



Racine / Kenosha Master Gardener Association

Newsletter
December 2021

From The (outgoing)RKMGA President....

This is one of my last messages to you as president of RKMGA, so I get to reminisce about the last six years, three as vice-president and three as president of RKMGA.

Remember when Extension decided that RKMGA had to be separate in mind and deed from Extension?

Then about two years later with a change in the leadership of the Racine-Kenosha Extension, RKMGA was welcomed back into the fold. RKMGA was, once again, deemed valuable to the master gardener experience. Then two years ago COVID hit, and we all—RKMGA, Extension, MGVs—scrambled to figure out what we were doing as master gardeners under scary circumstances.

Extension used that “down” time to revamp once again the criteria under which RKMGA and all the WI associations operated. Our by-laws had to match the WIMGA by-laws, and we had to establish legal status with WI and the IRS as a recognized Association or a 501 (C) 3. Recently we were alerted to more changes coming in 2022. Apparently now RKMGA will be considered an independent entity meaning that we can choose how we write our by-laws among other things.

I was really hoping that I would be handing over to the new RKMGA leadership a year without more changes, without frustrations, and without COVID. Luckily, the new slate of officers are individuals who are strong leaders and who have strong skills in organization, putting forth new ideas, and the ability to bend with the winds of change.

Finally, I want to thank everyone who supported RKMGA in so many ways during my tenure as president. Please, if you love to garden or love being involved in any aspect of gardening that the master gardener program can provide, do not give up on RKMGA or the MG program. Gardening is a passion that soothes our souls.

Thank you to everyone for everything you do and have done to educate your community and to make your community beautiful.

Best Regards,
Linda Graeper
Outgoing President-RKMGA



In This Issue

Page 2	From our new President...
Page 3	Union Grove Library project
Page 6	Seed Library project
Page 7	What We Learned
Page 11	Special Recognition

Important Links and Contacts-RKMGA

Register your volunteer and education hours
<https://volunteers.wimastergardener.org/vms/sec/Login/>

Racine Kenosha Master Gardener Association
<https://Kenosha.extension.wisc.edu/horticulture/rkmga>

RKMGA Facebook Page
www.facebook.com/Racine-Kenosha-Master-Gardener-Association-151441411616919

Racine-Kenosha County Master Gardener Activities page
www.facebook.com/MasterGardenersKenoshaRacineCounties

Kenosha-Racine University of Wisconsin-Extension web hub
Kenosha.extension.wisc.edu

Plant Health Advising resource page
Wimastergardener.org
go.wisc.edu/planthealthadvising

Key Contacts

Leon Potter, RKMGA President
Leon.Michael.Potter@gmail.com

Vijai Pandian, Horticulture Educator
vijaikumar.pandian@wisc.edu

Newsletter thoughts?

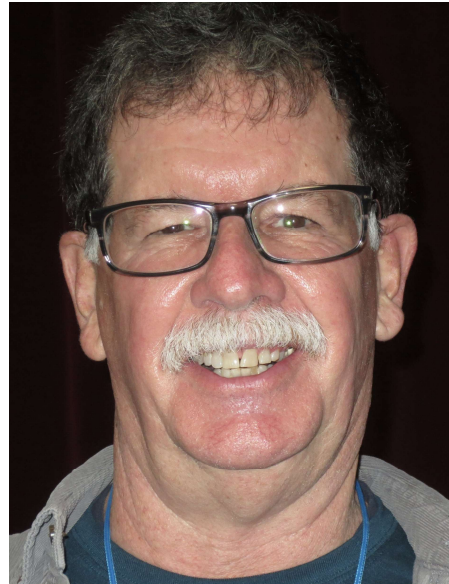
Please email Jayne Herring at
jdherring@jayneherring.com

From The (incoming)RKMGA President....

Leon Potter looks forward to the coming year

I am looking forward to Christmas with family this year. And I'm REALLY looking forward to a new year—hopefully a better year, and maybe a healthier year, for all of us. In all honesty, this was also my hope for last year...and we all know how THAT turned out.

But each new year brings new opportunities and challenges. And this year is no different. This new year I am looking forward to my new role as President of the RKMGA. While I am looking forward to this opportunity, I have to admit that it seems a little intimidating at times. However, I know that we have been blessed with some very strong and bright folks in leadership roles within the RKMGA who have promised to continue to offer their support.



In many ways, during the past two years, we have all been on a roller coaster journey. It's not unlike what we experience in gardening. We've all had seeds that don't germinate as advertised. Transplants that don't do as well as we hoped. Or that storm with high winds that comes out of nowhere. We've all had seasons where it doesn't rain enough or it rains too much. Or where the rabbits and other critters harvest more from our garden than we do.

Master Gardeners and the members of the RKMGA are a resilient and committed group of individuals. Master Gardeners have been confronted with a pandemic and continued to nurture the soil and add beauty to the landscape. I want to thank each one of you for your efforts and time. MGVs have contributed a great deal to their communities—too often without a lot of acknowledgement. But I don't know any gardeners who want a "trumpet fanfare". Maybe the rewards from our gardens are enough.

Gardening can add so much to our lives. I would encourage each and every one of you to continue your role as a Master Gardener and your participation as a member of the RKMGA. It adds to the collective experience when we can learn together and share our passion for gardening.

More challenges are ahead in the upcoming year, just as there will be new opportunities. But gardening continues to provide life lessons on hope and faith. I am looking forward to our journey together.

Sincerely,

Leon Potter

Incoming President, RKMGA



VOLUNTEER GARDEN PROFILE

Checking Out the Plants (not only books) at the Library

Master Gardeners have created major impact at the Graham Public Library in Union Grove for nearly 20 years. It all began with former Director of the library, who happened to be a friend of MGV Sharon Shouldice.

She asked Sharon if the Master Gardeners

might take the Library on as a project since the property was severely lacking in plantings. Sharon says, "The back of the library was plain brick. Our first effort back in 2002 was to plant some bulbs and shrubs to soften the façade." That first effort expanded over the years to a number of planters on the property, including the fairly new official library monument sign with a built-in planter.



Volunteers: Shawn Tilton, Carolun Graf, Melody Orban, Maryann Melby, Sharon Shouldice, Jim Jachna, Kathy Ernst, Emily Ernst.

"We also assist with winter décor to keep the planters festive and attractive over the winter," points out Sharon. "We all bring items from our homes, particularly Diane Battisti who lives on a 14-acre property. She brings red dogwood branches and more. We also add tall grasses that are woven into pine branches. Also pinecones, ribbons, and artificial Poinsettias."

A large group of volunteers contribute to this project including project lead Sharon, Nancy Jahnel-Barnes, Diane Battisti, Kathy Ernst, Carolyn Graf, Chris Hansen, Jim Jachna, Donna Janovicz, Maryann Melby, Melody Orban, Sharon Tilton, Art Scheel, Judy West, and Ann Ludwig.

Their work is supported in part by grants from Potpourri Garden Club.

"Our projects have evolved and expanded over the years," says Sharon. Trees have been lost on the property and in their place they have added planters, pots, perennial beds, and bulbs.

"We have worked with some challenging areas of the property such as an 8-foot by 6-foot hot, dry spot surrounded by concrete. We've planted a rosebush, sedums and Russian Sage that are doing quite well," according to Sharon.

(continued on next page...)

Graham Public Library Gardens... Continued

Watering is always a challenge at gardens, but at the Graham Library, that challenge is met with an outdoor spigot, a hose and an extra hose extension to get to all of the beds and planters. "While we come and work every few weeks, part-time library employees water almost daily. And they needed a LOT this year!"

Learning components have also been added over time. Many plants have metal signs with pictures of the plant and its name. "We also have a set schedule for doing the major work—approximately every 3-4 weeks—to do the planting, dividing and weeding. We let the library know when we are coming so they can promote that to their patrons to come ask gardening questions or just talk gardening."



Plant markers are one of the educational components of the Library's gardens



Spring blooms at the Library's gardens

Center garden, until that became privatized and ceased to be eligible as a MG garden, and also at Southern Center and occasionally helps elsewhere.

While she's proud of the positive impact they have on the Library, as with many Master Gardeners, it is the friendship she enjoys with her fellow volunteers that she treasures the most.

While Sharon has been leading the Union Grove Graham Library project since its inception, she had years of experience as a Master Gardener before that. She began in 1995 at the Racine Zoo, then helped at the Ridgewood Health

(See next page for thoughts from the Library Director)

SPONSOR PROFILE:

Graham Library Appreciates the Help of MGVs

The Master Gardener Volunteers at the Graham Public Library have contributed to the beauty of the grounds as well as provide a learning component to library visitors.

“We see our Master Gardener Volunteers as the experts in all things horticulture,” says Sara Swanson, Director of the library. “We value their expertise.



They serve as a resource for our patrons. We let our library patrons know that they are coming to work on a particular day and invite visitors to ask gardening questions or just talk gardening with fellow gardening fans.”

The Library Project also includes another component that is consistent with the Library’s mission of learning. “We are so happy that there are signs in front of some of the plantings with photos and the names of the plants. We often see people studying the signs to learn the names of what they like or find unique.”

“The volunteers keep our grounds beautiful in all seasons. We are so thankful that they make sure everything is spruced up before the July 4th parade, and the ‘Christmas Comes to Union Grove’ events.”

“We appreciate that the volunteers have donated so much of their expertise and time. Their work and personal contributions of plants and cuttings have provided us with beautiful grounds and have saved taxpayers money. We also know that they are using proper practices in choosing the plants and applying growing methods,” says Sara Swanson.

The Graham Public Library is located on Main Street in Union Grove. Its mission is *“Free and open access to ideas that connect our community and the world, promoting lifelong learning and literacy, and providing opportunities for recreation”*.



PROJECT PROFILE

And Even MORE to Check Out From the Library

The Racine Public Library Master Gardener project has recently begun to work with two key individuals to develop and monitor a **Seed Library**.

The project, led by Linda O'Connell with Linda Godson as the contact person, is supported in part by a grant from RKMGA. It is getting key support from both the Library and Extension.

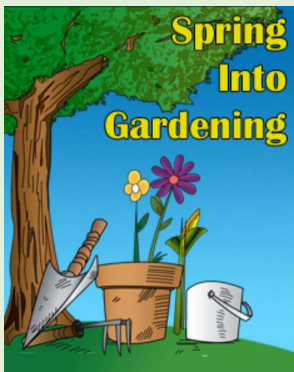


The MGVs are working with Amy Macemon who is the Nutrition Educator at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension, Racine and Kenosha Counties. Nick Demske, the Deputy Director of the Racine Public Library, is the Library representative on the team.

The Seed Library will be a place where people can obtain seeds for flowers and vegetables to use in their own gardens. Seeds will be donated by gardeners, seed companies and local vendors, such as D.P. Wigley company in Racine. Seeds will be placed in individual envelopes and will be available to any interested party. A small card catalog chest will house the seed envelopes at the Racine Public Library building.

The Master Gardener Volunteers of the Racine Library project will be involved in ensuring seeds are available and replenished as needed. Volunteers will load the envelopes, listing the plant's common and Latin names, planting suggestions, etc. on the envelopes.

Anyone with seeds to donate, please contact Linda Godson, 262-498-1988. Project workers hope to have the seed library at the Racine Public Library open in the Spring 2022.



COMING THIS SPRING!

Spring Into Gardening to be Virtual in 2022

Planning for Spring into Gardening-2022 is nearly complete. There will be eight sessions which will be presented via Zoom; two sessions will be scheduled for each Saturday in March – at 9:30 a.m. and at 10:35 a.m. As always, an exciting

array of topics are being planned, including perennials, soils, vegetables, container gardening, house plants, pruning shrubs and landscaping ideas. Beginning January 3rd, more information and registration will be available at www.go.wisc.edu/springintogardening

WHAT WE LEARNED



Vijai Pandian addressed the December RKMGA meeting and holiday dinner

Drought, Heat and Horticulture Challenges

Since Kenosha County in particular and SE Wisconsin in general faced the driest year in 127 years and one of the hottest, many of the questions coming in to the Plant Health Advising team featured questions about damage relating to these conditions and questions about the future of plants and trees.

Horticulture Educator for Kenosha, Racine and Milwaukee counties, Vijai Pandian, presented “Reflection of 2021 PHA's Landscape and Gardening Inquiries” at the December 13th meeting of RKMGA. Here are a few of the interesting facts presented.

- We experienced 50 days over 85 degrees. Most plants common to our zone have a 30-40 day tolerance for that temperature.
- Many of the effects of heat and drought were observable such as browning, curling and defoliation of leaves and needles. However not as easy to observe is the desiccation and shutdown of the feeder roots. It takes a very long time for plants to recover from this. Because the plant's tannins are affected, the plant/tree's immune system is compromised. Decline and death of the tree/plant is more likely.

Other interesting observations:

- On the “good news” column, it was a good year for pollinators. Reports of certain bees and butterflies that had not been observed for a long time
- Cases of Gypsy Moth's takeover and destruction of Blue Spruce trees—a bit of a surprise to many
- Viburnum Beetle is hitting some species of Viburnum. Should purchase beetle resistant varieties

Continued on next page...

Pandian-Horticulture Challenges...continued from previous page

- Many struggles with the lawn, particularly through the drought. One of the pests that thrive in hot, dry weather is the Chinch Bug, which can brown out large areas of lawn by biting, chewing and sucking.
- The Asian Garden Beetle (see photos below sent by Lake County, IL resident from their yard there) is a plant destroyer to watch for. It attacks the roots of plants overnight and kills the plant. It is new to Wisconsin but not yet in SE Wisconsin. It is compatible with over 100 host plants.

Vijai also discussed Boxwood blight, the invasive Teasel, Stink Bugs, Burr Oak Blight and more.

Collection of **Asian Beetle** photos presented to Vijai Pandian by a Lake County resident. Although not yet detected in Wisconsin, be on alert for this in the coming growing season



WHAT WE LEARNED

The Kenosha County Tree Path

UW-Extension horticulture assistant Susan Schlieve has been helping with a variety of projects, most noticeably the new walking path of trees at the Kenosha County Center.

She guided the RKMGA October meeting attendees along the nearly one-mile long path located to the north of the Center. Attendees were introduced to most of the 43 trees that have been planted so far, the fruit tree orchard and the new memory garden.

One of the goals of the path is to introduce visitors to disease-resistant varieties of trees. Also to demonstrate that planting a variety of trees is a strategy to consider versus planting all of the same variety. Using this strategy, if disease hits one type of tree, it is not a total wipeout of your tree collection.

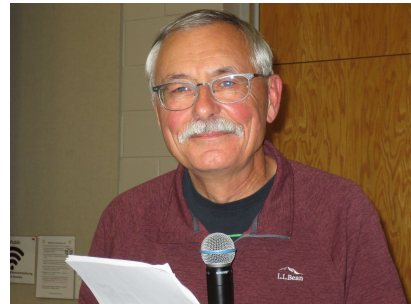
Susan indicated 30 of the 43 trees were planted during the 2021 season. Acknowledging that they were planted during the driest, warmest summer in history, Susan showed how water bags were added to a number of trees. She felt a big part of her job was carting water out to the new plantings. Even so, only a couple of the trees did not make it through the season. They will be very interested in how the trees winter.

Plans for the path include tree identification signs with QR codes and a self-guided tour brochure.



Conifers and MORE Conifers!

RKMGA November meeting speaker David Speth and his wife, Sherry have A LOT of conifers! On their property located near Sheboygan, they host 340 varieties of conifers. That's an impressive percentage of the 550 known species of conifers located on 6 of 7 continents. The photos David shared were amazing and enlightening.



He discussed conifers based on size and growth rates per year (miniature, dwarf, intermediate, and large), shape (upright, weeping, globe, spreading, and prostrate), and color. He also discussed which varieties offer visual interest based on season.

He explained why there is such great diversity—he attributed that to seed collectors and those who propagate using “witches brooms” grafted onto root stock.

David Speth is the Treasurer of the American Conifer Society-Central Region and a member of its publications committee. Please see the Society's website at conifersociety.org

WHAT WE WILL LEARN... January RKMGA Speaker**Pollinator Patch at Bose Elementary School-Kenosha****Submitted By Nancy Jahnel-Barnes, RKMGA Program Coordinator**

Nan Calvert, Root-Pike WIN Program Coordinator and our January 2022 RKMGA meeting speaker

Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network has received a grant from SC Johnson to support the Pollinator Patch Program at Bose Elementary School in Kenosha.

The \$5,600 grant will be used to fund the design and installation of a 1,000-square-foot pollinator patch on the Bose Elementary school grounds, 1900 15th St. This patch will be a living outdoor classroom, offering educational opportunities for more than 400 Bose students, right outside their schoolroom

doors. This project is scheduled to begin in March of 2022 and will include coordination, site preparation, planting, and working with Bose educators on curriculum implementation.

Pollinator patches provide a variety of ecosystem benefits, from storm water infiltration and reintroduction of native habitat to urban heat island relief. These patches recreate essential habitat necessary for the survival of the federally endangered Rusty Patched Bumble Bee as well as many other native pollinators.

The Pollinator Patch Program aims to address underserved areas of the Root-Pike river basin, Root-Pike WIN officials said. Each patch offers myriad educational opportunities for students, faculty, and neighbors to learn about and connect with healthy and resilient habitats. This program also serves the local community by providing a diverse and functional neighborhood green space.

Program Manager Nan Calvert expressed her gratitude for receiving this generous grant from SC Johnson. "Root-Pike WIN is grateful to SC Johnson for their support of the Pollinator Patch Program. When this project comes to fruition, the result will be a vital, living legacy that enhances, strengthens, and supports climate change resilience and quality of life for this underserved Kenosha community," Calvert said. "Our hope, our goal is that the students of Bose and the people of this neighborhood will regard this project as a valuable feature in their neighborhood."

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Carolyn Graf—Super Volunteer

Submitted By Nancy Jahnelt-Barnes, WIMGA

Carolyn Graf trained as a master gardener in 2003. She has achieved the milestone of **2,500 volunteer hours** as of 2020.



She has been active in teaching school children, answering Plant Health Advising (PHA) questions and many projects. To say that she has made her presence known in our communities is just not a grand enough statement. Carolyn is a quiet, thoughtful worker on our projects and we could not be more proud of her!

Carolyn Graf accepting a special award from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension Master Gardener Program. RKMGA President Linda Graeper is pictured making the presentation

A Huge THANK YOU To Our Outgoing President

The members of RKMGA recognized Linda Graeper for her years serving as President of the organization. She presided over her last meeting as President December 13th.

Linda's calm, straight-forward leadership kept the organization thriving during multiple (and continuing!) changes with the state Master Gardener Program and the COVID-19 pandemic.

We thank her for her leadership.

Outgoing Vice President Julie Whyte presents Linda with a thank you gift at the December 13th RKMGA meeting.

