

MAMGA Newsletter

March 2022



Photo by Percy Mather

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President's Message

by Ed Meachen

I think most of us have gotten used to Zoom meetings, and many of us (and I mean me!) are yearning for face-to-face meetings. We unanimously approved a bylaw change that gives us the flexibility to have our annual membership meeting in April. And we have a venue for a more traditional annual meeting on April 22, 2023. This gives us the opportunity to invite master gardeners who successfully on boarded between January 1st and March 31st 2023.

We also elected three new board members at the meeting: Eugenia Beecher, Barbara Park

and Carol Troyer-Shank. I believe we have really great new members. As usual, I was amazed at what the community gardens do with the grant money we award them. The Marlborough Community Garden and the Sun Prairie Community Garden both invested in compost, but their efforts caused me to think maybe we should be providing even more funding for these fantastic gardens. I'm glad Percy Mather could show the great progress her volunteers have accomplished for the MAMGA signature project. 6 years, and counting.

I found Reba Luiken's walk through the history of the Chicago Botanical Society very compelling. But then, I'm a big fan of the history of gardening. You might recall the speaker some years ago discussing pioneer gardens at Old World Wisconsin. And I am very appreciative of Lisa Johnson's question and answer portion of the meeting, addressing our concerns about onboarding new and volunteering.

We will be sending out a survey to all the registrants asking for their thoughts on the Zoom annual meeting. That should be coming out in mid-month. We would appreciate knowing how we could improve the next Zoom meeting (if we are required to have another Zoom meeting!)

Finally, I want to thank the crew that made this year's membership meeting run smoothly. Thank you to Em Meier, to Janie Starzewski, to Dennis Tande, Judi Janowski, and especially to Art De Smet, who kept us on task with his marvelous stage directions.

Congratulations to re-elected Board members Dennis Tande, Judi Janowski and Ed Meachen. Congratulations & welcome to three new Board members Barbara Park, Carol Troyer-Schank and Eugenia Beecher.

Calendar Events

Green Thumb Tuesday returns to face-to-face format 12:30 on Tuesday March 1st at Monona Garden restaurant, 6501 Bridge Road.

March 4 Due date for MAMGA Community Grants MAMGA members can sponsor a grant request for an eligible site such as a community, school or public garden project. See the MAMGA [website for details](#). This is a wonderful opportunity to help a worthy project. The application is short and straightforward.

March 21 Monday 4 – 6pm MAMGA Board meets via Zoom

March 26 Saturday 1:30 – 2:30pm The Art of Espalier - John Holzwart explains this practice of shaping the growth of woody plants at 4785 Toepfer Road in Middleton. Limited to 20 members. Watch for an email about registration.

April 5 Tuesday 12:30 – 2pm Green Thumb Tuesday

Employment and volunteer opportunities are listed on the MAMGA website under [Resources](#). MAMGA lists that information as a courtesy to our local organizations, businesses & employers.

The Waisman Center is looking for volunteers to maintain an outdoor play area used by

children with diverse developmental needs. See [the MAMGA website](#) for more information.

Help MAMGA's Signature Project by Donating Plants

You can help green up Dane County by donating plants through the Plant Dane Native Plant Program which is set up to help a variety of projects including MAMGA's signature project.

MAMGA is beginning its sixth year of volunteering at the Lussier Family Heritage Center. We hope to get 100 plants donated at \$10 for 4 plants. It's easy to donate. Go to [this website](#) then click on the tab that says "Donate Plants" located just below the Plant Dane logo. You will see a listing of project locations that are requesting donations. Click on the DONATE link and select Lussier Family Heritage Center from the pull down menu. Click the green "Add Donation" button and enter the amount you'd like to donate in \$10 increments. Pay for the plants online with a credit card and you're done! You don't do any planting. Dane County will notify MAMGA of the donations and the plants will be ordered and picked up by MAMGA volunteers on May 21.

Work at the Lussier grounds will begin on April 1 starting at 9am, weather permitting. Email percymather@gmail.com to be notified of the final schedule.

Looking for some help completing the new requirements for MGVs? Carol Troyer-Shank has generously offered to help others walk through the process. Contact her at ctshank2gm@gmail.com to get started. The Online Reporting System is being updated and should be up and running in early March. If you have logged in before, you can add your total 2021 volunteer hours as a one-time addition if you haven't already done so. You'll need to complete the On Boarding process prior to volunteering as an MGV and counting those hours. Remember that certification is not required to be a member of MAMGA. We just need to be patient as the new system is set up.

Meet Your Fellow Master Gardener:

Bob Lasseter

by Mary Collet

Bob Lasseter is enthralled by the aesthetics of gardening. His interest in design was sparked and honed by growing up in a design environment—his father was an interior designer—and he studied architecture modeled on the Bauhaus School of Design. One of the most important things he learned is that there are many solutions to problems, which has stood him in good stead in gardening.

Bob finds designing with plants more difficult than designing with wood, for example, because of their free forms and lack of constraints. In gardening, he imposes constraints by limiting the number of species and concentrating on texture. He is less concerned with color since colors change throughout the growing season.

Three years ago, Bob took on a sizeable experiment: converting the grassy median strip near the Dane County UW Extension building into a perennial garden. The 10- by 15-foot strip abuts two streets, so one constraint was plant height. Another was low maintenance. The project began by laying down cardboard to get rid of the grass. As the cardboard disintegrated, it served to keep the weeds down. Bob's [plan for the median strip](#) is highly

detailed and includes the location of each plant, species, height, and color.

When asked what prompted him to become a gardener, Bob said that it was practicality. When he lived on a highly wooded property, he was faced with two choices: to grow grass or perennials. He chose the latter and planted a shade garden. He found that the soil was as important as the sun. He became aware of microenvironments and discovered, by trial and error, which plants were suited to different areas. His aim was a self-sustaining garden. At his current residence in a co-housing community, Bob is involved with planting a prairie garden near the railroad tracks alongside the property to “soften” and beautify the area. He seeded the garden with a prairie mix. For weed control, the garden is mowed with a high blade (around 8 inches high). He finds that this method is better than pulling the weeds, which disturbs the plants.

Bob took master gardener training five years ago and has found it very useful, providing resources for information. He doesn't “see himself” as a master gardener, but I beg to differ. Bob has transformed neglected land into havens of beauty and nourishment for bees, butterflies, and people.

Photo by Mary Collet





Plant photos by Bob Lasseter

