

Master Gardener State Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes 4-4-14

The State Master Gardener Advisory Committee met on Friday April 4, 2014 in the conference room in Horticulture Hall at 10 am. The following members were present: Gary Whittenbaugh, MG member NE; Julie Koster, MG member NW; Jeri Bailey, MG member SE; Cathy Booth, MG member SW; Jennifer Pollard, staff SW; Margaret Murphy, staff NW; Megan Will, MG member Central; Suzette Striegel, staff Central; Gary Hall, regional director; Richard Jauron, campus staff; Donald Lewis, campus staff; Cindy Haynes, campus staff; Denny Schrock, campus staff.

The Master Gardener Winter training session for 2014 had 118 trainees at 11 sites. Fall training in 2014 will have registration due Sept. 5, system check Sept. 9, first Adobe Connect session Tuesday Sept. 16 (through Nov. 4). Class-on-campus dates are tentatively set for Oct 18 and 25, with half of the trainees attending each of those dates. No core course training will be offered in Winter 2015. Winter enrollment has always been smaller than fall classes. Many states in the Midwest train only once a year. The Iowa decision is also due in part to preparations for the International MG conference in Sept. 2015. County coordinators are encouraged to have volunteer service activities for new interns from January through March to keep them actively engaged in the program until the gardening season begins.

The Summer Webinar Session will be themed "Totally Trees". The tentative dates, speakers and topics are: Tuesday July 15, Mark Vitosh, "Iowa's Unknown Treasure: The Forest Reserve"; Tuesday August 5, Donald Lewis and Mark Shour, "What's Bugging Your Trees"; and Tuesday Sept 2 (or Thursday Sept 4) Jeff Illes "Ash Alternatives". Timing and cost will be the same as in past years: 6:30 – 8 pm with a cost of \$25 to hosting sites for each session. Counties are encouraged invite the public and charge a nominal fee, such as \$5 per person to cover their costs. A news release will be developed and made available on the "for staff" page of the Master Gardener website.

A policy has been developed for Iowa Master Gardener webinars (core course training and summer sessions) in which hearing impaired clients wish to

participate. If notified of the need at least one week ahead of time, closed captioning can be arranged. The cost will be split 3 ways among the county requesting closed captioning, campus ag program leader's office, and the statewide extension office. Counties may also arrange for a sign language interpreter for the hearing impaired client with the same cost-sharing arrangement. As they are often available locally, a sign language interpreter may be the less expensive option.

"Reporting county" will be added to the Master Gardener's reporting profiles so that Master Gardeners can indicate if they are active in a county outside of the county they reside in.

The county acceptance of volunteer hours reported was discussed. No change was made to the coordinator guide definition. It is a local decision.

There was discussion about the background checks. All new trainees need to be background checked prior to training. Counties may set earlier registration deadlines to accommodate the background check procedure. Counties should have plans in place for checking all the existing Master Gardeners within the 3 years of the background checking procedure beginning.

The NE staff position on the Master Gardener Advisory committee is now vacant due to the person no longer being on staff. Another staff person who also applied for the committee is being approached about filling out the term.

A request for funding a full-time Master Gardener program assistant has been approved at the departmental and Extension Ag Program Area levels. It is now moving on to Extension Administration for possible inclusion in next fiscal year budget. Currently state Master Gardener staffing is the equivalent of only a half-time position.

Fewer than 100 sets of Master Gardener resource guides and workbooks are in stock. Plans are to revise and print new editions prior to training this fall. A staff person in Agricultural Communications will be serving as the

graphic designer. Current authors and Richard Jauron are revising topics. Plans are to offer three books either in print or electronic versions. There will be a limited use of color to keep costs down. Plans are to print a 3-year supply of each manual. The 2015 garden calendar is in final stages of development, and will be printed prior to the Upper Midwest MG Conference.

The Bio Char research project will continue this year. It is in its third year of a multi-location and multi-year project. Yvonne McCormick is the coordinator of the three sites in Iowa with Master Gardeners assisting in project maintenance and data collection at the sites. The locations are: the Armstrong Research Farm in SW Iowa, the Hort Research Farm in central Iowa, and the Muscatine Research Farm in SE Iowa.

Hy-Vee provided grants for their dieticians and garden center employees to take Master Gardener training. These trainees will be involved with community garden projects associated with Hy-Vee stores. To date a dozen trainees have taken advantage of the Hy-Vee scholarships.

A horticulture graduate student has a research project, which investigates Master Gardener's motivation for joining and remaining in the program. Master Gardeners in the state may be contacted to participate in the survey.

Four applications were submitted for the Search for Excellence awards. Advisory Committee members scored each application, and decisions were made regarding the winners using a composite scoring system. The Advisory Committee was disappointed in the low numbers of applications and that projects which competed last year (and did not win) did not resubmit applications this year. The application is similar to the International Search for Excellence application and lends itself well to writing county extension success stories. County Master Gardener organizations are encouraged to consider their existing projects and apply for the awards in 2015.

The committee discussed the fact that Iowa currently does not meet the National Extension Master Gardener Guidelines requiring 20 volunteer hours

and 10 continuing education hours annually. Megan Will moved that Iowa change the hour requirements for Iowa Master Gardeners to match the National Extension Master Gardener guidelines beginning with the 2015 calendar year. Gary Wittenbaugh seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Registration is open for the Upper Midwest MG Conference is now open. As of April 7, 67 attendees have registered. The early registration deadline is April 30. Classes and tours are limited in the numbers that they can accommodate, and specific ones may fill early. County organizations are encouraged to make a container garden for the container design contest. These containers will be used as table decorations and be auctioned off as part of a silent auction supporting youth gardening programs.

The committee sign up is open for the International MG conference. A link for the sign up will be included in the Iowa MG newsletter. Sponsors are needed for the conference. State staff will be reaching out to potential sponsors.

The next Iowa Master Gardener Advisory Committee meeting will be Friday November 7, 2014; 10 am – 2 pm; location TBA.
Meeting adjourned at 1:45 pm.

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