

## **ANNUAL STATE OF THE GARDENS – 2019**

It was another great year for the St. Charles County Master Gardeners. Our chapter accomplished a lot in 2019.

What follows are just the highlights, because much more went on that was not noted or documented.

Let's start with statistics. In 2019 we had 13,232 total hours compared to 10,818 hours in 2018. That's an impressive 22% increase. The 2019 numbers breakdown to 11,891 volunteer hours, of which 6,429 were in the demonstration gardens, and 1,341 were education hours. Also, there were the hours of the 24 Emeritus Master Gardeners, who are not required to report, BUT we wish they would, as all of your volunteer hours show the value that Master Gardeners contribute to our community and St. Charles County.

We began 2019 with approximately 96 active members plus 20 emeriti, for a total of 116. We currently have 94 active members plus 24 emeriti totaling 118.

One Master Gardener training class was held in 2019 with 23 participants. Of these 23 participants, 15 were certified in 2019, plus one member of the class of 2018, was certified in 2019.

What else did we accomplish this year?

### **Education**

During the year, the Master Gardeners held seven different seeding/transplant sessions for new and experienced growers, teaching proper techniques to ensure success (although "these-things" do not always grow). These sessions provided "starts" for our Plant Sales, Pantry Garden, Plant Propagation/Hoop House Area, and even our home gardens.

In February, "Dig-In: A Gardening Seminar" was held at St. Charles Community College. The theme was an edible landscape, including trees, shrubs, and gardening. Seed Starting Classes were also held that month.

Several Continuing Education classes were held during the year.

Missouri Master Gardeners Association (MOMGA) State Conference was held on the University of Missouri campus in Columbia over several days in June. Attendees participated in a variety of classes and Advanced Training, received behind the scenes tours of the University's buildings and landscaping, plus engaging tours of the MU Jefferson Farm.

Several Master Gardeners attended the 2019 Mizzou Turfgrass and Landscape Field Day, held at MU South Farm in Columbia during July.

In September, members attended the Forest Keeling Fall Field Day in Elsberry.

Throughout the year, Master Gardeners educated the public by hosting garden tours for numerous groups in the Demonstration Gardens.

In November, the Soil Health and Soils Demo Workshop was held at the Extension Center, led by USDA Soil Health Specialist Warren Cork and Regional MU Extension Specialists.

The Master Gardeners had speakers at our monthly General Meetings who provided education on a variety of topics including St. Louis Agriculture History, Horticulture Behind the Lawn Sprinkler System, Daylilies and Pollinators, Attracting Hummingbirds to Your Yard, Secrets to Growing Roses in St. Louis, plus Flowering Shrubs. We also held off-site meetings at Theis Farm and Greenhouse in St. Louis, David Thies, 3rd generation owner of the farm, providing a comprehensive and informative tour of their ten-acre farm, and at St. Charles County's Klondike Park in Augusta, tour presented by Park Ranger- Steve Tiemann. We held a teleconference session with Arctic Apples, a breeder in British Columbia, at our June meeting.

Each of our monthly membership meetings offered a quiz that could be completed for educational credit hours.

### **Outreach**

Several St. Charles Master Gardeners attended a Gardening Expo at Rolling Ridge Nursery in St. Louis, representing both the St. Louis and St. Charles chapters, during February.

We worked with 4H groups during the year, teaching them about planting, growing and proper care of their plants.

Hortline calls received were less during 2019. We made 425 reports in 2018 and made 313 reports in 2019. We do not know a good explanation for this, some felt it is due to people doing self-research, "... just Google-It", while others said the numbers will just fluctuate periodically.

Master Gardeners participated in the "Day of Play" at O'Day Park in O'Fallon during September. Members hosted tours for Girl Scout Troops, garden clubs, and a church group.

Several Master Gardeners taught gardening classes to children at the Boys & Girls Club in O'Fallon during the summer.

This summer, St. Charles Community College taught their "Farm to Fork Camps" (cooking camps) at the Extension Office facilities, using a raised bed in our Demonstration Gardens. Here youth learned to grow and cook their food.

Ribbons were won this summer at the Convention Center Garden Show with plants that were grown in the Demonstration Gardens.

Master Gardener's supported activities at several Farmer's Markets around the area.

Many more outreach activities were conducted by individual Master Gardeners through their offsite volunteer work.

## **Improvements to the Demonstration Gardens in 2019**

The Master Gardeners continued to mow and maintain the lawn and landscaped areas around the Extension Center property. Our group also does maintenance and repairs on Extension Center outdoor equipment as our abilities allow.

Four of the twelve Raised Beds in the Pantry Garden were rebuilt this year.

Seasonal displays at the entrance of the Extension Council offices were provided by a talented member.

The multi-year makeover of the Orchard continued this year. The hoop house was also re-covered improving its usefulness.

Many smaller improvements were made that went unrecorded but added to the overall effort.

## **2019 Fund Raising Activities**

Master Gardener Plant Sales continue to be our main source of income. 2019 net plant sale revenue (i.e. profit) was \$14,316. Other sources of income and expenses include the Dig-In, the Speakers Bureau, Demo Gardens, and Greenhouse Operation.

Taken in total, we had \$24,046 in revenue, \$18,310 in expenses, giving us net revenue (profit) of \$5,536 for 2019.

## **Donations made to and from the St Charles County Master Gardeners**

Our Demonstration Gardens, in particular, the Pantry Garden, provided an impressive amount- 3,006-pounds, of fresh vegetables and fruit to the community, mainly donating to the local St. Joachim and Anne Food Pantry. By comparison, the Master Gardeners contributed 2018-pounds in 2018 (yes, really). These donations- for many years going, have been a valuable resource for them and we expect to continue this in the future.

Donations to our chapter during 2019 included lumber and decking material from a member to build "stuff" around here, an assortment of confiscated plant-growing equipment from the Missouri State Highway Patrol, and a nice, new, handheld string-trimmer from a member.

Also, in-turn, we donated plants to the Agricultural Education Garden at Broemmelsiek Park plus donated plants (and occasionally our labor) to several different organizations throughout the year.

## **Membership and Attendance**

As previously mentioned, our chapter began the year 2019 with a total of 116 members. We currently have a total membership of 118.

Average attendance at our monthly membership meetings for 2019 was 53. The high was 85 and a low of 35.

## **Special Events and Workdays**

There were many special events and workdays during the year.

For several years now, continued flooding and erosion along Dardenne Creek threatens the Extension Center property and so, the Master Gardeners Demonstration Gardens. The City of St. Peters has been working with the Extension Center to help stabilize the banks of the creek. Late in the year, the City informed the Extension of their plan to proceed with a project to control the bank erosion during 2020. This project will require a financial commitment from the Extension Council and all of us under the Extension's authority.

Members got together on several occasions to work on the greenhouse, the orchard, various garden areas and on the hoop house. Flood clean-up has become an annual event with many Master Gardeners coming out to return the Demonstration Gardens to its normal beauty. During April, several attended the Governor's wife's tea called "Missouri "Roots and Blossoms" Afternoon Tea" at the Governor's Mansion in Jefferson City. In June, a contingent of St. Charles County Master Gardeners represented us at the Missouri Master Gardeners Association (MOMGA) State Conference in Columbia.

## **Looking Forward to 2020**

**OUR MISSION:** To provide horticultural information and training to the gardening public based on the University of Missouri research that is specific to the local climate, soils, and plants.

New or expanded educational outreach opportunities are planned for 2020. One highlight of our activities will be the 2020 Dig-In to be held at St. Charles County Community College with Keynote Speaker, Dr. Pat Guinan, MU Extension Climatologist and followed by three breakout gardening sessions. A new Master Gardener training class will begin in early March 2020 and continue into June 2020, with plans to engage the trainees through a class project within the gardens. Our annual cool-season and summer-season Plant Sales will hopefully be bigger and better. These Plant Sales have become well known around the area because of the numerous plant varieties we offer and the high-quality plants. This year, we began offering classes to the public on various gardening topics at several St. Charles County Libraries. The plan to stabilize the bank of Dardenne Creek should provide some relief that we don't have to worry about losing the Demonstration Gardens- although we will continue to battle the QUICK flooding. We continue to look for ways to expand educational and outreach opportunities in the demonstration gardens. We will look for ways to increase member involvement and improve succession planning.

Thank you to all who spend their time making the St. Charles County Master Gardeners successful.

THE STATE OF THE GARDENS IS GOOD! We will make it even better in 2020 with your involvement.

Sincerely,

***The 2019 Steering Committee of the St. Charles County Master Gardeners***

*President - Kevin Minard*

*Vice - President - David Wilson and Jan Carron*

*Treasurer - Joe Walker*

*Secretary - David Prince*

*Demonstration Garden Lead - Victoria Gally and Cindy Platzer*