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by December 15th
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Yellowstone Master Gardener



NEWSLETTER

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Adela Awner: Hiker and Orchid Enthusiast

by Sheri Kisch

While living in the Bay Area of California, Adela found that she had just the right conditions to grow orchids. Not being an experienced gardener, she joined the local and national orchid societies and met with other orchid growers. These orchid lovers would exchange plants and give away new starts. Eventually she had more than two dozen varieties. She says the challenging part is getting orchids to bloom every year. About 12 years ago, her son gave her a much-cherished orchid, which she is happy to say has bloomed every year.



Left: While traveling through Tajikistan earlier this year, Adela remarked to her bus driver how beautiful the red poppies (not the opium kind) along the road were. He stopped the bus, jumped out, and got her a bouquet.

Adela has lived in Billings for about 35 years. Her husband is not a gardener but has helped Adela by building a raised bed and getting a drip system in place. She does most of her volunteer hours at DanWalt Gardens where she enjoys the peace, beauty, learning and even the deadheading. She has learned from this to deadhead in her

When Adela travels, she likes to visit local botanical gardens and discover what grows in other places. Her children, now grown, used to roll their eyes when they visited yet another botanical garden, but now they are taking their own children to gardens and teaching them about plants and to appreciate their beauty. Adela also enjoys hiking, which she likes even more as she discovers new wildflowers, like the fairy slipper orchid outside of Red Lodge.

own yard and now enjoys seeing plants re-bloom because of it. Her favorite part of being a Master Gardener is mingling with other like-minded and knowledgeable people.



Fairy slipper orchids

Thank you, Adela, for your love of plants and your contributions to the Master Gardener program. Happy hiking!



Easy Care Begonias for Beautiful Color

by Sheri Kisch

I've always been fascinated with begonias because there are so many types, gorgeous colored leaves and blooms, sizes from miniature to 10-foot tall, and leaf shapes of every size and dimension. You can also choose from indoor and outdoor plants for those of us who like some color in the winter. They also have a long bloom time from late spring through fall. I would like one of almost everything. That was until I found that there are over 2,050 species and thousands of cultivars. Oh.

Before buying or inheriting a begonia plant, know what conditions that cultivar needs and do you have the lighting, humidity, well-drained soil, water, 10-10-10 liquid fertilizer, and space for it winter and summer? They are easy to grow if you keep in mind that overwatering kills: they don't like wet feet. They can survive underwatering.

Begonias enjoy temperatures of around 75° degrees and overnight lows of mid-60s. They can tolerate higher temperatures with protection from harsh sunlight. The best combination for partial shade and soft light is on the north or east side of your home.

You can grow your own begonia plants from seeds, root cuttings, rhizomes, or tubers. They can also be found at the garden center. Be adventurous and get stem cuttings from a friend or start from seeds.



Here in the north, rhizomatous, fibrous, and tuberous begonias need to be lifted and brought in before frost. They should be quarantined in the garage or basement before bringing them into the house, giving the aphids and other pests time to hatch and be taken care of. They can be left in pots and those too will have to be checked for pests and the condition of soil. Most begonias are considered annuals. Tubers can be saved over the winter and planted again.

Have fun and save pictures of the ones you really enjoyed.

Sources:

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/dont-toss-those-tuberous-begonias-save-next-summer>
<https://hgic.clemson.edu/>

[factsheet/growing-begonias-indoors/](https://www.begonias.org/growing-begonias-indoors/)
<https://www.begonias.org/the-begonian-july-august-2023/>

RECIPE submitted by *Suri Lunde*

Cucumber Salad

Yields: 4–6 servings

Prep Time: 10 mins

Total Time: 40 mins

Ingredients

2 lb. cucumbers thinly sliced.

Seedless or near seedless preferable, e.g. English or Persian. If using other types of cucumbers, scoop out the seeds and remove peel.

1 small onion, thinly sliced

5 tbsp. apple cider vinegar

1 tbsp. granulated sugar

4 tsp. kosher salt

1/2 tsp. ground black pepper

2 tbsp. fresh dill or chives, chopped

Directions

Combine the cucumber, onion, vinegar, sugar, salt, and pepper in a medium bowl. Toss gently to combine; let stand for 30 minutes.

Stir in dill or chives just before serving.



Tip: This cucumber salad can be made a day ahead. Stir in the herbs just before serving.

Rebel Gardening

A Beginner's Handbook to Creating an Organic Urban Garden
by Alessandro Vitale

Gardening is an amazing “hobby.” Even beginners can have success. Gardens produce food which helps us be healthy, saves money, and helps save the planet as we eat locally and avoid plastic and transportation pollution. If blessed with health, gardening can be a lifelong endeavor, keeping us learning and active all our lives. And with community gardens and wonderful educational programs like Master Gardener, we can make many acquaintances and friends and keep on learning with every season.

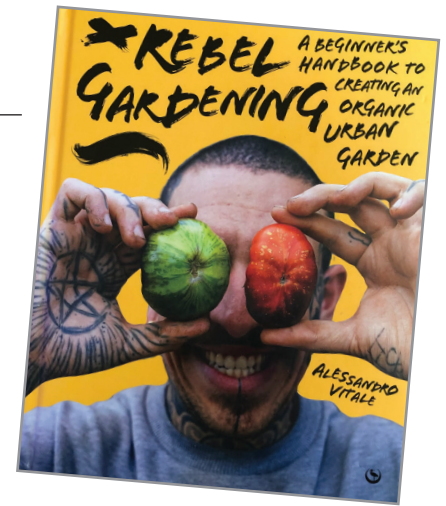
Alessandro Vitale is a young Italian gardener who settled in London and who has devoted his life to growing his own food in small urban spaces and teaching others how to do so. He has created an in-depth, practical reference book to help beginning urban gardeners (and others as well) called *Rebel Gardening*.

I think the book is called “rebel” because the author gardens

unconventionally, i.e., without using synthetic fertilizers or pesticides and as sustainably as possible, striving for a closed-loop system in his small, productive space. He practices no-till methods, creates his own amendments like fermented plant juice, and minimizes input from other sources. For example, he chooses to build his own structures and planting containers from used, found materials, he saves seed and grows starts, and he creates his own fertilizers.

Mr. Vitale is concise in his text and offers many illustrations. He also has an extensive video collection, offered on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, which offers a source of more extensive information for topics presented in the book.

Despite being located in London, his advice is generalized and applicable for gardeners in other countries. He covers many aspects of gardening, including planning, mulching,



composting, vertical gardening, making amendments, watering, season extension, raised beds, choosing plants, seed starting, and much, much more. *Rebel Gardening* could be very helpful to a beginner as well as serving as an ongoing reference book for more experienced gardeners.

It took me a while to get into the rhythm of the book. At first, I found it jumbled and seemingly disorganized. I also am not used to an author inserting his presence so frequently. But as I got further into it, these aspects fell away from my perception and I grew to appreciate the soundness and depth of Mr. Vitale's experienced voice. May we all learn from him and continue forward as “rebel” gardeners!

Federal Funding for Billings Urban Forestry

by Ann Guthals

Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council (YVCC), a local affiliate of Northern Plains Resource Council, developed a campaign this year to encourage the City of Billings to create a comprehensive urban forestry program for Billings that would increase tree density in neighborhoods that don't have it. The members hoped the city would take concrete steps to advance this goal – like doing a tree inventory, forming an advisory tree board, and developing an urban forestry management plan for the city. The group was also wishing that trees be recognized as necessities not amenities, and that the tree canopy of Billings could be increased on city-owned land, especially in less affluent neighborhoods.

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) includes \$1.5 billion for the nation for developing urban forests and, specifically, \$1.5 million for Montana (dispersed over a period of years). With the urging and support of YVCC members, city forester Steve McConnell applied for a grant from the federal government. On Thursday, September 14th, it was announced that the City of Billings has been awarded \$1 million for urban forestry from the IRA funds. Now, the City will have the capital needed to develop an urban forestry program and plant many new trees, bringing important benefits to the City of Billings such as cooler temperatures, cleaner air, and greener, more inviting neighborhoods.

A Crevice Garden Experiment

by Julia Osslund

Crevice Gardens may be a way for people to create a habitat for butterflies, burrowing bees, and other pollinators. In their book *The Crevice Garden* by Kenton Seth and Paul Spriggs, they define it this way: “The crevice garden replicates the environmental conditions of mountaintops, deserts, coastlines, and other exposed or rocky places on earth.” They can be as small as a garden pot or as large as you want them to be. These gardens add height and interest to the landscape. Like an outcropping of rocks or alpine garden, the rocks are buried vertically and plants are grown between the crevices.

Sheri Kisch told me that the Master Gardeners who volunteer at ZooMontana in Billings made a crevice garden several years ago. The colorful garden is located near the playground. Linda, a volunteer in the sensory garden, said that she thinks this is the best the garden has ever looked! It was a nice habitat with rough and soft textures and a variety of colors.

So, armed with a shovel, some flat rocks, and compost, I scanned the landscape for a bright sunny spot. I dug out what I thought was an interesting shape, then added



Crevice garden at ZooMontana

some compost to make a sort of berm. Soil media for these gardens may depend on what you want to plant in them. The rocks I used were a mix of travertine that I got in Gardiner, flat smooth stones from the Yellowstone River, and an assortment of sandstone and smooth and rough rocks. The authors of the aforementioned book say they generally plant the rocks at different depths, with the rocks at the ends planted the most deeply. It was fun to plant the rocks at different angles, while leaving space for the green stuff. Then I stood back and let the garden rest while I thought about what plants to install. The garden rested for several days. A few butterflies landed on a tall triangular rock and an enthusiastic beetle jumped in between one of the crevices. “Yay!” I could imagine the ground beetle saying, “New digs!”

The authors recommend plants that are drought tolerant like hens and chicks, sedum, cactus, lavender, and dianthus. Certain ground covers and native plants for every season like blue flax, sage or larkspur would be good forage for critters visiting the habitat. Eventually, the care of a crevice garden would be pretty low maintenance.

Every new garden is an experiment!



Crevice garden at ZooMontana

Watering for Winter Survival

by Ann McKean

As summer fades into autumn and the weather changes, we should be thinking about how we are watering our landscape plants, including our trees. Nature naturally dials back the water as the temperatures cool, and so should we. Slowing down your watering encourages your plants to stop growing and prepare for dormancy. If you continue to water generously and we have warm weather, your plants will keep putting out new growth which will die when the temps drop below freezing. Allowing them to slow down and harden off their summer growth protects them from injury which can steal their energy and potentially disfigure them, furthermore any injury stresses plants, which is not a great way to start off next season.

After your plants have hardened off, we have had our first frost, and the leaves are on the ground, then you should soak them thoroughly, so they go into the winter with plenty of water on their feet. Water is a much better insulator than air. When we have our warm spells during the winter and the ground becomes dry, give them another bucketful every so often. Although plants look dormant in the winter, they are working hard preparing for the next season and continue to move sap around as cells need it. Evergreens transpire all winter, drawing on the moisture in their tissues as they exhale. If their roots dry out and there is nothing to fill the vacuum created by their transpiration, tissue damage occurs resulting in winter burn. So, stay warm and dry this winter, but keep your plants moist!

Eating Local

by Ann Guthals

We live in a world where you can get strawberries from the supermarket in December. This is because we have created a global food growing and distribution system that gives us New Zealand apples from 8,000 miles away, and those strawberries in winter that probably come from Mexico.

This globalized system has many downsides. Transportation and storage of food for such long supply chains create a lot of pollution and use a lot of energy. The food from the other side of the world is not fresh, often not in season here, not adapted to our local area, and has created a dependence on farmers all over the world. We have seen how such long supply lines can be disrupted by a worldwide pandemic, climate catastrophes, and political upheaval such as in the Ukraine (wheat supply cut off to Africa, for example).

Locally grown food, on the other hand, supports our local economy, encourages young farmers in a land where the average age of farmers is 50 years old, and provides us with food that is fresh, of known origin and growing techniques, and not needing preservatives for thousand-mile-long trips to the store or aging agents to ripen. Local means relatively short transport miles to the grocery, not subject to the disruptions mentioned above.

Master gardeners know how to eat local – gardening is as local as you can get! Whether in a home or a community garden, food is fresh and at hand and we know exactly how it has been raised. What other sources are there beyond what we grow ourselves? There are farmer's markets, the Yellowstone Valley Food Hub, direct purchase from producers (such as lettuce from Swanky Roots in Billings), buying from grocery

Produce from Swanky Roots



Photo credit: Swanky Roots Instagram

stores that feature local growers, roadside stands, and restaurants that source local foods.

How do we find sources of locally-grown food? Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO), an environmental group based in Helena, started a local food guide in the 1990s and has evolved over the years. It also birthed a program called *Abundant Montana* to help develop the guide and to provide support to redevelop the local food system. The *Abundant Montana Local Food Guide* now comes in a full-length magazine format full of useful information, published in 2022 and 2023. In addition to the magazine format, there is an interactive map for finding producers and businesses, and a staff of four local food coordinators located across the State to recruit local business “partners” for listing in the guide and receiving marketing help.

In the *2023 Local Food Guide*, you will find a list of farmer's markets, food pantries, and producers and businesses by region, as well as inspiring stories of small farmers and recipes using seasonal, local food. The guide is sent to AERO members. For non-AERO members, you can go to the Abundant Montana website and find “pins” for places to pick up a free guide (in Billings this includes Zest Kitchen and Cookware, Black Dog Coffee House, Yellowstone Valley Food Hub, Swanky Roots, and Last Chance Cider House). There are plans to offer a subscription to the guide, possibly next year. You may also read the guide online at abundantmontana.com/localfoodguide.

Is the guide a comprehensive and definitive guide to local food sources

and producers? At this time, it lists many such sources but not all producers, because participation in the guide is voluntary on the part of the producers. The local food coordinators are working to include more producers each year. If you read the guide and do not see a listing for a favorite source, encourage your favorite source to contact Abundant Montana about joining the guide by emailing Hello@abundantmontana.com. The Food and Farms Map on the Abundant Montana website goes beyond the magazine as a directory, providing a more comprehensive list of local food sources.

Sometimes it takes some effort to procure our food locally. Luckily we have a great resource in the Abundant Montana Local Food Guide to make this easier!

Yellowstone County Master Gardener Newsletter MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Yellowstone County Master Gardener newsletter is to “educate and inform,” not to advocate or persuade. The Newsletter Editorial Board takes no position endorsing or opposing, approving or disapproving, any of the assertions or arguments in the contributed information. Information submitted to the newsletter is for your interest only.

"I Thought I Knew How To Garden..."



Every gardener has at least an experience which was strange, disappointing or frustrating at the time, but later turned out to be a funny faux pas, laughable surprise or just growing gone wrong. Don't be shy and come share your humorous story with fellow gardeners by submitting it to ynergardener@gmail.com to be published in future newsletter issues. We all could use a laugh or two!

A Master Gardener... Am I Really?

by Ann Guthals

I grow a fairly large garden every year and much of it does well. But every year there is always something that pretty much fails. I usually feel bad about the "mistakes," but I also know that we learn a lot from our errors.

Unfortunately one area I have not been able to improve on is growing zucchini. I believe I am the only gardener in Montana that can't seem to grow it. I get little finger size fruit, not the behemoths most people bemoan. Maybe next year I will solve this conundrum...

One year I decided I would like to grow tomatillos – I grew a big healthy-looking plant that produced beautiful though empty husks. I found out later that you need at least two tomatillo plants for pollination unless you want to take a paint brush and pollinate the plant yourself.

Another "mistake" I have somewhat learned from is to be careful what you plant because you might have it forever. Case in point is Virginia Creeper – I loved the fall color of this vine so much, I planted it deliberately next to my garden. I have been trying to get rid of it for about 20 years now! I just pulled out a healthy specimen this very morning! It's indestructible! I had the same problem with Russian olive trees and currant bushes, but I think I have finally conquered these. Other plants that grow everywhere in the garden are oregano, calendula, mullein, orach, and shoots from my plum tree. Some of these are useful, none are as aggravating as the Virginia Creeper, thank goodness.



JoAnn Glasser gave me a tip I plan to try: to get rid of a plant like the Virginia Creeper, cut the tip and dip it in extra-strength vinegar. The vinegar will be taken up by the plant, travel to the roots and kill the plant.

Half A Lawn, 'Sick' Tomatoes, and An Extremely Resilient Strawberry Plant

by Sheri Kisch

Greetings from the Kisch Death & Dying Experimental Farm. Before we moved to our new property, I felt I had a very good handle on growing most things and had 45 years of trial and error under my belt. We had sandy loam on a steep hillside with a gravel pit underneath. Still, I managed to grow huge peonies, a large garden and a variety of trees and shrubs.

Then we moved to a brand-new place with clay loam and salty water for irrigation. I knew it would be a challenge, but not to the degree of perennials, shrubs, and trees getting sick and dying. Who has a lawn that goes from being very lush with only one use of fertilizer to dying the next year of some weird *Rhizoctonia solani* pathogen? Really? Half of the lawn? I didn't even know lawns could get sick except for thatch.

This year I had four different tomato plants that started out growing nicely in their wall-o-waters (my love-hate-relationship product).

After about two months of normal growth, I noticed huge (really huge!) leaves on the lower stems that had a very mottled look to them. The tomato plants reside inside my flower beds for lack of a better situation. Afraid that I may have some kind of blight, I contacted Heidi Schueler and then on to the lab with samples and pictures. I spent the next two weeks worrying every day that if they did have some kind of nasty disease, I would lose all the ground spaces that the tomato plants were in. No nightshade plants again. No blight. In the meantime, I had snipped all the suspect leaves off the worst plant.



Above: The leaves were trimmed from this tomato plant because they initially looked sick. The lab report and the abundance of tomatoes proved otherwise.

Below: The strawberry plant that could.



Wandering around the property checking on everyone's health, I keep noticing a small strawberry plant that

continued on page 7

decided to grow in the walking path. It has been walked on, smashed, given no water and still lives. If I had planted the thing there, it would have been dead in days!

Sometimes there is just no explanation for things that go right or wrong. You just keep learning.

Bringing Houseplants Inside For Winter

by Ann McKean

I have lots of plants that I keep outside in the summer and drag into the house for winter. Although they are beautiful, they are not just for decoration outside or inside; I have orange and lime trees and lots of herbs like lemon verbena, scented geranium, bay laurel, and rosemary all for the kitchen. If I keep my garden thyme watered, the plants in the ground hold up well enough to pick all winter so they don't need to come in. Ditto for the culinary sage.

Every year, I carefully wash the potted plants, trim them, and bring them inside, arranging them in an attractive way in front of our south facing sliding door. Then I dote on them all winter, scouting for bugs, trimming and washing and maintaining just the right levels of soil moisture and air flow. All of this is as much for my mental health as it is for their health. I've always been a pretty casual, chemical-free gardener who maintains her plants with benign neglect. A very *laissez faire* plant parent...

Last autumn, we took a trip in September, and I just shoved them in the door and raced to the airport. It was below freezing when we returned, so there they remained for the rest of the winter. In December, I had foot surgery and was confined to the ground level of the house for the next two months, while my kind family watered them for me. I then had one week to visit them before I went under the knife again. They didn't look very good, so I gave them some fertilizer and then disappeared for another two months.

First of all, don't over-fertilize your plants in the winter! Second, I now have empirical proof that all that washing and prepping and doting is more than just for my mental health and totally worth the effort. My poor plants barely survived. By the time I was able to care for them again, they were covered

with scale, and aphids, and spider mites, and every other pest known to man! They were leggy and covered with powdery mildew and mercy knows what all else! It took them half of the summer to look like themselves again.



This year I have purchased some neem oil which I will apply to every square inch after I have meticulously washed them but before they come inside. I've bought a water meter, so any helpful family members will know for sure if any plants need water or not. I will space them carefully for light and airflow, and I will wash them periodically and rotate their positions.

What Is it? It's A Summer-chini!

by Sheri Fredericksen

As I was getting my garden bed ready for planting this summer, I thought I'd try growing some summer squash in addition to zucchini. I knew that squash required a lot of room but decided to give it a shot anyway (all the while knowing my 3'x10' bed would become crowded quickly).

Once the plants started bearing fruit, I noticed that the zucchini looked a bit sick to me (or so I thought), because it was yellow and green. When there were more than one fruit looking the same way,

I decided to investigate the possibility of cross-pollination and found that several squash varieties can cross-pollinate. The hybrid squash came from the zucchini plant, and both plants also bore fruit typical to each one. The result from the cross-pollinated fruit was that it tasted sweeter compared to zucchini.

In addition, both plants suffered from powdery mildew but it didn't seem to affect their producing capability. At any rate, it was delicious on the grill with

other squash and sliced mushrooms all marinated in olive oil and spices. My boyfriend and I tossed around possible names for this yummy surprise, but my personal favorite was "summer-chini"!



Sheri's summer-chinis

Meanwhile... I volunteered at the Yellowstone County Master Gardener Fair Booth in August. As I walked past the exhibit entries, I saw a zucchini squash that, much to my surprise, won a ribbon for "largest" vegetable. I thought – what the heck? I had a zucchini that somehow "got away" while I was on vacation in July and weighed in at a whopping 5lb 6oz! Maybe next year, I'll let one continue to grow and win my own ribbon.

Summary of General Meeting of State and Yellowstone County Master Gardener Association

by Sheri Kisch and Suri Lunde

A general meeting was held on September 11th at the 4-H building at MetraPark to discuss the roles of all individuals involved in the Yellowstone County Master Gardener Association (YCMGA), Extension Agents, Master Gardener Coordinator, and volunteers, and the future of the Extension Master Gardener Program.

Larry Brence, MSU Extension Eastern Regional Department Head, Sarah Eilers, Montana Master Gardener Coordinator, Heidi Schueler, Yellowstone County Extension Horticulturist Agent were in attendance along with 21 Master Gardener (MG) Association members.

Questions, answers, and statements:

Hierarchy: Larry the MSU Extension Eastern Region Department Head supervises Heidi. Heidi is a full-time horticulturalist (the only one in Eastern Montana), focusing on commercial outreach, diagnosis and consulting on any acreage 160 and less. Sarah provides administrative and coordination support for the Master Gardener Program for all extension agents in Montana.

Program and Number of Members: It is estimated that there are 24 MG programs in Montana. The YCMGA and Gold County Master Gardener Association (in Helena) are the only two stand-alone organizations connected to the Extension MG Program.

There are roughly 190 Yellowstone County MGs in total.

Fee: There is no annual fee to become or remain an Extension MG. However, for an Extension MG to

become a member of the Association, there is a yearly fee of \$15.

Privacy Rule: Master Gardeners must abide by the privacy and security rules stated by MSU. MG participants must consent and give permission for their information to be publicized. The Yellowstone County Horticulture Agent mailed out an information update on August 7th, 2023, which included this request.

It was asked if the MG brochure that is handed out by YCMGA could have a check box at the bottom for this purpose when someone uses this to request for membership. Sarah said it does not apply in this case.

Sarah offered that maybe Heidi could notify us every few months of new members and information.

Level 1 & 2 Courses: Changes are being implemented into the Level 1 and 2 class to follow along with national standards. Along with this is a new video portion being worked on to be released with the new course. Tom Kress related that one time he had a guest attend a Level 2 class. The guest remarked that the class covered in one session what would have been covered in two semesters and he liked it.

In the future, a beginner MG course and an advance class will be offered. The advanced course will travel around the State, alternating cities and towns every three years so that participants do not have to spend time and money to be in Bozeman.

Number of Course Participants: The 2023 Level 1 MG course was space-restricted due to the course being held in the Yellowstone

County Extension Office. Rooms elsewhere had already been spoken for by the election's office and 4-H Clubs. Names of participants who completed Level 1 were not revealed because of the MSU privacy standards.

Classes with 40 to 70 participants will not happen anymore. Twenty participants will be tops for hands-on in-person classes.

It was mentioned that MGs feel shut out because their help is not wanted for classes anymore, they have no contact with new MG Program participants, and very few projects have come up this year.

Heidi and Sarah mentioned that Level 1 course will be simplified. A number of MG attendees did not agree to this.

MG With Good Standing

Requirements: Sarah stated that in 2024, 10 volunteer hours and four hours of continuing education (CE) by a scientist, professor, or MG certified person are required in order to remain an Extension MG with good standing. CE hours can come from out-of-state as long as it fulfills unbiased, scientific and research-based requirement. For the time being, 20 volunteer hours for Level 1, 30 volunteer hours for Level 2, and 40 hours for Level 3 still stand.

Sarah plans to travel the State, offering some of the education programs as she already has done.

MG Emeritus Status: If a MG is unable to fulfill volunteer hour requirements due to health issues, approach Sarah to apply for an Emeritus MG status.

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SUMMARY OF GENERAL MEETING *continued from page 9*

Online Volunteer Management System (VMS): Sarah reminded everyone to enter volunteer hours online, although the system may still be down. If VMS is not accessible, write down and keep a record of volunteer hours.

Certificates, Achievements, etc.: Certificates will always be given out for various things. There will be no more colored shirts denoting Levels. New name badges are being designed in the shape of Montana and will replace existing name badges and pins.

Square Foot Garden (SFG): Heidi was asked why the SFG was given away. She said upon starting her job, she was given three projects with exiting project heads to replace. She was unable to fill those roles in 2023. The previous person who volunteered there did offer her help.

When asked what Heidi thought should be done with the SFG, she said maybe move it over to the Demonstration Garden area. It was mentioned that there will be construction on the highway intersection in the near future (maybe a roundabout) and that it will affect the NILE building and the Demonstration Garden area.

Project & Volunteering Locations List: It was suggested that the list of MG projects and locations for volunteering be sent out more often than just once at the beginning of the year.

The project list was sent out monthly in the Spring of 2023 with updated volunteer opportunities.

Email Problem: There is still an ongoing issue with emails not getting to a lot of Association members and probably many more. Sarah explained that since the whole MSU computer system was

compromised, they still haven't been able to retrieve anything that was on the old system, and it may stay that way. Her mailing lists and the volunteer management system(VMS) were among those that were affected by this.

Email: It was suggested that Heidi's emails to MGs not contain links that take you somewhere else and have to be clicked or opened from a second page. Keep it simple.

WANTED We are looking for talented and hardworking Master Gardeners to come onboard the Newsletter Committee. Assignments may include conducting and writing interviews; attending, taking photos and gathering information of events; and writing and researching articles. If you are interested, please contact **Sheri** at 406.601.1300 or nick.sheri.kisch@gmail.com

HELP Please assist us compile a new Master Gardener contact list. Email **Heidi** at heidi.schueler@montana.edu with your name, address, phone number and email address. If you have moved or changed phone number, send her your updated information. If you do not have an email address, please send or drop off your information to her.

COMMUNICATION Computer issues affecting email communications from Sarah Eilers and Heidi Scheuler are still an ongoing issue that is yet to be resolved. In view of this, please keep in contact with other Master Gardeners to ensure that important information gets shared in a timely fashion.



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Montana Extension Master Gardener Response to General Meeting Questions

by Sarah Eilers

I wanted to get back to the Association about a few of the points that were raised during the meeting.

The first point I would like to clarify is that Montana State University and Montana State University Extension do not release names of individuals participating in events/activities to groups outside of the university.

Regarding having association members at new MG classes; a representative or two from the Association could potentially come and present to the new class of Master Gardeners and explain the role of the Association. At that time, they could have a sign-up sheet or leave flyers. This would allow the Association representatives to get to know the new participants. Maybe the Association could hold a coffee break for new MG participants.

Anything that identifies individuals, like a Master Gardener directory, would need the approval of the person whose information will be shared. A photo release form and a signed letter stating that their information can be shared should be obtained. If an Extension Master Gardener directory is available, it cannot be used to solicit membership for a non-profit.

Priority will be given to new students in participating in Level 1 or 2 courses. All students will be required to pay the full course fee to fund the supplies for labs. If an active MG wants to participate in Master Gardener classes, they will need to pay for the class. If they want to support the MG Program by volunteering to help teach the class, they should contact the local county agent, in this case Heidi, to find out when she might need their help.

Finally, it came up about class size. I reached out to a professor in Adult and Higher Education who shared this with me.

My experience has been that the 8–12 range works well for adult learners. It depends on the group dynamics, the pedagogy/andragogy and according to http://also-chicago.org/also_site/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Adult-Education-Toolkit_Updated_022814.pdf, “Based on current literature, the best class size estimate is approximately 15 students per classroom if you are

teaching face-to-face, although debate still rages around a specific number. Smaller class sizes make it easier to break into groups or work on activities and use other learning methods besides lecture.”

I completely understand that people want higher numbers, but at the same time higher numbers do not equal a better learning experience. If there is demand for the class, I am sure that Heidi would be willing to offer it twice a year.

Finally, if you have not been receiving emails for me, there are a few things to check. First, keep an eye on your Spam folder. Once you identify an email as safe, it should be moved to your priority mailbox. The next step is to go into the Volunteer Management System (VMS) and check your account. On the top right corner under your name is an ‘Edit Account’ button. Once in, you can check your email. If neither of these actions remediate the issue, please contact Sarah.

Currently, all reporting systems related to the Master Gardener Program are up and running.

If there are more questions about the Montana Extension Master Gardener Program, please contact Sarah directly.



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Summaries of Yellowstone County Master Gardener Association Quarterly Meetings

by Sherry Doty, Secretary, YCMGA

19TH JULY, 2023 MEETING

Old Business

Master Gardener List: Mike asked if a Master Gardener list could be provided to all members. Heidi said she could not automatically send out a list without approval from each Master Gardener. Heidi said we could keep directories for the different groups, such as the YCMGA.

Mike asked if we still could create a Master Gardener list for those who agree to having their info on the list. Included would just be the name, e-mail address and phone number. Sherry will send out an e-mail to YCMGA members for approval to share their info with just YCMGA members. Heidi will try to do the same with the Master Gardener members.

Tours: Paul said he has called St. John's United (Hydroponics) Center for a possible tour. He has not heard back and will continue to pursue the tour request. Mike made a motion to donate to the center if they do not charge us a fee. Roberta seconded. All in favor.

Plant Sale Debrief: Paul said the plant sale was a success. Some discussion about requests from shoppers. We plan to have another sale next year.

3 Ways of Gardening Class: Paul shared the newspaper article about gardening and the author of *Outside Style* by Ryan McEnaney. His book is about the three gardening personalities to determine your gardening style. He also shared the e-mails asking Ryan to do a class based on his book. In his response, Ryan asked if we would be able to cover his travel expenses. There was

some discussion about the expenses, and we all agreed that Paul would talk with Ryan about Zoom and what he would expect if he did travel to Montana. Heidi suggested to also keep his rep, Eric Celmer, in the loop. The library was mentioned as a venue. Heidi gave us a list of dates and times the library community room was open in August and October. Paul will ask Ryan if any of these dates are available for him. Paul and Steve suggested we set a \$300 limit for a stipend. Roberta made a motion to approve the stipend. Mike seconded. All approved.

New Business

Greenhouse Update: Paul and Mike discussed leveling the growing areas of the greenhouse because it is uneven and creates puddles in certain areas when watering. They also mentioned getting a heater and paving stones. Mike will communicate with Joann about Metra Project budget for the greenhouse. Mike will shop for pavers. Sherry made a motion to provide a limit of \$50 for the pavers. Amanda seconded. All approved.

Metra Demo Garden Fence: Heidi said Joann wants to put in a new, taller chain link fence with some sort of wire at the top for the protection of the garden. Critters are crawling over the current fence into the garden and feeding on the plants and vegetables. There was also a request to move the square foot garden over to the demo garden and expand it. Mike suggested having Joann check on fencing prices, etc., and report back to us.

Plant-a-Palooza: Mike suggested having a Plant-a-Palooza to bring people together in the spring. Members could meet for lunch and trade plants.

Fall BBQ and Plant Trade: Paul asked if we should have our annual BBQ in the fall. Possible dates: September 21st or 28th between 5 and 7 pm.

20TH SEPTEMBER, 2023 MEETING

Old Business

Metra Demo Garden Fence: Heidi will check on what it will take to enhance the fence and possibly keep the critters out. We have not heard from Joann on her requests.

Tours: Paul said he has called St. John's United (Hydroponics) Center for a possible tour. He has called about 15 times. Steve suggested dropping in to see if they are still in business. Paul plans to visit the Center.

Worm Farm: Paul suggested we contact the Hungry Worm Farm for a possible tour. Paul has called and is waiting for an answer.

BBQ/Picnic: The picnic was discussed. Paul collected all the door prizes to give away.

Field Guide to Outside Styles

Gardening Class: The class will be held at the Billings Public Library on Tuesday, October 10 at 5:30 pm.

New Business

Seed Library Update: Patti Doble shared that the Seed Library group has been doing classes one time a month and they may be changing to less often. Patti is requesting the seed library group and the association work in conjunction with the classes.

Board Meeting Minutes: Sherry asked and will send the minutes to all

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Master Gardener Picnic 2023

Photos by Sheri Kisch

Yellowstone County Master Gardener Association hosted a BBQ and pot luck picnic on Thursday, September 21st in the 4H building at MetraPark. It was moved indoors due to unseasonably cold weather.



From left: Plant exchange table, Joann's garden tasting table, and drawing table



SUMMARY OF GENERAL MEETING

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association members after Board approval.

Board Membership: We had a discussion of Article 9 Section 1 paragraph D. Heidi mentioned that an association member can visit the Master Gardener classes to share association information and hand out application forms.

Email from Sarah Eilers: Sherry read an email sent to her from Sarah responding to some of the questions that came up at the meeting that was held on September 11, 2023. Sherry will forward this email to the association members.

Master Gardener Lists: Heidi is still working on the list from the questionnaire that was sent to all Master Gardeners and is planning to contact persons who have not responded.

These Really Do Work!

by Sherry Kisch

If you are having trouble with flies, wasps, yellowjackets and apple moths, get a two-liter bottle and add:

½ cup white sugar,
½ cup apple cider vinegar,
1 cup water.

Swish it around and tie a string to the top of the bottle and hang it in a tree. It does attract all of the above but not honeybees.

Please do not use pop or juice to refill. You will attract and kill bees.



Master Gardener Program is 50!

by Suri Lunde

The Master Gardener Program was founded in 1973 at the Washington State University (WSU) Extension Program within the College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences (CANHRS). The Extension office faced an overwhelming demand for gardening ideas in the area in the early 1970s as interest in gardening spread.

Area Extension faculty members, Bill Scheer and David Gibby, had the inspiration to enlist volunteers to meet the public's need for knowledge, thus pioneering a new way to deliver gardening support at scale. Their idea was to 'teach the teachers', volunteers who would be university educated on the science behind gardening, and then offer that knowledge for free to the general public. Advertisements for their first class attracted more than 600 applicants; 200 were accepted into that first training session. The Master Gardener program was born.

David Gibby left WSU at the end of 1973 and was replaced by Sharon Collman. Sharon built a solid foundation for the program within Washington State as well as promoted the expansion of the program. She also helped other Extension offices establish Master Gardener programs in other states and interested land grant universities across the country despite the long hours and tight budgetary constraints.

From the outset the Program's mission has been to engage university-trained volunteers to empower and sustain diverse communities with relevant, unbiased, research-based horticulture and environmental stewardship education. Best practices are taught for creating sustainable landscapes that enhance and protect natural resources and improve the health and well-being of individuals and communities. New volunteers are trained in foundational knowledge to become horticultural educators in their communities. Trained volunteers must continue their educational development in subsequent years to stay abreast of current



research and the ever-changing environment.

The needs of communities have evolved over the years. In the early days, Master Gardeners mostly looked into flowers and shrubs. Nowadays, Master Gardeners are working with food gardens, growing food for local food banks, improving soil health, conserving water in landscapes, and dealing with climate change.

Today, the Master Gardener concept has been replicated across the United States and internationally with about 85,000 volunteers certified as Extension Master Gardeners.

To celebrate this Golden Anniversary, local Master Gardener programs are encouraged to host their own 50th celebration and recognise the impact that

the programs have in their communities. It is a chance to show the world that Master Gardeners are visionaries: hardworking volunteers who believe in the impact that education and engagement can have on communities and neighbors.

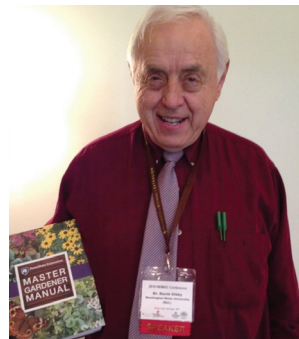
With recent changes in the MSU Extension Master Gardener Program, local Master Gardeners may want to throw a celebration in 2024 instead. After all, 51 and a season late is not necessarily a bad thing!

Source:

<https://mastergardener.wsu.edu/who-we-are/50-years/>



Bill Scheer



David Gibby



Sharon Collman

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