

The State Master Gardener (MG) Advisory Committee met Friday November 14, 2014 in the Mahlstedt Building of Reiman Gardens at 10 am. President Megan Will called the meeting to order. The following members were present: Gary Whittenbaugh MG member NE, 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, Duane Gissel staff SE, Gary Hall REED, Susan DeBlieck campus staff, Cindy Haynes campus staff, and Denny Schrock campus staff. Richard Jauron campus staff, and Donald Lewis campus staff arrived later following their campus commitments.

The Fall 2014 Master Gardener class had more than 290 trainees at 29 sites/counties. The class-on-campus schedule dropped the soils compaction lab and replaced it with a session on composting.

Plans are under way to host three winter webinars highlighting food systems. It is hoped to devote one session each to Schools, Community (food pantries, farmers market etc.) and Institutions (hospitals, businesses etc.). They will *tentatively* be held on three Thursdays from late January through mid-March. There was discussion of having one per month; without conflicting with Homegrown Lifestyles. Cost to the counties will be indicated in the final announcement.

The MG summer webinar series in 2015 will focus on specialty gardens as the theme. The current plan is to include two related specialty gardening topics at each 2-hour-long session. Discussion included possible topics.

Ashely Sherrets was selected for the open NE staff MG Advisory committee position. Her term will expire at the end of 2017. Duane and Megan's terms expire this year. Both have served one term under the current organizational structure and are eligible for another term. Both agreed to serve another term. It was moved and seconded to have them serve another term. Gary H. moved nominations cease and a unanimous ballot be cast. Duane and Megan's second terms will expire at the end of 2017.

The Iowa Master Gardener Search for Excellence (SFE) application was reviewed. Counties/Applicants are encouraged to apply for the International MG SFE as the Iowa MG SFE application is based on the International awards. Denny will send the application for the committee to review; please send changes to Denny by December 1st. After December 1 the application will be uploaded to the For Staff site. Applications are due March 15 2015.

Susan DeBlieck is the Master Gardener Program Assistant (campus staff) hired this fall. She has been making changes to the Facebook page (Be sure to "like" Iowa Master Gardeners) and the Master Gardener website. As part of the web page redesign the For Staff pages will be reformatted, too. A new generic Iowa Master Gardener email goes to both Susan and to Denny. That way whoever is responsible for the subject of the email message or whoever is available first can respond. That email is: mgardener@iastate.edu.

A 2000-hour pin is now available for Master Gardeners reaching this level of volunteer service. Even though it is not yet listed as an option, counties may order it by indicating they want it in the other items section of the Materials Order Form.

An item needed for Iowa to meet National Extension MG Standards is an annual Volunteer Agreement. A first draft of an annual Iowa MG Volunteer Agreement was reviewed and will be sent to the committee. Suggestions for revisions should be sent to Denny by March 1st so that the form can be discussed at the spring 2015 Advisory Committee meeting.

Another item needed for Iowa to meet National EMG Standards is a measurement of competency of trainees. Discussion about possible ways to measure competency reached the consensus of using pre- and post-training open book assessments. Plans are to make the assessment computerized for easier tabulation. The goal is to pilot-test the assessment with counties that participate in the Fall 2015 Master Gardener training.

A pilot program will occur this spring for ***Achieving the Extension Mission Through Volunteers***. One experienced (more than 2 years as a coordinator) and one new (fewer than 2 years as a coordinator) staff member who work with Master Gardeners are wanted for the pilot. Master Gardener coordinators and 4-H staff from 13 states have been chosen to participate in this project.

Denny surveyed coordinators earlier this year about the resources they use. Susan has identified the coordinators from the NW region and has a conference call set up for them to interact, including sharing of resources. She intends to have similar calls with all regions.

The Upper Midwest Master Gardener conference was held this summer in the Quad Cities. There were 250 people attending including speakers. Conference planners had hoped for 300, so the revenue was below budget.

Bryn Takle, ISU grad student reviewed his MG survey progress. He will send the survey to all MGs in the online reporting system. He would like county coordinators to publicize the survey to all MGs in their counties to encourage a high response rate.

Preston Sargent, Iowa co-chair for the 2015 International MG conference reported on the planning progress. So far, 140 volunteers have signed up to be on the following committees: **Decorations, Entertainment, Evaluation, Finance, Food, Goody Bags, Hospitality, Registration, Silent Auction, Speakers, Conference Tours, Post-Conference Tours, Trade Show, Volunteer Coordination, and Communications**. Committee sign up is closed, but there is space for more volunteers on specific committees. Any Master Gardener who wants to be involved on the committees, can send an email to Preston (sargetech@radiks.net) ASAP.

International MG conference potential keynote speakers include Jay Schwanke (uBloom floral designer/entertainer), Mark Hirsch (That Tree), and Gary Oppenheimer (Ample Harvest). All but one meal will be included in the conference registration fee. Registration should be open by March 1. There will be daily registration and spouse packages available. The basics of all tours (pre- and post-conference as well as during the conference) have been determined. County coordinators are encouraged to promote the conference to their MGs and possibly organize groups to attend. The International Master Gardener Conference will not be held this close (Omaha/Council Bluffs) for a number of years to come, if ever again.

The next Iowa MG Advisory meeting will be Friday April 10 or 17, 2014; 10 am – 2 pm; location TBA.

Meeting adjourned at 1:30 pm.

Submitted by Suzette Striegel, secretary