



WISCONSIN MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION
Serving its members since 1992

January 2024

WIMGA

WIMGA Vision - The Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association will be the collective voice for local Master Gardener Associations and individual members in active support for their horticultural projects and services; build networks to enhance outreach, share ideas and promote projects.

January Thoughts

Marilyn Gorham, St Croix Valley MGV

Happy New Year! Usually at this time of year I'm watching my gardens to see what winter damage might be happening. This year, I watch as buds on the trees seem to be swelling and the grass turns unexpectedly green. Gardening can bring the unexpected at any time of year. One thing that is certain is that we are starting another year as Master Gardeners. Please make sure that you enter your volunteer and educational hours before January 9th. You don't want to lose credit for your work in 2023!

WIMGA's work for 2024 has already started. A schedule of educational events on the next page lists our speakers for the first half of 2024. Information about Brian Hudelson's 2024 PDDC Plant Disease Talks is located on page 11. WIMGA's Annual Meeting will be held via Zoom on Tuesday, January 16th. We'll look back at 2023 and provide insight into plans for 2024. Join us at 6:30 pm.

Be sure to read *The Vibe* and emails from the Program Office to stay current with any updates for 2024. Enjoy browsing the gardening websites and catalogs for new offerings. We'll be planting before we know it!

Marilyn Gorham, WIMGA President

WIMGA Member Dues

By Roseann Meixelsperger, WIMGA Treasurer

WIMGA dues are \$5 per person. It is the responsibility of each Local Association's Treasurer to assure dues are paid by **March 1** of each year and sent to WIMGA's Treasurer along with a list of current paid members, including email address for each member. The email address ensures members receive notifications from WIMGA including newsletters. MGVs not affiliated with a local association may send their dues directly to the WIMGA Treasurer.

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Continuing Education Opportunities

The Registration link for our January 16, 2024, Zoom presentation has been sent out to members. A reminder with the link is included in this newsletter email.

Craig LeHoullier's presentation, "Bring Your Garden to the Sun – Success with Containers and Straw Bales" connects us with gardening where the sun shines. This presentation will be part of the WIMGA Annual Meeting.



WIMGA's February speaker is **Vanessa Mueller** from Johnson's Nursery. "**Trees in the Landscape**" will talk about the 'State of the Nursery 2024' and trees, shrubs, and perennials that add beauty and benefits to all gardens!

Vanessa has a BS in Horticulture from Iowa State University and a BA in English from the University of Northern Iowa. She grew up in Iowa on a farm in the middle of the state. After college she moved to Chicagoland and met her husband, Tyson. In 2009 they moved to Wauwatosa to be closer to their family. The following year Vanessa started at Johnson's Nursery in the Wholesale department. Johnson's Nursery, Inc.™ is a third generation, family-owned business. There she started networking and bringing in clients as well as growing existing clients for Johnson's. Vanessa is very active in the Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association. She currently co-chairs the Educational Committee and is the Board Treasurer – set to be the 3rd female president of the WLCA in 4 years. Following quickly will be complete world domination!

January 16, 2024, 6:30pm

WIMGA Annual Meeting & Craig LeHoullier
Bring Your Garden to the Sun:
All About Container and Straw Bale Gardening

February 15, 2024, 6:30pm

Vanessa Mueller
Trees in the Landscape

March 4, 11, & 18, 6:30pm

Diana Alfuth
Environmentally Sound Landscaping
in a Changing Climate

Cost will be \$30 for WIMGA members and \$45 for non-members.

April 11, 2024, 6:30pm

Mark Dwyer, Adaptive Gardening

September (date TBD)

Susan Betz
Fresh Start Herbs

The Continuing Education Committee is excited to bring another series with Diana Alfuth, Retired Horticulture Educator, in March to continue the Landscape Design

Fundamentals that began last year. This series will be made available to members and non-members of WIMGA for a fee. This added income from educational programs helps to fill the lower revenue from member dues and allow WIMGA to bring an in-depth level of learning to interested gardeners.

2023 WIMGA Grant Awards

One of the WIMGA membership benefits is our Educational Grants. Here is the list of this year's awards to aid master gardener associations in their efforts of community education.

Name	Project Summary	Awarded
Barron Co MGA	Barron County Sunflower Project involving horticulture education at various schools in the Barron County School district. Purchase seeds and awards (birdfeeder).	\$250
Clark Co MGA	Spring conference speaker honorariums	\$225
Columbia Co MGA	The Microfarm in Schools seeds, seed-starting mix, seed starting trays, disposable bowls, forks, and salad dressing for harvesting/tasting.	\$250
Columbia Co MGA	Youth program with the new Boys and Girls Club of Portage with several programming options.	\$400
Crawford Co MGA	Kids in the Garden program flag and potting mix	\$400
Dodge Co MGA	Teach gardening to Huber Inmates and donate produce to local residents with pamphlets containing information about the produce.	\$400
Eau Claire Area MGA	Kitchen Garden at Affility House to facilitate various educational lessons offered by FoodWise.	\$250
Eau Claire Area MGV	Youth Garden program at North River Fronts Park in Eau Claire. Replace raised beds and watering hoses over multiyear plan.	\$400
Grant Co MGA	Speaker fees for educational webinars	\$400
Madison Area MGA (MAMGA)	Educational resource "Bookmark" and planting labels	\$250
Marquette Co	Marquette County Interactive Nature Trail wooden shade structure, a rain barrel, plants and shrubs to expand the garden sections.	\$400

Master Gardeners of the North	Gardening supplies for Healthy Kids Day and the Oneida County Fair such as pots, soil, seeds, and pot decorations.	\$100
North Central WI MGA	Children's education in gardening via the "milk jug" portable garden supplies including flowering annuals, craft activities, and education on gardening and pollinators.	\$400
North Central WI MGA	Educational resources for the Shade and Hosta Garden, such as informational signage.	\$250
Northeast WI MGA (NEW)	Community outreach programs outdoor display board.	\$400
Outagamie Co MGA	Speaker fees for "Master Gardener Presents" series providing gardening related classes to the general public.	\$250
Outagamie Co MGA	Speaker fees for the Annual Garden Conference	\$400
Sauk Co MGA	Classes and Speakers in conjunction with Baraboo Library Seed Savers	\$100
Sheboygan Co MGA	Speakers for Association	\$250
Winnebago Co MGA	Informational display case to educate the community and the public in the gardens at the Winnebago County Historical and Archaeological Society	\$400

GRAND TOTAL ALL GRANT CATEGORIES \$6,175

Grant Funding budgeted for the 2024 year is \$8,850. Applications for each of the three levels of funding (\$100, \$250 or \$400) are due by **October 1st** (postmark date). The grant application forms and WIMGA Educational Grant Criteria are on the WIMGA website at <https://www.wimga.org/grants-1>. This is a great opportunity for your association to get some funding from WIMGA to help make your educational community projects become a reality. Electronic submissions are recommended. Please e-mail your grant application(s) to treasurer.wimga@gmail.com



[Garden Visions 2024 Gardening Conference](#)

Click on the link above for more about Central Wisconsin's largest gardening conference, in person on January 27, 2024, at Northcentral Technical College in Wausau. Go to the [WIMGA website](#) for more information on association events around the state.

Seed Starting Kits

Northern Lights Master Gardeners Association Inc. (NLMGAI) Grant Report

This is a picture of one of the 'kits' NLMGAI purchased with the WIMGA \$250 grant awarded this year. The idea was to assist members in growing some of the plants for the All-America Selection Winners Display Garden at Harmony Demonstration Gardens in Marinette County.

As stated in the proposal, with the grant we bought 6 kits, each comprising of a 24-cell tray with cover and self-watering system (capillary matting to wick water up from the water reservoir), clip-on bar light with 2 heads, bag of seed starting mix and seeds supplied by All-America Selection Winners at no charge.

These kits should last several years and will be returned to NLMGAI at the end of the season to be loaned out again next year.



The project was a success, and the seedlings were transplanted into the display



garden. Some of the plants were marigolds, peppers, verbena, cucumbers, bok choy, fennel, tomatoes and petunias. There are many others in a different part of the "Whimsical Garden".

There is almost always a breeze blowing at Harmony, so the whimsy is based on wind spinners and kites, etc. This garden has already been very well received by

visitors and will be promoted at an Open House in August. The All-America Selection Winners Display Garden, the new Native American Garden and the new Hosta Garden will be featured.

The project funded by the WIMGA grant increased participation by members in seed starting and the resulting Display Garden for All-America Selection Winners became a success.



Council Tree Planting

Winnebago County Master Gardener Association Grant Report

By Linda Werner, Winnebago Co MGV

The City of Neenah celebrated its 150th anniversary and Arbor Day on April 28, 2023 by planting a Princeton Elm purchased with a \$400 grant from the Wisconsin Master Gardener Association. It is hoped the tree will grow as large and stately as the original Old Council Tree that existed when Neenah was founded and has since become the city's trademark. The grant to the Neenah Historical Society for this project furthered the connection between the Society, the Winnebago County Master Gardener Association and the community. Master Gardener volunteers established and have been maintaining the gardens at the Historical Society's Octagon House for many years.



The new Council Tree is located at Kimberly Point Park which is located where the Fox River meets Lake Winnebago and near the site of the original elm. Indigenous people used it as a meeting place long before European settlers arrived. It was a towering tree which remained a gathering place and landmark until it was removed when the river was dredged and widened in the 1880's. Gone, but not forgotten, it is an integral part of Neenah's history that has been kept alive through use of its image as the city's logo. Planting a new living tree is recognized as an important part of celebrating the sesquicentennial anniversary and looking to the future.

Kimberly Point Park is a lovely lakeside area. A new walking trail that runs along Lake Winnebago passes right next to the Council Tree. The Park is also used extensively by fishermen and picnickers. A new sesquicentennial commemorative plaque will be installed to commemorate the new Council Tree as part of Neenah's 150th anniversary celebration. The new elm is a welcome addition that will be enjoyed for its beauty and provide historical information to community members in the years ahead.



Approximately 50 people attended the planting ceremony. Mayor Jane Lang spoke at the event as did Neenah Superintendent of Parks and Forestry, Trevor Fink. During the program, WIMGA was recognized for its generous grant. WIMGA's contribution was also noted in the event program. Members of the fifth-grade class from Roosevelt Elementary School were invited to help with planting the tree.

Who is Hibernating in YOUR Yard?

by: Donna Mae Stohlmann, St Croix Valley MGV

Did you rake your yard in the fall or mow the grass, so you had no leaves left on your lawn? Did you think that you made it beautiful for the winter? According to research conducted by University of Maryland entomology PhD candidate, Max Ferlauto, raking the beautiful fallen leaves into paper yard-waste bags can disrupt a delicate ecosystem. “Raking fallen leaves could impact the complex ecosystems around your home,” explained Ferlauto, who studies urban ecology in the Burghardt Lab. “Removing leaf litter means killing or disturbing the insects that hibernate on the ground, especially the ‘good’ ones that provide beneficial ecological benefits like natural pest control or pollination.

Ferlauto has been working with 20 homeowners in suburban Maryland for more than two years, studying the general biodiversity of local lawns and the presence of beneficial critters—namely moths, which are important pollinators, and parasitoid wasps, which feed on many garden pests.

In his research, Ferlauto removed or retained autumn leaf litter in residential yards and collected insects emerging from the ground in the spring. He learned that leaf litter removal practices resulted in vast reductions of moth abundance and biodiversity. Based on those studies, Ferlauto came up with the following list of leaf management do’s and don’ts that can help homeowners limit disturbances to the winter hibernation patterns of insects.



One of Ferlauto’s research stations.
Photograph courtesy of Max Ferlauto.

- Don’t remove and discard all leaf litter in autumn or spring. This will reduce pollinator numbers in your yard. Raking leaf litter and bagging it up reduces moth emergence from winter hibernation by almost half. In areas where leaf litter was removed, Ferlauto also found fewer moth species overall.
- Do keep some leaves on the ground where you can. Leaves can act as a food source and a ‘blanket’ for insects. Many insects make their winter homes in leaf litter, others burrow themselves deeper into the soil under leaves. Ferlauto found that areas where leaf litter was removed had reduced temperature buffering. Keeping litter intact will allow these insects to stay protected from the harsh coldness of winter and variability of spring.
- Don’t shred or mulch your leaves. Ferlauto found that shredding or mulching fallen leaves causes as much damage as gathering leaves up and disposing of them in leaf bags. Placing leaves in compost bags kills the insects on the leaves. Putting leaves and compost through a mulcher or woodchipper also destroys the insects clinging to the leaves.
- Do retain some leaves and create shallow leaf piles in your yard. Creating small pockets of leaves in safe spaces is a great alternative if you can’t leave them where they fall.

With just a few changes in leaf management routines, homeowners can keep their yard presentable while also supporting the health and longevity of natural ecosystems all year round. Ferlauto said. “We still don’t know as much about when they’re in an inactive life stage—hibernation—but we do know that keeping their hibernation homes intact is key to keeping them around longer.” [College of Maryland News](#)

In the spring, wait if you can, to clean out dead stalks and grasses in the garden, as these may be the home of overwintering invertebrates. Home gardeners should wait until it is time to mow regularly. In the fall, consider letting your plants stand as they are instead of cutting back and removing dead material. Not only will leaf litter and dried stems provide habitat for insects, but also dead seed heads can be a food source for overwintering and migrating birds.

Many invertebrates are unable to dig through the heavy wood chip mulches. Using leaf mold or compost is one alternative; another would be to mulch the first visible feet from the front of your beds, leaving the back of the beds available to nesting bees and insects to make their homes.

Our pollinators live and overwinter in the layers of leaves left behind in the fall. It provides shelter from the cold and a great habitat for their food sources as well. Raking, shredding, and blowing leaves may destroy delicate chrysalids, as well as the insects themselves. Consider leaving one area of your yard wild, or letting the leaves lie where they fall for the pollinators.

I interviewed Ashley Goldbeck, Lead Naturalist/Nature Center Coordinator from Friends of Willow River & Kinnickinnic State Park. She said, “Hibernation is a type of deep sleep an animal enters to keep its energy expenditure to a minimum. As they are sleeping, they do not need to search for food, and the fat and calories built up prior to this resting period helps carry them through. There are different habits followed by animals that hibernate. A squirrel may sleep for 4 to 5 days at a time, wake up, eat some of the food it collected in the fall, go to the bathroom, and then go back to sleep for another couple of days. Others will sleep for weeks, months or all winter without a break and wake up very hungry after winter is over.”



Whether an animal hibernates or not depends upon how it copes with winter’s temporary food shortage. Some animals migrate to winter-feeding grounds, some store food in caches, others stay and sleep, while some grow more fur and/or change their diet. During winter, food is scarce and with freezing temperatures, it is no picnic for most animals. To top it off, the days are short, and the nights are very long. Animals end up losing more calories than usual, leaving them weak. This is because their bodies use up a lot of energy just to keep warm, and the remainder of their energy is lost in searching for food and shelter. Also, many animals live solitary lives and will not den up with other species to keep warm. Starve or freeze. Their choices are limited. To get through these difficult times, animals have adapted to sleep through the cold season to survive,” stated Goldbeck.

The only known bird species that hibernates, the common poor-will, snoozes under rocks and logs for 4-5 months. During this time, the bird has a lowered body temperature, heartbeat, and rate of breathing to conserve energy.



Hibernation includes groundhogs, ground squirrels, mice and some species of bats. These hibernators remain in a state of inactivity for several days, weeks or months and can sleep through loud noises and other commotion. Groundhogs hibernate inside burrows below the frost line in wooded or bushy areas for as long as 150 days. Chipmunks typically hibernate from three to four months. They wake up periodically and move around in their burrows, but only for short periods. If the weather warms more than usual or if they run out of food near the end of hibernation, chipmunks may wake up early. They will start to stir, and their heart rate will increase when the days get longer in the spring.

Bats are the only mammals that can fly, but they are one of the few species that hibernate. Over half of the bat species in North America hibernate from late autumn to early spring. During hibernation, bats curl up into a ball and reduce their heart rate and body temperature to conserve energy.

Opossums, raccoons, skunks, and chipmunks enter a sort of mini hibernation called torpor, in which they conserve energy for a short period, then wake to find food when temperatures rise, and weather improves.



Unable to generate their own heat, cold-blooded animals like reptiles and amphibians survive frosty temperatures and scarce resources by slowing down considerably and oftentimes becoming inactive. Frogs and salamanders can escape freezing temperatures by burrowing in the mud on the bottoms of ponds, and turtles by burying themselves in soft ground below the frost line. They just need to get down deep enough to where the earth doesn't freeze solidly, during warm

periods, cold-blooded animals may become active. Wood frogs, common box turtles and some salamanders burrow in leaves and freeze. Their bodies produce glucose that acts like an antifreeze that protects their cells and come spring, they thaw out.

Garter Snakes burrow deep into the ground and go through a type of hibernation called brumation. They go into a deep sleep and don't eat or drink anything for several months. Garter Snakes start hibernating when the temperature starts to drop below 60 degrees Fahrenheit. They can hibernate for up to six months.



Search For Excellence Awards

By Becky Gutzman, Columbia Co MGV

If the last issue of the WIMGA News got you thinking about projects that you might consider entering in the 2025 SFE, very thorough guidelines can be found at the National Extension Master Gardener website:

<https://mastergardener.extension.org/awards/david-gibby-search-for-excellence-awards/>

Keep these tips in mind as you go through this year, so that you will have the information you need when the applications are available later this year:

1. The SFE application must be written by the Master Gardeners involved, and not by Extension staff. Each project can only be submitted in one category (Community Service, Demonstration Gardens, Innovative Projects, Research (Applied Scientific Methodology), Special Need Audiences (Senior, Disabled Audiences or Horticultural Therapy, Workshop or Presentation.) You will write a description of the project, including the target audience, goals, location and any partnerships.
2. The judges will be considering how simple the project would be to replicate, practicality, originality and how compatible it is with the MG mission.
3. Besides writing about how you planned and implemented the project, you will need to show how it was evaluated. What were the results, and how was learning and impacts documented?
4. A budget narrative is part of the application, so that others can see what the costs were and how they were covered (fees, donations, fund-raising, etc.)
5. Up to six digital photos can be submitted to support your application.

When Columbia County MGs put together their application, we realized that our project (Micro-farms in Schools) did not have any written evaluations from students, but we did have notes and emails from teachers and parents stating what the children had learned or the impacts they had seen. Don't forget that anecdotal evidence is still evidence. If you have a chance to collect written or statistical data, do so. We are developing a new project with adults, and we will use a written evaluation form. After each session, participants will be asked what did you learn today and how will you use it? At the end of the year, I expect that we will have good statistical information (what percent of participants learned something new) as well as some valuable statements about how they will use what they learned.

Keep in mind that 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners will need to create a poster about their project. As we were gathering photos taken of the micro-farm project over the years, we realized we didn't have enough photos that showed what the wagon looked like (but we had lots of photos of happy kids eating their greens!) We were able to work on taking some better photos that helped us tell our story for the application, and we were excited to use them in our poster when we were selected as a second-place winner!



Good luck and hoping to see many more Wisconsin MG projects on display at future International Master Gardener Conferences!



2024 PDDC Plant Disease Talks

Brian Hudelson, UW-Madison Plant Pathology

Each month in 2024, the University of Wisconsin Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic will sponsor a free Zoom presentation on a plant disease-related topic.

To register for one or more talks, visit <https://pddc.wisc.edu/>.
Check at the bottom of the page for a link to the registration form.

Top Ten Plant Diseases of 2023 January 24, 2024 6:30 – 8:30pm

Fun and Games at the PDDC! February 28, 2024 6:30 – 8:30pm

Learn about the UW-Madison Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic and the services and activities that it sponsors. This presentation will include information on both the diagnostic services and outreach efforts provided by the PDDC, as well as information on new and (hopefully) fun and exciting projects that have recently debuted or are currently in the works.

Fundamentals of Plant Diseases March 27, 2024 6:30 – 9:00pm

Plant Disease Management by Design: April 24, 2024 6:30 – 8:30pm

Preventing Plant Disease Problems During the Landscape Design Process

The Science (and Art) of Plant Disease Diagnosis May 22, 2024 6:30 – 8:30pm

Plant Diseases in History June 26, 2024 6:30 – 8:30pm

Learn about how plant diseases have impacted human history and how plant diseases continue to be important in our daily lives and in pop culture.

Ten Diseases of Native Plants (and Non-Natives, Too) July 24, 2024 6:30 – 8:30pm

Hosta Diseases August 28, 2024 6:30 – 8:30pm

Growing Healthy Plants: September 25, 2024 6:30 – 8:30pm

Basics in Plant Disease Management

Orchid Diseases October 23, 2024 6:30 – 8:30pm

Confessions of a Black Thumb: November 20, 2024 6:30 – 8:30pm

Plants That I Have Killed (or at Least Seriously Maimed) Learn about the favorite plants of Brian Hudelson (aka Dr. Death) and his epic failures in attempting to grow these plants in his home garden, either through his encouragement of plant diseases, his insistence on practicing "Darwinian gardening" or through his sheer gardening stupidity. Use these cautionary tales to improve your own gardening skills.

Evil Twins: Plant Disease Look-Alikes December 18, 2024 6:30 – 8:30pm



The Bumble Bee Express with wind spinner wheels from the Whimsical Garden at Harmony Demonstration Gardens in Marinette County.

We love these 'snaps' that brighten our newsletter and website. Article ideas and contributions may be sent to **Hali Dessecker** at halirenee@yahoo.com

Please send any WIMGA related questions/concerns to news@wimga.org.

Visit the WIMGA Website at <http://www.wimga.org/>

Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association (WIMGA)

Serving its members since 1992



January 2024 Newsletter

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The Wisconsin Extension Master Gardener Program supports a network of individuals dedicated to horticulture education, service, and lifelong learning. Through unbiased university research-based horticulture training they are equipped to address needs and opportunities in their community and throughout the state. An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Madison provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act requirements.