



MASTER GARDENER

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

VOLUNTEERS

1,318 Volunteers in 73 Counties
Gave 65,846 Volunteer Hours
Worth \$1.81 Million

REACH

Reached 68,274 Contacts with
Volunteer Service
Donated 81k Pounds of Fresh
Produce to Food Pantries
48,784 Total Media Reach

EDUCATION

Volunteers Logged 11,470
Continuing Education Hours
294 MG Training Participants



Floyd County Produce Give-Away

Highlights

AVERAGE VOLUNTEER HOURS: TOP 5

1. Boone County
2. Buena Vista County
3. Jackson County
4. Harrison County
5. Hamilton County

TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS: TOP 5

1. Polk County
2. Linn County
3. Black Hawk County
4. Johnson County
5. Dubuque County

Master Gardener volunteers were not required to volunteer or complete continuing education hours due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many MG volunteers found ways to safely volunteer. Woodbury County MG volunteers offered the Siouxland Garden Show virtually. MG volunteers switched the annual event to an online platform that drew in 689 live views and 1,641 YouTube views of recorded sessions. Tama County MG volunteers established over 300 square feet of pollinator habitat. They planted perennials, labeled plants, and set up rain barrels for watering the plants at the county fairgrounds and county public health building.

The ISU Extension and Outreach Floyd County office was awarded one of 29 Growing Together mini grants to increase donations of fresh produce to the food pantry. A Master Gardener volunteer created connections in the community to solicit produce donations and support donation gardens. When the community food pantry closed because of COVID-19, the MG volunteer and her partners acted quickly to create a fresh produce distribution event outdoors in three locations across the community. They were able to distribute 700 pounds of fresh vegetables to over 200 people at the events.

Master Gardener volunteers in Jasper County have been part of the Growing Together mini grant program since 2018. They established a donation garden on the campus of Des Moines Area Community College to grow vegetables for the Salvation Army food pantry. In 2020, they added cattle panels as vertical trellises for squash and tomatoes to grow on. It was good timing, because in August when the derecho winds hit, plants were secured by the cattle panel trellises and were not damaged while most gardens in their community were destroyed. The community endured a weeklong power blackout causing many families and food pantries to lose their perishable foods. Because of the cattle panel trellises, the delicate crops supported by them survived the storm and allowed the MG volunteers to provide a large donation of fresh tomatoes and peppers to the food pantry for immediate dispersal to people in need.

The Master Gardener Training was offered online by ISU Extension and Outreach county offices. 29 counties offered the MG Training via ten Zoom sessions. Some MG trainees were assigned to go visit gardens and submit videos about what they did on FlipGrid. The Class on Campus is usually offered in-person at Iowa State University as part of the MG Training. In 2020, MG state staff hosted 4 live webinars with content experts on Plant Pathology, Entomology, Natural Resources, and Botany to connect MGV trainees with ISU faculty. The recordings were edited, close captioned, and shared; they now have over 1710 watches combined on YouTube. 290 people finished the virtual Master Gardener Volunteer Training and are preparing to volunteer in their community. Already in 2020, 46 MGV training participants logged 405 volunteer hours worth \$9 thousand.



“Presenting this course virtually... was the only way I could have participated. I had wanted to take the course for 10 years,”

2020 Master Gardener Training participant

Two counties won the 2020 Search for Excellence Award – Marshall and Linn. In Marshall County, MG volunteers helped youth grow produce at elementary and middle schools, and at the Bobcat University. The produce was donated to local food pantries. 464 youth benefited from the educational portion of the program, and youth and other volunteers helped to donate 930 pounds of produce in 2019 and 670 pounds in 2020. In Linn County, MG volunteers worked with 18 community gardens to improve food access and knowledge in underserved communities. Each garden had a MG volunteer liaison as project leader, and volunteers who worked with the community. In three years, the Linn County project has led to more than 31,000 pounds of fresh produce being grown and donated to people who are food insecure. More than 200 adults have been educated about growing produce, and more than 600 students have received gardening education and experience.



Marshall County Youth (2019)

Master Gardener Volunteer Hours by County 2020

