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Sprinklings

ST. CROIX VALLEY MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

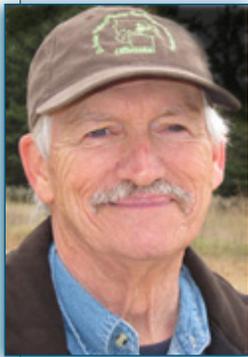
<http://scvmga.weebly.com>

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2014



President's Message

The past two years have been interesting, and have gone by rapidly. I have been proud and privileged to serve you with the assistance of the rest of the Board. Several "firsts" happened this year: two meetings were canceled because of the extreme cold, and membership surpassed the 200 number (I have never seen Deb Pederstuen happier with membership numbers). Garden U, of course, went well as it always does, with Carolyn Barrette and her helpers planning the whole program. We now have signs showing the driveway turns for meetings; they are yellow with changeable information.



Duke O'Brien

We held a plant sale at the Octagon House in Hudson, where we raised much of the money that is distributed in grants and a scholarship; the setup and sale both took place on rainy days. Both county fairs, St. Croix and Pierce, had booths that were staffed by members of the SCVMGA and went well. SCVMGA clothing was sold by Kathy Beebe so we can easily be identified at any meetings or training we attend. The SCVMGA brochure as well as the information cards were updated.

This was a difficult growing year and not all gardens grew well. Some areas had lots of rain early, but were drier than expected during the last half of the season. I hope you were in an area where the moisture was more balanced.

Remember, we have our November meeting to vote for all of our new people in the various open positions, so come and vote; your participation is appreciated.

Voting, grant projects, year-in-review

by Carolyn Barrette

Our November meeting at the Unitarian Society Church will feature grant recipients of our annual Master Gardener grants given each May. The grants, you recall, are funded from the proceeds of the June Octagon House Plant Sale and Garden U.

Three grant recipients spoke at our October meeting.

November's recipients will be Karen Jilek, Hudson Hospital; Julie Hawley, Glenwood City Community Garden; Kathy Gerats, Rock Elm Skyrockets 4-H club; Lizzie Schousek, butterfly garden at Houlton School; Barb Nelson, Family Resource Center in Baldwin; and Debby Walters, newly acquired land for environmental development. Each will provide a short presentation on how they used the MG grant.

In addition, we will vote on board officers and hear a peppy year-end wrapup from our Master Gardener Horticulture Educator Diana Alfuth. Come hear what all we have been doing this past year. You can also read about it in Deb Pederstuen's year-end report. (pp 4-6)

There will be no meeting in December. Enjoy the deer hunting, turkey, and holidays.

6:45 p.m.
Thursday, Nov. 20
Unitarian Universalist Society
N8010 State Road 65
River Falls

Have you RENEWED your membership?

Avoid the \$10 late fee and renew before Dec. 31.

Graduate of Fall 2014 MGV course - \$10

Individual member - \$15

Family (all must qualify) - \$20

<http://scvmga.weebly.com/new-member-sign-up.html>

Contact: debnrick@gmail.com



2014 SCVMGA Scholarship Recipient

Pursuing a lifelong dream, student is grateful for MGV scholarship

By Colleen Callahan

Walking through gardens at the end of the day is one of Nicholas Peter's favorite passions.

"I love looking at the changes in plant migrations, what needs pruning, seeing the whole growth process and the designing results," he says.

This joy of discovery led Nicholas, 20, to major in Horticulture/Landscape Design at UW-River Falls two years ago.

Raised in Athens, Wis., a rural community near Wausau, Nicholas was active in FFA and the 4-H Gardening Club, whose leader was a MGV. The club's projects included maintaining plots in local parks and hosting garden walks.

Community involvement is important to Nicholas. "I enjoy interacting with and educating the public very much." Perhaps that's the reason he contemplates working at a botanic garden one day. That would mean getting a Master's Degree in Public Horticulture. He's researching graduate schools now, and if those classes are anything like his undergraduate courses, Nicholas will have a great time.

Right now, he's excited about a research project on the timing and type of pinching of chrysanthemums. He's also taking twin courses on native shrubs and staple perennials, where students must walk through campus identifying dozens of species.

One of his favorites is *Calamagrostis acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' feather reed grass. "It's a staple plant, gives structure for summer and makes a good backdrop."

Nicholas incorporates backdrops into his landscape design at home where he creates a gradual flow from manicured to natural settings. "The landscape beds



Nicholas holds samples of a research project from his Greenhouse Management course. The class received 'Pittsburgh Purple' chrysanthemum cultivars as 1-inch cuttings and are testing two pinching practices: when to pinch and how much to pinch to encourage more blooms. The plant on the right was pinched soft (buds only) on Sept. 11. The plant on the left was pinched hard (apical leaves) two weeks later. Although the plant on the left is shorter, it's fuller and will likely produce more blossoms.

near the house are more structured, but as they work outward, I let them intertwine and be free."

Nicholas also plants day lilies and spireas. "I'm a fan of spireas," he says. "They're staple and maintainable. I leave them for three years and then mow them to the ground to rejuvenate."

Nicholas credits both sets of grandparents for turning him into a gardener. "I grew up helping in the vegetable and flower gardens, and I help them still today," he says. "I check on everything when I go home. I just pruned my grandmother's hydrangea."

Being a few hours from home was one reason

Nicholas selected UW-River Falls. "Madison and River Falls are the only ones in the state with a Horticulture major," he says. "River Falls is smaller and closer, and in high school I got to know some UW-RF professors at FFA events."

Nicholas has nothing but praise for his teachers. And one of them, Diana Alfuth, Pierce County UW-Extension Horticulture Educator, was delighted to hear that he received the SCVMGA scholarship. "I had Nick in my Landscape Design class and he is a wonderful and enthusiastic student and person," she says. "He's very talented and motivated."

For Nicholas, the \$1,000 scholarship means more than financial aid for himself. It's about the impact it has on the field, he says, because "the MG scholarship encourages students to pursue horticulture as a lifelong career." In a thank-you note, he wrote: "It is truly you [SCVMGA] and your dedication to keep education at the forefront that keeps the horticultural industry green and growing."

Master Gardeners help 570 kids identify perilous plants

by Sheila DeRosier

Diana Alfuth, Horticulture Educator for Pierce County UW-Extension, and Master Gardener Volunteers Colleen Callahan, Heather Lacke and I had the pleasure of teaching 4th graders about Perilous Plants at the Pierce County Farm & Rural Safety Days.

The event was held on Oct. 1 and 2 at the Pierce County Fairgrounds in Ellsworth, and was attended by 570 delightful and inquisitive students. They asked a lot of good questions and enjoyed sharing some of their experiences with plants.

Eleven sessions were held each day and covered the topics of Electrical Safety, ATV Safety, Fire Safety, PTO Safety, Grain Safety, Lawn Safety, First Aid, Chemical Safety, Animal Handling, Protection Connection (Public Health Nurses), and

of course, Perilous Plants.

To enhance the presentations, Diana created a display board with pictures of perilous plants such as wild parsnip, poison ivy, mushrooms and more. We also had several samples of actual plants such as burdock, dried wild parsnip, roses, prickly ash, clumps of buckthorn berries, chokecherries, and wild grapes.

Did you know that burdock burs were the inspiration behind the invention of Velcro? Interestingly, when we asked what product was developed thanks to burdock burs, every group came up with the correct answer!

If you're thinking about volunteering for this event, I highly recommend it. It was a truly enjoyable experience.



PHOTO BY HEATHER LACKE



PHOTO BY SHEILA DEROSIER

MGVs Sheila DeRosier (top) and Heather Lacke (bottom) show examples of perilous plants to 4th graders.



PHOTO BY BARB BEAR

Anita Voiles (above) presented the results of her grant project at the October meeting. She planted hydrangeas in Windmill Park, Hammond. Other presenters included Sandy Madsen who improved the rain garden, created a vegetable garden and established a compost bin at Houlton Elementary; and Zeke Schwarz, who removed buckthorn and planted trees at Bridge House in Hudson for an Eagle Scout project.

October Meeting

Food plots, grant projects discussed at meeting

by Sandy Madsen and Suzy Naschansky

Wildlife need food, shelter, air, water and companionship for survival, according to Trent Kowalchuk, guest speaker at the October meeting. If any of these things are missing, they must adapt or evolve to keep their numbers from declining. When a food source is depleted, available food is low quality, or the animal population is too great for the food supply, a food plot may be desired.

A food plot is a small area with supplemental food sources for a variety of wildlife. Food plots may serve as a food source for a short duration of time, or even as a resting and recharging spot during migration. Examples of food plots include unharvested corn, restored prairie, a windbreak, tree plantings, clear-cut woodlots and flowerbeds. Food plots are often intended for specific animals such as deer, but they can also service song birds, insects and small mammals.

Some ideas for plantings are corn or soybeans (May/June), alfalfa or clover (June), and brassicas (July). Other popular items include grains, sunflowers, chicory, rapeseed, dogwood, hazelnut, highbush cranberry, apple, crabapple, black cherry, mountain ash, oak, black walnut, bitternut hickory, basswood, and hostas.

Membership News

by Deb Pederstuen

I'm excited to announce our membership has grown to 202 members! Joining this fall were Sheila DeRosier of Somerset and Gail Behr of Spring Valley. Sheila, a 2013 MGV intern, says she "finally found time to join." Gail, a 2009 MGV graduate, was a member for three years, took a break, and is now back. We welcome them both to our growing association.

We invite all the graduates of the 2014 MGV Level 1 Training Class to attend our January 22, 2015 Open House at the Unitarian Church in River Falls.

Our condolences to Julie Walsh of New Richmond who lost her husband on October 23 after a 2½ year battle with cancer. Julie is a third-year MGV.

Don't Wait – Renew Your Membership Today! See Page 1 for a direct link to the membership form. The annual Wisconsin MGV state fee of \$5 is included in your dues and will be paid for you.

New 2015 Pierce County Fair Coordinator

Leroy Clark is gearing up to take over the reins from Helen Fryer and Susan Wallin. With four years of fair booth experience under his belt, he's ready to coordinate the event. Don't miss getting your favorite slot! Contact Leroy or sign up at the November meeting. As Leroy says, "I'll take any help I can get!" Our thanks to Helen and Susan for a successful 2014 fair!

New 2015 Volunteer Coordinator Team

They became friends at the 2013 MG training class and now Lisa Mosbey and Deb Schommer have teamed up. While Lisa is snowbirding in Nevada, Deb will be ready with sign-up sheets at the January Open House. Lisa got her Nevada MGV certification in 2009 and joined SCVMGA last September. To be certified in WI, she took Diana's 2013 class where she met Deb. We're confident they'll dig up enough volunteer opportunities as Pauline Goerdts did. Special thanks to Pauline for a job well done the past two years!

Need Coordinator for River Falls Farmers Market

Rick and Kari Hussey did a super job of keeping the MGV table staffed throughout the season. They're ready to pass the baton to a new coordinator. If you'd like to see MGV presence continue at the market, please contact one of your Pierce County Representatives, Kathy Beebe or Pat Tremaine.

November 2015 Election

Elections for open positions on the Board of Directors will take place at the November 20, 2014 meeting. All positions are two-year terms. For nominations or questions, contact anyone on the Nomination Committee. Currently, the Board of Directors' (BOD) meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday from 6-8 p.m. at the Hudson Public Library, 1st Street, Hudson. The following are nominations for the 2015 election:

President: Barb Peterson
 Vice President: Trent Kowalchuk
 Treasurer: Jackie Daharsh
 St. Croix Co. Rep-Director 2: Barb Kolbe
 Pierce Co. Rep-Director 2: Pat Tremaine

Respectfully submitted by Nomination Committee: Donna Davis, Deb Pederstuen, JoAnn Ryan, Kathy Beebe

2014 YEAR IN REVIEW

January

TWELVE of the 38 original members are still active in SCVMGA since mid-1997. Thanks and appreciation to Carolyn Barrette, Debbie & Jim Barron, Jill Berke, Daphne & Tom Brackley, Marilyn Gorham, Wendy Kramer, Kathleen Oss, Betty Schultz, Margaret Smith, and Peg Wastell for preparing the groundwork!

NEW VICE PRESIDENT Barb Peterson replaced Linda Bertram, who served only year 4 of Jerry Olson's two terms. Barb was new to the board, but not to committee work. Weeks after her 2008 MG class, Barb took charge of Hospitality where she served three years (2009-2011).

JANUARY OPEN HOUSE was postponed until March 27 meeting because of the severely cold weather. Members were notified by an impromptu calling committee.

NEW SCHOLARSHIP CONTACT is Treasurer, Jackie Daharsh. Thanks to Kerry Christopherson for drawing up the guidelines in 2011 for our UW-RF Foundation \$1000 scholarship awarded every other year.

February

FEBRUARY MEETING was canceled due to cold weather.

AUDIT COMMITTEE reported Treasurer Jackie Daharsh's 2013 records to be well organized & documented. THANKS to Coordinator Kathy Beebe, Connie Klecker, Pat Tremaine, and Peg Wastell!

FIRST COMMITTEE SURVEY. Marilyn Gorham, WIMGA Rep, gave members a chance to express opinions & suggest improvements. Only 7 members responded. Deb Pederstuen provided a descriptive list of the committees. Committee restructuring is planned.

NEW WEBMASTER Ellen Montgomery, a 2013 MGV intern, dug right in to making website improvements after training with Lisa Dembouski. Over 100 hits on a mid-October day

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is a good indication of website usage. Weebly costs are \$71.80 every two yrs. **NEW TOUR COMMITTEE COORDINATOR** Ron Campbell recruited two MGVs to help him find and schedule both private and public garden tours. Check out SCVMGA website for NEW section on Events/Garden Tours.

March

13TH ANNUAL GARDEN U on March 15 drew 156 attendees at Ready Randy's in New Richmond (3rd year). A great value for \$30. Presenters: EMILIE JUSTEN, "What's New in Invasive Plants?"; DAVID ZLEZAK, "What are the Best Trees to Plant?"; and DAVE PAULSON, "Woody Plant Samples w/Q & A session." Profits of \$587 applied toward grants. Thanks to Carolyn Barrette, Garden U Coordinator, and all her volunteers for a job well done! **STEVE GONZALEZ**, PAST PRESIDENT OF ORCHID SOCIETY, shared growing tips and demonstrated how to repot a Phalaenopsis orchid at the New Member Open House March 27 meeting. Only 52 members attended due to poor road conditions. Six 2013 interns had mini-tours led by board members, enjoyed Domino's pizza and Brad Kincaid's 2013 slide show. Open House expenses were \$148. Diana Alfuth presented MGv certificates, including Carolyn Barrette's special recognition for 2500 lifetime volunteer service hours. Donna Davis, Deb Pederstuen, and Peg Wastell received 1000 hour lifetime awards.

April

LISA DEMBOUSKI, SCVMGA WEBMASTER, gave a tutorial on "How to Navigate the Website" at the River Falls Public Library for 64 members at the April meeting. Step-by-step, she demonstrated how to access and share news & photos. We're forever grateful to her for creating our website initially called, THE WEEBLY, in April, 2012 and maintaining it the past three years. Lisa transferred to MN for a teaching position this summer.

14TH ANNUAL COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM awarded \$2,285 in grants to 11 applicants. Possibly two canceled meetings and lack of publicity in the Hudson area (failed to print article) affected the reduced number of 14 applications. THANKS to Dianne Wright,

Coordinator, and three active grant committee members.

5TH ANNIVERSARY at Unitarian facility at River Falls. First meeting was 4/22/10. This year only four meetings were held there due to Jan. and Feb. cancellations, two field trips, and three offsite meetings.

May

HEIDI DOERING, UW-Ext Horticultural Educator- St. Croix Co., discussed **PLANTING FOR POLLINATORS** with 52 members at the Unitarian on May 22. She discussed the need to plant pollinators, the beneficial insects that pollinate our plants, and the need for developing a habitat for pollinators. **SECOND YEAR SEED TRIALS GARDEN GROUP** Coordinator Peg Wastell reported 40 MGVs tested cilantro, sweet bell peppers, beets, kale, romaine lettuce, zucchini, radish, and nasturtium in their gardens and in 5 community gardens. Heavy rains and a cool spring reduced germination. Results of seed trials are on the SCVMGA website and featured at both county fairs. Also featured in the Eau Claire-Leader Telegraph.

THIRD YEAR UW-EXT DEMONSTRATION AND LEARNING GARDEN (DLG) in River Falls. Coordinator Diana Alfuth recruited Ellsworth HS students to plant seeds in early spring & MGVs to plant & maintain the gardens, including a "tea garden" of herbs and a "soup garden," plus annuals to attract pollinators. First year for running water and fencing. The garden gate and sign crafted by MGv Leroy Clark welcomed the public at the September Garden Walk where 14 varieties of cherry tomatoes were sampled. Grow to Share Volunteers harvested the produce.

June

TENTH ANNUAL PLANT SALE was held at the Octagon House Saturday 6/07/14 (9am-1pm). Plant sale coordinators Corky Weeks and Heather Lane, and volunteers didn't allow the cold, wet soggy day to dampen their successful sales of \$3,100 which supports the grant program. Camp St. Croix and grant recipients scooped up the leftover plants. We donated \$100 to St. Croix Historical Society for use of the Octagon House property.

TED ANDRLE passed away at the Com-

forts of Home in River Falls on June 14, 2014. Ted was a very likeable guy who proudly earned his volunteer hours tending the Clifton Town Hall gardens and manning the Pierce Co. Fair booth. Two of his nine years in SCVMGA (2003-2011) were spent as Pierce Co. Rep (2004-2005) on the BOD.

GOLDFINCH FARMS TOUR was held with Heidi Doering, co-host, and Byron Gjevre, co-owner of Goldfinch Farms, a commercial cut flower producer east of Baldwin for 55 members.

NEW RIVER FALLS FARMERS MARKET COORDINATORS Rick & Kari Hussey reported 7 MGVs answered about 4 questions per Saturday - 8am to noon from June-October. THANKS to Bev Hoppe in 2013 and to the Husseys for serving 13 Saturdays due to lack of volunteers. Coordinator's position is available.

HUDSON FARMERS MARKET. Second Year Coordinator Janet Jones reported 11 MGVs answered 6-7 questions per week on Thursdays & sold 10 cookbooks. Yippee! THANKS to Jackie Daharsh's donated umbrella and stand which resolved the sun/asphalt heat safety issue.

CAROL WILCOX resigned from her position as Sprinklings Editor to pursue other kinds of volunteer service. She was an awesome dedicated Editor. THANKS to Carol for keeping us informed the past three years.

WESTERN WISCONSIN WINTER DIEBACK SURVEY -Marilyn Gorham, SCVMGA State Rep., compiled results to determine which plants in our area were most able to withstand & recover from the 2014 severe winter.

July

NEW SPRINKLINGS EDITOR Colleen Callahan, a 2013 intern, was excited to take over for Carol Wilcox. Being a retired journalism professor, she's "having fun" designing and reporting.

FIRST ASSISTANT EDITOR for SPRINKLINGS & WEBSITE Suzy Naschansky, a 2013 intern with computer expertise, has been helpful to both Editor Colleen and Webmaster Ellen and in revising the SCVMGA brochure.

HEIDI DOERING, UW-Ext Hort. Educator, hosted the July 24th meeting for 53 members & 5 guests at her home NW

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of Roberts. A walk through her gardens revealed curly willow and dogwood fields, a unique tomato trellis system using old willow branches and succession plantings of peas. She discussed her basket weaving processes. Originally scheduled Straw Bale Garden Tour at Roxanne Kiekhofer's may be offered another year.

SCVMGA BROCHURE and BUSINESS CARDS were updated since last printing in 2011 with our website address, new photos, logos, and activities. Copies available from Jackie Daharsh.

GARDENING WITH NATIVE PLANTS Garden Group 3rd year Coordinator Pat Tremaine & five MGVs charted phenological records for 2014 & toured native woodlands and prairies, including Prescott's Freedom Park, Carpenter Nature Center and the Outback Nursery near Hastings, MN.

NEW ST. CROIX CO. FAIR COORDINATORS Brenda Bodelson, Yvonne Koch-Proctor, & Norma Rudesill recruited 22 MGVs for 2014. Jerry Bridge, 2013 intern/certified MG, brought his exclusive collection of insects & fungi samples & two electric microscopes which were a big draw. Also had Peg Wastell's Plant Trial Results & Yvonne Koch-Proctor's sensory potted herbs, new kid's drawing board, & a kid's critter box.

August

CR STEPHENS at STILL H2O Stillwater shared the requirements and science of hydroponics with 45 members on Aug. 28. Don Edison discussed growing 100% edible fodder for livestock w/o soil. Pat Cleary offered wine samples (sweet dandelion wine) after explaining process and tools for wine-making.

PIERCE COUNTY FAIR COORDINATORS JoAnn Nielson & Doris Schmitt for 2012-13 were not able to continue because of family commitments. Helen Fryer & Susan Wallin, 2014 Coordinators, recruited 25 MGVs. Highlighted was Jerry Bridge's microscopes and display of heirloom roses. THANKS to Helen and Susan for a successful 2014 fair. 2015 Fair Coordinator Leroy Clark is recruiting volunteers and accepting "any help he can get." New ladder and foot stool were purchased at \$105 and are stored with the UW-Extension Tent.

September

ANDREW SANKEY of CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND and a popular speaker at SCVMGA, spoke to 54 members +18 guests at the Sept. 18 meeting at the United Methodist Church in Hudson. His fourth visit here to show beautiful photos and point out design tips he used creating the English gardens around his home.

GLADIOLUS FARM TOUR at Jim Madison's, Clayton, was cancelled due to heavy rains that left fields muddy and glads infected with botrytis, an unsightly gray fungal mold.

FLOWER GARDEN DESIGN GROUP. (4th yr) Coordinator JoAnn Ryan shared basic design information and handy lists of perennials useful to MGVs when answering questions. Some of the 17 MGVs in the class talked about what they learned and what fun they had meeting more members.

1ST NEW VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR TEAM. Lisa Mosbey and Deb Schommer, both 2013 MG, interned, teamed up to organize our volunteer projects. Together, they'll update the website and have sign up sheets ready at the January Open House.

NEW RICHMOND SCVMGA COMMUNITY GARDEN Coordinator Carolyn Barrette reported 27 MGVs spent 349 hours and donated 1700 lbs. of produce. With 75 hrs. from students on New Richmond Service Day & 65 hrs. from St. Anne's Summer Stretch kids, 500 total volunteer hrs. were spent. The new finer shredded corn stalks for a weed block was ineffective. Grass has taken over the whole plot and solutions are needed. The utility shed purchased last year for tools was very appreciated.

MGV APPAREL SALESPERSON Kathy Beebe sold \$1,480 worth of SCVMGA labeled clothing in many different styles and colors. Proceeds of nearly \$400 are designated for education speakers and MG materials.

WESTERN DISTRICT SPECIALIZED MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER WORKSHOP was not held this year. Other Master Gardener Associations in the district were invited to host, but there was no response.

October

TRENT KOWALCHYK presented the "Basics of Food Plots" for wildlife and

their importance to Master Gardeners on Oct. 23. Three grant recipients reported on their projects.

MANDATED CHILD ABUSE REPORTER ONLINE TRAINING. To be certified in 2015, all MGVs needed to complete the online training to receive their certificate of completion and turn in to Diana before Oct. 1 with their Education/Volunteer Service Hours. The 30-60 minute session counted as 1 hour of continuing education.

November

ANNUAL MEETING. Election of officers, budget approval, five grant recipient reports, and Diana Alfuth's annual wrap-up will be covered.

WIMGA EDUCATIONAL GRANTS are available annually to MG, associations. Our grant committee successfully applied and received \$250 for 2015 Junior Garden U educational supplies and \$400 for 2015 Garden U speakers.

SECOND SCVMGA UW-RF Biennial \$1000 SCHOLARSHIP was awarded to Nicholas Peter of Athens, WI. Nicholas is a junior Horticulture major.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PRESIDENT DUKE O'BRIEN for serving the past two years. Having never served on the BOD, it wasn't an easy task. He's learned how much we rely on our volunteers.

MEETING SECRETARIES Sandy Madsen, Mary Pat Finnegan, and Ellen Montgomery did a fantastic job of documenting business meetings and speaker presentations for Sprinklings. **COOKBOOKS & FIELD GUIDE FUNDRAISERS.** Just a few cookbooks available from Jackie Daharsh. We sold 19 cookbooks @ \$12 each and 15 field guides @ \$4 each for a total of \$288 in gross sales.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP is 202 members—23 of 35 (66%) 2013 MG, class interns joined in addition to 4 new members and 175 renewals. Twenty-four members discontinued their membership.

FIFTEEN YEARS, we have been very fortunate to have our faithful friend, instructor, and mentor, Diana Alfuth, Pierce County UW-Extension Horticulture Educator. She brings fun and laughter to our meetings. My apologies if I failed to include your event in this Year in Review.

Growing Nyjer seed is for the birds

by **Suzy Naschansky**

I thought I would share the results of a small growing experiment I did this year. As a long-time grower of seeds for birds, I wanted to expand my usual selection of sunflowers and millet for the feathered friends that will be dining in my yard this winter. I decided to give Nyjer – those thin little black seeds that look like tiny wild rice – a try.

In 1998, the Wild Bird Feeding Industry trademarked the name Nyjer (pronounced NIGH-jure). Often incorrectly referred to as ‘thistle seed,’ Nyjer (*Guizotia abyssinica*) is actually in the Aster family. The plant is native to Africa, but is grown primarily in India and Ethiopia today. It is used for cooking oil and other products, and about 60,000 metric tons per year are imported into the U.S. as bird food. The USDA requires that imported Nyjer seed is heat treated to kill any potential dodder seed (*Cuscuta* sp.), a Federal noxious weed, that may contaminate a shipment.

After I finally received and planted my mail-order seeds, they germinated easily in just a few days in late May. I kept the plants in pots until I was sure I could identify them once I planted them out; they were not particularly attractive and looked ‘weedy’ with very large ovate-lanceolate leaves. Nyjer has a shallow taproot and will tolerate nearly any soil type. It needs sufficient moisture.

My plants grew very quickly and eventually reached a height of about five feet. I found the stems to be weak and brittle; even after staking the center stalks to keep the plants upright, many of the lateral branches snapped off at their base, and I did lose a couple of entire plants due to breakage.

Our area deer did not bother the Nyjer, although they may have just been too busy eating my green beans and Swiss chard to notice it. Nyjer is self-sterile and requires insects for cross-pollination – and the bees loved these plants. Each plant can have as many as 400 flowers (I did not count mine, but that seems accurate), and each flower lasts about a week. My plants flowered from mid-August until frost in October. They were not terribly attractive with all of the dead seed heads left intact, but that’s exactly what I was growing them for.

I harvested the entire plant stalks in late October and bundled them together loosely to finish drying under my deck, but I don’t anticipate taking the time to separate and clean the seeds in order to put them into a tube feeder. I’m hoping the birds in my yard will be willing to eat them straight from the dry stalks hanging off my deck in a few weeks.

Overall, I’m glad I tried this experiment, but I don’t think I’ll grow this again except as an oddity. Given the number of flowers produced and the time needed to hand harvest and process the numerous and very tiny seeds, I can understand why this particular type of bird food is relatively more expensive to purchase – and I’ve decided it’s worth it!



PHOTO COLLAGE BY SUZY NASCHANSKY

*Want to get a jump-start on your **education hours** while staying warm indoors? Check out UW-Extension Master Gardener Continuing Education opportunities:*

<http://scvmga.weebly.com/continuing-education.html>

Late-season offerings at Farmers Market

by Sheila DeRosier

"Ask a Master Gardener" volunteer

It's a brisk mid-October morning at the River Falls Farmers Market, and there is only one more Saturday before the market closes for the season. But there is still an abundance of fresh produce available, such as Brussels sprouts, potatoes, onions, pumpkins, apples, parsnips, corn, radishes, peppers, eggplants and more.

I can just picture some of the plump orange pumpkins being creatively turned into jack-o'-lanterns for Halloween, much to the delight of the young and the young at heart. Still other pumpkins will be used to create culinary delights. Yum!

Flowers, both fresh and dried, adorn the market, as well as maple syrup, cheese, preserves of all kinds, and even apple brats. It is a veritable cornucopia of delectable fare!

As shoppers casually meander through the market, musicians playing the accordion and guitar enhance the festive atmosphere.

I have joined the River Falls Farmers Market Coordinators, Rick and Kari Hussey at the "Ask a Master Gardener" table. They are both such wonderful people, and have spent numerous Saturdays here since the market opened in the spring.

Among the many benefits of volunteering at the Master Gardener table are meeting like-minded people, helping them with their questions, and expanding your knowledge in the process. It's so much fun to hear what others are doing with their gardens, and it gives you some great ideas!



Another benefit is shopping here! I purchased parsnips and Brussels sprouts to roast, red peppers to add to salads, corn on the cob, and a beautiful arrangement of dried hydrangeas that I may add to a wreath or simply place in a vase to admire.

But my favorite purchase of the day has to be the outstanding cheese from Falcon Foods, which is hand-crafted by students attending the University of Wisconsin—River Falls. Did you know that the University has a dairy farm and processing facility on the campus grounds right here in River Falls?

When I sampled the Raw Milk Cheddar, I detected

the pleasing texture and nutty undertones of Parmesan. I found it so delicious that I bought two packages! I also purchased Reggenti, which is blended with beets, poblano peppers, jalapeno peppers and shallots, and was specially selected by the University's Board of Regents this year. And finally, I had to have a block of the Sesame Thai Colby, which

incorporates Thai seasoning and sesame seeds into the cheese for a nicely balanced blend of flavor and heat.

As the market closes down and I gather my purchases to take home, I can't help but reflect on what an enjoyable morning I have had at the River Falls Farmers Market.



PHOTOS BY KARI HUSSEY



Coordinator Needed

River Falls Farmers Market "Ask a Master Gardener" booth

Contact Kathye Beebe at wbeebe@presenter.com or Pat Tremaine at pat@tremaine.net



PHOTO BY DEB PEDERSTUEN

After years of deer eating her plants, Deb had an electric fence installed.

Deb's Gardens

by Colleen Callahan

Her father's instructions to give customers a "baker's dozen" of sweet corn many years ago still resonate with Deb Pederstuen.

As Membership Coordinator for SCVMGA, Deb continues to give a little something extra.

It may mean spending extra time tracking down members who forgot to pay their dues, or finding a more efficient way to update the database, or devising new methods of communication among coordinators, board officers, and the general membership.

And at the heart of any organization lies the individual. Deb understands firsthand the importance of welcoming new members. She remembers attending her first MGV meetings in 1999 with apprehension. "I felt ignored," she said. "I felt everyone knew more about gardening than I did!"

A few months later when the position for membership coordinator opened, Deb volunteered. She admits it's a lot of work, but "it's been wonderful meeting so many people with a passion for gardening."

December and January are the busiest months as she prepares membership binders, creates new attendance sheets, updates the contact list for Board members and committee coordinators, and reviews the 29 job descriptions that she wrote with coordinators. Throughout the year, she collects member dues, pays state dues, maintains a current list of members,



Deb enjoys working from her kitchen table with a view of her backyard flower gardens.

Described by several as the "glue that holds us together," Deb strives to connect all the various elements that make up SCVMGA. She attends board meetings to keep officers informed, communicates with committee coordinators to find out their needs, keeps detailed records to ensure accuracy, and suggests ideas to make things flow more smoothly. In essence, she helps keep the organization vibrant.

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relays information from registration forms to respective committees, and writes articles for Sprinklings and the website.

For most people, that would be enough. But for Deb, who believes in the "baker's dozen" philosophy, it translates into giving a little bit more: she's served on nine committees, helped start a Mentor Program, organized four new garden groups, created a reference binder for the county fairs, rounded up all policies made by the Board

WANTED

MGV Mentors

Interested in helping new MGVs become acquainted with our organization? Our Mentor Program was established to provide support and advice to new members. If you'd like to become a mentor, contact Deb Pederstuen at debnick@gmail.com.

Speaker Suggestions

Ideas for 2015 topics, speakers and tours are welcome. Please contact Carolyn Barrette at tbarrett@presenter.com or 715-549-6438.

THANK-YOU

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through the years, and initiated small discussion groups during a regular meeting in 2010 and 2012 to acquaint members with one another. "The discussions were very well received," she said. "It'd be fun to repeat it every year."

And she still finds time to work in the gardens at Christian Community Home in Hudson where she coordinates six MGVs. "It's a lot of grunt work, but fun in getting to know more members," she said.

Digging, weeding, and pruning are not on Deb's list of favorite things to do. "I don't enjoy any of the gardening tasks because it's all hard work," she said. "I do them because I love the looks of a freshly weeded and mulched garden."

Her home gardens are a testament to all that hard work. An electric fenced-in vegetable garden is meticulously weeded between rows of the usual vegetables plus kohlrabi, parsnips and this year, Crimson Sweet watermelons. "I got my inspiration after tasting the melon at the UW-Extension Demonstration and Learning Garden in River Falls last year," she said.

With a degree in Dietetics, Deb grows vegetables without pesticides or herbicides and is always on the lookout for vegetables with greater

nutritional value, such as red cabbage instead of green cabbage.

She freezes, dries or preserves every vegetable, fruit and herb that grows in her backyard in Hudson, not too far from Willow River State Park. This year she canned more than 90 jars of tomatoes, sauces, jellies, salsa, and relishes.

In the winter, while Deb is eating the fruits of her labor, she spends time wrapped up in her favorite book, "Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Perennials," beside baskets of dried hydrangeas from her flower garden.

She also grows gladiolus and Star Gazer lilies, although they're relegated to the fenced-in plot, away from the roaming deer.

"I thought it was great living near the state park," she said, "until I found out that my backyard was the main thoroughfare for deer to get to the cornfields across the street. They soon tested my love for gardening."

Deb's love for gardening has strong roots. Growing up in Rice Lake, she helped her parents with gardening and canning chores. Her dad would plant sweet corn and strawberries for her and her siblings to sell at the end of the driveway.

That's where she learned about giving others a little bit extra.

Sprinklings

Sprinklings is a newsletter publication of the St. Croix Valley Master Gardeners Association and is published eight times a year: monthly issues in May, June, July and August; and bimonthly issues in September/October, November/December, January/February, and March/April. It is emailed to members in PDF format, and archived on the association's website at <http://scvmga.weebly.com>. All SCVMGA members are welcome to contribute articles, information, book reviews, or ideas on any horticultural topic. Submission deadline is the first Friday of the publication month. The next deadline is **Friday, Jan. 2** for the Jan/Feb issue. Please email submissions or inquiries to giverny@me.com.

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