Throughout Minnesota, University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardeners have been increasingly asked to teach people in their communities about growing food, and – a favorite new term – edible landscaping. Edible landscaping is a type of garden design in which edible plants – fruits, vegetables and herbs – are combined with lovely annual and perennial ornamental plants. The concept has come on big time in the past few years. It breaks the mold of “perennials in front, vegetable plot out back”.

Our urban audiences have really grasped the edible landscaping concept as it makes practical use of limited space in a city lot. It brings out the down-home, grass roots feeling that lives inside all of us to grow our own food. It is creative, inspiring one to mix the distinctive form of dinosaur kale, bright red strawberries, and the long-lived glow of edible calendula blossoms with their traditional home landscape plants. Edible landscape is science, inspiration and fun all rolled up together.

Master Gardeners are like the concept of edible landscaping. They teach people science and methods based on University research, encouraging exploration, trial and discovery along with presenting information and resources.

Master Gardeners are inspiring – and inspired! They bring their own form of excitement and energy to every project, every client, and every class they teach. They are inspired by nature and intrigued by challenges as well as success.

Master Gardeners are fun – a lot of fun. A favorite part of my job as state director is getting out of my office and visiting Master Gardeners in their home communities. It’s fun to see their teaching gardens, hear their ideas, and most of all, to see them in action as teachers for University of Minnesota Extension.

But more than all this, Master Gardeners are volunteers. They are giving their time, talents and enthusiasm to people they may not even know, and may never see again. They are there – investing in others, encouraging them to plant an edible garden, to nurture the earth and to take care of the precious resources provided for us. Master Gardeners rarely take, and they always give.

Thank you to all 2075 University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardener volunteers who generously gave 111,817 precious hours of themselves in 2009 to make Minnesota a better place. May you all relish in the fruits (and vegetables) of your effort.

Julie Weisenhorn, State Director
## 2009 University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardeners

*County listing based on state program database (if county not listed, currently no Master Gardeners)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number of Master Gardeners</th>
<th>Number of volunteer hours</th>
<th>Value of volunteer time</th>
<th>Number of continuing education hours</th>
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### 2009 University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardeners

*County listing based on state program database (if county not listed, currently no Master Gardeners)*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number of Master Gardeners</th>
<th>Number of volunteer hours</th>
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State Master Gardener Conference 2009

The 2009 State Master Gardener Conference took place in August on the St. Paul Campus. Thanks to Master Gardeners from Hennepin and Ramsey Counties for work on planning the event. Hosting the event on campus was an opportunity for Master Gardeners to gain a closer tie to the University and experience many of the resources available at the U. There were many ways to learn and experience the University of Minnesota.

Lots of hands-on learning about insects and disease in the teaching garden.

In-classroom workshops and discussion sessions.

Demonstrations and instruction on the latest food safety practices was a popular topic with increased interest in home vegetable production.

Sharpening up on those tree identification skills with a hands-on session and a walk around campus.

It’s practical hands-on learning for participates in the popular plant propagation workshop taught by horticulture faculty.

Lots of hands-on learning about insects and disease in the teaching garden.
Junior Master Gardener Pilot Project

The Master Gardener Program collaborated with Extension’s 4-H program to pilot the Junior Master Gardener 4-H SET (Science, Engineering, and Technology) project in 2009. The pilot was generously funded by a grant from the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association (MNLA) Foundation. There were six expectations of each site.

1. engage at least 10 youth in a minimum of 8 learning sessions
2. involve a local MNLA member sponsor
3. incorporate a science experiment and a service project
4. use technology to teach, communicate and report
5. utilize JMG curriculum and have some type of teaching garden
6. participate in evaluations

Also:
- Seven of the eight pilot projects obtained a local MNLA member as a sponsor for the project.
- Seven of the eight sites completed one or more science experiments:
  - In Olmsted County, youth grew a tomato plant upright in the garden and another in an upside-down hanging planter. They compared and charted fruit size and yield.
  - In Sherburne County, youth participated in the Minnesota Master Gardener vegetable variety trials.
  - In Stearns County youth experimented with water content of fruit, weighing and dehydrated fruit; the comparing and charted results.
- Eight project sites participated in at least one community service project; six groups used their project gardens to grow produce for local food shelves.
- All leaders praised the JMG curriculum. They said activities in the curriculum:
  - were easy to use
  - contained learning activities that were relevant
  - engaged youth and youth liked the learning sessions

Six counties were selected to participate, two had multiple sites: Clearwater, Crow Wing, Olmsted (2), Sherburne, Stearns (2), and Winona. Seventy-two participants attended one of two trainings. Each site received JMG materials and a $125 grant for supplies.

All sites were successful. Data from the pilot evaluation shows that in total:
- 125 youth enrolled in the project; 97 youth completed the entire project
- 30 percent of youth participants were non-white/persons of color; 70 percent were white/Caucasian
- 87 youth were new to the 4-H program

Introduction of a Plan to Increase Connections between State and County Programs

The original Master Gardener program model counted on county Extension educators to coordinate and manage Master Gardener volunteers and program operations. The state program role was primarily to establish general program expectations and provide training and resources.

In recent years, Extension restructuring and reductions in county funding have left the Master Gardener program with fewer county program staff coordinators. Those circumstances shift to the state program greater responsibility for oversight and accountability for management and for the work of county Master Gardener programs and volunteers.

Master Gardener volunteers have stepped up to the plate and assumed many leadership roles for local program operations. In 2009, an infrastructure plan was introduced to better connect state and county programs. It provides important infrastructure to better support MG volunteers and to address the state program need to be more accountable for outcomes of Master Gardener work across Minnesota.

The plan outlines minimum expectations necessary for county program groups to be sustained. It requires that five operational documents be on file at the state office to validate participation in the University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardener program. They include:
- A set of operating guidelines
- An annual work plan
- An annual highlight report
- A directory
- An annual financial report

The plan will be fully implemented in 2011.
2009 State Program Recognition
State recognition is presented to Master Gardener volunteers who reach benchmarks for hours contributed and years of service. In 2009, recognition was presented at the Annual State Master Gardener Conference.

30 Year Volunteer
Esther Filson, Washington
Diane Hagstrom, Washington

25 Year Volunteer
Elaine Blommel, Stearns
Donna Gill, Otter Tail – East
Shirley Mah Kooyman, Hennepin
Toots Lundberg, Kandiyohi
Susan Morris, Kandiyohi
Peg Mossberg, Kandiyohi
Cathy Peck, Beltrami
Mary Crane, Ramsey
Linda McGraw, Renville
June Johnson, Pipestone
Bud Suchy, Ramsey
Judith Stoel, Pipestone
Mary Jane McHardy, Olmsted
June Johnson, Pipestone
Joan Andersen, Stearns
Kevin Boatman, Ramsey
Carolyn Dingfelder, Winona
June Ballard, Winona
Linda Trumbull, Winona
Cindy Welke, Winona

20 Year Volunteer
Frank Dobie, Blue Earth
Barbara Stendahl, Dakota
Liz Volkert, Dakota
Donn McCoy, Hennepin
Muriel Grooters, Lincoln
Mary Jane McHardy, Olmsted
June Johnson, Pipestone
Mary Stoel, Pipestone
Ralph Thrane, Ramsey
Linda McGraw, Renville
Hank Wessels, Watonwan
Lois Ankrum, Winona
June Ballard, Winona
Carolyne Dingfelder, Winona
Marie Spellz, Winona
Cindy Welke, Winona

15 Year Volunteers
Twenty-nine Master Gardeners received recognition

10 Year Volunteers
Ninety Master Gardeners received recognition

1000 Hours of Accumulated Volunteer Service
Jan Kolodji, Aitkin
Hilde Manuel, Anoka
Barb Botten, Carver-Scott
Alice Heglund, Crow Wing
Dick Raymond, Crow Wing
Michael Gonzo, Dakota
Rebecca Lystig, Dakota
Grace Anderson, Hennepin
Teresa Rooney, Hennepin
Barbara Orstad, Kanabec
Bev David Knudsen, Kandiyohi
Peg Mossber, Kandiyohi

2009 Awards from Partner Organizations/Institutions
- Mayor Chris Coleman presented Ramsey County with the City of St. Paul “Sustainable St. Paul” award in the category of improving green space. It recognized a land renewal project with the American Indian Family Center.
- Chisago County was recipient of an annual Minnesota Horticulture Society award recognizing the Stacy Teen Garden Project.
- Hennepin County received three of Metro Bloom’s 2009 awards: Best Raingarden (MG Lori Anderson); Outstanding Partner Organization (Hennepin Co. Master Gardener program); and, Most Valued Professional (Terry Straub, Hennepin Co. Master Gardener Coordinator)
- Anoka County’s JMG program at Riverview School in Coon Rapids, lead by Anoka County Master Gardener Hilde Manuel, was a finalist for the National JMG Group Award in 2009.

Outreach to New Audiences
Urban Gardener Program
The Urban Gardener program in Hennepin County continued to grow in 2009 drawing 65 participants to Master Gardener-taught classes; 36 new Urban Gardeners graduated. The curriculum teaches individuals how to grow vegetables at home or in community gardens. The six-session series has grown in popularity, doubling the amount of graduates since beginning in 2006. The program model will be replicated in north Minneapolis.

Aurora-St Anthony Community Garden
A Ramsey County approach to reaching new immigrant and historically underserved audiences has included working through a part-time staff person from the community and bringing neighbors together around a community garden created in the Aurora-St. Anthony neighborhood in St. Paul. The garden is a conduit for community gathering and relationship-building. About 30 residents participated bi-weekly with Master Gardeners.

Native American Program Partners
Dream of Wild Health is a St Paul-based program that works with the Native American communities. The program educates Native American youth in the areas of plants, healthy lifestyles and Native American culture. Master Gardeners in Washington and Ramsey County conduct classes on soils and water, composting, germination, and photosynthesis. Each session starts with a prayer circle and discussion. Youth plant and maintain the gardens, then sell the produce at a local farmers market.

Beltrami County’s work with the Red Lake Community is described in their highlight report.
A Unique 50th Anniversary Celebration
Deb Wolk, a Hennepin County Master Gardener, found a unique way to celebrate her 50th wedding anniversary. Instead of holding a traditional celebration, she and her husband invited family and friends to assist in the planting of 11 raingardens. The couple, who live near the Minnehaha Creek and watershed in Minneapolis contacted 11 neighbors regarding the project, hoping that 6 would agree to planting a raingarden in their yard. All 11 agreed! Ten Master Gardeners lead the planting teams, educating 150 volunteers how to plant the raingardens. Deb’s project was highlighted in the MN State Horticultural Society’s magazine, Northern Gardener. She also received the 2009 Green Leaf Award which honors sustainable gardening practices.

Grow a Row
Several counties promoted and participated in the national “Grow a Row for the Hungry” program. In Pine County, ‘Grow A Row’ was the theme for the Master Gardener booth at county fair. They handed out information about food shelves in the county, growing vegetables in containers, and how to become a Master Gardener. One Master Gardener alone contributed 1167 lbs. of produce to the local food shelf. Goodhue Master Gardeners got involved in the program for the second year. An average of about 200 lbs. of produce was donated weekly to the Red Wing Area Food Shelf, doubling the amount donated in 2008.

Programs and Support With and For Libraries
Master Gardeners in Hennepin, Beltrami, and Steele Counties have found great partnerships with public libraries. But libraries are not just a place to deliver educational classes and hands-on projects. For six years Winona County Master Gardeners have provided grants for school and public libraries. In 2009 they approved $500 for the Library Grant Project.

On a different angle, Cook County Master Gardeners have begun raising funds and developing a local horticultural/farming library at the Extension office. These resources are available for check out by anyone, including folks from neighboring counties. One need the library addresses is to assist the significant number of rural residents that do not have access to Internet.

Veterans Garden
The City of Thief River Falls approached Pennington County Master Gardeners to design a garden in an empty lot next to City Hall. A plan was developed for a sustainable perennial garden. Three eagle scouts took on this project. They named it the Veterans Memorial Garden and launched a fundraising effort that reached $15,000.00. What was initially planned to be just a sustainable perennial bed turned into a huge perennial garden with stone paths, a fence and statues of veterans. Master Gardeners assisted in plant selection and planting. It was a wonderful collaborative project involving over 50 people.

Community Corrections
Several county Master Gardener programs collaborate with local corrections departments on projects that benefit the corrections system clients and the greater public. In Olmsted County, Master Gardeners teach Dodge, Fillmore, Olmsted (DFO) Community Corrections staff and community work service clients the basics of vegetable gardening. The participants learn to grow and harvest vegetables from a 1-acre garden they maintain. About 200 youth performing community service and about 50 adults on daily work release from jail are involved. Upon harvest, they prepare and sell the vegetables. Over 5000 pounds of vegetables are harvested. This project provides a constructive environment for youth to serve their community service hours. It also acquaints the participants with all aspects of gardening and experiences that illustrate the rewards from work.

Addressing Special Needs through Hort Therapy
Work continues with the Enabling Teaching Garden Project at Cherry View Elementary School in Dakota County. Using a Minnesota Master Gardener grant, Master Gardeners worked with a special needs Boy Scout and his troop to construct an enabling garden for horticultural therapy. The garden included a wheelchair accessible bed surrounded by a wheelchair accessible path. Special needs students and their helpers were given instruction and assisted in the planting of their sensory garden that includes highly textured, colored, and fragrant plants. Students and helpers maintained the garden during the school year and through the summer months. The garden has been especially meaningful to special needs students and their families. It also exposes all who visit the school to the benefits of horticultural therapy. As described in the County Highlights section of this report, Goodhue County Master Gardeners were involved in creating a larger-scale city park designed with special needs in mind.

In Faribault County, Master Gardeners have worked with a local nursing home and engaged both residents and youth in creating a raingarden at the facility in Winnebago. This year youth had the opportunity to work with the senior citizens on garden cleanup in the spring. Together they divided perennials and extra plants were sold to benefit the nursing home.
Master Gardener volunteer work is first and foremost about delivering research-based education on best practices in horticulture. Master Gardeners spend a portion of their volunteer time helping homeowners and gardeners solve problems related to plant growth, insects and diseases using University of Minnesota Extension resources. This happens at venues like diagnostic clinics, county fair booths and information stations at farmers markets. It also happens through phone calls, email correspondence, articles for local media and, in a few counties, live call-in radio programs.

In addition, Master Gardeners continue to expand the focus of educational activities on three state program priorities:

**Environmental Stewardship**

Educating the public about environmentally-sound practices in home landscaping and gardening has a positive impact on the natural environment and on the greater community. Of the 45 county/local Master Gardener programs reporting:

- **24** – Twenty-four counties have Master Gardeners engaged in projects that promote, demonstrate or install raingardens to reduce runoff and filter potential contaminants from waterways. Most of this work is done in partnership with others, like soil and water conservation districts, municipalities and environmental organizations. Master Gardener roles range from teaching basic concepts to consulting on plant selection and planting techniques.

- **10** – Ten county programs have Master Gardeners involved in shoreline restoration. They work with individual homeowners or lake associations. In 2009, Master Gardeners were trained and then helped to host an information booth at the large ‘Lake Home and Cabin Show’ in Minneapolis.

- **12** – Twelve county programs conduct activities to reduce or eradicate invasive plant species. The primary emphasis in 2009 has been on education about emerald ash borer and assistance in leading efforts to remove buckthorn.

- **11** – Eleven counties have active educational activities to promote and teach how to compost. This work reduces the amount of material entering the solid waste systems and produces a positive amendment to enhance soil.

**Youth Gardening**

Programs that connect youth to gardening are on the increase nationally. Master Gardeners have expanded efforts in youth gardening education, often done in partnerships with other organizations and schools. These programs have goals associated with promoting healthy eating, reducing child obesity, connecting youth to nature, and teaching life and science skills.

- **6** – Six counties participated in the Junior Master Gardener 4-H SET pilot project. In total eight youth garden programs were completed, each with a unique program format. Over 100 youth participated.

- **34** – Thirty-four counties report some programming with youth. The activities range from intensive, weekly gardening sessions throughout the growing season to teaching short-term plant science concepts in a school classroom. Several counties education through learning stations conducted in partnership with conservation departments. Others engage youth in environmental projects like prairie restoration and raingardens.

**Food Access**

Family economic situations, concerns about food safety, access to healthy produce and growing interest in a “green” movement have all contributed to a significant increase in demands for education about growing vegetables and small fruits in backyards or community gardens. To meet demand, Master Gardeners across the state conduct more classes, establish garden sites and provide on-site assistance to new gardeners.

- **11** – Eleven counties report establishing of new community gardens and community garden educational programs. These programs meet the need in both urban and rural counties, from Hennepin to Traverse, Stearns to Cook. In several cases, Master Gardeners set up demonstration gardens at community garden sites. Others used a garden plot to grow food for local food shelves.

- **2** – Two counties, Houston and Fillmore, have been instrumental in organizing Farmers Markets in their communities and are now in process of transferring leadership for the markets to grower groups.

Master Gardeners Make a Difference

45 county/local programs share reports that highlight contribution of public benefit
An Anoka County Junior Master Gardener (JMG) Program, the Riverview Raccoons, led by Master Gardener Hilde Manual, was selected as a national JMG program of the month in 2009 and was a finalist for the National JMG Group Award. This program is delivered through an Anoka-Hennepin District school that incorporates the JMG into the 4th and 5th grade science curriculum. Over the two-year period students are able to complete the entire JMG curriculum. Currently 150 students are involved each year. About 300 hours are contributed annually by Master Gardeners who teach and work with students.

In addition to classroom activities, students have established a rain garden at the school. They also created global gardens using plant materials that represent cultures of the students. There is a U.S. regional garden and gardens representing Mexican, Central American, Asian, African, and Native American cultures.

Students in a nearby high school landscape construction class partnered with the JMG students. They build the gardens and prep the soil. Parents and family members participate at special program events and help with maintenance during summer months.

Because of budget cuts, the school will close at the end of 2010. The popular JMG program will be incorporated into the curriculum plan at a new school site in the district. Anoka County Master Gardeners are training a team of Hennepin Master Gardeners to take over the project.

University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardeners in Beltrami County began working with tribal members of the Red Lake Indian Reservation. Upon request, they conducted beginning vegetable gardening presentations in Red Lake and Ponemah. Over 100 people attended, many absolute beginners and others who had gardened before. These successful programs led to an invitation for Master Gardeners to participate in a health fair in July. Approximately 175 people stopped at the Master Gardener table to talk gardening, some with questions, others to share their success stories. While it was a diverse population of participants, most were Native American. Feedback from the community indicated that many of the participants started gardens for the first time and that many had good success. As a result of the partnership that developed, several tribe members have applied and are enrolled in the 2010 Master Gardener Core Course.

Benton County Master Gardeners continued to develop their educational and beautification project at the Benton County Fairgrounds. Fairgoers noticed and offered many kudos for the work. Fairground gates were completely remodeled and planted, an heirloom garden was enhanced and maintained, and a rain garden was added by the children’s barnyard. Eight daily schedule signboards were placed around the fairgrounds and were landscaped. The Historical Society Building, the site of a large Master Gardener booth was decorated inside and out with hanging pots and soil planted flowers.

The largest naturalization project in Becker County was undertaken over the past two years by a partnership of eight community organizations that includes Becker County Master Gardeners. The project involved reclamation of 4,000 feet of lakeshore on the north side of Big Detroit Lake impacted by highway renovation. Over that stretch, the shoreline ranged from 30 to 100 feet in depth.

Becker County Master Gardeners where active on the project planning team that was led by the Pelican River Watershed District. Master Gardeners assumed key roles in caring for over 12,000 plants used in the reclamation effort and in installing the plantings. The project emphasized and used many native plant species in the plan.
Carver-Scott
http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/carverscott/

Carver-Scott Master Gardeners (CSMG) began a new program called “Evenings in the Garden”. Master Gardeners taught sessions one Thursday evening a month during the growing season at their Teaching Garden on the Scott County Fairgrounds. Many family events were planned for these evenings, including such projects as planting annuals in old shoes, or making home-made ice cream topped with local honey.

The activities drew several students from the regional Juvenile Alternative Facility (JAF), an on-site school for juvenile offenders ages 12-17. Students were given many plants and seeds at the “Evenings in the Garden” sessions. They used the seeds and plant material to start gardens at their facility. This interaction led to a new collaboration between the CSMG and the JAF. In 2010, JAF students will continue to attend the “Evenings in the Garden” and Master Gardeners will visit their location twice monthly to present interactive garden demonstrations and assist with the JAF garden.

Chippewa County
In May of 2009, Chippewa County Master Gardeners planted a 4,000 square foot rain garden bordering the Chippewa County Courthouse parking lot in Montevideo. Native grasses and wildflowers suited for wet soils were chosen for lower areas of the garden. More drought tolerant Black-eyed Susan and both big and little blue stem grasses were planted on the upper edge of the basin.

The Chippewa County Courthouse rain garden project impacts the community by reducing the amount of pollutants entering the storm sewer system which is directly linked to the Minnesota River. By slowing down, capturing and absorbing runoff water from the Courthouse parking lot, pollutants such as grease, oil, and antifreeze which collect on the parking lot, are filtered through the rain garden. In the event of an extreme rainfall, the garden is designed with an overflow pipe that carries excess water under Highway 7 and across to an existing wetland area.

The rain garden project also served as a learning tool for area high school students. Under direction of the agriculture instructor, Chippewa County Master Gardeners collaborated with students in growing native plants for the project at the Montevideo High School greenhouse. This involvement made students more aware of water quality issues. The same is true for community members because of the highly visible location of the rain garden. The project was partially funded by U of M Extension Master Gardener grant.

Carver-Scott County Master Gardeners host family-oriented educational activities in their teaching garden during the new “Evenings in the Garden” series.

Clay
Day on the Farm, held at Lee and Noreen Thomas’s farm was a day long event that featured more than 12 hands-on activities/sessions offered by master gardeners, farmers, horticulturists, Extension educators, conservation and soil experts.

Participants were able to learn about backyard composting, how to plant bare root trees / shrubs, chemical-free house cleaning, and plant identification. This event served more than 180 people (30 were children), the vast majority not familiar with Extension.

Clearwater
While a major effort of Clearwater County Master Gardeners continues to be the day-long “Spring Wake-Up” Conference that drew 100 attendees in 2009, an exciting highlight of the year was participating in the Junior Master Gardener 4-H SET pilot project. All Master Gardeners participated in the project, including two who attended the pilot project training in St. Cloud. Thirteen youth took part in the weekly summer program.

Youth participated in all aspects of the program, including the building of five raised bed gardens at the project garden site on the Clearwater County fairgrounds. Youth created the garden and planting plans. They prepared the soil, planted, and cared for the gardens throughout the season. One bed included perennial fruits – raspberries, strawberries, grapes and rhubarb. At the final project session youth, along with their families and Extension staff, harvested many pounds of produce that was later shared with the local senior center.
Cook

We extended our Summer Youth Gardening program from a 9 week summer program to three sessions spread out over 6½ months. Cook County Extension received a $1000 grant to help pay for a project coordinator. Two U of M Extension Master Gardeners helped develop the curriculum and deliver the program. Many of the youth participated in all three sessions.

During the spring session, youth started plants indoors in April and attended after school sessions for seven weeks to learn plant basics.

Youth in the summer session group named themselves the ‘Stone Soup Gardeners’. Their goal was to raise food to make soup for an Empty Bowls event held in October. In this 10 week program youth learned to harden off the plants they started, prep the garden beds, and transplant the vegetables and flowers started earlier in April and May. They also planted seeds directly into the bed area. The youth learned to water, weed, harvest, and cook what was harvested. From the garden, they raised food for their meeting snacks, produce for the local Food Shelf and enough produce to make soup for 100 people.

During the fall after school sessions youth concentrated on harvesting potatoes, squash, and onions. They learned to compost and how to prepare the gardens to bed for the winter. This session lasted another 6 weeks.

A $10,000 grant to Cook County Extension from the Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation will help to sustain the project. The grant will be used to purchase a greenhouse for local schools, install additional planting beds, and begin the work with teachers to coordinate some of the project curriculum. The goal of this classroom and after school program effort is to help youth understand where their food comes from. The positive response to this project from the youth, community and schools will foster a great relationship between our local Master Gardeners and youth programming.

Crow Wing

http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/crowwing/

Making sure that we keep lakes and streams clean and healthy is becoming increasingly important, especially in Crow Wing County and other parts of the state that are expected to have a dramatic population growth in coming years.

In 2009 Master Gardeners from Crow Wing County contributed to several community efforts to reduce water and pollutant run off into area lakes by installing rain gardens and shoreline buffer plantings.

Several of Master Gardeners partnered with members of the Pelican Lake Association and the Minnesota Elks to restore 300 feet of shoreline at an Elks Camp. The Elks Camp site provides a highly visible example of a quality shoreline restoration project and will demonstrate how native plants can create a nice buffer around a sandy beach area.

Master Gardeners also volunteered during planting sessions along the shores of Serpent Lake in Crosby, MN. The city of Crosby, in cooperation with Crow Wing Soil and Water District, the Serpent Lake Association, Minnesota DNR and Crow Wing County Master Gardeners installed two rain gardens and a shoreline buffer to treat stormwater runoff from city streets to decrease sediment and nutrients flowing into Serpent Lake. Each rain garden is approximately 1940 sq. ft. and treats the stormwater runoff from the streets adjacent to City Hall. Pavement along the lakeshore was removed to create a native plant buffer that will also filter runoff from adjacent streets and homes. Approximately 9,000 sq. ft. of shoreline was restored. Approximately 5,000 plugs of native plants, along with some direct seeding, were used to plant the rain gar-

Crow Wing County Master Gardener prepares some of the 5,000 native plant plugs for planting during work on the Serpent Lake shoreline restoration project.

Master Gardener volunteers contributed 111,817 volunteer hours in 2009

Average hours per volunteer: 53.9 hours

Dollar value of volunteer time: $2,331,384

The value of volunteer service is calculated using Independent Sector's nationally recognized formula to determine dollar value of volunteer time. For more information visit: http://www.independentsector.org/
Douglas
http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/douglas/

Let’s Get Growing is the annual spring community education event planned and hosted by Douglas County Master Gardeners. This full day event features break-out sessions on a variety of gardening topics, local vendors offering a wide array of gardening products, and a keynote speaker. This year’s event occurred on March 28th, with 185 attendees, and 58 speakers, Master Gardener volunteers and vendors.

Our keynote speaker was Al Batt, of rural Hartland, MN. He is a writer, speaker, storyteller and humorist who was born and raised on a farm near Hartland. He writes three weekly humor and nature columns, and has a regular nature radio show carried on a number of MN stations. Breakout sessions included: Shady Characters: Perennials for the shade garden, Seed Starting, Bountiful Berries, Growing for the Farmer’s Market, Lakeshore Restoration, Hosta Hybrids, Tree Pruning, New Trees and Shrubs, The Synergy of Gardening, Heirloom Vegetables, Month By Month in the Garden, Grow Your Own Shiitake Mushrooms, Growing Peonies the Natural Way, Container Gardening, Frosting Glowers, Greenhouses for the Home Gardener, Grow Your Own Salad Greens, Make and Take Your Own Bluebird House, Identifying Your Trees, Get Your Garden Ready for an Event, and Adaptive Gardening. This event cost $20.00 in advance, and $25.00 at the door, with an additional charge for the Frosting Flowers and Bluebird House workshops.

Held in cooperation with the Alexandria Technical College, this is a very successful and well attended community event.

Dodge
http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/dodge/

Dodge County Master Gardeners were involved in a variety of projects to promote, organize and plan community vegetable gardens, work with 4-H youth and provide gardening information to consumers. Several Q & A booths were conducted at local businesses that sell garden supplies and Master Gardeners responded to consumer questions coming through the Extension office. Educational information is also shared through articles in the county newspaper.

Classes were conducted outside at the Master Gardener Education and Research Display Garden at UMore Park in Rosemount. Up to 20 participants attended class each week. Most were new gardeners. Many others followed the classes online, with weekly lessons, photographs and videos posted on the Dakota County Master Gardener blog. A demonstration video about how to construct a raised bed was posted to YouTube and linked to the blog. The use of technology was as an important segment to disseminate basics of vegetable gardening information to a wider audience.

Other features of the program included an Asian specialty garden where culturally significant vegetables and herbs were grown, composting demonstrations, and instruction on the use of cold frames to extend the growing season.

Participant evaluations suggest that there were positive impacts for attendees. Noted in the data was evidence of increased knowledge about vegetable gardening, change in gardening practices, improved access to nutritious and fresh vegetables, and increased environmental awareness.

Faribault

Rain barrels were the focus of Faribault County Master Gardeners in classes taught through local community education programs. Classes were conducted in three different communities. Purpose, placement and construction of rain barrels was presented in each class. Participants actually made their own rain barrel during the class. A presentation on rain barrels was also given in the horticulture building during the Faribault County Fair. These presentations provided educational information for the public and allowed the participants to interact and become familiar with the Master Gardener Program and Faribault County Master Gardeners.
Fillmore
Eighty, sixth-grade youth were reached with a Recycling/Composting demonstration at Forestville State Park in a SWCD sponsored Environmental Day.

Goodhue
http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/goodhue/

Goodhue County Master Gardeners’ biggest effort in 2009 was work on the Discovery Garden, a wheelchair-accessible raised bed garden for children and people of all ages and abilities located in Red Wing (www.discoverygarden.info). The garden is located next to the new Universal Playground, a site initiated by two mothers who both have children that have cerebral palsy. They envisioned a playground where children with disabilities could play and interact with other children. After a year and a half of planning, gaining city approval, and raising a half-million dollars the playground was completed in 2009.

The Discovery Garden was part of their vision for the playground and was constructed in the spring of 2009. Goodhue County Master Gardeners collaborated on the garden and plant designs as well as donating plants and coordinating all of the volunteers. The garden is planned to appeal to all the senses and to stimulate a child’s imagination and enjoyment of nature. Visitors are encouraged to not only look, but to stop and smell, touch and even listen to the plants.

The Discovery Garden contains eight garden areas: a ladybug garden (red/pink), a moon garden (silver/white), a sun garden (yellow/orange), a water garden (blue/purple), a fragrance garden, a faerie garden, a butterfly & hummingbird garden and a cook’s garden. A rainbow garden just outside the main garden is planted with annuals in bright prism colors.

Hennepin
http://www.hcmg.umn.edu/

Master Gardeners in Hennepin County have found a great new county partner in the Hennepin County Library System. Master Gardener volunteers taught free classes throughout the county on a very wide range of topics, including growing vegetables, edible landscaping, container gardening, low input lawn care and more. From downtown Minneapolis to locations in suburban communities, Master Gardener volunteers taught 68 classes in partnership with the libraries. Of the 126 surveys returned by participants, 95% agreed or strongly agreed that they learned new things.

Houston
Master Gardeners were instrumental in starting and organizing weekly farmer’s markets in Caledonia and Spring Grove. Markets draw approximately 28 vendors at each site. A vendor fee of $15 per season is used to cover publicity and coordination. Master Gardeners maintain an information booth at each site. Special events, like the Gardening 101 event, are periodically scheduled. Master Gardeners hope to transition leadership of the markets to a vendor committee during 2010.

Hubbard
For nearly 10 years the Hubbard County Master Gardeners have partnered with the Century Elementary School in the native prairie restoration project. Each year Master Gardeners teach first graders how to start plant native flower and grass seeds. The young plants germinate and grow under a grow-light in their classroom. In May, Master Gardeners meet with the 125 first graders and their teachers, teaching them how to transplant their native plants into the school prairie. Over many years, the prairie has become an outdoor classroom for many students. They learn and study native plants and their importance in the environment. Prairie Smoke, Blue-eyed grass, and Rudbeckia are a few of the native plants that thrive in the Century School Prairie.

Isanti
Isanti County Master Gardeners partnered with the Isanti County Environmental Coalition, City of Cambridge, local nurseries and garden experts to develop four 10’ x 60’ community gardens. Seventeen residents responded to our first year endeavor. All found success growing vegetables during the year. Gardeners were given information on how to plant, compost, control insects and disease and care for vegetables. A tool bin of garden supplies, a water tank, and compost bins were provided on location. Gardeners held a mid-summer picnic event. Plans to double the garden and include a raised bed for seniors have been approved for 2010.

Two first grade students in Park Rapids have a chance to get their hands dirty when they transplant seedlings they started in the prairie restoration project led by Hubbard County Master Gardeners.
Kanabec
The Kanabec County Master Gardener program focused significant volunteer hours and financial resources on opening the Mora Community Garden in 2009. The plan for the garden was developed in 2008, but because of a late, wet spring and an abundance of rocks in the city-owned plot, the opening was delayed one year. The garden is divided into 28 individual garden plots, each 10 x 20 feet in size. A total of 14 gardeners signed up to garden, several using double plots (10x40). Each paid $25 per plot to cover the City’s cost for supplying water. Annual rye was planted on unused areas and tilled up in the fall. Master Gardeners were instrumental in installing a deer-proof fence, a gate, composting bins, and a large sign on which we posted information for the gardeners. Master Gardeners taught on-site classes and provided informal instruction and encouragement throughout the growing season.

Master Gardeners were surprised when a local 4-H Club approached them with an offer to build two benches for the garden. The 4-H members videotaped planning meetings with the Master Gardeners as well as the process of building the benches at the community garden. The video was exhibited at the Kanabec County Fair. The benches are a wonderful addition to the Community Garden. A potluck and celebration for the gardeners and Master Gardeners was held at the end of the growing season. The 4-H members, county commissioners, city council members, the Mayor of Mora, and public works were invited. It was a successful event with 35 people attending.

Kandiyohi
University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardeners in Kandiyohi County host a radio call in program every Saturday morning from March to September on the local KWLM 1340 radio station. Each week a team of 2 to 3 Master Gardeners host the program. The team approach allows one Master Gardener to talk while another is looking up information to answer a caller’s question. Radio station staff say this popular Master Gardener program is one of the most listened to programs in their schedule.

Le Sueur
A primary venue for providing University research-based horticulture information for Le Sueur County Master Gardeners is at the County Fair. In addition to educational displays, Master Gardeners are on hand to answer insect, disease and plant growth and questions.

Lake
Lake County Master Gardeners used a $350 State Master Gardener program grant to design and construct two rain gardens at the Minnehaha Elementary School in Two Harbors. The project was done in conjunction with a larger landscape plan to incorporate an outdoor classroom learning environment complete with native trees and shrubs. The project was initiated by the PTA’s Green Team who received additional assistance from Tree Trust. The Master Gardeners designed the rain gardens, purchased the plants, and assisted students and adults in planting the gardens in early June. Two weeks earlier, the students worked with volunteers and Tree Trust staff to plant a variety of trees and shrubs on the school property. During the summer of 2009, a large deck with perimeter seating was constructed to complete the project.

The Lake County Master Gardeners were recognized for their role in developing the new outdoor classroom area during an October dedication ceremony held at the school. Kit Sitter, Lake County Master Gardener Chair, used the ceremony to present the school with a rock engraved with the phrase, “2009 North Shore Mystery Garden”. The rain garden was a featured stop on the annual North Shore Mystery Garden Tour organized by Lake County Master Gardeners.
Lake of the Woods
Lake of the Woods Master Gardeners presented a series of informational demonstrations over three days at the Lake of the Woods County Fair. Drawing an average of 30 participants, Master Gardeners presented on topics ranging from seed germination and propagations to enticing birds to the garden; from drying flowers to increasing youth’s interest in better nutrition by presenting food in fun, creative ways.

McLeod
http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/mcleod/

McLeod County Master Gardeners are working on a buckthorn removal and landscaping project to assist the ConnectCare Birchwood Hospice House in Hutchinson. Master Gardeners have spent two evenings removing buckthorn. Other efforts have included pruning, mulching and assisting with landscape maintenance in order to get the property’s landscape back in shape.

Meeker County
http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/meeker/

Meeker County Master Gardeners held educational seminars at the Meeker County Fair. Seminars focused on choosing the right plant for the right landscape and on weed control practices. Approximately 100 people participated. Master Gardeners also hosted an informational booth and a weed identification display.

Mille Lacs
http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/millelacs/

For the first time, the Mille Lacs County Master Gardeners taught one of the five sessions at the Mille Lacs County 5th Grade Conservation Field Day. This program reaches about 100 youth, nearly all 5th graders from Mille Lacs County’s five school districts.

Mille Lacs Master Gardeners presented a session titled “How Plants Benefit Us”. Using learning activities from the Junior Master Gardener curriculum, Master Gardeners taught youth about the photosynthesis process and discussed other uses and products of plants. They used the JMG “Gas Gobblers” activity to demonstrate how people, animals and plants depend on each other to survive.

Minnesota River Valley Master Gardeners (Mankato/Blue Earth County area)

Minnesota River Valley Master Gardeners began work on a demonstration garden in the city of Mankato. After several years of planning and working with city officials, Master Gardeners were given access to use a plot of land that once had been planted, but now was abandoned and overgrown. Although final permission came late, Master Gardeners were able to complete clean up and install some of the main components of the landscape plan for the garden. They anticipate the addition of more trees, shrubs and perennials to complete the garden. The garden will be an asset to the community and a site to learn more about appropriate plants for the geographic area.

Nicollet

Staff from the St. Peter Community Center requested Nicollet County Master Gardeners to teach an 8 week summer program for youth, ages 10-14. The goal of the project was to teach youth the basics of vegetable gardening. A raised bed was constructed at the Community Center and 8 students enrolled in the project. Master Gardeners met with students weekly from June through August. Students learned to plant seeds, seedlings and to care for the garden. Youth shared the garden produce with their families. For many of these students, and their families, growing their own food was a new experience. Another goal of the program was to encourage families of participants to feel confident in establishing a vegetable garden at their home. Master Gardeners plan to continue providing this program with the community center.

In a related program, the youth in the community center program were also involved at the historic Cox House in St. Peter. There they learned to weed and maintain the landscape. They also participated in the site’s annual plant sale fundraiser, an effort supported by Nicollet County Master Gardeners.

Olmsted

A dedication event in August that included the release of butterflies was the culmination of the year-long Quarry Hill Butterfly Garden project. Olmsted County Master Gardeners were key partners in the project and were recognized by Quarry Hill Nature Center staff during the dedication. Master Gardeners were instrumental in clearing the site, preparing the site and planting over 350 plants. While other partners donated funds and a professional landscape plan, Master Gardeners did the majority of work to establish the garden. Olmsted County Master Gardeners also applied for and received a University of Minnesota Extension State Master Gardener program grant to support the butterfly garden project. The garden provides educational benefits to the many nature center visitors and to the thousands of school children who visit each year. A poster documenting all the steps in developing the gardens was exhibited at the state Master Gardener conference and the Minnesota State Fair.
Otter Tail – East
Youth gardening was a highlight for East Otter Tail Master Gardeners. This effort involved creating a 4-H Children’s Garden for youth in grades 1-3 and a Junior Master Gardener program for youth in grades 4-6. Ten Master Gardeners worked with the 24 youth involved.

The youth met with Master Gardeners for 2 ½ hour sessions, seven times during the summer. Each session involved whole group, small groups and individual garden experiences, plus hands-on nutritional activities where youth prepared snacks. Group activities featured educational experiences on topics like garden safety, identifying weeds, plant parts, water cycle, lawn & landscape, and bug identification.

Individually youth each planted a garden space with help of a Master Gardener volunteer. This was a one to one educational opportunity. Youth planned, planted and cared for varieties they want to grow. They cared for the garden during sessions and on their own. Vegetables from the gardens were used to prepare a “Dinner from Dirt” served to family members and community sponsors.

The Junior Master Gardener participants maintained a separate garden space, plus a perennial raised bed garden, and the flag pole garden on the County fairgrounds.

Otter Tail – West
http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/ottertailwest/

Master Gardeners in West Otter Tail County have used a radio program to create a lot of impact for Extension and the Master Gardener program. Each Saturday throughout the growing season, two MGs host a one-hour call-in radio program on a local radio station. Master Gardeners are poised to answer a wide scope of questions during these live programs. Now in its seventh year, this program has really ‘caught on’ to the listening public. Several times throughout program, listeners are reminded that Master Gardeners are trained University of Minnesota Extension volunteers and that information provided is research-based. Master Gardeners remind listeners that during the week they may call or bring questions to the Extension office.

Because of the radio program exposure, walk-in traffic and phone calls to the county Extension office have more than doubled. It is common to have around 50 horticulture calls a week during the growing season. Many of the calls reference the radio program. For the MG’s who are not comfortable hosting the radio program, they volunteer on a regular schedule in person to answer calls at the Extension office.

Pennington
Pennington County Master Gardeners formed a youth involvement committee and designated funds to youth education from the group’s plant sale. Master Gardeners worked with community education to create a “Look What I Grew” class for K-5 students. Each of the student participants from Challenger Elementary School was asked to have a parent/grandparent/friend to help them. Each student planted a container garden and each received a pair of gardening gloves and a “goodie bag” that included a notebook, colored pen set, seed packets & coupons. Master Gardeners provided educational information on how to grow and care for the plants over the summer. Seventeen students participated and provided very good evaluations of the experience. The flower department at the county fair developed a special lot and class to exhibit the “Look What I Grew” containers. Several of the participants made fair entries. Master Gardeners plan to continue the one-day teaching event in 2010.

Pine
A Pine City Community Garden was one of the priorities identified in the U of M Extension Pine City Horizons visioning program. Pine County Master Gardeners stepped up to the plate and became involved on the Community Garden steering committee.

The committee met weekly for two months to work with the city to identify a site, develop policies and practices, create a gardener agreement, and publicize the garden. They held three informational meetings and taught a series of gardening classes throughout the growing season. Twelve families raised vegetables in the twenty-four 20’x10’ garden plots. The steering committee evaluated the project to begin planning for 2010.
"SPRING, Ready, Set, Go" was the educational event that the Renville County Master Gardeners hosted in 2009 in Hector. Approximately 50 people attended. A light meal prepared by the Master Gardeners was served preceding the educational presentation. Each participant took home a packet of information including "The Value of Trees" publication from the MN Landscape Arboretum, emerald ash borer information card, bookmark of gardening web sites and a packet of zinnia seeds. Speakers included local industry staff and Master Gardeners. Topics of presentations included: getting your gardens ready in the spring; container planting and care; choosing a tree considering soil type, ornamental value and Minnesota climate; and, vegetable gardening.

Involvement in school-based projects has grown exponentially in the past few years. Cooperative projects arranged between two watershed districts and schools have contributed most to the growth, but requests directly from grant administrators, St. Paul Schools Service Learning Program personnel and others have also increased.

Thirty-four Master Gardeners spent approximately 604 volunteer hours working with 1,865 students and 89 adults. These school-based community enrichment projects will have a lasting impact upon future gardeners. The gardens will help manage storm water run-off, beautify schoolyards, inform future school education activities, serve as demonstrations to students, staff, residents and visitors, and provide valuable wildlife habitat. Master Gardeners explained and discussed garden design elements, evaluated sites for schoolyard gardens and residential rain gardens, explained soil types and conducted soil sampling, taught students to identify common garden weeds, and instructed students on seed starting and transplanting.

"Thank you so much for everything you’ve done. You’ve been really helpful to Battle Creek. I think it’s awesome that you care about our community. What I’m trying to say is that it means a lot to us middle-schoolers that you helped take care of our environment. Thanks a bunch."

Quote from student
Sherburne
http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/sherburne/

Sherburne County Master Gardeners were selected as one of the sites for the Junior Master Gardener/ 4-H SET pilot program. A team of Master Gardeners, 4-H staff and the county Extension educator developed and implemented the pilot program using National Jr. Master Gardener Curriculum.

Fifteen youth participated in the program and met for two-hour bi-weekly sessions from April to September. Youth learned about raising vegetables and flowers using containers, raised garden beds, and community garden plots. At the community garden site, youth established a Master Gardener Variety Trials site. They raised Asian vegetables and lima beans and collected growth and production data. They also grew several types of tomatoes and experimented with several growing methods: caged, staked, bush, and inverted hanging. As a service project, youth planted flower boxes at the Sherburne County Government Center and at the Sherburne County Fairgrounds. Each child also planted their own container pail garden to grow at home. They were encouraged to plant a row for the hungry at home and donate extra produce to local food shelf. During the summer gardeners experienced a problem, powdery mildew disease. This turned into a real-life experiment where treatments using a fungicide and a milk/water mixture were compared.

The program culminated with a salsa making party to sample some of the produce grown and to evaluate the program. Overall, the youth really liked the program and most said they would be interested in more program activities.

Stearns

A highlight for Stearns County Master Gardeners was the successful participation in the Junior Master Gardener/4-H SET pilot project. Master Gardeners, working with 4-H staff, conducted programs at three sites that included:

- Stride Academy – a charter school with racially diverse students
- Bel Clare Estates – a mobile home park with economically compromised and racially diverse populations
- La Cruz Community – an apartment complex with nearly 100% Somali population

While Master Gardeners used varied techniques and lessons at each site, all sites had a classroom component with emphasis on experimental learning and a garden laboratory component. At Stride Academy youth learned about composting and set up a composting program for the waste from the Academy’s lunch program. The standout feature at Bel Clare Estates was a vegetable garden that was not only very attractive, but exceptionally productive.

In addition to a vegetable garden and flower border, the members at La Cruz worked on reclaiming a neglected city park.

Steele
http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/steele/

Steele County Master Gardeners and Steele County 4-H staff teamed up with the Owatonna Public Library on a youth gardening project. We met with youth for an hour and a half every week throughout the summer. The program included class time in the library and time in the library garden working on various activities from the Junior Master Gardener (JMG) curriculum. In 2010 Master Gardeners hope to expand the afternoon programs to incorporate JMG’s Literature in the Garden curriculum into the programming.

In addition to providing a great learning environment, the garden produced over 300lbs of produce that was donated to the local food shelf and some local church groups. The produce was also shared with the youth participants. Youth enjoyed bringing home the fresh produce to share with their families. The garden was visually pleasing and a landscaping asset to the Owatonna Public Library. The flower beds were home to butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects.

Traverse

The Traverse County Master Gardeners combined efforts with 4-H members, Junior Master Gardeners and adult volunteers to develop a community garden project. The goal of the garden was to provide the community access to fresh produce grown locally as well and to promote healthy lifestyles and improve environmental awareness in our community. The Traverse County Master Gardeners served as a resource to the project by delivering quality plant education to teach youth and adults how to garden.

Traverse County youth share produce with the Senior Dining Center
Three Master Gardeners worked with employees of Retail Construction Services (RCS) in Lake Elmo to grow and donate 1800 lbs. of food to the local food shelf. They involved kids from the local elementary school, and students in the St. Croix Valley Alternative Learning Center (ALC) program. Along the way they involved many businesses in the community to provide these great gifts.

Retail Construction Services got off to a great start and were well on their way by the time they contacted the Master Gardeners. Master Gardeners visited the garden on multiple occasions and provided advice on growing vegetables in general, fertilizing, mulching, disease treatment, composting, and growing fruit. A Master Gardener actually gave them a barrel composter as a gift which they put to good use. The Master Gardeners did additional investigation to assist the company’s program. They did research on seed saving, organic certification, and additional uses for the veggies they were growing (e.g., fennel). One Master Gardener has continued to work with them, with details and photos of the project found on the blog [http://rcsgivinggarden.blogspot.com/](http://rcsgivinggarden.blogspot.com/). The company has asked the Master Gardeners to continue as partners as they work with the ALC. The project received TV coverage on KARE 11. In recognition, Retail Construction Services wrote a powerful letter of appreciation for the Master Gardeners and for the value they found in the Master Gardener program.

### University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardeners in Washington County

http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/washington/

Wotonwan County Master Gardeners undertake a variety of activities. Like many counties, the county fair is a prime venue for providing information and education. Two Master Gardeners also write weekly garden articles for the local newspaper.

Focusing on food production, Master Gardeners oversee two community gardens, one in St. James serving 20 families and the other in Madelia serving 15 families. Additionally, raised garden boxes were built with the help of 10 families in a trailer park in St. James. Master Gardeners provide education on basic vegetable gardening and also provide information on how to use and process the produce from the gardens.

### Winona

In 2009, 33 children participated in the Youth Garden Project co-sponsored by the Winona County Master Gardeners and the Winona Women’s Resource Center. A variety of educational presentations were conducted for the youth. New this year was a very successful and fun library night where we read gardening books. Another special event was a tree night which ended with planting a tree on the Redeemer Lutheran Church property where the youth garden is located. In the program, educational games and garden related craft activities tools to help children learn about gardening. They also learn to respect each other through working together to care for garden plots. Youth are rewarded when their vegetables and flowers were ready to be picked. Each child also kept a garden journal that included pictures and a weekly log of garden happenings. Feedback indicates youth had a great experience, learned about gardening in fun ways, and look forward to participating in the garden program again.

Youth prepare the soil for their gardens at the Winona County Youth Garden Project
Wright County Master Gardeners led and coordinated a committee to create a community garden plot in the City of Delano. Thirty garden plots were rented. Produce from three plots was donated to a local food shelf. Master Gardeners worked in partnership with a number of city, community organization, and business leaders to plan and implement the community garden.

Master Gardeners consulted on organization set up, bylaws, rules, timelines, donations, and the actual physical creation of the garden, including soil sampling through the University of Minnesota. They created and presented a 'Vegetable Gardening 101' session for participating gardeners and conducted a presentation on composting. During the season, four editions of a newsletter for community garden participants was created and emailed. In it, Master Gardeners provided education and information on timely garden advice, local garden events, and vegetable recipes. Activities, like a picnic, were planned in the garden area to create group cohesiveness.

Initiated and led by Wright County Master Gardeners, the creation of the community garden brought together contributions from many sources: park land, office assistance, labor, compost, wood chips, water to fill a water tank from the City of Delano; seeds, labor, supplies and classroom space from Otten Brothers Nursery; a grant for 300 seed packets from America the Beautiful Foundation; a water holding tank from a local garden club; a sign from Landscape Structures, Inc.; tools from a variety of community members; and many volunteer hours.

Through education and by providing a clear format of operations, the Wright County Master Gardeners are credited with providing the education and leadership to get the community garden operating. The goal is to continue to provide education to gardeners, but have garden operations led by the newly formed Delano Area Community Garden committee.