



Rock County
2007

Master Gardener Volunteer Program

and the reporting summary of the
Rock Prairie Master Gardener Association

General Master Gardener Training: The University of Wisconsin-Extension first implemented the Master Gardener Program in Wisconsin in 1980. The purpose of the program is to have trained volunteers assist county UW-Extension horticultural staff reach out to a greater number of people who are interested in, or have questions about, gardening. With the aid of trained volunteer staff this reaches more individuals than Extension staff can provide alone.

The Master Gardener Volunteer Program is open to any resident of Wisconsin 18 years or older (Illinois residents are permitted). Potential Master Gardener Volunteers should be interested in horticulture (but a formal degree is not necessary), willing to help people with their horticultural concerns, dependable, unbiased and open-minded, and be willing to provide volunteer service to their community. Although the program is statewide, some counties may choose not to offer the program.

In Rock County, Master Gardener training has been in place since the mid-1990's. Since 2003, local Master Gardener training has consisted of 60 hours of classroom instruction by University personnel including Extension Specialists from the Departments of Horticulture, Plant Pathology and Entomology, horticulture educators, Extension agents and other qualified professionals. Certification is achieved when participants successfully pass the final exam addressing information delivered in class as well as volunteering a minimum of 24-hours of garden-related service to the community.

Individuals who continue in the program from one year to the next must complete 10 hours of continuing education each year along with the volunteer component.

Annual report summary of activity of the Rock Prairie MG Association.

	# in program	Hours of community service	Hours of community education	Hours of youth education	Total hours	Continuing education
2007	138	7235.0	463.0	1213.5	8911.0	1959.0
2006	130	5674.0	786.0	756.5	7216.5	1663.0
2005	121	3300.0	293.0	60.5	3653.5	1562.5
2004	99	3365.0	117.0	27.0	3509.0	1008.0

The volunteerism and continuing education requirement are key aspects of the Master Gardener program which sets it apart from being a "garden club." MGVs must complete a minimum of 10 hours continuing education each year as well as volunteer a minimum of 24-hours.

Volunteerism: Rotary Botanical Gardens is the primary recipient of the volunteer service by the Master Gardener Volunteers (49% of total 2007 hours). With a wide array of plant materials and maintenance needs, RBG offers many opportunities for individuals to take part. For two seasons, the Rock Prairie Association has been responsible for the Sunday watering of the containers on the grounds. This has proven to be a valuable resource to RBG as it reduces the need for paid staff on the grounds for that day.

	# MGVs at RBG	% of volunteer base at RBG	# hrs at RBG	% hrs of RBG total
2006-2007	103	37%	4400	41%*
2005-2006	NA	NA	3713	31%

*information is based on data collected by RBG.

Additional recipients of MGv service:

Rotary Botanical Gardens	Welty Environmental Center	Angel Museum, Beloit
Rock Haven	Rock County Sherriff's Dept. Garden	Rock Co. Farm
Rock Co. 4-H Fair Grounds	Pelishek Trail-Hood Park	Delavan Arboretum
Parker High School Community Garden	Wisconsin Tree City USA Celebration	Rock Trail Coalition
Shilberg Park, Milton	Traxler Park, Janesville	Janesville Farm Market
Cargill United Methodist	Head Start, Beloit	Edgerton Garden Walk
Janesville Home Garden Tour	Hanchlett/Bartlett Historical Homestead	Renaissance Fair, Janesville
Merrill Park, Beloit	WPT Garden Expo	More...

Interesting notes:

- o The association averaged 64.5 hours of volunteer service per member in 2007
 - o55.5 hours per member in 2006
 - o30 hours per member in 2005
- o 51% of MG volunteer service is in the community at-large.
- o 49% of MG volunteer service is at Rotary Botanical Gardens.
 - o 1/3 of RBG's volunteer base in 2007 was Master Gardeners
 - o 40% of RBG's recorded hours in 2007 was from Master Gardeners
 - o 9 out of 10 participants come to the program with no prior volunteer experience at RBG.

2007 Rock Prairie Master Gardener Association Executive Committee

Julie Gibes, President	Karen Bernard Secretary	Jody Moy Vice-President
Peggy Kleinhans Treasurer		Debs Grams WIMGA Representative

Impact and Comments

"... From the landscaping and plant information classes, I learned some techniques that I will apply to the redevelopment of a border in my large back yard. I have always been a bit shy about tackling a mixed bed of shrubs and perennials, and let my husband do this, but the class has given me the tools to get involved in this type of gardening.

I have always tried to garden "organically" in my veg beds. But sometimes the pests get out of hand and I believe I then over use pesticides. I was introduced to Integrated Pest Management in the course and it will now be my plan to deal with pests. I can still do "organic," but if organic fails, the IPM approach will better control the amount and type of pesticides I use." – MGV Carol C.

"...Prior to being involved in MG I had never heard the term IPM. The one aspect of IPM that has caused me to rethink my practices is the use of chemicals. An example-I have never overused chemicals. But as a result of participating in MG training I find that I am asking myself if chemical treatment or the timing of it is justified given the circumstances at the time. In the past I have probably over sprayed tea roses to prevent or control disease. This past summer I found myself spending more time inspecting and spraying at the first signs of problems vs. spraying as a preventative measure. At the end of the season our roses are still pretty healthy following a more judicious use of chemicals throughout the summer.

I am amazed at how other individuals have asked for gardening and landscape advice upon learning that I have been involved in the MG program. While I am sometimes surprised at how much I am able to share with them, I am also frustrated at how limited my knowledge is in many areas. But participating in the MG program has been extremely beneficial in learning where and how to find information and has provided a framework, including community service, to network with other gardeners, both novice and professional, to expand my own knowledge and share with others. MG is an excellent program. It takes time and commitment. But the return is worth every bit of investment." –MGV Art H.

"On a personal level, I've felt I could tackle relandscaping my yard now that I have a better overall knowledge of plants and planting. I no longer feel shy when entering a greenhouse/nursery or when casually conversing with others about plants. Mike[Horticulture Educator] has a wonderful way of assuring the MG interns that the goal isn't to become experts but to learn enough to gain confidence in asking questions. That philosophy allows the interns to remove the pressure from themselves so that they can get the most out of the program. It's a good reminder for the veteran MGs also.

On the community level, in a nutshell it's expanded my vision. I entered the MG program after meeting Mike. He was essential in helping me start a community garden in a low-income neighborhood. Had I not entered the program, taken the classes, networked, and made the connections that I made, the vision for the garden would've remained small for a longer period of time. Instead, the garden has almost tripled, over 2 dozen local businesses, groups, and individuals outside of the neighborhood have supported the garden, and I'm preparing for creating a non-profit." – MGV Anna K.

"... I have a whole new outlook when it comes to plant varieties and how they will fit into my landscape plans. I am constantly researching new varieties to fit into our landscape.... I am excited to see the results of 'correct pruning ' of my trees and shrubs in our landscape plan. Prior to the MG class I was pruning everything incorrectly thus I have shrubs that are woody and odd shaped. I also learned how to properly plant trees and shrubs, which I wish I would have know several years ago... My renewed enthusiasm has led me to start a significant landscaping project in my backyard. We have removed the scrub trees and are in the process of putting in two rock walls/flower beds and a pond with a waterfall. We will be planting many new trees and shrubs as well as lots of perennials. I have taken additional classes to learn about water plants, pond management, and selection and care of fish... Through my volunteer work at Rotary Gardens I have also gained much knowledge and insight and a keen interest in plants, planting, compost, mulch, and the importance of adequate watering. I have also learned a lot about turf management. I have canceled my [lawn care provider service] contract and am now doing my own management program. I had my soil tested and am now aware of the correct type/amount of fertilizer to apply to my lawn....I have made many new friends with similar interests through my volunteer work at the Gardens." –MGV Gene B.

"Taking your Master Gardener class was very fulfilling for me. I've loved to garden all my life, and signed up for this class to learn as much as I could about everything gardening. You more than filled my expectations in not only WHAT you taught us, but HOW you taught us. Your humorous, down-to-earth presentations made for a great learning situation. You taught me so many things, not the least being how important it is to amend my garden soil - something I haven't done to the extent that I now realize I need to for optimum results. You even made learning Botany interesting! For the most part, I thought your guest speakers did a great job, and I have learned so much. I'm still learning, as a result of speaking with you and so many great gardeners that I met in our class, and at volunteer opportunities. As a volunteer at Rotary Gardens and the Angel Museum, I realize even more how important these volunteer hours are to our communities.

Thanks for the great year, and I look forward to coming to some of the classes this coming year." –MGV Mary Z.

(below, left) Master Gardeners visit an area orchard;
(right) visitors to Rotary Botanical Gardens line up to taste the heirloom tomatoes and peppers MGVs help grow in 2007.

