



Sprinklings

UNDERLINED WORDS ARE ACTIVE LINKS

March-April 2021

ST. CROIX VALLEY MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

VOL 24 NO. 2

Annual plant sale back on track after last year's Covid cancellation

by Marilyn Gorham

The snow is melting, the sun is shining, the temperature is above freezing and our thoughts are turning to the SCVMGA Plant Sale. Covid cancelled our 2020 sale, but not this year.

We are excited that our annual sale will be held on Saturday, June 5 at the Octagon House in Hudson. The sale will be in compliance with the Covid-19 requirements in place at the time of the sale, protecting both our volunteers and our customers. Proceeds from the sale will again fund our annual Community Service Grants. You are critical to the sale's continued success.

Gardening is expected to be even more popular this summer than it was in 2020 so expect higher demand for our plants at this year's sale. If you are starting seeds for yourself, please consider planting extra and donating those plants. Herbs, annuals, vegetables and some perennials available at the sale all depend on the seedlings you raise.

Your garden renewal work and plant divides from your own gardens provide the hostas, daylilies and other perennials at the sale.



If your perennials need to be divided, save the extra divides and donate them to the sale. The earlier the divides are replanted, the larger the plants will be at sale time making them more attractive to our customers.

This year, we will group some plants into "curated gardens" such as a "shade garden," a "native garden" or a "pollinator garden." If we have enough annuals, some individual plants will be grouped together as preselected plantings for containers. An "herb garden" grouping of popular herbs may also be available if we have enough herbs contributed.

Please watch this newsletter and the website for updates and additional information as we get closer to sale time. Thank you again for your continued support with your time and talents. We can't do this sale without you!

If you have questions, please contact a Committee member: [Leroy Clark](#), [Renee Clark](#), [Cindy Gleason](#), [Marilyn Gorham](#), and [Christine McGinnis](#).

SCVMGA MONTHLY MEETINGS

Propagating plants, caring for peonies highlight March, April meetings

An inexpensive way to multiply your favorite plants is through do-it-yourself propagation. Techniques of planting from seed, cuttings, division, or grafting will be shared by David Zlesak, UW-River Falls horticulture professor, at the March Zoom meeting. He will focus on techniques and resources commonly available to home gardeners.

Caring, planting, and growing peonies is the topic at the April meeting. Sam and Helen Finazzo of [Fina Gardens](#) in Hillsdale, Wis., grow 15,000 plants on 60 acres. They're actively involved in the Wisconsin, Minnesota, Midwest, American, and Pacific Northwest Peony societies. They've been growing peonies since 1998.

Upcoming Meetings

Thursday, March 25

6:30 p.m. Business meeting
7 p.m. "Plant Propagation"

Thursday, April 22

6:30 p.m. Business meeting
7 p.m. "Peonies"

Members will receive a Zoom invitation via email.

Celebrating Master Gardeners



Statewide recognition for Wisconsin Master Gardener Volunteers will take place April 5-9 on MGV Facebook pages and via emails to all members.

A special "Shout-out" is scheduled to recognize 10 MGVs throughout the state for their contributions. One of the 10 is SCVMGA member Peg Wastell. Larry Meiller, host of "Garden Talk" on Wisconsin Public Radio, will tape the "Shout-outs" for MGV Facebook pages and special emails to be sent to all members.

Wednesday, April 7 is "Thank A Master Gardener Volunteer Day," asking the public to show their gratitude for the work of Master Gardeners across the state.

Enrollment Deadline Reminder

To remain active in the Online Reporting System (ORS) for 2021, you will need to complete an annual enrollment registration by **March 31**. Log on [here](#). Click on the ORS green box, then the Online Reporting System words. You will need to enter your username and password.

President's Message

I'm just going to go ahead and say it. Spring is here!!! Sure, we'll probably have a little more cold weather, and even some more snow, but that's just life up here in the northland. Hopefully a lot of you have gotten your vaccinations by now. I'm scheduled for my first shot in a little over a week.



Leroy Clark

In the meantime, I'm chomping at the bit to get started gardening. Most of my seeds are here, and the snow is disappearing fast.

It looks like we will have our plant sale this year! We will follow any guidelines still in place, with masks and social distancing etc., but it's a go! Hope you can get

your perennials divided and any spare divisions potted up for it. And please try to start a few extra seeds so we can have lots of annual plants too. The pandemic has caused a real increase in gardening, so there should be a great demand. Let's try to fill it as best as we can!



EPICGARDENING.COM

I hope all of you are able to make our Zoom meetings on the 4th Thursday of the month. The last one featured a cool presentation on the Monarch Butterfly migration to their winter quarters in Mexico.

This month will feature information on how to propagate plants for the home gardener.

Bare root trees for sale

by Debby Walters

Are you looking to improve the value of your property for birds, bees, and beneficial insects?

Research shows that what we plant makes a huge difference. Native trees and shrubs provide food and shelter for those species that add beauty to our world.

If you've read Doug Tallamy's "Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard," he promotes the idea of a homegrown national park from coast to coast. The key to its success is the plantings in our backyards.

Through an annual tree sale, the Botany Belles & Beaus Garden Club of Baldwin offers mainly native trees and shrubs to help with this goal.

This year 20 varieties of bare root trees and shrubs are available. The age and size of the trees

vary (note the size range on the order form). Individual trees or quantities can be purchased.

These evergreens and deciduous trees beautify yards and improve habitat. Bird, bat, and bee houses are also available for purchase. Click [here](#) for order forms.

Orders need to be placed by April 1. Trees will be available for pickup on Sunday, April 25 from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. at Paisley Cow located on HWY 12 in Baldwin.

Questions about ordering? Call 715-222-0021.

Proceeds from the sale fund projects of the Botany Belles and Beaus Garden Club. Maintaining plantings at Windmill and Creamery Park and supporting the prairie restoration project at Viking Elementary School are some of the projects. New members are always welcome!



BERKELEYHORT.COM

Rare Plant Monitoring Program

Four new populations of the endangered purple milkweed (*Asclepias purpurascens*) were discovered in Wisconsin last year by volunteers in the [Rare Plant Monitoring Program](#). Training is now available online through the Wisconsin DNR. Join others to find rare plants around the state. Participants learn GPS coordination, surveying techniques, and how to assess habitats.



BEN BOMKAMP, KERSTYN PERRITT
Purple Milkweed

WIMGA newsletter changes delivery system

Beginning this month, the newsletter of the Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association (WIMGA) will be emailed from the organization to local representatives, who will then forward to individual members. SCVMGA members will receive the newsletter from MGJ Deb Pederstuen.

Previously, the newsletter was emailed directly to individuals from the UW-Extension's Master Gardener Program office. Recent organizational changes within UW-Extension prompted the separation of duties between the Program office and WIMGA.



This month's issue features "Art Through the Eyes of Master Gardeners," "Caring for Garden Tools," "Individual Food Donations," "Indoor Seed Starting," a description of gardening in the Sonoran Desert, and a guide to creating beautiful landscapes by Melinda Myers, author and host of a syndicated radio/TV program.

A new president and vice president were elected recently. Jackie Shaffer, Waushara County, is the new president; and Hali Dessecker, Barron County, is the new vice president.

(The MG Program office in Madison will continue to email its publication, "Volunteer Vibe," to all Master Gardeners statewide.)

Membership News



Deb Pederstuen
Membership Director

Deb is a 1999 MGVC class graduate and our first Membership Director, beginning in 2000. Her mission has been to welcome and inform every new Master Gardener.

Our 2021 SCVMGA membership is finally complete! I'm pleased to announce we have 168 members – 157 MGVCs (91%) renewals and 11 new members.

To not meet our new members in person is very unfortunate. However, we're thankful for Zoom during this pandemic. We can still meet our members wherever they are! At our Feb. 25 meeting, Ann Leake greeted us from her granddaughter's home in Portland, Oregon.

OUR NEW MEMBERS

Nine of our new members are graduates of the first-ever virtual 2020 Fall Master Gardener Preparation Training course, taught by UW- Ext. Horticultural Outreach Specialists, Diana Alfuth and

Margaret Murphy. Residents from six counties, Eau Claire, Dunn, Chippewa, Polk, Pierce, and St. Croix participated. To obtain MGVC Intern status, graduates will complete a new online Onboarding course and pass both a Criminal Background Check and the final exam. The Onboarding course needs to be completed by March 31, 2021.

Four new St. Croix Co. members are **Joseph Koch** of Wilson, **Dana McKenna** of New Richmond, **Laura Sherar** of Baldwin, and **Koreen Theisen** of Houlton. Five new Pierce Co. members are **Richard** and **Tanya Franta**, and **Ann Leake** of River Falls, **Dwight Robinson** of Plum City, and **Niki Zimmer** of Ellsworth.

MGVC **Colleen Foxwell** of Amery is our new transfer from the former Polk Co. MGA. She joins MGVC **Cricket Lafond** of Amery who joined SCVMGA in mid-January.

SCVMGA MEMBER WINS A PRIZE

Our congratulations to **Carol Hokenson** of Somerset. She won a \$20 Rose Floral gift certificate, one of the three door prizes awarded at the Feb. 20th 2021

Western Wisconsin Spring Garden Seminar. Enjoy shopping, Carol!

SHOUT-OUT TO PEG

Kudos to **Peg Wastell**! She'll be recognized in the first Master Gardener Shout-Out Program, created by the MG Program Office to show gratitude for WI Master Gardeners' volunteer service. At the Feb 2nd Statewide Kickoff Event, ten MGVCs were selected for an interview with Larry Meiller, Host of Garden Talk on Wisconsin Public Radio. Watch for Peg Wastell's video and others on Facebook the first week in April during the first ever Master Gardener Week.

NINE MENTORS NEEDED

For 2021, we need nine volunteers for mentoring. Though we can't meet in person, it works to link up with our new members with a phone call, email, or text. Coordinators Nola Weber, Karalyn Littlefield, and Deb Pederstuen encourage 2020 mentors to make connections with their 2019 MG Interns another year. For a "Mentor-Intern Expectations" description, contact [Deb Pederstuen](#).

Vegetable Garden Group gets off the ground

The recently started Vegetable Garden Group is the third specialized [SCVMGA group](#). Variety Plant Trials and Gardening with Native Plants are the other two opportunities for members to learn and share knowledge on a specific topic. Groups are open to all SCVMGA members.

Nora Bennett is the Vegetable Garden Group's coordinator, and they held their first meeting via Zoom on Feb. 20. Some of the areas of interest include garden pest management, raised bed gardening, beneficial plants and insects, food pantry participation, community gardens, and composting. Karalyn Littlefield talked about the River Falls Food Pantry, which is seeking volunteers to work in the Test Kitchen and help with curbside pickups.

Meetings occur on the third Sunday at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. The next meeting is March 21, when Maria Scheidegger and Paul VanDenMeerendonk will discuss raised garden beds. If interested in joining, please contact [Nora Bennett](#).

Volunteers needed for memorial flower garden

Bring a shovel or rake to help clean up the new Rainbow Bridge Memorial Garden at Gregory's Gift of Hope Rescue in New Richmond on Wednesday, June 23 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Gregory's Gift of Hope is a non-profit animal shelter/pet adoption organization. Contact MGVC [Donna Mae Stohlmann](#).

"Seed-Sharing Center" on website

Have extra seeds? Looking for some? Donate to or receive seeds from our "Seed-Sharing Center," located under the password-protected SCVMGA Members tab. Sharing is between members only.

Seeds must be viable and not outdated. Seeds may be those you collected or purchased. If you have seeds to share, email [Colleen Callahan](#) and she will add them to the list.

Please type Seed Sharing in the subject line and provide:

Your contact info (*how you want others to contact you*)

Common name and Scientific name

Flower, vegetable, or herb

Annual, perennial, or biennial

Start indoors/germination time

Start outdoors/date

Sun, shade preference

Tolerant of dry, wet soils

Spacing/Height

Bloom, harvest date

If flower, what color

Special instructions (Stratify, scarify, presoak)

Number of seeds

Comments

Members who want to receive seeds will communicate directly with the seed giver.

Seed packets are available under Forms on the website.

The password will not be sent via text or email. Please call a coordinator: Colleen Callahan 715-371-0114 Debby Walters 715-222-0021 Mari Marson

JANUARY MEETING

Caring for houseplants

by Colleen Callahan

What are these bugs on my houseplant? Where did that white stuff come from? When should I fertilize? Diana Alfuth answered these and other pesty questions at the January Zoom meeting with 64 members in attendance.

LIGHT, FERTILIZER, WATER

Because the most important element – light – is hard to find in our northern winters, it's essential to allow as much of it as possible into our homes by removing screens and cleaning windows. Dust can block up to 25 percent of light.

And because light and fertilizer go hand-in-hand, the less light, the less fertilizer needed. In fact, Diana suggests not fertilizing at all from December through February. The one exception would be blooming plants, but even then the fertilizer should be diluted and used only once a month.

Osmocote fertilizer (slow-release dry granules) is the preferred type. That white crusty stuff on the soil is from overfertilizing and roots begin to crystallize. If this happens, repot in warmer weather and pour clean water over the roots to flush out the fertilizer. Repot with fresh potting mix. The best is a balance of nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium (10-10-10).

Always water the pot thoroughly until water drips from the drainage hole. Dump catch trays within 30 minutes. Roots shouldn't be sitting in water and standing water is a lure for fungus gnats.

HOUSEPLANT PESTS

Organic pesticides are recommended for indoor plants. PyGanic, a product containing permethrin, is effective on most houseplant critters. Permethrin is commonly used in insect repellants.

Aphids come in all shapes and sizes. They have a soft body and feed on plant sap. Insecticidal soap and forceful water sprays will control the population, as well as organic pesticides with permethrin.



Thrips are 1/16 inch long and hard to find. They're fast and hide in flower and leaf buds. They cause feeding damage and vector plant viruses. If permethrin doesn't control them, the best solution is to discard the plant.



Spider mites are oval, yellowish and 1/50 inch long (size of one salt grain). They feed under leaves sucking sap causing stippling (spots). They multiply quickly, but if caught early, they can be controlled initially with a forceful water spray and then daily misting, as they do not like water or humidity.

White flies have piercing mouthparts. They feed and lay eggs on the underside of leaves. Washing, bifenthrin or permethrin works. Spray once every five days at least three times. Neem oil also works.



Scales prefer ferns, orchids, schefflera, zebra plants, weeping fig and ivy. They like leaf veins and petioles. Insecticides can't penetrate their hard shells. Wash and scrape them off with your thumbnail.



Mealybugs look like powdered sugar with a waxy coating. They feed on plant sap and love citrus, but can be found on ferns and orchids. Use a Q-tip with rubbing alcohol. Be careful not to get the alcohol on the plant or soil.

Fungus gnats

Often mistaken for fruit flies, fungus gnats come in from outside looking for moist soil to lay their eggs. The larvae eat the organic matter in the soil, and unless there's a major infestation, they don't harm the plant.



Fungus gnats are only 3mm long.

Because social media is notorious for all kinds of dubious claims, Diana had a segment called "**Don't use these WHACKO remedies**" on fungus gnats.

Tobacco ashes on soil surface: high pH will harm plants

Hydrogen peroxide soil drench: kills beneficial microbes

Neem oil: doesn't kill larvae

Diatomaceous earth (shells from ancient lakes): ineffective

Sticky traps: works for flying pests, but not larvae in soil

Gnat-catcher products: only catches adults, not the larva

Fruit-fly traps: contain vinegar, gnats are not attracted to them

Vinegar: changes soil pH and burns foliage

Dish detergent: chemicals harm soil and foliage

Rubbing alcohol drench: worse than hydrogen peroxide

Dryer sheet: contains chemicals

Cinnamon: ineffective

Diana's solution? "**Quit watering so much!**" Let soil dry at least an inch deep before watering. Adults won't lay eggs in dry soil. Adding sand or gravel on the surface will keep the larvae away. Clean catch trays regularly.

If you have a big infestation, you can use pyrethrins or synthetic pyrethroids, which target the nervous system of insects. Pyrethrins are organic compounds found in chrysanthemum flowers, and have been used as insecticides for thousands of years.

FEBRUARY MEETING

'Super' Monarchs overwinter in Mexico

by Colleen Callahan

It takes four generations to produce the Super Monarch – the one who flies 3,000 miles to Mexico from Wisconsin in the fall. Its destination is one of 14 overwintering sites, a group of protected areas designated the Monarch Biosphere Reserve by the Mexican government. Five of them are open to the public.

Visiting one of these areas has been on MGVB Debby Walters's bucket list for years. Last winter she realized her dream and this February shared her experience and knowledge with SCVMGA members via Zoom. Fifty-four members participated.

"It's like living in a National Geographic picture," Debby said. When thousands of monarchs suddenly left their clusters to find water and nectar, she described the scene as "standing in a cloud of orange."

Monarchs gather on oyamel fir trees (*Abies religiosa*), which grow at altitudes of 9,000-10,000 feet in west-central Mexico. The climate is perfect – not too hot, not too cold, morning humidity, and very little wind. What's amazing is that monarchs don't eat during the first few months. They survive on stored energy from the nectar consumed on their journey south, and water from morning mists. Near the end of January, they start to feed on flowering shrubs, salvia, and montanoa (daisy family).

Of the five Mexican sites open to the public, El Rosario is the largest. It's the most popular because it's the easiest to access. Debby prefers Cerro Pelón because of the solitude and a bed



PATO MORENO

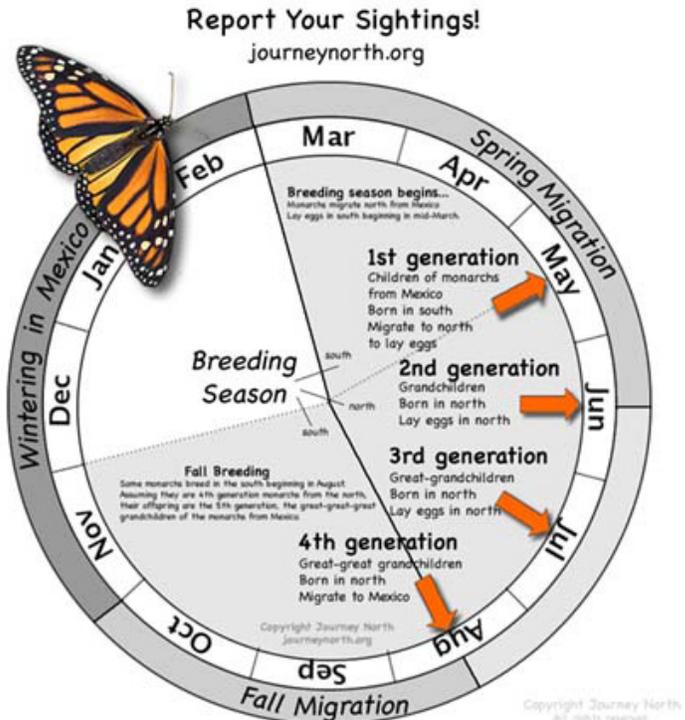
Like drooping fruit, monarchs group in clusters while spending winter in Mexico.

and breakfast nearby offering guided tours. Debby rode 1.5 hours on horseback and hiked 20 minutes to reach the meadows surrounded by the oyamel trees. The best time to go is between December and February.

The first encounter of a monarch site occurred in 1975 by Cathy Aguado, a Mexican naturalist, and her husband Kenneth Brugger. Their discovery made the cover of National Geographic in August 1976. They started searching for sites in 1972 after reading a newspaper notice

seeking volunteers to find the monarchs' winter habitats. The notice was written by Canadian zoologist Fred Urquhart, who had been studying monarch migration for decades. He and his wife, Norah, founded a citizen-science organization, now known as Monarch Watch, where hundreds of volunteers tag monarchs and report sightings. Journey North is another website that tracks migration, plus contains a wealth of information.

Counting the number of acres occupied by monarchs in Mexico is how naturalists keep track of the population as a whole. In the 1996-7 season, over 44 acres were home to monarchs. Last year, only 7 acres hosted the butterflies. That's



FAMILY TREE: The first three generations of monarchs can live up to six weeks. The fourth generation, which flies to Mexico, can live up to 8 months – this generation is called the Super Monarch.

a loss of 37 acres. Since each site holds millions of butterflies, the estimated decline in population is staggering. A number of reasons account for the decline. Encroaching development and use of pesticides and herbicides in the U.S. reduce the numbers of milkweed and adult nectar plants. In Mexico logging not only eliminates the butterflies' habitat but also creates gaps in the forest, lowering the temperature. Monarchs are very susceptible to freezing. Trees are removed for lumber as well as to make room for farming and cattle grazing.

Mexico isn't the only place where monarchs overwinter. Western monarchs, those west of the Rocky Mountains, migrate to the California coastline. High property values and pressure to develop the coastline threaten its 25 roosting sites, according to Monarch Watch.

Similar issues occur in Wisconsin. Large farm operations and development result in dwindling plant resources for monarchs.

"We can make a difference," Debby said. Gardeners can grow milkweed and adult nectar plants. Click here for a list a nectar plants for Wisconsin's climate. Black-eyed Susan, Spotted Joe Pye weed and Skyblue aster are three of the 24 recommended.

Raising monarchs is another way to help the butterfly population. Females lay between 150-400 eggs, but less than 10 percent survive. One of the reasons is natural predators. Click here for instructions on raising monarchs.

2020

Variety Plant Trial Rankings

by Peg Wastell

Bean, Fillett: 1-Maxibel, 2-Masai, 3-Velour, 4-Soleil

Maxibel was the clear favorite of many growers while Masai was close behind; many picked it as #1 yet others ranked much lower. The colored varieties seem to not be favored with yellow Soleil well behind other varieties mainly due to poorer germination.

Beets, Red: 1-Red Ace, 2-Detroit Dark, 3-Ruby Queen, 4-Merlin

Our second time of trialing red beets has knocked Detroit Red out of first place ranking of 2014. Close numbers for all four varieties.

Bok Choy, mini: 1-Asian Delight, 2-Li Ren Choi, 3-Purple Lady, 4-Toy Choi

Asian Delight was nearly the unanimous first in ranking and Toy Choi was almost unanimously last. Many considered Toy Choi as too small.

Carrots, Colored: 1-Malbec, 2-Solar Yellow, 3-Cosmic Purple, 4-Lunar White

Lunar White was, by far, least favored of all the carrots. Malbec, a newer hybrid, was most favored because of taste, color, and production.



PEG WASTELL

Lettuce, Butterhead: 1-Buttercrunch, 2-Red Cress, 3rd-Sylvesta, 4-Edox

All but one voted for Buttercrunch as #1, a tried-and-true variety that has been grown for years.

Summer Scallop Squash: 1-Early White, 2-Patisson Golden Marbe, 3-Sunburst, 4-Bennington Green Tint

Growers ranked Early White as #1 or #4 but enough had germination that more ranked it highest.

Basil, Large Leaf: 1-Italian Large Leaf, 2-Tuscany, 3-Newton,

4-Nufar

You may think Basil is basil, Right? Not so fast. Italian Large Leaf, our least expensive variety was, by far, tops for most growers.

Phlox, Annual: 1-Red, 2-Brilliant, 3-Cherry Carmel, 4-Sugar Stars

Subjectivity is difficult when my favorite is #1 ranked by most growers, although Brilliant, another red, was close. Annual Garden Phlox had that beautiful red color all the way to frost. A list of results from previous years is on our [website](#).

Update on 2021 Variety Plant Trials

Our dedicated volunteers made seed-sorting happen in a socially distant way by picking up seed from my front porch and delivering it back all counted, labeled, and packaged. Thank You to Barb and Ken Kolbe, Barb Kolpin, Patricia Miller, Donna Davis, Donna Cadenhead, Corky Weeks, Gloria Bonse, Carol Hokenson, and Rose Kuebker. We got it done this year because of your volunteer efforts.

There are still some seeds available from the 2021 Variety Plant Trial. Find the order form posted on our [website](#). The seeds still available are cauliflower, spinach, squash, shallots, tomato, fennel, and celosia.

Another shout-out of thanks to all who bought leftovers from last year's seed. We made over \$70 to cover this year's seed costs. I still have some left: basil, beets, bok choy, carrot, butterhead lettuce, squash and phlox. If interested, please [email me](#).

Our volunteer master gardener growers are already starting the process of growing, evaluating, and reporting on this year's trials. Thanks to them and our organization we have a unique and useful resource for us all to use. Check out previous years of Variety Plant Trials when making your growing selections and recommendations to others on what grows best here and what master gardeners prefer!

Scholarship recipient interested in plant genetics

(Editor's note: The previous issue of Sprinklings incorrectly reported the name of the scholarship recipient)

Jillian Turbeville is the 2020-21 recipient of the SCVMGA \$1,000 scholarship. She's majoring in horticulture with a minor in biotechnology at UW-River Falls, where she's been assistant manager of the greenhouse. Last summer she interned at Bailey Nurseries. Today, she's president of the Horticulture Society, a member of the Honors Program, and works two part-time jobs.

Studying plant science was something Jillian wanted to do since she was a high school freshman in Hammond, Wis. She's a first-generation college student whose goal is to complete a master's degree in plant genetics. In a thank-you letter, she wrote: "I am extremely appreciative and honored that I was chosen as the recipient."

Matt's Picks

by [Matt Schmitz](#)

Hetz Midget Arborvitae

(Thuja occidentalis) 'Hetz Midget'
Sun, 2 ft. tall x 2-3 ft. wide

This is a nice compact globe form of arborvitae. It has a dense appearance that does not need pruning. Same care and maintenance as other arborvitaes. A good choice for a small garden that can use an evergreen.



PLANTINGTREE.COM

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

Yummm . . . Maple Syrup Frosting



Karalyn Littlefield
A SCVMGA member since 2013, Karalyn teaches classes in Food Science and Animal Science at UW-River Falls. After receiving a master's degree in Food Science, she worked in the food industry.

The sun is beginning to shine, the temperature is below freezing at night and warming up during the day. The sap is running and waiting to be collected and concentrated into maple syrup.

What time is it? It's time to head to the sugar bush.

The tradition of collecting sap and producing sugar and syrup originated with the Native Americans living in regions around the Great Lakes and was used as a major source of sugar.

Sugar maples are the tree of choice due to their high ratio of sugar to water in the sap. There are 10 different species of maple trees (*Acer*) that can be tapped for syrup including the more common silver and red maple and boxelder as well as birch (*Betula*).

Making maple syrup was a strong tradition in my family from the first homesteaders to when my Dad was young. We tapped a few times when I was a kid and my aunt tapped every year.

I say that it was a tradition, though it was more a part of survival for the early generations. During World War II, starting in June of 1942, sugar was rationed. (*For more information on sugar rationing, see Sprinklings from Jan-Feb 2020 in my article "The Evolution of Soft Molasses Cookies."*)

That was the time my Dad and his older siblings were young. My grandmother made cake with Maple Syrup Frosting. My Aunt Ardala recalls always taking cake to the church and school events and that the cake had frosting. This was a really big deal at that time. Aunt Ardala told me that her older sister, Aunt LaVonne, thought that grandma only knew how to make maple syrup frosting.

Grandma's recipe is not with any of her handwritten recipes and newspaper clippings; however, we have her Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook, First Edition, 1950, which has a maple syrup frosting recipe that Aunt Ardala agrees is what she remembers as a child.

I tested the recipe on spice cake as that's how my aunts and uncles remember the frosting.



KARALYN LITTLEFIELD

(Above) Karalyn's spice cake with maple syrup frosting.
 (Below) The log cabin, where the sap was boiled, was on Karalyn's great grandparents' farm in Polk County. They called the area Sugar Bush.



Helga and Pete Peterson (right) with (?) at the Maple Syrup Log Cabin that sat northwest of their house, out in the woods near the lake.

Maple Syrup
Log Cabin

Maple Syrup Icing

Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook, 1950

Boil 1 ¼ cups maple syrup to firm ball stage (242°F) and beat gradually into 2 stiffly beaten egg whites.

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.

Editor: Colleen Callahan Proofreader: Maria Sanocki
 Publisher: Diana Alfuth, UW Horticulture Outreach Specialist