



MAMGA Newsletter

April 2021



Paul Pienkowski demonstrates the setup for filtering the syrup that is close to being finished by the wood-fired evaporator.

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The President's Column Ed Meachen

"April is the cruelest month, breeding Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing Memory and desire, stirring Dull roots with spring rain. Winter kept us warm, covering Earth in forgetful snow." T.S. Eliot, ***The Wasteland***

So here we are beginning the "cruellest" month. The snow has finally melted and everything looks naked and dull, even amidst the emerging crocuses, daffodils and a few ephemerals. So many things low to the ground in their tiny microclimates are born again. "Winter kept us warm" Eliot wrote, I think referring to the "us" as all the plants that were covered by the foot of snow in February. Will we have less plant death this year, I hope, because the forgetful snow did cover "us" and kept us warm.

But April is an exciting month. I love the cleanup in the spring. I usually leave up the dead perennials for the birds, mice, and rabbits over winter, but cleaning everything up clears nature's palette for painting again in May. There are so many things to see in April after one of those wonderful five-day warming streaks. I go out and look carefully nearly every day for the emergent peony heads. And of course, the rhubarb is always breaking through in April. Still there are marvelous things happening, the most beautiful is the stonecrop pictured below. I wish you all well as Covid winds down and we get back together again.



MAMGA Events

>April 6 Tuesday Green Thumb Tuesday via Zoom 12:30 to 2pm

This month's topic is seed starting—indoors and outdoors. If you haven't joined the group before, email tipandskip1@gmail.com to receive an invitation. There will be a Zoom poll of five questions for participants. Topic: Green Thumb Tuesdays Time: Apr 6, 2021 12:30 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

>April 17 Saturday Avoiding Garden Mistakes by Mark Dwyer via Zoom from 9 to 10:30am. Save yourself time, money and frustration by learning what not to do in your garden. Mark Dwyer has been the horticultural director at Janesville's Rotary Gardens and now has his own business, Landscape Prescriptions by MD. Register at [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com) and receive a link on Friday, the day before.

>MAMGA Board Meeting via Zoom May 10 Monday 4 – 6pm Contact Ed Meachen willismeachen@gmail.com to be included.

>Dane County Master Gardener Plant Sale, Sunday May 23rd

Good news from Karen Allenstein: The Wisconsin Master Gardener Program Director, Mike Maddox, recently announced that MGVs will be able to hold plant sales in 2021. Mark your calendars for the Master Gardener Plant Sale on Sunday, May 23rd from 11 am to 3 pm at the Dane County Extension office parking lot at 5201 Fen Oak Drive. The sale will include hundreds of perennials for shade or sun. **Note:** this year we will not be offering vegetable & herb starts, or annual flowers. Proceeds are used to support the Teaching Garden. Due to COVID, we will be making some changes to the plant sale format. We will not be advertising to the general public. Our invitations will go to MGVs, garden clubs, plant societies, Extension office staff, past plant sale customers and those who follow us on Facebook. MGVs are welcome to extend invitations to their friends and family. Only adults may attend. We will be following UW Extension program COVID guidelines which include:

- All attendees and volunteers working the sale must wear masks and socially distance
- Plant varieties will be placed in rows 6 feet apart, and customers will be asked to move through the sale area in one direction
- Attendees who wish to use our wagons or carts to carry their plants must use disposable gloves (provided on-site)
- Attendees will be required to provide their name and phone number to facilitate contact tracing should it become necessary
- Restroom access will not be available
- If you are experiencing any COVID symptoms or have been in contact with anyone with COVID 14 days prior to the sale, you should not attend
- If you are at high risk or if you live or work with anyone who is at high risk you should not attend

Find Plant Sale updates on www.facebook.com/uwexteachinggarden/, including any changes to the Plant Sale format due to the pandemic. Information on our COVID will be posted on the Teaching Garden web page <https://dane.extension.wisc.edu/horticulture/teaching-garden/>, in addition to a listing of plant varieties for sale (available by mid-May).

Jumping worms continue to be a concern for gardeners, and we want to assure you that we are taking several steps to protect plants that are dug up and donated for our plant sale. We hope you will consider donating plants, or hosting a “dig”. Email Karen Allenstein kallenstein@charter.net for more information on how to contribute plants, including our plant dig protocols and list of desirable and undesirable plants. We are estimating that we will need at over 1000 plants in order to meet our revenue goal.

Other areas for supporting the plant sale include: participating in plant digs, potting and labeling plants, setting up for the sale, working the sale, etc.

If you are interested in helping out, please email Karen Allenstein and she will forward you an e-mail invitation from www.signup.com. Thanks for all your support!

Continuing Education Opportunities

from Lisa Johnson: A colleague in Rock County is offering these, they sound like some great topics. Remember that no volunteering is required in 2021, but you still need 10 hours of continuing education to certify. Stay safe!

April is Citizen Science Month! Learn how to monitor for new insect pests from the Wisconsin Detector Network at [this website](#). Register for sessions on April 14 and 28 from 6 to 7pm on Zoom.

>Pollinator Gardens: Plant Selection and Garden Care, by Susan Carpenter Tuesday, April 6 6:30-7:30 p.m. (CST)

Learn how to select and care for plants to attract and support diverse pollinators in your garden all season long. This presentation will emphasize native plants and pollinators and will include sustainable gardening practices.

This is a free event, but registration is required. Please use the following link to register: <https://go.wisc.edu/842s07> Once registered, a connection link to the webinar will be sent the *day before the event*.

Presented by Susan Carpenter who is the native plant gardener at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Arboretum. She works with students and community volunteers to manage and monitor a 4-acre garden representing southern Wisconsin plant communities. She also promotes pollinator and bumblebee conservation through outreach, monitoring, and encouraging students and the public to document native bumblebees through the WDNR

Bumble Bee Brigade. Hosted by UW-Madison, Division of Extension, Rock and Walworth Counties, in partnership with local, regional and statewide organizations. Questions can be directed to Julie Hill, julie.hill@wisc.edu

>Jumping Worms: The Impacts of a New Soil Invader
Wednesday, April 21 12:00-1:00 p.m. (CST)

Note: The Arboretum has received a grant to conduct a survey of public observations of jumping worms. See [this announcement](#) for details.

Earthworms are found in a variety of habitats, from our backyard gardens to native forests. However, a new group of non-native, invasive earthworms collectively referred to as jumping worms, are moving into Wisconsin with potentially destructive consequences. We will discuss the impact of jumping worms in gardens, the latest research on their ecology and biology, how to tell them apart from other species of earthworms and what we can do to slow their spread. This event is free, but registration is required. Contact julie.hill@wisc.edu for information on registration.

>Testing, Amending, and Managing Gardens for Soil Health
Tuesday, May 18 6:00-7:00 p.m. (CST)

Join Dr. Doug Soldat from the Department of Soil Science at UW-Madison to learn how you can create and maintain healthy soil in your landscape and gardens. You will learn how to conduct a soil test and interpret the results. We will also discuss various amendments to improve your soils for greater gardening success! This event is free, but registration is required. Please use the following link to register: <https://go.wisc.edu/461n76>
Hosted by Julie Hill, UW-Madison Division of Extension Horticulture Outreach Specialist for Rock and Walworth counties. Questions about this event can be directed to Julie at julie.hill@wisc.edu

What did I miss? Maple Syrup Making Program by Percy Mather

MAMGA's first "in person" program took place on March 24, the rain date that lived up to its label. We visited two very different maple syrup operations. The basic constraint is that maple sap contains a very low concentration of sugar, from 2 to 4%. A lot of water needs to be removed before the final product is created. Paul and Deb Pienkowski have a hobby operation involving boiling nearly 60 gallons of sap over a wood fire and propane stoves to collect a gallon of delicious maple syrup. Paul demonstrated how to drill into maple trees to divert the sap into collection bags which are then emptied into buckets, then kept in a

convenient snowbank until enough sap is collected to process a batch. The syrup needs to be watched carefully, especially as it nears its final sugar concentration.

The second operation, Open Kettle Farms in Cross Plains, collects sap from 700 maple trees in plastic tubing which relies on gravity flow to a processing shed. There a combination of high tech reverse osmosis unit (shown below) and an open simmering kettle (on page 8) remove much of the water in the sap using much less energy than if only heat were used. The resulting syrup contains more maple flavor than methods that rely solely on boiling off the water.

Many thanks to our two hosts for this interesting program. Photos by Percy Mather.



Project

Opportunity

MAMGA received the following request for help. If you are interested, please respond directly to the contact listed.

My wife and I just built our first home. We are looking for a landscaping plan for around the perimeter of the house to include flowers, plants and bushes in a number of beds. Our house is just south of Mt. Horeb, WI which is about 15 miles from the west side of Madison. If this project is of interest to you, feel free to contact me.

Thank you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Greg (608) 513-3786 Gmill172@yahoo.com

MAMGA Board Minutes Draft

6 - 8:00 March 9, 2021

Zoom

(EIN 39-1694554)

Board Members Present: Karen Allenstein, Mary Collet, Art De Smet, B'Ann Gabelt, Judi Janowski, Sally Kefer, Percy Mather, Ed Meachen, Victoria Robertson, Dennis Tande, Dana Warren

Also Present: Barbara Strand, MAMGA member

● **Review of January minutes** Moved by Victoria Robertson and seconded by Sally Kefer. Approved.

● **Welcome** Ed welcomed our new Board member Karen Allenstein and guest Barbara Strand.

● **Election of Officers** The slate of officers Ed Meachen - President, Judi Janowski -VP, Art De Smet- Treasurer, Dennis Tande - Secretary, B'Ann Gabelt - Representative at Large and WIMGA Representative. Dana Warren moved for approval of the slate, seconded by Victoria Robertson and approved.

● **Community Grants** Sally reviewed the 2020 and 2021 grants. There are two outstanding 2020 grants. Sally will continue to track their progress and check on reports. There were requests for additional funds from 2021 applicants. There is currently \$3,000 in the budget for the grants, with a recommended limit of \$500 per grant. The Grant Committee is meeting 3/15 to review requests. The committee will need to decide to spend remaining money on current projects or reach out to other community groups such as the Food Pantry Network. Karen will join the group to help with marketing and community outreach. Judi will get information on Forward Gardens, which is part of Madison Area Pantry Gardens.

● **Treasurer's Report** Art highlighted two items, increase in donations and increase in number of membership renewals. He will check on the Acorn Fund, recommended by Sally. It is part of the Madison Community Foundation

● **Membership** Four people have passed the exam and became MG. Because of no in-person class time, there is a predicted significant decrease in membership. Karen will send emails to all members of the 2020 class and include information about MAMGA. A variety of ideas were suggested to increase awareness of MAMGA, including media coverage and information available from the UW Extension. Two social events are being planned, one this fall and one in the spring of 2022.

Ed asked about recognition of member service, which in the past has been an etched vase. He will poll board members about possibilities, including the vase, gift certificates or donations.

● **Annual Meeting** Ed has received lots of positive feedback, including the schedule and guest speaker. Special thanks to Art and planning participants for the organization and attention to details.

● **Signature Project** Percy updated progress as well as plans for the summer of 2021. We received a grant from Dane County Environmental Council for \$756, with which we will purchase plants. MAMGA agreed to match and is now responsible for \$100. Maps of the area and plans for planting, seeding, burning and new gardens were presented. We will be working with Dane County Parks staff and continue with the 1st and 3rd

Fridays of the month from 9:00-12:00, probably starting April 16. In addition to hands-on work, MG volunteers will help direct DCP work group volunteers.

●**Succession Strategy** Jane LaFlash, in charge of membership record keeping, is retiring. Karen volunteered to take over the role and will work with Jane and Janie Starzewski. Ed will do the introductions. In addition, the key roles of treasurer and newsletter editor/web master were identified as critical. Ed tracked board membership and found that the average term is 5 years.

●**MOU** There was continued discussion of the affects of UW Extension and MOU on our organization. We expect to hear from Mike Maddox in April with specific directions. Karen will investigate other 503 (c)(3) organizations in the state. We have finished the 5th year of Footsteps to Our Future strategic plan. While a new strategic plan was not recommended, we will need to decide the future of MAMGA. This will also depend on the constraints from the UW Extension.

●**Meeting Date** The regular board meetings will be held the **second Monday of the month** (May 10, July 12, September 13, November 8) **starting at 4:00.**

The meeting will be virtual until further notice.

●**Scholarship** Lisa requested a \$100 scholarship for an interested student. Ed will check with Lisa for additional information regarding the student, financial need and volunteer interests.

●**Meeting Adjourned**

The open kettle with simmering syrup

