

To: WIMGA Local Representatives and Board Members

From: Becky Gutzman, President

Date: December 11, 2018

Holiday greetings to everyone! Even though it's a busy time of year, I want to appreciate your work for WIMGA and give you an update on WIMGA happenings.



WIMGA Annual Conference: The team of planners, headed by Ellen Terwilliger and Nancy Spak, did a great job of organizing this year's conference. There were 226 people in attendance, including MGs from Iowa, Indiana, and Minnesota. The speakers, tours and facilities all received high ratings in their evaluation. I really enjoyed the camaraderie that happens among MGVs from around the state—especially when “friends” who have only connected via Facebook or emails get a chance to meet face-to-face! There was also a good turnout for the WIMGA annual meeting on Friday of the conference.

Our **Fall face-to-face WIMGA Board meeting with Local Reps** was held Saturday, October 13 at the Hancock Ag Research Station with about 28 people present. Susan Mahr updated us on the progress of the online reporting system (slow!) and the merger of UW-Extension, which includes the Master Gardener Program, with UW-Madison (should be complete by July of 2019.) The changes include increased expectations of making sure that all volunteers are eligible (pass the background check and take Mandated Reporter Training) and that all projects are valuable and authorized by the county in which they happen. All of you should have received an invitation to login to the new Online Reporting System, which is the first step; next, counties will be creating their lists of approved projects. The big event of the day was wishing Susan Mahr a happy retirement! She's winding down her time in the office and transitioning duties to Amy Freidig and Mike Maddox. WIMGA presented her with a set of wind chimes to use at her new home in California. You may send Susan farewell wishes at semahr@wisc.edu.

The **Master Gardener Advisory Committee** meets twice a year, to provide input to the MG Program Office from Volunteers, UW-Extension staff and administrators. WIMGA has five seats at that table: president, past-president and three others; this year it will be Byron Hacker, John Hahn, Jackie Shaffer, Marilyn Gorham and myself. When we met on October 31 at the Schmeekle Reserve in Stevens Point, we took a close look at the changes that are happening due to the merger with UW-Madison and staffing changes. Horticulture responsibilities in counties, defining the relationships of volunteers with their county offices, and clarifying partnerships with outside groups are some of the challenging issues; continue to read the *Volunteer Vibe* for updates and information.

The **WIMGA Board** held their last board meeting of the year on November 26 by teleconference; we're still looking for the best way to avoid traveling for our far-flung

members, and having a productive meeting without seeing and talking to each other face-to-face! Some really important issues are facing WIMGA:

- Possibly limiting membership to certified MGs only. Having non-certified members, who have likely not taken mandated reporter training, nor the background check is a huge liability issue, and may ultimately be required of us by UW-Madison. The procedures committee is going to work on a bylaw revision to help us comply.
- The *WIMGA Newsletter* is undergoing changes: the mailed paper copies will be discontinued after the final (Jan 2019) issue of this volume. By utilizing the website, we will save thousands of dollars, and be able to get WIMGA news out to members in a more timely fashion. For those of you who have members without email in your associations, we hope you will print a copy for them. Look for the opportunity to elect a new At-Large Director in the January newsletter.
- There have been no volunteer associations to host a 2019 annual conference. After discussion both at the face-to-face and the last couple board meetings, we are going to have a one-day “leadership” conference instead for 2019, and plan to conduct it in three places around the state, to make it more accessible. Suggestions for topics have included working with different personality types, how to recruit officers in local associations, navigating the computer for reporting and other MG work, financial information for associations, and designing MG projects for maximum value. If you have a speaker or topic idea for this type of conference, please send it to Becky at buckhill@centurylink.net.
- The next Board meeting is tentatively set for Friday, February 8, 2019, in Madison. This is the first day of Garden Expo, so if you do not regularly attend, this might be an incentive to you! Look for a couple messages to set dates for Board meetings and Local Representative meetings for 2019. If we can get these on our calendars early in the year, it will help us accomplish our work more easily.

There is a great MG conference opportunity coming up this summer: **June 17-21, 2019: [International Master Gardener Conference](#), Valley Forge, PA.** Registration is now open and the sessions and tours sound great! I know that some WI MGVs have already made their plans; I am still looking for a travel companion and roommate to share the costs. If interested, please let me know.

Once again, thank you for all you do as a Master Gardener Volunteer. Enjoy winter: a time to reflect, renew and recharge!

Becky Gutzman

