

The Iowa Master Gardener program advisory committee met virtually on Tuesday, April 27, 2021. The Zoom meeting was called to order at 9 am.

Members present include: Chair Chelsea Martens, Doug Brightman, Ann Carter, Susan DeBlieck, Steven Eilers, Sherry Ford, Cindy Hutcheson, Sharon Jeter, and Donald Lewis.

Committee Updates:

Katelyn Brinkerhoff has left her position in Woodbury County to take a position out of state. Becki Lynch has relinquished her spot on the committee to focus on retirement. Susan will advertise to active Master Gardeners in NE Iowa and MG Staff in NW Iowa to fill those openings.

Old Business:

Susan reported on:

- Master Gardener program mission and Advisory Committee purpose.
- Growing Together Mini-grants: 32 mini-grant applications were funded in 33 counties. 2021 is the 6th year in the program. In the past 5 years, over 443,000 lbs of produce has been donated to over 360,000 people.
- Conferences:
 - International Master Gardener Coordinator Conference will be virtual; hosted by VA Tech in Sept 2021
 - International MG Coordinator Conference to be hosted by Kansas State in 2023
 - ISU Horticulture In-Service held virtually spring 2021. Tentatively looking at in-person opportunity fall 2021.

New Business:

- No summer webcast series. Susan is spending that time moving the Master Gardener core training to an online class format. Many online continuing education opportunities remain.
- 2021, and going forward, the Master Gardener Core Training will be 100% online, hosted from campus.
 - Currently there are 220 applicants. Maximums are 350 for the Master Gardener and 50 for the Pro-Hort option this first year. Class will start August 30 and run through November.
 - Applications will be reviewed in July, fees paid/background screenings in August through county offices.
 - Hope is to reach more than the 50 counties currently offering the training annually, or bi-annually. Current applications reflect a more diverse age range than traditional course applicants.
 - Suggestions to create a plan to support volunteers completing the training in counties lacking a county coordinator were discussed.
- VRS – plans in place to create “local projects” section to more clearly define the work being done by volunteers.

- Susan and Donald worked to clarify the pesticide application policy based on private/public land use and required certifications to apply pesticides in those instances. That update has been added to the MG manual for coordinators and volunteers.
- The Committee reviewed Search for Excellence application from Woodbury County prior to the meeting, providing ratings/feedback. Susan reported the outcome. Steven moved and Chelsea seconded to approve the application for the award. Motion passed.
- A sub-committee spent time working to more clearly define appropriate volunteer and educational hours. Susan created and presented a document that will be shared with current and future volunteers. Specific examples were given for county coordinators to determine whether or not hours count for various activities.

Konrad Powell, graduate student in horticulture, presented information about a study he conducted with Master Gardeners in relation to Growing Together project sustainability in the long term. The main take-aways were: Master Gardeners responding to the survey indicated a strong preference toward donation garden activities, and a desire to share gardening practices and knowledge through informal opportunities.

With no further business, the committee adjourned at 11:41 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Carter