

Iowa Master Gardener Advisory Committee Meeting

April 10, 2015

OVERVIEW:

The Iowa State Master Gardener (MG) Advisory Committee met Friday April 10, 2015 at the Speer room of Mahlstede Building, Reiman Gardens at 10 am. The meeting was called to order by Megan Will. The following members were present: Megan Will MG member Central, Gary Whittenbaugh MG member NE, Jeri Bailey MG member SE, Cathy Booth MG member SW, Ashley Sherrets staff NE, Jennifer Pollard staff SW, Suzette Striegel staff Central, Shannon Bielicke, staff SE, Gary Hall REED, Susan DeBlicek campus staff, Donald Lewis campus staff, and Denny Schrock campus staff. Richard Jauron campus staff arrived later following their campus commitments. Unable to attend were Julie Koster MG member NW, Margaret Murphy staff NW and Cindy Haynes campus staff.

WELCOME:

A welcome was extended to Ashley Sherrets who was attending her first meeting after being appointed to complete the term for staff NE (ending in 2017). Gary W moved to have Shannon Bielicke complete the term for staff SE (ending in 2017). Seconded and passed unanimously. A welcome to Shannon was extended also. Introduction of the advisory committee followed.

PROGRAM UPDATES:

Winter Webinars had 43 locations, charged \$2,975, evaluation showed that people plan to work with school & community gardens, and donate produce to food banks

Summer webinars will be pre-recorded available after the first week of June, July & August. Each 2-hour time block will be divided into two 1-hour-long sessions with a Master Gardener presenting one topic and an ISU staff member presenting a coordinated topic. Featured in June will be Design from Yard to Trough (landscape design and trough gardens). For July the topics center on Water in the Garden (waterwise landscaping and water features). In August Pollinators and Growing Herbs will be the topics. Counties will be able to show the webinars to their own schedule. 14 Counties have already signed up.

Fall training will start in late September. The enrollment fee remains at \$195. There are promotional materials created for the counties to use, so far 25 sites plan to host. A photo release is included in registration materials which are still in draft form. Materials are/will be on the website for county staff to use.

There was discussion about Iowa having MG Training in both fall & winter or just once in the fall. Discussion included costs, time, and how other states have training. Motion was made by Gary W for Iowa to only offer training in the fall. Motion was seconded by Jennifer P. Discussion included the need for campus staff to work with counties for other training options when they want to offer more than once a year. Passed unanimously.

A Volunteer manual is being prepared. A draft should be available by next meeting. It will include policies and ideas for MG's.

A grant to offer School Garden 101 in Iowa received a \$2,500 Excellence in Extension grant. It is a train the trainer type of training. Training will be offered to 10 extension staff (minimum) on the SG101 workshop series this fall, and the trained staff will offer the five week workshop series (in 5 counties minimum) in spring of 2016. Attendees of the county trainings will be involved with school gardens.

There is a SNAP-Ed partnership (with Human Sciences) in the initial stages. The funding is for increasing fruit and vegetable consumption in low income audiences. More information will be released as available. Potentially the Iowa MG program will receive \$40,000 to support MG's to educate low-income audiences about gardening, and encourage MG's to donate to food banks.

Search for Excellence award form suggestions (for use next year) should be sent to Susan before our next meeting. Discussion included indicating the points available for each section on the application.

MANAGEMENT:

Background screening continues at the county level of existing Master Gardeners. This is to be done by 2016. All county volunteers will need to be background screened at enrollment and every three years.

The online hours reporting system will be revised to include more information for coordinators and be more user friendly.

An item needed for Iowa to meet National MG Standards is a measurement of competency of trainees. Motion was made by Ashley and seconded by Jennifer to have pre and post open book assessments with this fall's training. The assessment will need to be taken on a computer. Enrollees not meeting the competency level desired on the post assessment will be allowed to retake. Motion passed unanimously. This will be incorporated into the registration flyer.

Another item needed for Iowa to meet National MG Standards is a Volunteer Agreement. A draft of Iowa MG Volunteer Agreement was reviewed. It still needs to be reviewed by ISU legal. A motion to adopt usage of the volunteer agreement following ISU legal approval was made by Gary H and seconded by Shannon. It passed unanimously.

SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE

Search for Excellence (SFE) applications were reviewed. There were ten applications, awards were selected for five of the applications. All of the non-winning applications were encouraged to apply again. Winners will be announced next week:

- Johnson County Downtown Garden, Polk County Discovery Garden, Buchanan County Mill Prairie, Marshall County Youth garden, and Johnson County Butterfly project

MG SURVEY

Bryn Takle, ISU grad student reviewed his MG survey preliminary results. Survey was sent to 4424 email addresses, 711 bounced (3713), Opened by 1880, 1328 started, 1022 completely finished.

Demographics results: The largest percentage (44%) are in their 60s; 89% report being over the age of 50; 80% women; 78% married while only 5% single/never married; 82% have children, most of which (86%) are of adult age (> college age); 46% retired, 33% work outside of the home full time (16% part time); 65% report earning a bachelor's or graduate degree, 31% of those being graduate; 45% report being in their current residence for more than 20 years with another 24% reporting 11-20 years.

Program results: 45% have been active in the program for 6 or more years; 89% report over the minimum requirement for volunteer hours; 2014 and prior = 12; 45% reported > 41 hours volunteered; 87% plan to continue for next year (but that means 141 people will not be).

Training Topics and Delivery Methods: More than 85% were moderately or very interested in native plants; Sustainable horticultural practices - more than 80% moderately or very interested; and interestingly, youth garden education was the least preferred topic with nearly 50% of respondents slightly or not at all interested in further training. Live presentations and workshops are preferred by more than 90% of Iowa Master Gardeners. Video presentations and webinars were generally less preferred. Respondents were moderately or very interested in video presentations (75%) and webinars (65%). Nearly 60% of respondents use Facebook some or a lot; more than 30% use Pinterest some or a lot. Therefore, while they are comfortable with these technologies, they prefer live presentations and workshops over webinars and videos to receive training on these new garden topics.

What motivates MG: Results show that questions relating to individual rewards ranked higher than those relating to strengthening community. Specifically, more than 98% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the program provides opportunity to learn about plants, soils, and horticultural topics. 93% agree or strongly agree that the program provides classroom instruction and hands-on experience in horticulture. Less likely to agree or strongly agree that the Master Gardener program will alleviate some societal problems (30%) and that influential people in their community are Master Gardeners (24%).

CONFERENCES:

HortInservice held on February 27 was discussed. Change in location was appreciated. Having in-service the same week as shade tree short course was not recommended for future in-services because it's difficult for staff to be out of their home office for so many days in one week. Approximately 50 attended this year's training.

International MG conference to date has 157 full registrations (+10 one day); 81 tour sign ups; 20 paid booths at trade show (+7 pro bono/exchange for speaker fee). Deadline for Early (reduced) rate is still upcoming (April 30).

NEXT MEETING:

The next Iowa MG Advisory meeting will be **Friday November 6, 2015; 10 am – 2 pm; Speer room, Reiman Gardens, Ames.**

Meeting adjourned at 1:45 pm.

Submitted, Suzette Striegel, secretary