



Rock County  
2008

# 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
2008	151	7052.0	959.0	671.0	<b>8682.0</b>	2076.0
2007	138	7235.0	463.0	1213.5	<b>8911.0</b>	1959.0
2006	130	5674.0	786.0	756.5	<b>7216.5</b>	1663.0
2005	121	3300.0	293.0	60.5	<b>3653.5</b>	1562.5
2004	99	3365.0	117.0	27.0	<b>3509.0</b>	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.

Recipients of MGV service:

Rotary Botanical Gardens	Welty Environmental Center	Angel Museum, Beloit
Rock Haven	Rock County Sheriff'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...

**2008 Rock Prairie Master Gardener Association Executive Committee**

Jody Moy President	Bev Drew Secretary	Laurie Matelli Vice-President
Peggy Kleinhans Treasurer		Debs Grams WIMGA Representative

## 2008 Iron Gardener Challenge



The Iron Gardener Challenge (IGC) was created by members of the RPMGA as a way to broaden their MGCV related experiences. The guidelines of the challenge were to encourage MGCVs to volunteer outside their comfort zone, experience diversity, and help a part of the community that may be unfamiliar to them. Modeled on the grueling competition of the Iron Man triathlon, the IGC required each individual to set personal goals and measure their accomplishment at the end of the year. Success or failure was determined by the individual—several judged themselves as not meeting their predetermined goals.

The IGC required the participant to engage in a variety of roles:

- **Leadership.** MGCVs are expected to be community leaders.
- **Community Service.** MGCVs play an important role in the betterment of the places we live.
- **Community Education.** MGCVs are key in the distribution of unbiased, researched based information to the community.
- **Youth Education.** Youth are engaged by MGCVs in garden- or environmentally-themed activities.
- **MGCV-hosted Special Events.** MGCVs host several programs for community impact.
- **Other.** We recognize that MGCVs have a variety of interests. To recognize the diversity in the association, a maximum of 6 hours of non-gardening activities can be applied to the Iron Gardener Challenge.

The IGC was issued to members of the RPMGA in the early spring of 2008. Six members successfully completed the challenge. As part of the IGC requirement, a reflective summary was submitted.

- "I wanted to step out of my comfort zone."
- "I was nervous at first. I learned that by taking an interest in those around who were in need of help, I quickly forgot about being nervous. These projects aren't about me, they are about helping and teaching others."
- "... working with the kids wasn't bad."
- "... public speaking— NERVOUS!"
- "At first, hesitant. Then I thought, why not?!"
- "This a good way to challenge yourself and explore different aspects of being a MGCV."
- "... an attempt to find harmonization between work and personal life, technical and artistic expression, self fulfillment and community participation."

The MGCV program prides itself on its community service and continuing education. It is stressed repeatedly that the MGCV program is "more than a gardening club." The IGC proves this point. Not only is it to be a conduit for expanded volunteerism, but, more importantly, it proves to be a self-directed challenge that allowed for personal growth and development, expressing a different role of the MGCV program may play in members' lives.

