

ADDRESSING THE MONTHLY HAPPENINGS OF THE MADISON AREA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION & DANE CO. UW EXTENSION HORTICULTURE PROGRAM

MARCH 2014



Quote of the Month

***"Gardening uses flowers as paint
and the soil and sky as canvas."***

Anonymous

The President's Message

from Catherine Murray

Greetings!

As I write this, we are between the Garden Expo and the Annual Membership meeting – two events designed to offer inspiration and education to help us dream up beautiful garden plans while waiting for the spring thaw. One of the seminars that I attended at the Expo reminded me that success is often achieved by identifying the right plant for the right place.



UW
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DANE COUNTY

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As an analogy, in 2013, the MAMGA Board worked on identifying the right plant (or the right focus) for the right place (this place in our history). One of the decisions made was to suspend the production of the Wisconsin Garden Journal. On the website, you will find information from the focus group who met to discuss what the journal meant to and for the organization and options to consider for the future.

Other feedback received this past year suggests MAMGA should focus increased energy on supporting its members. Without the income from the journal, it was decided that we should also suspend the Community Grants program and spend time assessing whether those grants, in current or a modified form, are a priority for MAMGA.

How else we can best meet the needs of MAMGA members needs further exploration and input from you. As you make your plans for 2014, consider including volunteering for MAMGA. There are many options for projects or committee assignments available for those of you who want to take part in planning future endeavors of the organization.

2014 promises to be an exciting time for MAMGA as we continue to work together to strengthen and grow our organization.

"I love spring anywhere, but if I could choose I would always greet it in a garden." ~Ruth Stout

Happy (soon to be) Spring!

Catherine

The Extension Express

From Joe Muellenberg
Dane County UW-EX Horticulture Program
Coordinator



With all the polar vortexes, arctic blasts, and a frozen groundhog, we have every reason to forget that the garden season is just around the corner! It's time to get your grow lights fired up, plan your garden, and be ready for a long, warm growing season.

I'd like to take a moment to introduce you to a new project to promote gardening in Wisconsin schools. A local non-profit,

Forms

[2013-14 MGVS Hours Reporting Form](#)

[2014 MAMGA Membership Form](#)

[2014 Volunteer Interest Form](#)

Calendar of Events

~local events of interest~

For reporting purposes:
Items in green count as CE credits for re-certifying MGVS.

Items in red count as a MAMGA event.

March 6

"Queen of the Sun"

Free film and discussion

See "Events" for more info

March 8

MAMGA Annual Meeting

Candlewood Suites, Fitchburg

[More Info](#)

March 10

1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Seed packing, McFarland Library

See "Volunteer Opportunities" for more information.

March 13

1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Purge and repot office plants
Set up light tables

Dane Co., Extension building

See "Volunteer Opportunities" for more information.

March 29

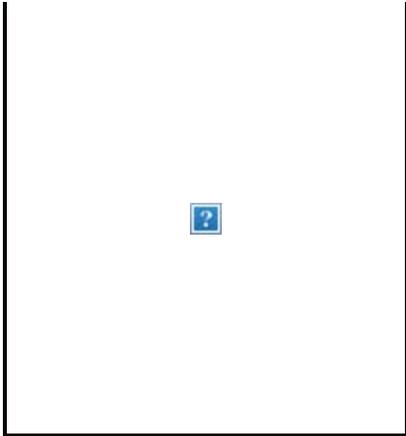
Annual Pruning Workshop

5201 Oak Fen, Madison

[More Info](#)

[More Wisconsin Events](#)

Also see "Events" column

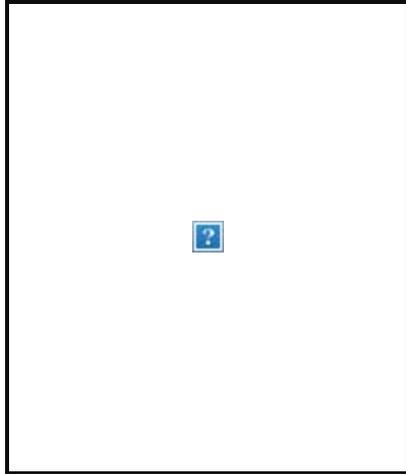


[Community Groundworks](#), is leading the Wisconsin School Garden Initiative to improve child health outcomes through youth gardening and garden-based education. At the

end of the three year project, the initiative intends to launch an ongoing Wisconsin School Garden Network (WSGN) that will continue to promote youth gardening throughout Wisconsin.

Here is a sampling of what work Community Groundworks is doing to promote gardening in Wisconsin schools:

- Free trainings for garden educators and teachers.
- Technical support for new and existing youth gardens.
- Contribute to the evidence that school gardens and nutrition education have positive effects on child health outcomes.
- Creating and coordinating a network of Wisconsin school gardens.
- A free monthly newsletter. [Click here to sign up!](#)



2015 MEMBERSHIP CARDS

We have received some questions about 2015 membership cards from members who took advantage of the option to pay their 2015 membership dues with their 2014 dues. The 2015 membership cards will be issued later in 2014 or early 2015. Our vendor discounts are updated each fall for the following year, and there always are a few changes. The 2015 membership cards will list the updated 2015 vendor discounts on the back.

Contact Info



MAMGA

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MISSION

Dedicated gardeners promoting responsible gardening through education, volunteer service, and fellowship.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Catherine Murray, President
Cheri Schweitzer, President-elect

Mary Burke, Secretary
Cathy Cryor Burgweger, Treasurer

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MAMGA is a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization.



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Thank you!

Many thanks go to Ann Munson, Lori Nelsen, Mary Beth Plane, Marilyn Sallee, Rosanne Horne, Sandy Klabunde, Nancy Jacobson, Suzy Bowditch, Susie Herlache, Holly Walker, Margaret Hanson, Carole Blemker, Emily Embury, Nancy Gustaf, Mary Young, Betty Lou Knight and Sandy Aebly for work at the Extension office; Janie Starzewski, Jackie Winchester, Lisa Mlinar and Peg Schumann for newsletter work. We couldn't do it without you!



Green Thumb Tuesday

~~a get together for MGVs~~

Tuesday, March 4, 2014
5pm - 8pm

Viet Bistro
656 West Washington Avenue
(corner of Regent and W. Washington)
features Vietnamese and Chinese cuisine (stir fry)



Topic: "Seed Starting - from the mundane to the exotic"

What's the strangest or most exciting seed you've started?

Host: Percy Mather
608-233-1955; percy.mather@gmail.com

Events of Interest in 2014

Mark your 2014 calendars for the following out-of-Madison events:

RBG Spring Symposium 2014
March 22, 2014



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WI Master Gardener website:
<http://wimastergardener.org>

MG Program Office Blog
<http://fyi.uwex.edu/wimastergardener/>

INCLEMENT WEATHER ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR MAMGA EVENTS

Please note that event cancellations or other inclement weather announcements for MAMGA events will be posted on our [website](#).

Did you miss a past e-newsletter?

If you didn't receive one of our past e-newsletters, be sure to look in your "spam" or "junk" folder. Some email applications mistakenly place emails in these folders.

Theme: Gardening for Good
Times: 9:00am-3:30pm (check-in begins at 8:15am)
Price: \$55 RBG Friends Members/\$65 General Public

Optional boxed lunch with drink (soda or water) and sweet treat, \$11 (see options on the attached PDF). For those who choose to remain at RBG during the lunch hour, Hort. Director Mark Dwyer will be talking about our Gardens in 2014—color themes, special gardens, etc. Bridget's Family Bakery will also be on hand to sell her delicious baked breakfast goods and more. Coffee, tea and juice will be provided.

Speakers:

- Eliza Fournier, Manager of School & Community Gardening from the Chicago Botanic Garden.
Topic: Urban Agriculture – Growing More Than Plants (will speak about gardening for the good of our bodies and for the community).
- Barb Kreski, Director of Horticultural Therapy Services at Chicago Botanic Garden.
Topic: Gardening as We Grow Older (extending our own gardening season, if you will).
- Cindy Peterson-Berlovitz, Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist from Minnesota Landscape Arboretum and Abbott Northwestern Hospital.
Topic: Gardening for the Good of All (will speak on what current research says about nature promoting healing both at home and in the clinical setting; and practicing mindfulness in nature to “recharge one’s batteries” on a regular basis).

As always, there will be a silent auction, a raffle, some goodies and some surprises...but that's not all! Don't forget that Master Gardener Volunteers from both IL and WI can claim education hours for attending these programs.

Online registration coming soon to <http://rotarybotanicalgardens.org>. Please feel free to contact [Kris Koch](#) (click on her underlined name) or call 608-752-3885 ext 17 with any additional questions.

Garden Expectations State Conference
March 28 & 29, 2014

Join us at the beautiful Radisson Paper Valley Hotel and Conference Center in downtown Appleton on March 28 and 29, 2014 for the [Garden Expectations Annual WIMGA Conference](#). Each year, the Outagamie County Master Gardeners Association hosts a Garden Expectations Conference and, in 2014, will combine the event with the annual Wisconsin Master Gardeners Conference. The 2-day event will be jam-packed with wonderful speakers on a wide variety of topics, and you'll have the opportunity to visit with vendors introducing some interesting and exciting products. While this event is organized by the Wisconsin Master Gardeners for its members, it is open to the public!

If you use Gmail's new design, you may have noticed that your emails are now being sorted into three tabs — Primary, Social, and Promotions. If you'd rather see the emails we send end up in your Primary tab, it's simple to tell Gmail where these emails should go. Simply drag and drop this email into your Primary tab and click “yes” when Gmail asks if you'd like future messages from this email address to go to your Primary tab.

Garden Getaway: Garden Art & the Art of Gardening

by Shake Rag Alley Center for the Arts

March 29–30, Mineral Point

<http://mineralpoint.com/art-in-mineral-point/shake-rag-center-for-arts>

All About Herbs Lecture Series - 2014

Sponsored by the Herb Society of America –

Wisconsin Unit AND Ozaukee Master Gardeners

Dates: March 13, April 10, May 1. [View schedule and event details.](#)

Upper Midwest MG Conference

June 25-28, 2014

You won't want to miss the Upper Midwest Master Gardener Conference June 25-28, 2014 in Bettendorf, Iowa. Keynote and featured speakers are already lined up for the conference. Scott Ogden and Lauren Springer-Ogden, authors of Plant-Driven Design and Passionate Gardening will both be speaking at the conference. Felder Rushing, author of Garden Hearts, Bottle Trees, and Slow Gardening is another of the keynote speakers. Melinda Myers, contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine and author of more than 20 garden books will be a featured speaker. Check out the [conference website](#). Registration will begin in early 2014. You can also Like the [Facebook page](#) for the conference to follow developments.



Volunteer Opportunities

- Purge and Repot: March 13, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. Lisa can use some help with 2 tasks: an indoor plant purge and repotting session and setting up seed light tables at the Dane County UW-EXT office, 5201 Fen Oak Circle, Madison.
- Library seed packing: March 10, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Seed packing event at the McFarland Library. Register by calling 838-9030.

- AGRACE HOSPICECARE NEEDS
GARDENER: Help 2-3 hours per week from mid-April through November. Job Description: Agrace gardeners are responsible for maintaining the 8 acres of developed gardens which surround our facility. Duties include: planting, watering, mulching, deadheading, pruning, cutting back perennials, edging beds, sweeping patios and lots of weeding. Location: AGRACE HospiceCare, 5395 E. Cheryl Parkway, Madison, WI 53711. Contact: Cassie Deacon, (608) 327-7163, cassie.deacon@agrace.or
- MIDDLETON OUTREACH MINISTRY (MOM) FOOD PANTRY GARDEN: The MOM garden consists of 25 20' x 20' garden plots that are made available to clients of the food pantry. Mentors are needed to assist gardeners with limited garden experience from planting through harvest.

The mentor's duties are as follows:

This spring will be the 4th year for our garden. Each family generally harvests between 200 and 300 pounds of fresh produce that goes directly to their dinner table. The reward for participating in this project is knowing that you have helped provide fresh produce for families who do not have access to an adequate and healthy food supply.

Contact Dan and Mary Johnson at 608-836-1638 or email maedouuro@live.com

- Meet with garden manager to discuss in detail MOM food pantry garden protocols and policies.
 - Initial meeting with client to discuss expectations and responsibilities.
 - Help client decide on what vegetables to plant.
 - Assist with planting.
 - Meet, when necessary, with client to weed, mulch, trellis, harvest, etc.
 - Time commitment will vary with skill level of gardener but 2-4 hours a month would be a reasonable estimate.
 - The garden is located near the corner of Evergreen and Pleasant View Roads, near the Middleton Hockey Rink & UW Provisions.
- BELLEVILLE PHYSICIAN RESIDENT SEEKING HELP OF MGVS: I am a family medicine resident at the UW Belleville Family Medicine Clinic (between Belleville and New Glarus). As part of our residency, we work on a community health project, and for mine, I am exploring sustainably expanding our small clinic garden (currently, two small raised beds) and using this as a visible (and edible) centerpiece to encourage children and parents to incorporate more fresh

vegetables and fruits into children's diets during well-child visits. I found your name on the Dane County Master Gardener website, and thought I would get in touch with you to see if you thought any of your students or alums might be interested in helping to plan such a garden, given I have some, but limited, experience in gardening, and would really appreciate expertise from your group. I am only in the beginning stages of planning, but thought I would get in touch with you early to see if collaborating might be an option. Contact Dr. Aistis.Tumas by clicking the following link: aistis.tumas@fammed.wisc.edu.

Ask a Master Gardener (AAMG)



If you would like to be part of the MGV Team that staffs the Ask A Master Gardener (AAMG) booth at local farmer's markets, read on.

How it works: AAMG volunteers should have completed the Core Course and filed volunteer and continuing education hours to maintain certification under UW guidelines. MGs can also volunteer if they are working with Extension to get recertified. The Plant Health Advisor class is good preparation, but not a requirement. Current students are encouraged to sign up, to observe and get comfortable with the Q&A format. Two MGs and one student are scheduled at each Market date.

Ask A Master Gardener (AAMG) Training: The single, 2-hour orientation class for first-timers and returning AAMG volunteers is offered twice to accommodate busy schedules. [Watch for training class schedule coming this spring.](#)

For more information, contact Lisa Johnson, Extension Horticulture Educator (johnson.lisa@countyofdane.com) or Rosanne Horne, AAMG Coordinator (rosannemh@gmail.com).

Teaching Garden Work Days



Come back here in April for 2014 schedule.

As always, don't forget to record your Volunteer hours so you can report them in October.



Continuing Education Opportunities

FREE FILM: "Queen of the Sun: What Are the Bees Telling Us?" is a profound, alternative look at the global bee crisis from Taggart Siegel, director of "The Real Dirt on Farmer John." Taking us on a journey through the catastrophic disappearance of bees and the mysterious world of the beehive, this engaging and ultimately uplifting film weaves an unusual and dramatic story of the heartfelt struggles of beekeepers, scientists and philosophers from around the world including Michael Pollan, Gunther Hauk and Vandana Shiva. Together they reveal both the problems and the solutions in renewing a culture in balance with nature.

Come join us for this free film screening and discussion.

Refreshments provided!

When: Thursday, March 6, 6:30 PM

Where: Fitchburg Public Library, Fitchburg, WI 53711

Questions? Email walker.evans@fitchburgwi.gov, or call 608-729-1763.

Pruning Workshop

Saturday, March 29

8:30 a.m. to 12:30 pm

Dane County UW Extension Office

5201 Fen Oak Drive

Join Dane County UW Extension Horticulture Educator Lisa Johnson and members of the Dane County Tree Board for a tree and shrub pruning workshop at the Dane County UW Extension Office on Saturday, March 29, 2014.

There will be an indoor program, then an outside demonstration and hands-on pruning session on shrubs and trees. Wear your woolies & bring pruning shears or loppers if possible.

Please pre-register with Lisa; only 25 spaces are available. Program cost: \$12. Earn four hours of continuing education credits by attending.



Garden Reflections

by Joan Fitzgerald, MGV, PHA



As I write this column I can hear the wind howling around my house. There's been a lot of that this winter and even though it's only February 21, it sure feels like March outside. From the weather report I heard today I think it's safe to say that March will come in like a lion.

I've been thinking a lot about my flower beds the last few weeks. I am longing to get out and put my hands in the ground but I know that won't be happening for several more weeks. I did get my first taste of spring at the Garden Expo a couple of weeks ago. I saw many smiling faces as people perused early spring plants, garden art and tools, and many other warm weather niceties. I bought three pieces of yard art this year; an orb to hang in a tree, a plant chair and a fairy

house on a stake. I love my yard art!

I imagine many of you are preparing to plant seeds. I'm not a seed planter; I don't have the patience to nurse seeds to life. I like going to area greenhouses to select my plants. I visit several greenhouses because over the years I've discovered that for me, some of my favorite plants come from specific greenhouses. I usually go with friends and we often come home with a car full of plants. I've gotten smarter over the years and tend to plant as I go. I've found it much easier to do that than to have 12-15 plants waiting for a new home in the ground or in containers.

Enjoy March as it's the gardener's last chance to get non-gardening projects completed before the rush of spring planting begins in earnest.

Think spring!!

Plant of the Month

-- Caladium --

from Jackie Winchester, MGV

Caladiums are tuberous-rooted tropical perennials grown for their colorful foliage with leaves that are variegated in white or shades of red and pink. They originate from the woodland edges in tropical South America. They are very popular as container plants and as bedding plants. The green flowers and white berries are secondary to the interestingly mottled leaves, often with prominent veining.



The leaf shape is oval or like an arrowhead. There are many hybrids available that offer a variety of leaf colors and patterns. Tall varieties such as white 'Candidum' and pink 'Carolyn Whorton' put on a

beautiful show, but since each tuber has only one to three active buds, the leaf count is low. Lance-leaved types, including 'Rosalie' and 'White Wing', produce many more leaves from multiple buds, but the leaves are thinner and not as long.

Caladiums grow in moist, well-drained, organically rich, slightly acidic soil in part to full shade. A shady location in the garden is a perfect spot for caladiums and they are wonderful companions in beds with ferns or coleus or in pots to accent shady spots. In warm, humid climates of zones 8 and 9, caladium tubers can be planted into the ground in spring. In our area, get a head start on growing time by potting up in the spring providing warm temperature inside and transplanting potted plants. Caladiums are primarily all leaves so they thrive

on regular fertilizer. Use a balanced soluble fertilizer such as 10-10-10 twice a month to keep plenty of new leaves coming.

To overwinter caladium tubers, dig out the bulbs, shake off the soil, dry out completely, and place in an old hosiery or a mesh bag and store above 60 degrees F.

They will be ready to replant the following spring. Plant in the spring and grow with high humidity and temperatures from 55° to 70°F. Planting three tubers in a 6-inch pot and sinking the pot up to their rim in the bed can make watering and fertilizing easier.



The pot will collect and hold water, protect them from thirsty tree roots, and make it easy to lift and collect the tubers in fall.

Common problems include tuber rot, Southern blight, leaf spots, and root-knot nematodes. Aphids and spider mites can become problems in the greenhouse.

Gardening Tip



Turn a long-handled tool into a measuring stick! Lay a long-handled garden tool on the ground, and next to it place a tape measure. Using a permanent marker, write inch and foot marks on the handle. When you need to space plants a certain distance apart (from just an inch to several feet) you'll already have a measuring device in your hand.

5 Common Mistakes of Seed Starting

Many people share with me how much they like starting seeds for their garden, but then state that they aren't very good at it. After teaching seed starting classes for several years I realized there were a few common mistakes that lots of people were making. Remember: a healthy and vigorous seedling is going to fare the trials and tribulations of the garden much better than one that is struggling before it even gets into the ground.

#1 – Don't start your seeds in cheap potting soil. They will yellow and become unhealthy before you get them in the ground. At the very least buy a high quality potting soil and

mix in worm castings or compost for extra nutrients. I buy seed starting mix from a local farm.

#2 – Stop trying to grow seedlings in front of your window. Vegetable plants need overhead light. Invest in a seed rack with lights.

#3 – Let your seedlings dry out a bit between waterings. Most people overwater their seedlings. This can cause damping off, which is when the seedling stem rots where it meets the soil surface. Many growers let the plants dry out about 85% before watering again. (This is after they germinate. Seeds waiting to germinate need to remain moist until they pop through the soil.)

#4 – Keep your lights within one inch of the tops of the plants. Most people put their lights too high and the seedlings get leggy (tall and stretched out). You want stout plants with strong stems.

#5 – Keep records so you don't have to waste time next year. Who wants to sit around trying to rack their brain to remember how many pepper seedlings they started last year? Grab a piece of paper and keep it next to your seed starting supplies. Each time you plant seeds write the date, variety and how many you started.

The Creative Vegetable Gardener
576 Troy Drive
Madison, WI 53704



From the Bookshelf

Gardening Basics for Dummies

Publication Date: February 23,
2011

You're now officially out of excuses for not planting the garden of your dreams. Even if you've never sowed a seed nor pulled a weed, *Gardening Basics For Dummies* contains everything you need to know about flowers, beds, borders, trees, shrubs, and lawns to create your own private



paradise. This friendly and informative guide also covers all of the tools and additives available to make gardening easier.

You'll discover:

- Clear definitions and descriptions of the different types of plants
- Tips on choosing the type of garden you want
- How to create a garden plan
- Easy-to-follow instructions for soil preparation
- Advice on planting, growing and caring for annuals and perennials
- Step-by-step plans for organic and edible gardens
- Plans for butterfly and children's gardens

Packed with helpful tips on controlling pests safely, managing weeds, and correcting common gardening problems, *Gardening for Dummies* turns your brown thumb green in a hurry.

Snippets . . .

2014 HOSTA OF THE YEAR: American Hosta Growers Association has recently chosen its 2014 Hosta of the Year. With the increasing number of hosta cultivars being introduced each year it is increasingly difficult for nursery owners and gardeners to choose just the right hostas for their sales areas and gardens. To this end the American Hosta Growers Association established the AHGA Hosta of the Year in 1996. It is selected by a vote of AHGA members. Award winners are hostas that are good garden plants in all a regions of the country, are widely available and in sufficient supply and retail for about \$15.00 in the year of selection.



2014 Hosta of the Year
'Abiqua Drinking Gourd'
(Walden West 1989)

Size - Medium (22"ht x 46"w)

Habit - Mounding

Bloom - White

Parent - 'Tokudama' x sieboldiana

Dark blue-green seersucker leaves with heavy substance. Probably the most deeply cupped foliage of any hosta cultivar makes for a distinct and unique specimen. Near white flowers in mid-summer.

Source: February 10, 2014 Wisconsin Ornamentals Newsletter

HERBS FOR TEA: Here is a list of favorite herbs for tea. You can plant these in a garden bed, perhaps shaped like a tea pot or teacup. Or you could plant them in containers. All of the following are tasty, however if I could only have a few, I'd choose the lemon herbs and the mints.

Lemon Herbs

Lemon basil and Cinnamon basil (*Ocimum basilicum* spp.)
Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)
Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*)
Chamomile, German (*Matricaria recutita*) and
Roman (*Chamaemelum nobile*)
Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*)
Lemongrass (*Cymbopogon citratus*)
Lemon thyme (*Thymus X citriodorus*)
Lemon verbena (*Aloysia citriodora*)

Mints (*Mentha* spp.)

Orange mint (*Mentha aquatica*)
Peppermint (*Mentha X piperita* 'Mitcham')
Red mint or Doublemint (*Mentha X gracilis* 'Madalene Hill')
Spearmint (*Mentha spicata* 'Kentucky Colonel')

Others

Pineapple sage (*Salvia elegans*)
Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis* spp.)
Sage (*Salvia officinalis* spp.)
Scented geranium (*Pelargonium* spp.)
Stevia (*Stevia rebaudiana*)

Source: Susan Belsinger for Fine Gardening Newsletter
1/27/14

NEW PERENNIALS FOR 2014: It's never too early to start thinking about your garden — especially when it comes to shopping for new plants! Keep your eyes out for these 3 beautiful perennials at your local garden center this year.



Balmy Purple bee balm (*Monarda didyma* 'Balbalmurp')

What we love: Deer- and mildew-resistant with a very compact habit, Balmy Purple is low-maintenance at the front of any border — just deadhead spent flowers to keep it looking its best.

Type: Perennial

Blooms: Rich purple from late spring

Light: Full sun

Soil: Well-drained

Size: 10 to 12 in. tall, 8 to 10 in. wide

Cold-hardy: USDA zones 4 to 9

Heat-tolerant AHS: zones 9 to 1

Introducer: Darwin Perennials



'Mulberry Flambé' Mojave sage (*Salvia pachyphylla*)

What we love: Performing best in Western gardens, 'Mulberry Flambé' will take dry, hot summer weather in stride once established. And even when its hummingbird-favorite blooms are finished, silver evergreen foliage adds interest.

Type: Perennial

Blooms: Purple bracts with blue flowers in summer

Light: Full sun

Soil: Dry, well-drained

Size: 18 in. tall, 18 to 24 in. wide

Cold-hardy: USDA zones 5 to 8

Heat-tolerant AHS: zones 8 to 1

Introducer: High Country Gardens

Source: High Country Gardens



New Vintage Whiteyarrow (*Achillea millefolium* 'Balvinwite')

What we love: This new series features a tidier shape and improved reblooming — perfect for containers. In addition to unique White, three other nonfading colors (Red, Violet and Rose) are also available.

Type: Perennial

Blooms: Clusters of white flowers in late spring

Light: Full sun

Soil: Well-drained

Size: 12 to 14 in. tall, 10 to 12 in. wide

Cold-hardy USDA: zones 4 to 9

Heat-tolerant AHS: zones 9 to 1

Introducer: Darwin Perennials

Source: *GardenGateNotes.com*, February 18, 2014



Master Gardener Volunteer Profile

-- Mary Pelzer --

by Lisa Mlinar, MGV

An old joke: "Why are chemists so great at solving problems?"

“ Because they have all the solutions.” While this month’s Master Gardener, retired chemist Mary Pelzer, may not actually have all the solutions, there is no doubt that she is not afraid to tackle problems, enjoys experimenting, and never seems to be out of her element.



Mary comes from a line of serious yet diverse gardeners. Her grandmother built an absolutely fabulous rock garden. At the family home in Florida, her mother was a year-round gardener, mainly growing ornamentals. The roses, papayas, and other flowers were so beautiful that the garden was the setting for

many a Homecoming photo for local students. While in college, Mary grew succulents. She graduated to other plants once she had a house, which came with its own huge vegetable garden. She was able to manage this for a while, but gradually switched it over to flowers and perennials. She found it was cheaper and easier to buy her produce from the Farmer’s Market. Now that she has more free time, she is changing it up once again as she learns more about permaculture and how to incorporate it into her landscape.

Mary became a Master Gardener in 2011, shortly after retiring from Covance. Ever the scholar, she had already met all the Continuing Education requirements by January 2012. After attending one of Brian Hudelson’s seminars, she asked if she could work in his lab: the Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic on the UW-Madison campus. She spent one day a week learning how to diagnose.

While some diseases are fairly simple, others require more investigation, such as differentiating a bacterial wilt from a fungus. After a visual inspection with the naked eye, dissecting scope or higher power microscope, most specimens are put in a moist chamber, which can be as simple as wrapping it in a moist paper towel and sealing it in a plastic bag to induce spore generation. Another visual inspection occurs once sporulation occurs.

Some specimens are sampled then grown on several different types of agar. Sometimes visual inspection of the pattern on the agar plates is sufficient for identification, but a dissecting scope may be needed. After putting the specimen on a slide, the spores are viewed under 200x magnification.

Under the microscope, spores take on a whole new dimension, with some surprising and unexpectedly beautiful appearances. They can resemble peas in a pod, whorls, or

shimmering crystals, to name but a few. The shapes can be unique enough to serve as the diagnostic identifier, and Brian Hudelson has plenty of mnemonics. For example, Dutch elm disease fruiting bodies are known as “the lollipops of death.” Further identification methods for viruses include dipping a chemical strip in a mashed-up specimen, and comparing its pattern to the patterns produced by known pathogens. There is even DNA testing if necessary.

The lab gets hundreds and hundreds of samples each year from all over the state. Mary added to that, bringing in specimens from her own yard, all as part of the learning process, of course. (She discovered the buckthorn close by had rust.) One of the more interesting and challenging aspects is that the same disease can present itself differently depending on where it is on the plant, and may even have a different name depending on what fruiting body occurs or whether it is an asexual or sexual spore. Overall, Mary found it was a fascinating experience and terrific opportunity to advance her Master Gardener knowledge. It was also a great way to learn what questions to ask in order to solve the problems presented to a Plant Health Advisor.

With spores on her mind and a yard turning to shade, Mary’s thoughts turned to mushrooms. She had always loved them, and one of the highlights of spending six months in China was seeing and trying some of the many different varieties grown there, including King oyster, shiitake, jelly fungus, and wood ear fungus. Local vendors always had plenty of mushrooms and vegetables for sale, but she needed to rely on a Chinese colleague for guidance because many had no American translation.

Closer to home, she harvests some indigenous varieties each year, including morels and puffballs, being careful to eat only the mushrooms she can positively identify. The Wine Caps have a sinister look-alike, looking somewhat like the Death Cap and other poisonous Amanitas. Careful inspection of the gills, annular ring, cap color, and spore patterns helps differentiate them.

She puts mushrooms in just about everything - from eggs to stir fry to “anything with gravy.” (So far, desserts are an exception, but to go with dessert, tea can be brewed from woody Shiitake stems.) When ground up, mushrooms add flavor to the dish without the texture that some find unpleasant. With such a taste and a passion for them, it was time to try growing mushrooms herself, and she has been doing so for the past three years.

She gets her supplies from Field & Forest Products, located in Peshtigo, WI. One of the simplest year-round methods is to grow them on toilet paper rolls. The toilet paper is saturated with boiling water and the paper core removed. Mushroom spores (oysters work well) are poured into the core, and the roll placed in the supplied air bag, left in the dark for three

weeks, then moved into light. The mushrooms grow directly on the paper, using the cellulose as their substrate.

She had no luck the first year she tried growing them outdoors. She had inoculated oak logs with Shiitake. Last year she used wood chips from the city, successfully growing Wine Cap *Stropharia*. As long as there is substrate available, the mushrooms will keep on coming, and Mary prefers to grow them outdoors. She says they are drier and meatier with a wilder, gamier taste.

Besides using fresh logs for growing mushrooms, she has several other interests involving trees. *Hügelkultur*, a German word that roughly translates to “mound culture”, is a lasagna-gardening growing method using raised beds, but with a core of buried wood: rotting or fresh, diseased or healthy. Other organic material is placed on top and provides the surface for planting. As the logs, trees, and branches at the core slowly decay, they provide an on-going source of nutrients, heat, and moisture. Not all trees are good candidates for filling the core, and Mary is learning more about what works best.

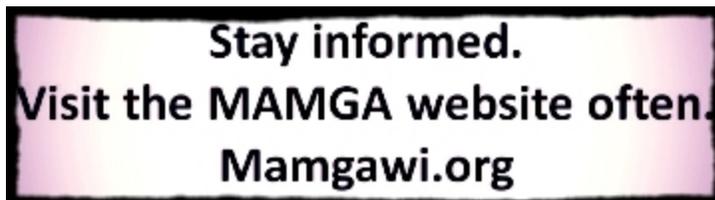
With the arrival of the emerald ash borer, the city and home owners have already begun to cut down trees, and the wood could and should be put to the best possible use. That is one of the goals of the Urban Tree Alliance, where Mary sits on the Board. The non-profit also aims to preserve and grow the urban canopy, raise awareness, and promote responsible management of trees, from planting through utilization. Mary also will take training as an Ash Ambassador to disseminate information about the emerald ash borer.

Although trees and mushrooms rank high on her list, her role as a Plant Health advisor rekindled her interest in vegetable gardening. She recently added raised beds to make room for even more. Her current organic garden has plenty of heirloom varieties (she finds they have more flavor), including tomatoes, peppers, kale, beets, bok choy, parsnips, spinach, onions, eggplant, and shallots. Her proudest achievement recently was a single Brandywine tomato plant that produced around 150 pounds of tomatoes. The fruit came in late, and she was still harvesting into early November. Some tomatoes were still green when picked, but they ripened up nicely and lasted into January. She also has a kitchen garden right outside her door where she can watch all the bees and wasps. Pest-control includes neem oil, capsaicin, or baking soda, and spunbond polyester barriers.

When it comes to flowers, she buys her roses based on fragrance and looks for unusual varieties in other plants. Her garden has shrub roses, salvia, iris, and alliums; but she gave up on tulips, losing a battle with the deer. Her yard changes color with the season. Springtime it is bursting with pinks, whites and purple. Summer is heavy on the gold and orange, and autumn finds it purple once again.

Her daily walk takes her through the Troy Gardens natural area, where she has long been a volunteer and steward. The Sol Levin Memorial trail winds around and through woodlands, community gardens, a prairie, greenhouse, and a Hmong medicinal herb garden. Fruit and nut trees, berries and herbs are there for the picking and tasting. Mary has helped clear and weed, prune and plant, and even burn the prairie. She also helped plan and participated in a wildly successful Halloween event at the gardens, an effort intended to gain recognition for the site. A dozen trick-or-treat stations were set up with costumed volunteers handing out candy. The decorations included corn shocks, pumpkins, and Chinese lanterns from the CSA that is also located there. Visitors used a map and flashlights to navigate their way through. They expected 50-60 people, but nearly 200 attended! She is hoping it becomes an annual event.

Maybe it's because she's a chemist, and maybe not; but either way, Mary has found the formula that makes her a satisfied and successful Master Gardener: she continues to grow her skills while being able to provide solutions to others.



Current Accomplishment Report Summary

The following is an excerpt from the Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association (WIMGA) 2013 Annual Accomplishment Report for Madison Area Master Gardeners (MAMGA). For the entire 64 page report as a PDF click [here](#).

Madison Area Master Gardeners

There are over 350 members in our association with 220 certified for 2014.

Over 85 students participated in Level 1 training in 2013.

In 2013 we volunteered 449 hours in youth education

1,361 hours in community education

11,613 hours in support service

and participated in 3,398 hours in continuing education

The Madison Area Master Gardeners Association (MAMGA) is a large organization with many diverse projects and activities overseen by an 11 member board of directors that meets every other month at the Dane Co. UW-Extension Office in

Major Accomplishments or Projects:

1. MAMGA partners with the Dane Co. UW-Extension office to produce a monthly e-newsletter packed with timely and interesting information about gardening happenings, events, horticultural information and more. MAMGA's website (www.mamgawi.us) also supports member communication. A website team works on improving content and functionality.

2. An excellent crowd attended our annual meeting in March 2013 that featured guest speaker Diane Ott Whealy, co-founder of Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa. The response to her presentation inspired Lisa Johnson, Dane County UW-Extension Horticulture Educator, to hire a bus to take 30 enthusiastic MGVs to Decorah to tour the Seed Savers Exchange gardens and shops in August.

3. The following local gardens important for their educational and inspirational value each were awarded a \$500 "Partner Grant": Allen Centennial Garden, Dane Co. UW-Extension Teaching Garden, Olbrich Botanical Gardens, University Display Gardens at the West Madison Agricultural Research Station, and the UW Arboretum Native Plant Demonstration Garden.

4. MAMGA also awards grants annually, through a competitive application process, to either individuals or organizations to support gardening projects in the Madison area. The involvement of an MGV in the project is mandatory. A team of MAMGA board members review and score each application, and visit each of the winning grant applicant projects at the end of each project. This year \$4,978 was distributed among 5 successful grant applicants.

5. We partnered with the Hardy Plant Society for garden tours in Madison and Oregon. MAMGA members joined Allen Centennial Garden Director Ed Lyon for a tour of the University gardens.

6. Over 25 MGVs trained as Plant Health Advisors (PHA) spend many hours Monday - Friday mornings at the Dane Co. UW-Extension office answering gardening questions from telephone calls, e-mails and visitors to the building. PHAs work in tandem with MGV interns to provide additional educational and hands-on experiences for the new students.

Highlighted Project: Ask a Master Gardener

"Ask a Master Gardener", started in 2012, features information tables at Farmer's Markets in Madison and nearby areas to provide research-based gardening and horticultural support, educational resources, and information about the MG program to market goers throughout the season. The project

expanded in 2013 to over 12 Farmer's Markets in both urban and rural parts of Dane Co. and provided information to 672 people versus 195 people the previous year. "Ask a Master Gardener" information tables were also staffed at the Olbrich Home Garden Tour in July and at the West Madison Agricultural Research Station Field Day in August, as well as at garden events by Community Action Coalition and Habitat for Humanity.



What's the Difference Between MAMGA, WIMGA & Certified Master Gardener Volunteers?

MAMGA, the Madison Area Master Gardeners Association, is a local non-profit organization of persons who have completed the basic Master Gardener training course, or are current students. MAMGA members may or may not also be currently certified Master Gardener Volunteers. MAMGA exists to provide education, service, and fellowship opportunities for its members. Membership costs \$15 per year. MAMGA members receive discounts at many local nurseries, participate in educational programs and garden tours throughout the year, and are invited to social events.

WIMGA, the Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association, is a state-wide non-profit organization of persons who have completed the basic Master Gardener course, or are current students. Most MAMGA members also choose to join WIMGA, but doing so is not required. WIMGA membership costs \$5 per year. WIMGA members receive periodic newsletters and other informational communications from the state master gardener office. WIMGA also hosts a statewide master gardener conference each year.

Certified Master Gardener Volunteers have completed the basic Master Gardener training course and have satisfied annual volunteer service and continuing education requirements. Most Certified Master Gardener Volunteers choose to join MAMGA and/or WIMGA, but are not required to do so. There is no cost to be certified as a Master Gardener Volunteer. Certified Master Gardener Volunteers assist gardeners through the local UW-Extension Office by serving as plant health advisors, answering hotline calls, tending the Teaching Garden, and performing various other activities that support the UW-Extension Horticulture Program and reach out

into the community. Certified Master Gardener Volunteers also perform lots of other gardening outreach and service at places like University Display Gardens, Allen Centennial Garden, Olbrich Gardens, the UW Arboretum, churches, community gardens, and many other venues.



University of Wisconsin-Extension, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties cooperating. UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA.

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