons send monthly emails. Face to face meetings are held six times a year and feature a guest speaker on a current topic. Patty Percy assisted by other volunteers and guests coordinates a weekly public radio1 call in program during the winter months. Call in assistance on gardening and plant questions is provided to the UW Extension office each summer. Volunteers contribute 2 hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays during June – August to handle phone calls or help walk in gardeners with questions.

Educational tours are arranged for members each year. This year on June 13, we had 42 people go to Foxfire Gardens in Marshfield and Lensmires Village garden in Plover.

Several Fond du Lac County MG members attending the Annual WIMGA conference held at Eau Claire in October. Our local representative attended the State board meeting.

Submitted by
Lyle Mercer, Local Representative
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