

MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

U of M Extension's Master Gardener Volunteer Program
is growing with the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.

2,953
MASTER
GARDENERS

169,567
VOLUNTEER
HOURS

142,363
MINNESOTANS
REACHED



Rhonda Cosgrove, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer with Crow Wing County, guides Gardening 101 for Youth at the Northland Arboretum in Brainerd, Minnesota. Photo by Sally Jacobsen, Crow Wing County Master Gardener Volunteer.



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION

extension.umn.edu/master-gardener

A MESSAGE FROM TIM KENNY

This past year has been one of renewed confidence and excitement as Master Gardener Volunteers regained their stride and resumed activities and programs with enthusiasm. A new five-year strategic plan was completed in June, construction began on a new education building, and a record number of Minnesotans applied to become interns in the new year.

In 2022 interest in plants continued to grow throughout Minnesota. Many counties saw a rise in activities and projects that support the nearby nature, local food and pollinator health program priorities. Master Gardener programming that was developed in response to the pandemic became a new standard for enhancing access and inclusion.

This year also saw growing collaboration with local organizations: schools, assisted-living facilities,

treatment centers, etc. Further, some collaborative projects launched a few years ago have now evolved so that the projects are run by a local organization, with Master Gardeners serving as advisors and/or assistants.

The impact of the Master Gardener Volunteer Program has increased significantly across the state. This report highlights a few examples of the many ways Master Gardeners' community engagement benefitted Minnesotans in 2022.

Tim Kenny
State Program Director



VOLUNTEERING WITH PURPOSE — WHAT GUIDES OUR WORK

The work of Master Gardener Volunteers is guided by the program's priorities. And it's because of that guided work that more people are growing food locally, are connecting with nature, and are planting pollinator-friendly gardens.



Last Update: 06/08/2022



PROGRAM PRIORITY: LOCAL FOOD

Master Gardeners promote growing food on multiple scales and in different types of community locations.

- Gardening is Science, a youth educational program started by **Kanabec County Master Gardeners** in 2017, is now an integral part of the 5th grade science curriculum at Mora Public Schools. Facilitated by volunteers, the lessons give teachers an opportunity to add hands-on learning experiences with easily observable outcomes for students. Students learn about plant science using onsite raised beds with vegetables and flowers. The program has met its goals to teach about vegetable gardening with an emphasis on fun, to encourage students to garden with their families, and to motivate students to taste new vegetables. The program is now coordinated and led by teachers, with Master Gardeners as advisors and assistants.
- While collaborating with Carver County Public Health, **Carver-Scott Master Gardeners** transformed an unused garden at Riverview Terrace Mobile Home Park into a thriving growing area for healthy food. Educational materials and on-site mentors guided the residents, who maintained their own garden plots. Children were excited to learn about growing vegetables while working alongside their parents, which transformed sessions at the garden into family activities.
- To share gardening knowledge and assist students in growing fruits and vegetables, **Pine County Master Gardeners** collaborated with Pine Grove Learning Center, a charter school at the Lake Lena

Reservation operated by Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. Students grew and harvested corn, pumpkin, squash, peppers, tomatoes, strawberries, potatoes, onions, carrots and herbs, which were served in school lunches. Students enjoyed connecting with the natural world, and they were able to take seedlings home to grow in their own gardens and pass on what they learned.

- For over a decade, **Washington County Master Gardeners** have overseen the Giving Garden at the Retail Construction Services, Inc. site. Volunteers provide education to visitors of all ages, while growing crops for donation. After a two-year COVID hiatus, volunteers welcomed 150 youth from nearby schools and churches. Over 2,000 pounds of produce were donated to Valley Outreach Food Shelf in Stillwater in 2022. Food shelf staff suggested crops to plant such as bok choy, okra, tomatillos, hot peppers and herbs. Community members stopped by the garden regularly to chat with volunteers, often leaving with fresh vegetables.
- **Lyon County Master Gardeners** provided gardening instruction and hands-on experiences to children enrolled in the 13-week Marshall Area YMCA summer camp. With volunteer assistance, campers planted and maintained their own raised garden bed. Local businesses and community members donated starter plants and seeds. Classroom lessons discussed seed knowledge, healthy eating habits, environmental awareness and harvest gratitude. An open house showcased the campers' gardens for parents, donors and community members. Campers cooperated with peers to complete garden tasks and share the harvested produce.





PROGRAM PRIORITY: NEARBY NATURE

Many Master Gardeners' projects increase access to plants and green spaces for health and wellbeing.

- Many residential facilities for seniors and disabled individuals don't provide indoor spaces enhanced with live plants. To remedy this need, **St. Louis County Master Gardeners** propagated, potted and donated over 200 houseplants, each labeled with care instructions, to residents of several facilities. Volunteers distributed the plants during informal, onsite educational sessions. Residents felt connected to the natural world when the plants were shared with them.
- A peaceful and healing garden space for cancer patients receiving treatment at Mayo Clinic was created through a collaboration between **Olmsted County Master Gardeners** and Shades of Green Hosta Society. Volunteers renovated the gardens, located at the American Cancer Society Hope Lodge. Many plants were added, and labels were installed. The garden was enjoyed by people of all ages from around the country who stayed at the facility, sometimes for weeks at a time. Patients and their families frequently expressed gratitude for the beauty of the gardens to volunteers working at the site.
- **Dakota County Master Gardeners** collaborated with New Chance, a program for male juveniles, to improve a garden area at Juvenile Services Center in Hastings. Early in the year, volunteers met with staff and residents to discuss plans for the garden. What was once a small garden surrounded by turf was transformed into a multi-bed garden area. With volunteers' assistance, staff and

residents planted the garden. Once planted, volunteers shared gardening knowledge while working with youth at weekly "garden time" sessions during the growing season. The hands-on aspect of gardening together was a friendly and positive way to engage and educate the young men.

- Over the past four years, **Hennepin County Master Gardeners** have collaborated with staff at the Catholic Charities Children's Day Treatment program to facilitate hands-on, weekly educational sessions during the growing season for youth with emotional and behavioral challenges. Children learned about plants, the environment and the joys of gardening, while planting and tending onsite raised garden beds planted with vegetables and flowers to enhance the outdoor space. During the learning sessions in the garden, children practiced self-regulation and healthy coping skills as they enjoyed the beauty and wonders of the outdoors. The garden is a space of peace that's welcoming to all. Remarkably, children who otherwise did not participate in many of the center's activities were actively engaged in the garden.
- Healing gardens at Central Park Muriel Sahlin Arboretum in Roseville are becoming a showplace and experiential teaching space. **Ramsey County Master Gardeners** co-sponsored "Nature Heals" events at the gardens to promote access to nature and to educate the public about the benefits of time spent in natural spaces. During these community events, volunteers shared information about design elements of healing gardens and how to apply them at home. Signage was developed and installed to enhance the educational aspect of the gardens.





Goodhue County

PROGRAM PRIORITY: POLLINATOR HEALTH

Master Gardeners help increase pollinator habitat in private and public spaces.

- Red Wing Environmental Learning Center reached out to **Goodhue County Master Gardeners** to request assistance designing and planting a memorial pollinator garden for a high school student. Volunteers, working alongside youth attending classes at the center, planted “Sammy’s Garden,” a beautiful garden in memory of a girl who loved flowers. While working together, volunteers shared knowledge about the plants and benefits to pollinators. The garden, installed in a highly visible location, serves as an excellent learning site for ELC students, and provides much needed pollen, nectar and shelter for pollinators.
- Milkweed, Monarchs and Pollinators, a countywide initiative of **Washington County Master Gardeners** increases awareness and provides education about pollinators to many different audiences: youth, adults, educators, gardeners and the general public. As part of the initiative, educational events were held around the county for community groups. Using interactive tools provided by U of M Bee Lab, volunteers incorporated engaging activities to their educational sessions, making learning easier and fun.
- Buffalo High School’s neglected raised garden beds were renovated with the guidance and assistance of **Wright County Master Gardeners** to create a new pollinator-friendly garden space. Volunteers and the high school agriculture teacher developed

a plan for the raised beds that included native plants and innovative, non-chemical weed control methods. Students, working alongside volunteers, prepared and planted the beds. Maintenance duties were shared: students watered and volunteers weeded. A student who commented, “Wait...we want bees?!” early in the season, soon learned that bees and other pollinators are vital to our food sources.

- “Helping Garden Helpers” was a three-session, afterschool workshop facilitated by **Pine County Master Gardeners** at Pine City Elementary School. Lessons were developed to increase awareness and encourage observation and appreciation of pollinators, and also to illustrate the ways pollinators help humans and how we can help them. Students learned how to meet pollinator needs by providing shelter, nesting sites, natural foods and water. In class, students made a bird feeder, toad house and seed tape to bring home. Students were also given perennial plant seeds and annual seedlings to create their own pollinator patch at home. Parents reported that the children were excited for the next lesson and shared information they learned with their families.



Pine County

MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS SERVE THEIR COMMUNITIES AT HOME

These at-home service opportunities, created in response to the pandemic, increased access to participation in volunteer activities to such an extent that they are now a part of Master Gardener Volunteer programming:

GROWING A POLLINATOR-FRIENDLY GARDEN

- **127** new gardens were planted totaling **47,291** square feet
- **172** established gardens were maintained totaling **212,888** square feet



GROWING A GIVING GARDEN

- **60** volunteers grew and donated **10,735** pounds of fresh produce
- **14** volunteers grew and donated **370** floral bouquets



PROPAGATING AND DONATING PLANTS TO THOSE IN NEED

- **35** volunteers grew and donated **7,170** starter vegetable plants
- **25** volunteers propagated and donated **853** houseplants



BURTON AND VIRGINIA MYERS EDUCATION CENTER AT THE FARM AT THE ARB

The new Myers Education Center will house Arboretum adult education, Extension horticulture educators and the Master Gardener State Leadership Team. The center will be a place where education and horticulture intersect, showcasing University of Minnesota research on growing food and demonstrating the importance of pollinators in the plant-to-plate story. The building will open in spring 2023 – we look forward to welcoming you there next time you visit the Arboretum!



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