

## **Annual State of the Garden Report**

President- Sharon Hedges, Vice President- Al Winkeler, Treasurer- Joe Walker, and Secretary- Laura Steimel. Speakers Bureau- Val Mertz, Membership- Waneta Parmenter, Hortline- Patti Kolek, Green House- Evelyn Franks, Demo Gardens- Mary Carey and Education- Mary Medina.

One of the first activities of the year was the Dig-In which was held on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>. It was well attended. Our goal for that day was to educate the general public who participated in the event. The classes consisted of starting summer plants from seed, ABC's of organic vegetable gardening, salsa gardening, how to do cuttings, lingo of food labels, best perennials for sun or shade, MG's favorite gardening tools, Monarch madness, and using native shrubs and trees in your landscape to attract birds. The fact that there was snow on the ground and the mid-morning temperature was 22 degrees did not hinder the attendance.

Our growing season for early that year was hampered by the flood. Water got into the green house but did not do a lot of damage. There was water on some of the parking lot. The bee hives from the bee keepers were lost down the creek. The gardens on the back side of the main building sustained water damage because some of the bulbs were washed away and some were lost due to the loss of soil around the bulbs. A lot of good top soil and mulch were also lost down the creek. But with a lot of effort and work these areas were returned to their original quality.

Early in the year Paul Hendricks had a class on grape pruning. A number of master gardeners also spent one morning learning about Monarch butterflies. We had the opportunity to catch and tag these beautiful little critters. A few weeks later we went to a local school in St. Peters and planted Milkweed and other butterfly loving plants.

On April 29<sup>th</sup> we had our annual plant sale. That is a monumental task. Basically all the plants that we sell are grown by our own master gardeners. Paul Hendricks, with the help of Marsha, Sharon and Pam, grew in his basement or patio 439 annuals, 340 perennials, 220 natives, 539 herbs, 1379 vegetables, 36 house plants, 14 fruits and 19 hanging baskets. Total plants for the sale was 2323 annuals, 1023 herbs including 12 herb boxes, 1618 vegetables, 23 fruits and 1421 natives and perennials. We took in \$13000 gross for the sale that day and the follow up sale the following Saturday. There were 37 master gardeners participating in propagation, watering, IPM and growing. They put in 539.5 hours.

Another opportunity to educate the public was our presence at the Farmers Market. We volunteered our time twice a month for the summer time. We gave advice and advertized what our organization does. We also had Lawn Chair Tuesdays where tables were set up and we had Masters Gardeners there to talk about various activities. Raised beds, how to grow garlic, pruning, soil conservation, mulching, and composting, taking cuttings from plants, hypertufa, garden pests and container gardening were some of the topics.

Of course we always have an opportunity to educate ourselves by attending our monthly general meeting. There is always a quiz to do prior to that meeting. And a lot of times we had guest speakers who presented a variety of topics. Some topics this past year dealt with the Purple Martin, entomology, roof top gardening, drip irrigation and great Missouri birding. We also received instruction on how to build a back yard pond with appropriate water plants and a waterfall. On February 13, we held a back yard bird count. This consisted of displays of birds that winter in your back yard and how to identify them. There was also a craft area set up showing how to make a nesting ball for the birds. Suet feeders were constructed to show one way to attract birds. Information was available on ideas of how to attract birds to your yard. And of course which plants are best to use for that same purpose. We will be having another bird count this coming year.

A list of the demo gardens is as follows. Birdseed garden, bulb garden, cottage garden, daylilies, enabling garden, entrance garden, flutter by garden, herb garden, iris bed, lasagna garden, fairy garden, native garden, orchard, pantry garden, perennial garden, rose garden and the square foot garden. All of these gardens can be very beautiful. However, the pantry garden does not always fit this criteria. But, with the guiding hand of Dave Wilson, that garden helps put food on the table of those less fortunate. This year we donated 1144 pounds of produce. My question is "how many cocktail/cherry tomatoes is that?" All of the gardens are maintained by a garden lead with the help of other master gardener volunteers. The gardeners work the soil from start to finish. They amend the soil as needed. They select the plants appropriate for that garden. They get the plants into the soil and water them. Maintenance of these plants consumes the balance of time spent in that garden. Weeding, trimming and watering keeps the plants alive and thriving and makes it a joy for all who see these gardens while in their splendor. The entire demo garden is over seen by Mary Carey who does a fantastic job. When autumn rolls around and the plants die back, it's time to put the garden beds to sleep for another season. . Memories of its beauty linger in your mind.

And of course general maintenance of the grounds is an on-going endeavor. General maintenance is something that we really do not see. The beauty of the flowers and the harvesting of the crops are very visible. Maintenance occurs behind the scenes. Repairing a gate or fixing a water pipe or installing new fans all require time from someone. Grass cutting, sharpening a tool or changing oil in the lawn tractor requires a dedicated person or persons. That compost that we all use is there waiting for us because someone worked to produce it. Kevin Minard, Russ Reed, and Del Moeller are a few of those behind the scenes people who do that work. To them, and any others involved, we owe a big thank you.

Another important activity that the master gardeners perform is running the hort line, the Master Gardener Horticulture Answer Line. For "almost the end of this year" they handled close to 350 inquiries via office walk-ins, phone calls, voice mails, and email. The purpose of the hort line is to give advice to our clients using university and other research based information. Pattii Kolek, Bonnie Winkeler, Laura Steimel, Tina Hoechst and Judy Klemme staffed the line for the spring/summer months. Starting in October and through the winter months they will continue to assist our clients by checking voice mail and email messages daily.

Rich Hoormann has presented various topics of interest prior to the start of the general monthly meetings. He also gave a pesticide class to interested MG's. In addition, he contributes information at the steering committee meetings. He has initiated the quick sheets for information that is frequently needed to answer the typical common questions that are asked by people making use of the hort line.

Another point of interest was the Kansas City conference that was attended by a few of our members. Those that I spoke to enjoyed the weekend and more importantly, learned a lot.

Recently we were contacted by the local Amvets concerning their desire to start a pantry garden to be used for the Veterans and Active Military families to provide fresh produce. We have agreed to help provide direction in their endeavor. They are in the very early stages of this project.

In the previous year, 2015, we had a total of 10,142.5 volunteer hours.

New terms....Marsha.....a pokey thing

Chuck...right vs left handed mouse