



# Sprinklings

July-August 2020

ST. CROIX VALLEY MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

VOL 23 NO. 4

## "How does your garden grow?"

### July meeting via Zoom

As large group gatherings continue to be banned during the pandemic, the SCVMGA Board of Directors decided to conduct a virtual tour of SCVMGA members' gardens in place of its July meeting.

Members were asked to send photos of their gardens or individual plants to Karalyn Littlefield who will create a presentation for **Thursday, July 23 at 7 p.m.**

Members will receive an email with Zoom instructions shortly before the meeting begins. Note that the meeting is *NOT* acceptable for education credit.

### August meeting features creatures



Take photos of critters in your garden or yard for the Aug. 27 Zoom meeting. Send them to Karalyn Littlefield by **Aug. 24** via email at [littlefieldkaralyn@gmail.com](mailto:littlefieldkaralyn@gmail.com) or text her at 612-432-5264. Be sure to identify yourself in the text message.

### Coffee Talks, Happy Hours bring us together with mini-learning sessions

"At first, they were intended to be just a way to stay connected while everyone was stuck at home," says Diana Alfuth., Pierce County Horticulture Educator. "But then it morphed into something a little more educational and I started having 'mini-topics.' Then it made sense to allow it to count as continuing education, too."

Thus began the weekly virtual gatherings, alternating between morning Coffee Talks and evening Happy Hours on Thursdays. Topics include invasive plants, egg shells in gardens, bees, phenology, Japanese beetles, pollination, mushrooms, flooding effects on gardens, lily leaf beetle, watering tips, squash bugs, fertilizing, and powdery mildew.

"I especially love the way she debunks gardening myths like using epsom salts for fertilizer and she does it in such an entertaining way! She makes me laugh and in this awful time, that's a real gift," says Corky Weeks, a regular participant.

For members who can't join in, Diana will email a proprietary YouTube link. Contact [Diana](#).

### 'Guardian angel' keeps up with the times

Donning a face mask, the scarecrow at the UW-Extension Demonstration and Learning Garden in River Falls reflects the precautions of living in today's world.

The idea of a scarecrow originated with past MGV member Pat Tremaine, who dressed the scarecrow in new apparel each year.

She helped design the overall garden and because of her expertise in native plants, she created a native plant-pollinator plot that continues to this day.

When Pat passed away in 2015, Diana Alfuth asked Marilyn Gorham to take over the role of fashion designer.

"It became a 'garden angel' and was refreshed with clothing each year, including a SCVMGA t-shirt, each time in memory of Pat," says Marilyn.

When Junior Garden U selected a Peter Rabbit theme, the 'guardian' became Mr. McGregor complete with hoe, straw hat and rabbit repellent.

Last year, the theme was "Superheroes/Super-Foods" and the scarecrow turned into Spider-Man.

This year, Diana and Marilyn decided to focus on Covid-19. The garden also has a series of signs by Diana about social distancing, complete with some vegetables 'socially distanced' to demonstrate the meaning.



PHOTO BY DEB PEDERSTUEN



Spider-Man

PHOTO BY MARILYN GORHAM

# President's Message



Donna Davis

Summertime is half over and our weather has sure had its ups and downs so far. They told us that global warming may change our climate to be more like Kansas or Missouri, but with the heat, high humidity and rains, some days it seemed like Costa Rica! Mowing and weeding between rainstorms has been challenging. At least there has been less need to water but the weeds are growing overnight. Our plants and trees grew more this year with this weather, but that has caused less room between plants and not as much air circulation. Have you noticed that powdery mildew is showing up on some plants due to less space and air movement?

The best thing is that our gardens are blooming and looking great. It's a good year to take photographs of the plants and landscapes.

The Japanese Beetles have emerged and I try to collect them 2-3 times each day with a bowl of soapy water. The mosquitos are trying to have a banquet from my body so I have to wear long sleeves and pants when it's not too hot and use spray for protection. Monarchs are here now but I haven't yet found caterpillars to raise in ice cream buckets.

The deer have ravaged my hostas because I was late spraying them with a deterrent. They started on the daylily buds which I now have sprayed. I have found one annual flower they avoid: Angelonia. They have left them alone for three years!

I have been working at a local food shelf garden with raised beds that SCVMGA helped fund with a grant several years ago. This year I grew pea pods to have an earlier crop to donate. I planted the seeds on April 25 and have been picking peas since June 16. They are done now. With the heat and humidity, powdery mildew has shown up on the leaves and my fencing was not tall enough. I'm going to cut all the stems at the ground level to keep the roots in the soil and not disturb the carrots I have growing close by. I will plant green beans next for a fall crop. I have harvested one green pepper so far (Big Bertha), the onions look great and the tomato plants have lots of small ones starting. I donate the food to the local church food giveaways and to a low-income housing residence. The need for fresh vegetables and fruit is great this year. Please consider sharing extra produce from your garden with neighbors, friends and local food shelves. It will be greatly appreciated.



Meanwhile, I have joined several of the Zoom meetings that Diana has offered for our continuing education hours. Some are Thursday mornings and some are Thursday nights. I have a notebook handy to take notes and we get to ask questions and get ideas from each other. It has been great to see master gardener friends this way. I have yet to enter my continuing education hours on the MG website – a rainy day project.

Enjoy your gardens this summer!

## A bountiful New Richmond garden

by Donna Cadenhead

The garden is flourishing in its second year next to the St. Croix Service Center in New Richmond. We have already harvested over 70 pounds of turnips, 25 pounds of beans, 15 pounds of onions, 25 heads of Bok Choi, 20 heads of lettuce, 12 pounds of radishes and bunches of basil.

All of the produce has been donated to area food shelves. Still to come are beets, tomatoes, onions, beans, squash, chard and more lettuce, peas, turnips, cucumbers, pumpkins, and basil.



PHOTO BY DONNA CADENHEAD

## Members needed to design table covering

by Donna Davis

Barb Peterson and I went on a prairie tour and Prairie Enthusiasts had a stretchy table cover made with their own pictures. This would be a good thing to have for our events. It zips up the back and would hide any boxes and materials stored underneath the table. We could have several pictures on the top, sides, and front. If we use SCVMGA members' photos, we could save money on the design and copyright. We would like a few members for a committee to explore and design a cover. The board would need to approve it before ordering. Go to this [website](#) and look at their "stretch table covers." A 6-foot premium table cover might be a good option. If you are interested in helping, contact me at [donna-leedavis@att.com](mailto:donna-leedavis@att.com) or call 715-549-5941.

### Vegetable gardening expertise needed

Pierce County Hunger Prevention Council needs help planning a garden next to the Ellsworth food pantry. Work would start this fall with soil amendments for planting next year. Contact [Diana](#).

## Membership news

by Deb Pederstuen

This summer, two Master Gardener Volunteers from Hudson joined our ranks raising our total to 173 members! Lenore Hoolihan, a 20-year SCVMGA veteran, renewed her membership and MGV Nancy Braschler transferred to Hudson from Red Wing, Minn. As a Goodhue County MGV, Nancy's volunteer efforts focused on Red Wing's Pottery Pond Rain Garden, Discovery Garden, and Rattlesnake Bluff Trail.



PHOTO BY DEB PEDERSTUEN

### Nancy Braschler

Five private garden sales, between May 31 and June 20, were held in lieu of our annual SCVMGA plant sale at Hudson's Octagon House. Members were notified by weekly emails. The Board decided at their May meeting to offer "Private Garden Sales" as the University of Wisconsin's Covid-19 restrictions prevented us from holding a public sale. Matt Schmitz in Prescott, Leroy Clark in Beldenville, Carolyn Barrette in Hudson, and Peg Wastell in New Richmond sold flowers and vegetable plants. In Hudson, Michele McElmeel sold special lily cultivars. SCVMGA received \$321 in donations from the proceeds of these private sales.

Our new Equipment Manager, Barb Peterson, lives north of Hudson. We are grateful for Barb's offer to store our event essentials, including banquet tables, canopies, and resource books.

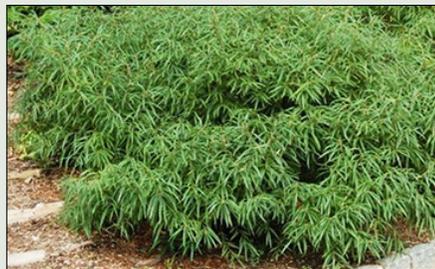
Our special thanks to JoAnn Ryan for storing our equipment for nearly four years in her garage. JoAnn also served as Board President in 2019, five years on the Nominations Committee, and six years as Group Leader for our Flower Garden Design Classes. In early August, JoAnn will be moving to Eagan's Active Senior Apartment Community where she'll be closer to her children.

## Matt's Picks

by Matt Schmitz

This woody shrub has lance-shaped fernlike leaves that when crushed have a sweet fragrance, which gave the plant its common name. This shrub spreads through underground stolons and will be a unique groundcover. It is native to Wisconsin and Minnesota and is the food source for the Gray Hairstreak butterfly caterpillar. It prefers sandy acid soils, but we have grown it successfully at the bare-root fields outside of Hastings, Minn. I would recommend purchasing container plants for your landscape.

MGV Matt Schmitz is an assistant foreman at Bailey Nurseries, St. Paul, Minn.



### Sweetfern (*Comptonia peregrina*)

2-4 ft. tall groundcover

Sun/part shade

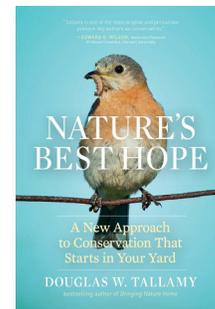


## Book Review

### Create a corner for native plants

by Debby Walters

As Master Gardeners, most of you have heard of Doug Tallamy and his book, "Bringing Nature Home." In that book he states that "gardeners have become important players in the management of our nation's wildlife. It is now within the power of individual gardeners to do something that we all dream of doing; to make a difference. In this case, the 'difference' will be to the future of biodiversity, to the native plants and animals of North America and the ecosystems that sustain them."



Timber Press  
February 2020  
256 pages

He has now written another book, "Nature's Best Hope," which expands on the ideas he promoted in "Bringing Nature Home." In it, he is asking people to contribute to a Homegrown National Park. Loss of habitat and habitat fragmentation affects insects, birds and animals and it is something that we have control over. Those creatures depend on the native plants that they have evolved with for food and shelter. To create a Homegrown National Park of native plants from coast to coast, Tallamy proposes individual landowners in cities, suburbs, rural areas plant native species and commit half of their mowed area to that end. If everyone did that, there would be corridors of habitat for nature to thrive. It would be lovely, but with American's appreciation of manicured lawns, perhaps not realistic. However, what if everyone would decide to devote a corner of their property to an assortment of native plants and incorporate more into our gardens? It would be a start.

Recently, I used the National Wildlife Federation and Audubon Society websites to access the number of native plants I actually have in my yard; unfortunately daylilies and hostas don't qualify. These useful sites list native plants by zip code and are an easy way to see what is native and what you might incorporate into your plantings. Even though I have native plants sprinkled in amongst my gardens and milkweed is beginning to run wild, my "native corner" currently has Pagoda Dogwood, Prairie Drop Seed, St. John's Wort (the native variety), New Jersey Tea, Fleabane (a lovely weed), American Hazelnut, Red Osier Dogwood, Regent Serviceberry, White Cedar and I hope to add some blueberries yet. I tried to neaten it up some this summer since the neighbors have to look at it, but for the first time, I had a Brown Thrasher visiting my yard!



Fleabane



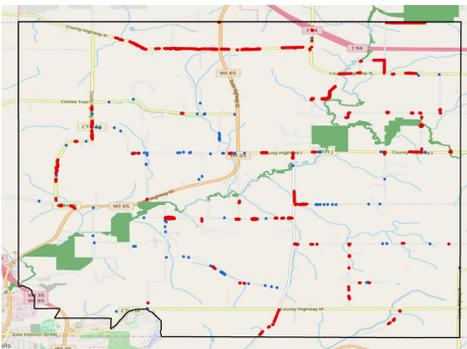
The flowers of wild parsnip look a bit like dillweed.

“Roadside plants are the gas stations, hotels, baby nurseries, grocery stores, rest stops for our birds, insects, butterflies and countless other species,” says Margaret. “These narrow corridors help wildlife survive, thrive and travel safely to larger habitats.”

It was this passion for nature that prompted Margaret to question the town’s decision to broadcast spray roadsides, which kills *all* plants. She rolled up her sleeves and got to work.

“It was a whole bunch of people working together to make it happen,” says Margaret. Around 20 landowners and MGVs attended a class by Diana Alfuth on plant ID and control. Niels Jorgensen, UW-Extension Geospatial Data Scientist, trained the group on an app used for mapping. UW-Extension Weed Specialist Mark Renz analyzed the mapping results (see map). And the town’s road committee joined in the effort to find new control options.

Mapping is the key. MGVs Marilyn Gorham, Karalyn Littlefield, Amanda Lawrence, Anita Justen and former



Map of wild parsnip in the Town of Kinnickinnic shows high-density areas in red and low-density areas in blue.

## Mapping to control an invasive species

### Wild Parsnip

Determined to stop her township from broadcast spraying all roadside ditches, MGV Margaret Smith set out to find an alternative method for eliminating invasive wild parsnip without killing valuable native plants. A partnership with UW-Extension, the town road committee, private homeowners, and MGVs provided the solution: mapping the township mile by mile. Spraying was then limited to high-density areas and volunteers removed the species in low-density areas. After three years, large swaths of wild parsnip along roadsides in the Town of Kinnickinnic have been eliminated.

MGV Denise Flaherty joined Margaret and homeowners in surveying and photographing parsnip patches along 79 miles of roads.

“The day I was out hunting wild parsnip was a beautiful day for a walk,” says Karalyn Littlefield. “The experience was rewarding. I’m particularly satisfied with our efforts as the results of our survey prevented blanket pesticide application.”

Marilyn Gorham remembers turning down a road while surveying and finding “it was alive with birds and butterflies feeding on the plants.” The area was identified as ‘clean,’ having no wild parsnips. “If this project wasn’t done, herbicides would have destroyed this important feeding ground,” she says.

Removal in low-density areas was accomplished with a parsnip predator, a special shovel that can cut the tap-



Parsnip predator

root two inches below the surface. An informative and entertaining video on using the parsnip predator can be found on the [Prairie Enthusiasts website](#).

After the survey, Margaret uprooted wild parsnip along 17.4 miles of roadsides, areas that would have been sprayed.

She credits the town road committee for its willingness to look at different options, and urges all towns and cities to include a specialist in native plants on their road/street committees. Who sits at the table when decisions

are made affects countless species.

“For me, it was important to speak up for the plants and animals who have no voice of their own,” she says.

### ‘Invader Crusader’



Margaret holds a wild parsnip she removed with a parsnip predator. She protects her skin from the sap with long pants, long sleeves and gloves – no exposed skin because the sap can cause severe burns.

Margaret was named an “Invader Crusader” for 2020 by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Diana Alfuth, Pierce County Horticulture Educator, nominated Margaret for her leadership in controlling wild parsnip in her area. “Margaret spearheaded an effort to collect information along the roadways, organized a group of volunteers to map the areas, and coordinated educational opportunities for local property owners,” wrote Diana. “This allowed the township to use the best control method, saving money on unneeded pesticide and protecting local wildflowers and pollinators.”

Margaret was one of four individuals to receive this year’s honor. It’s given to Wisconsin citizens and organizations for significant contributions to prevent, control or eradicate invasive species.

Congratulations, Margaret!

# Fresh produce and pasta salad

by Karalyn Littlefield

Wow, it is the hot time of the year. When the temperatures are high, I am not a fan of heating up the oven and multiple burners to create a meal. And, I like to cook so I imagine there are some of you who really do not like cooking during the hot days of summer or choose to use your time in outdoor activities. It is also a great time to take advantage of fresh produce from your garden or the farmers market. Now, is the time to create a delicious pasta salad.

According to Wikipedia, (please use your judgment on the credibility of my source), "Pasta salad is a salad dish prepared with one or more types of salad." The entry says it "almost always chilled" and "tossed in a vinegar, oil or mayonnaise-based dressing" that is "typically served as an appetizer, side dish or main course." To me, this says "use any pasta, add what you desire and eat it all day." You may interpret the definition any way you want. If we want to take this hyperbole further, we can examine if a pasta salad is really a salad. A salad, by dictionary reckoning, is a cold dish of various mixtures of raw or cooked vegetables. And guess how a salad is typically seasoned – with oil, vinegar, and other dressing (aka mayonnaise). So, there you have it, a pasta salad is pasta because it contains pasta of some shape. It is a salad because it contains vegetables. Lastly, it is a pasta salad because it is dressed with oil, vinegar or mayonnaise. Now, are you glad that you spent the 50 seconds that it took to read that paragraph? I am not even going to expound upon the preference of mayonnaise versus white salad dressing. I will present it interchangeably and you choose.

I am going to provide a master pasta salad recipe with suggestions for substitutions. I start with one box of pasta. I like radiatori because it is cool. Or the ever-present and easy-to-find, rotini, which allows the dressing to cling to its spirals. However, as ascertained in the above acclaim, use what you have or prefer.

Smoked turkey, chicken, ham, roast beef or smoked fish are a few options for the meat. Oh wait, you do not want to use meat. Ok, don't. I like to use meat so the pasta dish can be the main dish, however, Wikipedia gives us permission to serve our pasta salad as a side dish or appetizer. Replace the meat with roughly the same quantity of additional vegetables or cooked beans. Garbanzo (chickpea), black beans and cannellini are some of my go-to beans and canned increases efficiency and decreases heat in the kitchen.

And now, the ingredients that make a salad a salad – the vegetables and fruit. I am using an artist's license to include fruit with the vegetables. Grapes are easy to access year-round. If strawberries, blueberries or other firm berry or even mandarin orange segments are available, use them. The realm of vegetables is immense. The myriad variety is endless. I use carrots and celery, though cucumber, peas, green onions, cooked beets, radish, parsnip, tomato, corn, zucchini, summer squash, mushrooms and I can go on and on, though I will spare you, my faithful reader. If the vegetable you choose is hard, blanch it, cook it or shred it. I always recommend using onion of some type unless you have a food aversion to onion. The sting of the onion can be tamed by rinsing the cut pieces under

hot water and drained before using. Oops, I missed bell peppers, I guess I have inadvertently exposed a food aversion of mine.

As for the dressing, I start with white salad dressing or mayonnaise. However, oil and vinegar with the same herbs and spices make a great dressing, as well. Dissolve sugar in vinegar. Heating in the microwave will help. Then add oil (½ c. vinegar, 1 c. sugar, ½ c. oil). I am a super fan of herbs and use them alone or in combination in all things. I would add at least a cup of the more fresh delicate herbs, such as cilantro, basil, or parsley or a combination with a smaller amount of dill, mint, oregano, etc.

## Pasta Salad

Developed by  
Karalyn Littlefield



- 1 box (16 oz.) of pasta shape of choice, cooked in salted water, drained and rinsed in cold water.
- 3 cups carrots, peeled and shredded or fine dice
- 2-3 cups celery, fine diced or finely sliced
- ½ cup finely diced onion
- 4 cups cooked diced smoked turkey, or meat of choice, or substitute cooked beans
- 4 cups seedless grapes, cut in half if large
- Dressing
- 2 cups mayonnaise or white salad dressing
- 2 tbsp. sugar
- 2 tbsp. white vinegar
- 1 tsp. salt (adjust according to saltiness of ingredients)
- 1 tbsp. yellow mustard
- 2 tsp. dried basil
- Black pepper to taste
- Add cooked pasta to a large boil. Add vegetables and grapes.
- Mix dressing ingredients until dispersed evenly. Add dressing to boil. Stir until all ingredients are distributed. Taste and adjust salt and pepper. Refrigerate. Stir and taste for salt prior to serving.
- Serves 20-25.

## Sprinklings

[SCVMGA Website](#)

*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. All SCVMGA members are welcome to contribute articles on any horticultural topic. Please email submissions or inquiries to the editor.

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