



Calumet County Master Gardeners – 2014 Annual Accomplishment Report

We had about 33 members in 2014, with	23 recertified for 2015.
In 2014 we volunteered	123 hours in youth education
	570 hours in community education
	923 hours in support service
and participated in	441 hours in continuing education



Our membership has declined as members get older and cannot do as much, and we have not attracted new, younger members. One of our founding members passed away this past year, which was difficult for the entire group. But 10 energetic people took Level 1 training this year and we hope to keep them involved, bringing new and different ideas to group. At our monthly meetings we try to have programs to keep our members interested and involved. We toured a new milking goat farm operation, sampled their different cheeses, and enjoyed dinner in their restaurant. One of our meetings was at a local apple orchard, learning about the year-long, day-to-day operations. We also took a bus tour to the Anderson Japanese Gardens and the Nicholas Conservatory in Rockford, IL.

Major Accomplishments or Projects:

1. At our annual plant sale in May, which is our major fundraiser, we continue to offer all kinds of annuals, vegetables, herbs, hanging baskets, and perennials. In the past, most of our perennials were from MGV's gardens, but this is no longer practical with so many older members, so we started buying in the perennials along with the annuals.
2. We awarded a \$500 scholarship to a young lady who is attending Fox Valley Technical College with an educational focus on horticulture and business.
3. We continue to plant and maintain numerous flower beds in the City of Chilton, Calumet Co. Courthouse, Calumet Co. Fairgrounds, and the Optimist River Walk Beds in Chilton. We planted the City of Chilton bed in all marigolds, with a border of dusty miller. We also planted several vegetable beds in conjunction with the Salvation Army, providing fresh produce to needy families.
4. Several MGVs continue to be involved with other local, state, and national groups, like Tree Boards, WI and National Junior Horticulture Associations, 4-H, and Wisconsin Plant and Soil Science. Members also assist with judging days at the Calumet Co. Fair, working with the judges and youth.
5. MGVs staffed the CCMGA Booth at the County Fair, answering horticulture questions, selling our annual cookbook and horticulture related books and pamphlets. We also handed out free garden and flower seeds, courtesy of Jung's Seed Company. For our annual Fair Display, we showcased different kinds of squash that we raised in our new community garden.

Highlighted Project: Community Garden at Calumet Medical Center

This year several MGVs and our UWEX Ag Agent/MG Advisor were actively involved in creating a community garden with Calumet Medical Center, our local hospital in Chilton. MGVs planned and implemented the garden, which became a reality this spring and summer. The garden area is adjacent to the hospital, providing easy access for them and the general public. It was previously a farm field, so there were issues with soil quality and weeds.

We had a good response for the first year, renting out twelve 10' x 15' beds to members of the local community. The MGA had two beds where we planted the squash for our fair display. The hospital dietary department also had two beds where employees assisted with planting, caring for, and harvesting vegetables which were used in the cafeteria for employee and patient meals. The department plans to have four of the beds next year in order to expand the availability of fresh produce for patients and employees. There is sufficient land available that the garden could expand to around 100 beds. Local news media and the hospital administration have been very supportive of this new endeavor

Fruit and Vegetable Crops Encountered Varying Types of Threats During 2014

By Ray Mueller

Growers of fruits and vegetables contended with a variety of challenges to their crops during 2014, according to the year's summary Wisconsin Pest Bulletin issued by the state's Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection. The report is compiled with the cooperation of public and private sector entomologists and plant pathologists.

In most cases, the growers were faced with familiar insects and plant diseases. But the monitoring and reporting program funneling into the weekly updates also identified some new pests and their expanding range.

Spotted Wing Drosophila

A primary example of this is the spotted wing drosophila (SWD), which is found mainly on raspberries in Wisconsin but which infests blueberries, strawberries, and other sweet fruits throughout much of the country. It was first documented in Wisconsin in 2010 and has been positively identified in 36 of the state's 72 counties, representing every geographical corner, since then.

During 2014, SWD adults and larvae were confirmed in 20 of Wisconsin's counties. The first flies were caught in traps from June 14 to 20 this year. The eggs they lay on berries hatch as white larvae just when the berries are ripe for picking.

The summary report indicated that the infestation of fruits by the SWD was prevalent by mid-July and that "significant losses" to raspberries and blackberries were sustained for the third consecutive year in Wisconsin. It described the SWD as "the fastest-spreading invasive fruit pest" detected in Wisconsin and the United States in recent history.

Around the Apple Tree

For apple tree growers, the season started with somewhat of setback due to damage to trees during one of the 10 coldest winters on record in Wisconsin. The report noted that this led to slow leaf emergence, collapse of some leaves or flowers after emergence, and even tree death by mid-June, especially in northern parts of the state.

The decline and mortality of the trees was also attributed in part to factors dating back two years, the report indicated. These included the crop freeze in the spring of 2012, the drought which followed that summer, and the unusually heavy catch-up crop yield in 2013.

Winter injury, tree stress, and excess spring rains also created an opening for the spread of black rot and an invitation to wood borers in apple trees, the report pointed out. Based on that possibility, DATCP's apple insect monitoring program is planning to provide lures to growers who are already in the pest trapping network in order to detect the presence of the American plum borer, dogwood borer, and lesser peach tree borer.

Apple Insect Damage

A season-long presence of codling moths, combined with weather conditions that limited the effectiveness of control, caused management challenges for many apple orchard owners in 2014. The first moths were caught by May 21 and damage from the first generation larvae was noticed by July 8, the report noted.

Later flights of moths began in mid-July and continued until early September at some locations. Heavy June rains reduced the effectiveness of larvicides during the peak of the first round of infestation.

Localized but severe damage by the apple curculio weevil was observed in a few southern Wisconsin orchards in 2014. Apple maggot populations increased greatly after late-season heavy rainfalls, leading to damage to the latest maturing apple varieties in some orchards.

Vine Plant Woes and Noes

Gardeners in the southwest, west-central, and central parts of Wisconsin were plagued with infestations of squash bugs on their pumpkins, squash, and other vine plants. Numerous complaints were received during July and August. Growers are advised to dispose of the mulch, dead leaves, and other garden debris in which the squash bugs find protection during the winter.

Southwest Wisconsin was a hot spot for striped cucumber beetles by late July as 7 to 8 beetles per plant were feeding on flowering squash plants. The economic threshold for losses with the striped cucumber beetle is 4 to 5 beetles per 50 plants, the report emphasized.

Based on trappings from May 1 to September 30 in 11 vineyards in Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, and Sheboygan counties, no moth pests that could infest grape vines were found. That pest group includes the light brown apple moth, the European grape berry moth, and the silver Y moth.

Blight and Rots

Blossom end rot, which primarily affects tomatoes, peppers, squash, and watermelon, was prevalent in Wisconsin and home gardens this year, the summary report stated. Large black lesions on the end of the fruit are caused by a lack of calcium, especially when soil moisture is lacking.

Fourteen cases of late blight in potatoes and tomatoes were diagnosed in nine Wisconsin counties during July and August. They were among 236 confirmed cases in 23 states this year.

The report noted that this was the sixth consecutive year of late blight confirmation in potatoes in Wisconsin. There were no such confirmations from 2003 through 2008.

In an isolated incident, basil downy mildew, a fungal disease, was found on purple basil plants being sold in June by three retailers in Brown County. The discovery and intervention by DATCP removed 436 plants from sale. This type of mildew was first reported in Wisconsin in 2010.

A similar situation, tied to a Marathon County nursery, led to the first detection of the lily leaf beetle in Wisconsin. Following the identification of the red and black beetles and their larvae at the nursery on June 25, DATCP received 17 additional reports during July to September about this beetle – all from within Marathon County.

Vegetable and Melon Growers Report Activities for 2012 Census

By Ray Mueller

Among the more than 60 different edible species of plants grown in Wisconsin every year, vegetables and melons made up one of the categories for statistics were compiled in the 2012 national Census of Agriculture in which everyone growing product worth at least \$1,000 in the census year was invited to reply.

The results from the 2012 census, when compared to those from 2007, show a dramatic change both upward and downward in the number of operations and harvested acres for some of the crop species. In alphabetic order, the greatest gains in popularity were shown for beans, garlic, all types of greens, okra, parsley, peppers, rhubarb, sweet potatoes, and turnips while the totals dropped the most sharply for asparagus, ginseng, melons (both cantaloupe and water), and pumpkins.

Changes Over Five Years

During the five-year interval of the latest two censuses, growing tomatoes outdoors overtook pumpkins for the top number of operations. The tomato totals increased from 779 to 859 operations on 570 acres compared to 406 in 2007 while pumpkin grower operations dropped from 1,055 in 2007 to 839 in 2012. The number of pumpkin acres in Wisconsin fell accordingly – from 3,600 to 2,736.

Next in the order in the number of operations are bell peppers at 624 (up from 486) and 453 acres (up from 396). Other varieties of peppers follow with 395 locations (up from 269) and 329 acres (up from 234 in 2007).

The most noticeable change from 2007 to 2012 was the major drop in ginseng totals in Wisconsin. The number of growers answering the census plunged from 168 to 60 and the number of harvested acres fell by more than 50 percent from 554 to 267.

Minor Changes from 2007 to 2012

The numbers of squash growers declined only slightly during the five years – 433 to 411 for winter varieties and 218 to 203 for summer squash. Total acres slipped from 823 to 777 for winter squash but were up from 180 to 230 for the summer varieties.

Beets follow in the number of growers with 234 in 2012 compared to 210 in 2007. The number of beet crop acres increased from 2,784 to 3,526.

Asparagus had 178 growers but this was down from 223 in 2007. The number of asparagus acres slipped from 244 to 222.

Melon Categories

Three categories of melons were tabulated in the censuses. Cantaloupe had the highest number of operations and acres in 2012 with 166 and 163 respectively – down from 229 locations and 235 acres in 2007.

The number of commercial watermelon growers in Wisconsin declined in a similar manner. Operation numbers and acres dropped from 198 and 149 in 2007 to 185 and 136 respectively in 2012.

Honeydew melons, however, staged an increase. The number of growers was up by 10 to 26 and the number of acres increased from 3 to 16.

Greens and Leaf Vegetables

The highest percentage increases in the number of locations and acres during the five years belonged to the greens group – kale, collards, and turnips. Kale grower numbers increased from 43 to 92 while the number of acres jumped from 16 to 78.

Collard greens locations grew to 31 from 9 while harvested acres were 42 in 2012 compared to only 4 in 2007. The number of turnip greens growers went from 5 to 14 and harvested acres were up from 2 to 30.

The number of fresh-cut herb growers was nipped by 1 to 71 but the number of harvested acres tripled to 66. Similarly, the spinach grower total slipped by 7 to 71 but the harvested acres increased by 50 percent to 27.

For all types of lettuce, the Wisconsin grower total dropped by 5 from 2007 to 144 in 2012. The number of acres was 39 in 2007 but was not disclosed for 2012 to avoid disclosing data for individual operations, according to the report issued by the Wisconsin field office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Peas (sugar and snow) were harvested on 417 acres at 72 sites compared to only 69 acres in 2007 when there were 66 growers.

Batch of B's

Among all the crop species in the vegetable category, beans (both green and lima) surpassed all of the others for the acre total in 2012 with 5,720 – up from 3,435 in 2007, when pumpkins held the top spot with 3,600 acres. The number of bean growers increased by 40 from 2007 to 106 in 2012.

The number of broccoli growers slipped from 155 to 138 during the five years between the censuses. The 2012 report indicated 80 acres were harvested but the number for 2007 was not divulged.

Brussels sprouts growers increased their total by 2 for 58 in 2012. The number of acres was up from 15 in 2007 to 24 in 2012.

Less Than 100 Hundred Acres

Among the other vegetable crops with less 100 harvested acres in Wisconsin for 2012 were cauliflower with 95 acres on 75 operations (up from 55), garlic with 73 acres at 148 sites (up from 34 acres and 116 sites), and radish with 41 acres at 76 locations (up from 33 acres and 68 sites).

Chinese cabbage was being grown on 35 acres at 34 sites (up from 27 and 29 respectively), eggplant on 34 acres at 102 locations (up from 25 and 92 in 2007), and green onions on 26 acres at 79 sites compared to 19 acres and 92 locations in 2007.

Rhubarb nearly doubled its grower numbers to a total of 67 as the number of acres tripled to 19. Parsley enjoyed similar success with a near doubling of growers to 31 and a more than nine-fold jump in acres to 19.

Also included in the census data were the indication of a tripling of the number of sweet potato growers to 42 on 23 acres (up from 13 acres), a more than doubling of the growers of turnip bulbs to 42 on 19 harvested acres (up from 9 acres), and the okra grower total increased from 9 to 21 as the acres doubled from 2 to 4.

Census of Agriculture Documents State's Increases in Fruits, Berries

By Ray Mueller

For most categories of fruits and berries, the number of operations and acres has been increasing in Wisconsin.

That's according to the results of the 2012 Census of Agriculture. This survey, taken every five years, includes operations which grow agricultural products that would be worth at least \$1,000 – whether sold or not – during the year.

In terms of the number of growing sites or operations, raspberries remained at the top in popularity with 417 locations compared to 406 in 2007 but the number of acres went down from 286 to 251 during that period.

For the blackberry category, which includes dewberries and marionberries, the number of growers dropped from 86 in 2007 to 74 in 2012. But the number of acres was up by 10 to 48.

Grapes, however, jumped in popularity with 412 vineyards on 817 acres. Those were major increases from 253 vineyards and 479 acres in the 2007 census.

The number of tame blueberry sites increased from 133 to 224 during the five years while the acres were up from 216 to 383. A wild blueberry category was also reported for 2012 – 8 sites totaling 16 acres.

Pears were being grown at 208 sites compared to 147 in 2007 but the number of acres increased by only 4 to 105. The number of peach groves doubled from 46 to 93 as the acres increased from 18 in 2007 to 31 in 2012.

The growing of plums and prunes also became more popular as the number of locations increased to 156 from 93 but the acre total was up by only 8 to 65 in 2012. There were 109 growers of sweet cherries on 131 acres compared to 77 growers and 83 acres in 2007.

Although the total of growers of currants increased from 24 to 36, the number of acres slipped by 1 to 10 in Wisconsin for 2012. For apricots, the numbers decreased in both categories from 2007 to 2012 – 22 to 18 for locations and 7 to 4 for acres.

2014 American Garden Awards

Five months of very active voting have concluded and the winners have been announced. The top three winners based on online voting, in garden votes, and text votes are:

- Grand prize - Foxglove *Digiplexis Illumination Flame*
- 2nd place - *Petunia Sanguna Radiant Blue*
- 3rd place - *Celosia Arrabona*

What's in a Name

Many times people get the wrong impression from reading just the title and don't go or put in that extra effort to check it out thoroughly. This just came into play a week ago, when I received a call from a lady in northwestern Calumet County regarding a seminar/conference put on by the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service in La Crosse In February. Because of the wording (Organic Farming Conference) she thought it was just for farmers and didn't realize she could benefit from it also, as she was looking to learn more about organics as a whole.

These conferences are geared to have subjects that will help everyone seeking out sound organic practices. As this upcoming conference on February 26-28, 2015, has workshops on soil biology, using beneficial insects, to growing more fruit, pest management, to even protecting organic corn from wind pollinated that is susceptible to crossing with transgenic varieties.

Labeling of a name back in the sixties and even the seventies, the name organics meant backwards thinking and poor growing and farming practices to many people.

Years ago, when we first started out growing organic, we were fast labeled as the hippie people growing inferior vegetables with insect, etc. damage which was far from the truth, as we had healthier products. But nowadays people are beginning to learn the truth about over use of chemicals in the environment. It has taken lots of studies and time to see what costs have occurred, such as the decrease of pollinators, super bugs, and weeds taking over fields of crops, frog infirmities, and the list goes on. Not counting the concerns it has dealt to people and major health issues. So like Paul Hartman (retired Brown County Horticultural Educator) once said, you can't go by just a name, but in those days, he was referring to the Latin names of plants, versus common names. So we all must consider what's behind the name.

Miniature Gardening

Miniature gardening is still at the forefront of putting succulents with tropicals in home settings. Because miniature theme gardening isn't relegated to an outdoor only activity, it can be enjoyed year around by establishing miniature theme gardens in terrariums or repurposed containers.

ILEX

The Little Goblin Ilex shines with abundant, extra large fruit on a compact plant, which grows to within 3 to 5 feet, making it an integral piece for winter interest in small gardens or mass plantings. This shrub is Zone 3 hardy.

Ten Speakers Scheduled at Harmony with Nature Conference

By Ray Mueller

Ten speakers are scheduled at the Wild Ones Fox Valley Area Chapter's 19th annual "Toward Harmony with Nature" conference being held on Saturday, January 24. at the Oshkosh Convention Center.

Phenology and climate change will be topic of the keynote presentation at 9:00 am by Stanley Temple, a University of Wisconsin – Madison professor emeritus of natural resource conservation, who, for 32 years, held the academic position once occupied by Aldo Leopold. Phenology is a study of the timetable on when plants bloom, birds migrate, and other natural events occur.

Concurrent Sessions

Three topics will be covered in the morning concurrent session. Attendees will be asked to choose between presentations on landscaping with native plants, the interactions between plants and insects, and the standards – ecology, economy, or culture – for the composition of a prairie or savanna restoration.

Carol Bangs of Mequon will be the presenter of the session on landscaping with native plants. She is the principal owner, operator, and manager of a consulting firm and was a teacher of landscape horticulture at the Milwaukee Area Technical College.

Pollination and an overview of Wisconsin's herbivory and carnivorous plants will be the subject matter for the session on interactions between plants and insects. The presenter will be Gretchen Meyer, who is a senior scientist and manager at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee's field station at the Cedarburg bog in Ozaukee County.

Why the few remaining remnant prairies should be the model for all restoration plantings will be the genesis of a concurrent session presentation by Scott Weber. He has 35 years of experience in such restorations in both private and public sector projects and is the owner of Bluestem Farm (a native plant nursery at Baraboo).

Afternoon Concurrent Programs

In one of the opening set of concurrent sessions starting at 1:15 pm., Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources research scientist John Dadisman will outline the land management practices needed to support populations of grassland birds.

Wetland restorations, particularly as they pertain to birds, will be the subject for Jill Hapner, who is a senior biologist with GeoBotany Consulting Services in the Milwaukee area. She will list the characteristics for providing good bird habitat in a restored wetland and will share her research findings on how bird use of small created or restored wetlands changes over time.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources recovery program for the karner blue butterfly will be outlined by the program's coordinator Bob Hess. There is concern about the long-term fate of the program because numbers have started to decline after five years of growth in the state,

which is the home of the nation's largest population of the endangered butterfly.

Final Concurrent Sessions

Good practices in woodland management for enhancing wildlife habitat will be outlined by Tracey Koenig, who is the executive director of the Heckrodt Wetland Reserve in Menasha. She will also consider the emerging concern about coping with the emerald ash borer.

A presentation on identifying and understanding invasive specie plants will be given by Bernie Williams, who is a specialist on forest health with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. One point she will discuss is how earthworms are giving those invasive plants a boost.

A look at the future management of prairie habitats will be given by Amanda Zopp, who is a senior naturalist at the Riveredge Nature Center at Newburg. The title of her presentation is "Prairies: Continuing the Legacy of a Wisconsin Ecosystem."



More information about the conference, the fees, and the registration deadline is available on the Register tab on the www.towardharmonywithnature.org website.

Healthy Soil

This is a subject that I bring up several times a year as this is the key to a better landscape, flowerbed, garden, and even an orchard. Soil tests every three to five years, along with yearly pH checks and water test every five years will give you more free time and less work, in the long run. Plants use up nutrients on a daily basis to stay healthy.

Compost piles spread evenly throughout the flowerbed or garden add soil structure and workability. The use of trench composting in gardens works out great and continued turning is not necessary. Now is the time to read up on the basic of soil structure and even soil microbiology. When one improves their knowledge of the relationship between soil structure, soil health, and the microbiology of that, one will gain a much better feel when rolling the soil with your hand, the smell of the soil. In early spring as the soil dries out, take a spade and go straight down and then clean out the front of that slice and look at how your soil is layered and put together. This will tell you if you have what it takes to grow and produce healthy vegetables and plants.

Per a statement from John Biernbaum, Michigan State University, vermicomposting can be a reliable source of organic matter containing soluble and stable nutrients for use in your greenhouse or hoop house.

The This & That Column

First off I want to thank those of you that like to read my This & That Column, I appreciate the feedback as it helps me to know what topics interest you. So, here are a few more.

Fireblight: In my thirty years helping people in Calumet County, I personally have seen it only three times, and each time we were able to control it and keep it from coming back. In a recent article I read, David Granatstein of Washington State University stated that organic orchardists have used a systems approach successfully to maintain organic compliance by having good sanitation.

In my topic of what's in a name, I should have included the phrase "Word" also, as this past fall, a woman from northeastern Calumet County called seeking help on a source to learn fermentation.

But as we talked I finally got the jest of what she needed help with. My mother, grandmother, or even I never really called it fermentation; we simply were going to do some canning of fruit or vegetables usually and on occasion do some pickling of fish, meat, or vegetables. In a recent item, Angelica Holstadt of Angelica's Garden stated, the art of fermentation, is discovering the fascinating microbial world that turns a head of cabbage into sauerkraut. But I was able to help her, as some years back, I took a course through the University of Wisconsin outreach program on Home Preservation. So I highly recommend these courses to everyone as they are well taught and you gain helpful information that you will have for a lifetime.

Jane Hawley Stevens of the Four Elements Organic Herbals stated that medicinal herbs have seen a rise in use.

In recent articles in various publications I have seen where there are new developments on stone fruits, and I have spoken about some of the unusual fruits that are becoming available. So some of you might want to try one or two.

Container culture of fruits within your homes is an excellent way to break up the winter. Plants that can be grown are bananas, figs, lemons, limes, oranges, and pomegranates. There may be even more, study up on propagation. The internet holds lots of sources for plants.

I was surprised years ago at how many homes didn't have one, two, or more rhubarb plants. It told me which were new homes compared to older generation homes. As those older homes all had a row or patch of rhubarb and a few even had elderberries.

This spring a new paperboard pot, which is 3x3x3 inches in size, will be coming to your garden center. They will be sold in packs of 6 and made from 100% recycled materials, the bottom of this biodegradable pot is perforated to tear away easily, reducing root disturbance when transplanting seedlings.

Geodesic greenhouses are thought to be the new wave of the future for the homeowner. The design makes a greenhouse setup a breeze, by taking just a few hours, not days or weeks to erect. These amazingly durable structures are guaranteed to last for years.

The New Generation

As time rolls by, there seems to be a change of the younger people reverting back to yesteryears, when we or our parents did lots of canning and putting up staples of potatoes, cabbage, squash, pumpkins, watermelons, and even nuts. They want to learn home preservation methods, plus many want to grind their own flours from grains we don't think about often, such as einkorn (*Triticum momoccum* L.) and spelt (*Triticum aestivum spleta*). Others want to use buckwheat and oats. When I first got these questions, it sort of caught me off guard. But then I remembered a Brillion Iron Works semi driver whose wife ground their own flour years ago and grew or raised everything organically, and still does to this day. These young folks are into raising chickens and honeybees within the city limits and their rural country homes. The latest was sorghum, which I didn't know could be ground for flour. I always thought of it as being crushed for its juice, which we used on pancakes and in making cookies, but I'm sure Linda used it amongst other things as well. Sorghum was known to be grown in poor soil. Linda found on the internet that sorghum syrup is a natural sweetener that is a good source of iron, calcium, and potassium. It is delicious served over ice cream or in baked beans. Use sorghum to replace corn syrup, molasses, honey, or maple syrup in recipes. Eat sorghum syrup the traditional way by pouring it over buttered biscuits.

Attract Pollinators

When thinking about our spring plantings, let's not forget our pollinators, as we need to maintain a small patch of bare ground about 3 square feet for ground nesting solitary bees. Bumblebees will appreciate a wooden nest box built from plans provided by the Xerces Society (www.Xerces.org). Pollinators need to be assured of poison-free room and board. If at all possible avoid using pesticides. If you must spray, use a few common sense cautions. Spray only in the early morning or late evening when pollinators are resting. Choose treatments that break down quickly and are pest-specific. Try to use more organic type products. If you can, consider building new pollinator beds in corners of your lawn and turn your property lines into plant filled travel corridors, as open turf is unbelievably sterile to pollinators. Some plants that will attract pollinators are blue cardinal flower, beebalm, butterfly weed, cardinal flower, purple coneflower, smooth blue aster, sunflowers, and baby blue eyes. If new to the neighborhood, ask your neighbors if they know of any beekeepers in the area. Provide at least two birdbath basins filled with clean water, with small washed stones in basin for the pollinators.

Microgreens

This popular culinary is one of the easiest plants to grow. Microgreens are a tiny edible sprouted green, that are incredibly nutritious. Using either vegetable or herb seed, microgreens can be harvested in just a few weeks after planting and just after first leaves appear. They are used as a garnish, sprinkled atop a dish, or put into a pile of tender salad greens. Seeds that can be used are cabbage, mustard, chard, broccoli, radishes, and kale, and are all nutritious and brimming with phytonutrients. You can also try purple basil or red amaranth. Other interesting textures include kohlrabi, sorrel, cress, cilantro, carrot, bok choy, chrysanthemum, and fennel. How to Grow Microgreens at Home, by Mark Mathew Braunstein, is a good book to learn from.



Winter is The Time

Now is the time to ponder over the many catalogs one receives or the vast number of online catalogs. As we all know, we as gardeners want to add something new or more exciting to view in our landscapes. So below I have listed under-utilized plants that can possibly give you an idea.

Hen & Chicks

These plants always, with their variations, colors, and textures have been a fascination of mine for years. I like how the rosettes form the main or parent plant, the hen, and all of the little rosettes cluttered near the edge of the hen are known as the chicks form. These plants will continually multiply and spill over the bed, and thus need to have divisions done in the years ahead. They like full sun and will tolerate poor soil. Once established many will produce flowers on hairy stems that can rise upwards of twelve inches, and some will have purple to reddish pink blooms in midsummer. The height of the hens usually are three to approximately five inches or so. A couple that I really like out of many textures are the Blue Star Sapphire and the Bird's-nest, which has a silvery web spread across the top of the rosettes. The bi-color rosettes also add charm to a bed.



Carpet Thyme

This plant gives off a lemon scent and once established will give you pink blooms all summer long. They are perfect in rock gardens, pathways, walkways and as border plantings. They are tough enough to take foot traffic and still remain beautiful. They average two to four inches in height, love full sun and bloom late spring to summer.

Snow in Summer

If you're looking for an attractive plant with lots of eye appeal, then this is what you want, as in a border setting it looks like a drift of white snow. The plant has a grayish, downy foliage with star shaped white blooms that arrive in late spring. It spreads quickly and will even cascade over walls. It is hardy in zone three and is roughly three to six inches in height, plus it prefers full sun.



Hollyhocks

These old stately plants are easy to grow and can reach heights of five to six feet tall. They are biennials, meaning they bloom every second year, and they come in many brilliant colors. But, there is a perennial variety called Spotlight, that comes in the colors of lemon yellow, dark black-purple, bright red, and bright white with yellow centers.

Ferns

Many people do not utilize ferns in their landscapes. Most ferns are deer proof. I have always been fascinated by the delicate texture of many of the ferns. Take the Ghost Fern with its maroon midribs and frosted leaflets, which can brighten up a cool shady spot. The Brilliance Autumn Fern changes from a coppery pink to a pinkish honey green and then to leather green, what an amazing show. The ferns prefer full to partial shade. Ferns such as the Lady Fern are hardy to zone two, while others are zone three and five.



Wintergreen

These plants will give you pinkish white flowers in spring and berries in autumn. Glossy green foliage turns scarlet in winter. These plants are hardy in zone four, prefer full to partial shade, and will bloom in spring.



Liriope

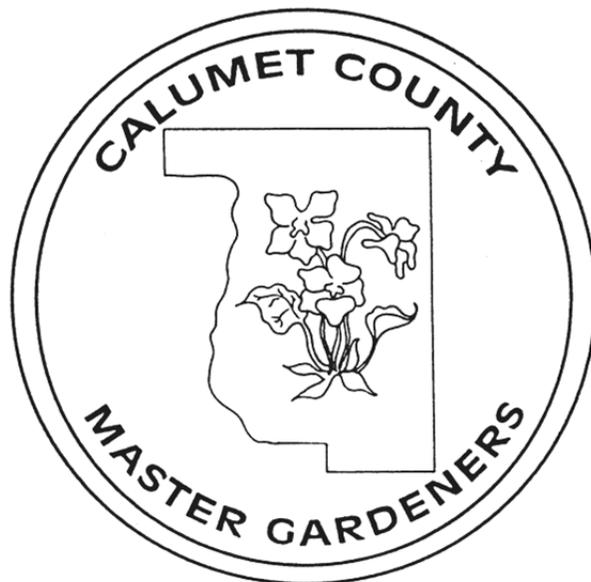
This lovely perennial will grow where nothing else will. It's large, lavender flower spikes rise above the arching evergreen tufts of grassy foliage. This plant is hardy in zone four, blooms in late summer, and prefers full sun to full shade. This plant is ideal in areas under trees and other shady areas where grass does not want to grow.

Fairy Garden

A typical garden should have eye appeal and can be placed into a corner of your lawn on a raised bed and by doing so, you can place a bench into the area and take in the wonderment and fragrance of the shrubs of which you place into the site. In this private area you can relive the magic of childhood dreams and wishes all over again.

Some shrubs that make perfect specimens are examples that grow only two to four inches per year, and reach heights of two to three feet over a span of ten years. Most of the examples I will share with you, will take full sun to partial shade, and are hardy to zones three and five. Fernspray Gold Dwarf False Cypress, Tansu Dwarf Japanese Cedar, Jean's Dilly Dwarf Alberta Spruce, Dwarf Mops Mugho Pine, and White Pygmy Dwarf False Cypress. All of these dwarf compact conifers add dainty beauty. Other varieties that can add eye appeal are Variegated Creeping Blue Sedum, Red Hens and Chicks, and Variegated Sedum. Other fairy garden furniture could include: a chair, bench, arbor, a birdhouse on a pole, a lantern hook with lantern, and a birdbath. Also, pretty stones and pebbles can be used, leave it up to your imagination.

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