



MAMGA November 2023 Newsletter

Organic 'Opal' Apples grown in Italy's Valsugana plateau Photo by Lisa Seidman

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President's Column by Ed Meachen

October was a productive month. One third of our members renewed their membership for 2024. Thank you! Thank you! We hope those who haven't yet renewed do so before the end of the year.

The board's executive committee decided to explore having a MAMGA booth at Garden Expo next February. The full board gave its approval. We contacted the Garden Expo staff and discovered that MAMGA had a booth for many years until at least 2011. Garden Expo staff were delighted to have the Dane County master gardener's association return again in 2024. We encourage master gardeners to continue to provide staffing for Extension's booth as they have in the past, but the association now needs volunteers, as well, for the MAMGA booth. PBS offers free 3 day passes to non-profits for up to 20 volunteers to staff our booth. We will need 14 volunteers (2 volunteers for each of the 7 timeslots over the three days, February 9, 10 and 11). MAMGA will pay parking fees.

We will use our booth to tell the story of MAMGA, encourage people to become master gardeners, invite school and community gardens to apply for MAMGA gardening grants, and promote our signature project at Dane County's Lake Farm Park. The booth will give us the opportunity to introduce ourselves to the general public and to promote gardening and volunteerism.

In the next few months we'll be reaching out to members for their help. Mark your calendars for February, 9th, 10th and 11th. It will be fun and exciting!

Calendar of Events

November 7, 12:30 – 2pm Green Thumb Tuesday at the Breakwater Restaurant, 6308 Inland Way in Monona just off Broadway. No need to sign up, just stop by.

December 5, 12:30 – 2pm Green Thumb Tuesday at the Breakwater Restaurant, 6308 Inland Way in Monona just off Broadway. No need to sign up, just stop by.

January 2, 12:30 – 2pm Green Thumb Tuesday at the Breakwater Restaurant, 6308 Inland Way in Monona just off Broadway. No need to sign up, just stop by.

January 16, 2024 WIMGA Annual Meeting WIMGA members will receive information through the monthly WIMGA newsletter.

Important information for maintaining certification:

2023 Deadline for Reporting Hours Extended to January 8th.

Our reporting year will stay the same, January 1 - December 31. However, we know everyone is busy during the holiday season. Therefore, you will have until midnight January 8, 2024 to enter your hours for 2023. On January 9, 2024 the ORS will no longer accept hours for 2023. Please enter your hours early.

- You must submit organizations by December 22, 2023! If you want to report hours towards an organization not already listed in the ORS, you must submit it for review and publishing in the ORS. Please plan accordingly. *Deadline is only for 2023 reporting.*
- Holiday hours: There will be no technical help from the program office outside normal business hours of M-F, 9:00am to 4:00pm and it will be reduced between December 22 and January 2. Response times will be longer. Thank you for your understanding.
- Self-service options: Automatic password resets and username retrieval will be functioning.
- Did you complete 2022 Onboarding-Lite? If you completed Onboarding-Lite in 2022, you do not need to do it again in 2023.

You can watch the presented by PJ Liesch for our last program on October 19 at this location: https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/t/1_50shdqj. The program is available for viewing from October 23 through November 30.

Trip to Northern Italy by Percy Mather

I spent the first 3 weeks of October in Italy on a trip that included visits to several farms that produced olive oil, wine and fruit. We traveled in northeastern Italy, roughly between Milan and Venice, an area that includes a portion of the Alps called the Dolomites. What is striking about the landscape is how much effort is needed to utilize all the arable land for growing crops. Steep hillsides produce hay for small dairy herds.

Incredibly steep hillsides were carefully terraced and planted in grapes where the microclimate would support them. Some areas were too steep to use any tractors, so harvesting is done by hand with the collected grapes hauled in baskets, sometimes pulled uphill on metal tracks and pulleys to reach carts and tractors that travel on narrow roads. Vineyards and orchards use concrete poles and wires as supports for grapes and apples. More farms are switching to organic production because of consumer willingness to pay a higher price.

The trees in apple orchards are planted close together and kept short to allow easy access for harvesting. I was interested in the varieties being grown—some were familiar names such as Pink Lady and Yellow Delicious. Two that were new to me were Opal and Florita—both delicious and flavorful. The Opal variety has a thicker skin to resist insects so it is always peeled before being eaten. Americans value crispness but Europeans opt for flavor and a softer pulp texture, so Honey Crisp is not widely grown in Europe. I tried my first fresh jujube fruit. I'd only had the dried fruits called Chinese dates. The fresh fruits are the size of a large olive and sweet and crunchy like an apple. Kiwis are another fresh fruit crop that are grown in the area.



From Ed Meachen: Please renew your membership if you haven't already done so. Next year will be a very good one. We have twelve programs scheduled for 2024, including the annual meeting on April 13th. We'll have programs on trees, birdscaping, the teaching garden, learning to make garden art, and watching another one of Art De Smet's fabulous photo tours of English Gardens. The complete program list will be out in December.

Of course, your renewal will also entitle you to receive discounts of 10 to 15% at many garden centers and greenhouses around Dane County.

Please visit the MAMGA website to renew your membership:

<https://www.mamgawi.org/mamga-membership>

I look forward to seeing you next year at programs, garden tours, and master gardener social events.