Extension Master Gardener volunteers: Building gardens, building relationships

When a Master Gardener builds a garden, it’s bound to be a really great garden. The Master Gardener plans well, lays out the space, amends the soil accordingly, and uses proper planting methods. Then there’s maintenance - watering, mulching, weeding – as well as solving problems that come along the way in the form of insects, diseases, weather, etc. A successful garden is usually measured by the amount of produce harvested, long-lasting blossoms or less required maintenance.

Master Gardeners also build relationships with people in their communities, and they are often really great relationships. Not surprisingly, gardens are often where this occurs. A relationship might start as a simple question – “What do you think is chewing holes in these leaves?” – and that might be all it takes for collaboration to grow.

In the process, the volunteer and the community gardener share not only their respective knowledge, but also their gardening experiences. Through this, they gain a deeper understanding of each other’s perspectives, not just on gardening, but on life. A successful relationship is not measured by finding an exact answer, but about finding common ground upon which to plant.

A sincere thank you to the 2,240 University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardeners and their fellow gardeners and supporters for building successful gardens and successful relationships in 2011.

2011 NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

- 2,240 Extension Master Gardener volunteers
- 130,450 volunteer hours contributed
- 58.2 hours average contribution per volunteer
- Total Dollar value of volunteer time: $2,820,329

Equivalent to 62.7 FTE staff positions

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/volunteer_time

Julie Weisenhorn, state director
Getting the Work Done…

University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardener volunteers extend the capacity of Extension’s consumer horticulture educators to reach homeowners and gardeners, youth and community stakeholders across the state. Master Gardeners deliver a wide variety of horticulture education directly in the communities where they live in ways that are often informal and down to earth. They help citizens solve problems and learn best practices. Most often the outcome of their work has a positive impact on the larger community as well.

Booths, Diagnostic Clinics and Fairs

Information booths, county fair demonstration gardens, and diagnostic clinics have been traditional ways Master Gardeners answer questions and share information face-to-face. These opportunities also promote the Master Gardener program and bring University of Minnesota resources to citizens in their communities. In 2011 Master Gardeners reported spending 27,527 volunteer hours at booths and clinics.

- **Benton County** - Master Gardeners implemented a new garden area at the Benton County Fairgrounds. They created a raised bed with additional seating in a high traffic area on the grounds. Master Gardeners will install signs and information for fairgoers on why the specific plants were selected for the raised beds. They will include suggestions for other low maintenance plants to use in the home landscape.

- **Carlton County** - Although it may not be the newest or most innovative activity, Carlton Master Gardener involvement in the Carlton County Fair is one of the most important. This small county fair attracts approximately 36,000 people and is considered one of the best and most traditional fairs in the state. Six Master Gardeners annually judge 4H horticulture exhibits. The “Ask a Master Gardener” booth reaches approximately 450 to 500 people throughout the weekend.

- **Fillmore County** - Because Fillmore County Master Gardeners are widely dispersed around the county they do a lot of work as individuals in their home communities. The county fair educational booth is one project that brings them together. With the booth relocated to the vegetable display area, traffic and visibility greatly increased.

- **Kandiyohi County** - What is the value of an information booth? Master Gardeners of Kandiyohi County have hosted a weekly gardening information booth at the Becker Market in Willmar for four summers. They see the farmers market booth as a way to deliver education in many ways. In Kandiyohi County they answer questions, like how to identify an emerald ash borer, how to control tomato diseases, what fertilizer is recommended for...
lawns and when is it applied, and how to select
native plants for shoreline management. Early
in the season they distributed free tomato plants
and talked about how to plant them. They
distribute DNR pollinator posters to children and
topic specific handouts for adults. The booth
also serves as a recruitment venue that sparks
interest in and answers questions about
becoming a Master Gardener.

- **Pennington County** - For many years,
Pennington County Master Gardeners have
worked with the Pennington County Fairboard to
support the open class horticulture department.
Master Gardeners manage the horticulture
exhibits and support the fair judges. A Master
Gardener information and education booth is
staffed by volunteers in the same exhibit
building. This provides a venue to educate the
public about current topics in horticulture. Prior
to the fair Master Gardeners publish articles on
preparing horticulture exhibits.

- **Pine County** - The Master Gardener “Square
Foot Gardening” booth at the Pine County Fair
was a big hit! The exhibit showed fairgoers how
they can grow 16 different vegetables in a 16
square foot raised bed that is 6 inches deep. The
booth included additional displays on raised bed
gardening, the community garden, soil sample
interpretation, honey bees and food preservation.
Over 300 people stopped by to see the displays,
ask questions and 153 registered for our door
prize drawing of two 2012 Minnesota Gardening
calendars. This has been a great opportunity to
reach a large number of people with garden
information.

- **Renville County** - For the past twelve years,
Renville County Master Gardeners annually
create an educational booth at the Renville
County Fair. This year’s theme was a “Backyard
Garden Party”. A special feature was a “Garden
to Table” booklet created by Master Gardens that
provides information on growing tomatoes and
controlling tomato diseases. The booklet
includes tomato recipes taste tested by the
Master Gardeners. Plans are to continue this
booklet with a featured vegetable each year.

- **Winona County** - Master Gardeners had great
response to their booth at the Winona County
Fair. Over 200 individuals visited the Master
Gardeners with questions or to learn about
shade gardening, composting, invasive plants
and integrated pest management. Master
Gardeners presented 13 hands-on
demonstrations during the fair. One
demonstrated proper tree planting techniques by
actually planting a Zestar apple tree on the fair
grounds. The event gave fair-goers and Master
Gardeners an excellent opportunity for
interaction, raised the program’s visibility, and
shared helpful information and solutions.

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**Educate through Media**

**Newspapers to Tweets**

Traditionally, Master Gardeners used periodic
newspaper columns and local radio programs to
share best practices and timely horticulture
information. Many still do. In 2011, county reports
show that Master Gardeners produced 386
newspaper articles. They produced 156 taped or
live radio shows. Over 20 television shows were
produced to teach recommended best practices.

New technology doesn’t stop Master Gardeners.
Master Gardeners have turned to internet and social
media to communicate educational information and
to make the public aware of University of Minnesota
resources. One county produces a monthly online
horticulture newsletter that reaches thousands. In
addition to county Master Gardener websites, several
use garden blogs to get information out. Ten
counties have Facebook sites and two use Twitter.

- **Aitkin County** - Master Gardeners began a
publicity and educational initiative working with
local entities to expand the Extension and Master
Gardener impact in the community. The
initiative started with the local newspapers.
Fifteen horticultural articles were published in
the Aitkin and McGregor newspapers.
Additionally, a series of horticulture educational
displays were placed in the Aitkin Library. That
project will expand to the McGregor Library in
2012.

Visit our website at
www.mg.umn.edu
Educational Classes and Events

Classes
Teaching formal classes on topics ranging from how to grow tomatoes to selecting plants for lakeshore restoration is a traditional way Master Gardeners have taught citizens best practices in horticulture. What once was a slide presentation has now become a more polished power point presentation, sometimes incorporating a web presentation or YouTube clip. Sometimes a class is more hands-on and sometimes the classroom is a garden, a field day, or unique setting that meets the audience where they are at.

- **Clearwater County** - Clearwater County Master Gardeners offered a new community education program in Bagley, a two-session series on “Starting Your Garden From Seed.” A single fee covered the cost of attending one or both classes. An added bonus of this event was that most of the participants also registered for the early spring horticulture day sponsored by Master Gardeners.

One unusual opportunity to reach people occurred in mid-March. A bus tour group of 72 people from the Roseau area was to include a stop at a Master Gardener’s greenhouse. Blizzard conditions on the day forced the tour to stop in Zerkel, MN. The Master Gardener then met the tour and, right on the bus, delivered a half-hour lecture on growing herbs.

- **Rock County** - Rock County Master Gardeners co-sponsored a “Tree Seminar” with Rock County Land Management. It was held at the farm home of one of our Master Gardeners who over the past years has planted over 50 varieties of trees to evaluate which will do well in southwest MN. Dr. John Ball, Extension Forester at South Dakota State University was the speaker, highlighting both trees for windbreaks and for ornamental use. About 45 people from southwest Minnesota and neighboring counties in Iowa and South Dakota attended.

Horticulture Days
An efficient way of delivering a lot of education into a single event is through a popular Master Gardener organized horticulture day. These one-day events feature formal workshops, keynote speakers, vendor fairs, and often a silent auction to generate revenue to support the program. In 2011, of the 38 counties reporting, 18 hosted a horticulture day. Over 3,400 people were reached through these events across Minnesota.

- **Chippewa/ Yellow Medicine Counties** - Chippewa and Yellow Medicine County Master Gardeners joined forces to collaborate as one program in 2011. Together, they hosted the 2nd annual “Spring…Can You Dig It?” horticulture day held in Montevideo. About 50 attendees participated in workshops that included topics on the top 10 annuals at the West Central Research and Outreach Center, vegetable garden, growing dahlias and floral arranging.

- **Houston County** - Houston County Master Gardeners had a huge response to their first ever spring workshop. The event, titled “Going Green Gardening Workshop,” was a one day event with approximately 140 participants. It was co-sponsored with community education and held in Caledonia. The event featured two keynote speakers, numerous breakout sessions, garden-related vendors and a silent auction.

- **Sherburne County** - Master Gardeners planned and hosted the 7th annual Garden Expo in April. Typical of a horticulture day, the event included a keynote speaker, nine workshops and a vendor fair. Master Gardeners staffed an ‘Ask a Master Gardener’ booth. Unique to this event is the addition of a Kid’s Expo. Master Gardeners lead hands-on activities that teach children about gardening and nature. In 2011, 180 adults and 15 youth participated in the event.

- **Stearns County** - The Stearns County Master Gardeners have organized popular spring events - Horticulture Education Day, Rose Education Day, and Gardening Knowledge for Free – for many years. Expanding on that success, Master Gardeners offered the first fall edition of Gardening Knowledge for Free. Participants could attend three 60 minute workshops from the list of six offerings. Presentation topics ranged from growing geraniums to growing garlic, storing vegetables to putting the garden to bed for winter. Sessions were taught by Master Gardeners. While pre-registration was requested, there was no cost to attend. The event was used to sell Master Gardener-grown
perennials. With 120 attending, Stearns County Master Gardeners will now host annual spring and fall Gardening Knowledge for Free events.

Learning Garden Tours

Garden tours have become a popular way to deliver education and give participants a fun day visiting gardens and seeing gardening techniques and plant material in person. With Master Gardener tours, it’s more than just walking through a garden. Educational signage, handouts and Master Gardener information booths give participants lots of opportunities to learn.

- **Olmsted County** - Master Gardeners hosted the 2nd annual “The Tour with the Masters” Garden Tour. The tour, this year attracting 283 participants, increases awareness about the University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardener program in Olmsted County. Educational demonstrations were included at garden sites. There were food samples from garden produce and herbs and some plants for sale. Admission wristbands and maps were sold at each garden location and also prior to the tour from Master Gardeners.

- **Otter Tail-West County** - Over the past few years a long-time Master Gardener has conducted an annual garden tour of his yard and garden. The tour has become an anticipated annual event in the community, with 250 attending. Master Gardeners staff information stations at garden beds around the property to instruct on plant identification and care. Several local businesses are invited to set up displays. Proceeds from the admission fees are all donated to the local Humane Society.

Special Projects, Special Needs

Master Gardeners, sometimes on their own and sometimes through requests from partner organizations, identify local needs that can be addressed through horticulture education. Some projects focus on a particular skill or service. Other projects focus on a specific audience.

In 2011, of 38 counties reporting:

- 4 counties report working in partnership with Habitat for Humanity to assist new home owners with plant selection and instructions about how to maintain the landscape at their new property.

- 9 counties report conducting programs and projects using therapeutic horticulture, some with seniors, some with special need individuals and some with audiences in correctional institutions.

- **Ramsey County** - Master Gardeners worked with 61 homeowners and 90 volunteers at 13 different Habitat For Humanity new home sites. They developed landscape plans that adhered to Habitat for Humanity’s design elements, including low maintenance, drought tolerance and curb appeal. In addition to developing a landscape design, Master Gardeners provide resource information about county compost locations, lawn maintenance and pest management. This year Habitat introduced “Green Community” criteria requiring incorporation of at least 50% native plants for most locations. During spring and fall planting days, Master Gardeners direct community volunteers and homeowners on how to implement the landscape design and provide plant and planting education.

- **Le Sueur County** - Master Gardeners established a ‘seed library’ that contains both organic and non-organic flower and vegetable seeds to share. The library is taken to Master Gardener meetings and functions. It is used at the annual perennial exchange event.

Priorities and Impacts of the Work…

Four years ago, the University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardener program set three program priorities hoping to encourage more educational efforts in areas having significant public value. Each year since, Master Gardeners have increasingly explored ways to expand local programming around the three priorities.

1. **Environmental Stewardship**
2. **Food Access**
3. **Youth**
Environmental Stewardship

Master Gardeners are committed to the care of the earth and to teaching about home landscape practices that minimize negative impacts to the environment. In many cases, Master Gardeners work in partnership with soil and watershed districts and other community organizations. Often these efforts are larger community-based projects. Sometimes projects are solely organized and led by Master Gardener volunteers. Master Gardeners contribute University-based research and information, training for other volunteers who will carry out projects, and leadership in organizing all or part of a project.

In 2011, of 38 counties reporting:

- **13** counties report conducting educational programs, demonstration sites, and informational booths that teach about the purpose, value, design or maintenance of an effective raingarden to retain runoff and reduce pollutants entering waterways.

- **8** counties report that they provided classes and consultations about shoreline restoration and the selection of plant materials appropriate for shoreline buffers.

- **15** counties teach about or demonstrate composting techniques and best practices for reducing and disposing yard waste.

- **9** counties provided public education about invasive species, some leading eradication efforts. A number of Master Gardeners became trained as Emerald Ash Borer detectors.

- **Anoka County** - In Anoka County, a primary goal of Master Gardeners is to help homeowners make informed choices and to use best practices in home horticulture that lead to minimal environmental impact. In an effort to gauge the impacts from the Master Gardener classes and services approximately 145 online surveys were sent to a random list of participants who utilized the Plant and Insect Diagnostic Clinics, attended the Home Landscaping and Garden Fair, or attended one of the Walk in the Garden classes.

  Survey results showed that from 20 to 32 percent of people reduced their use of lawn fertilizers and chemicals, utilized healthier tree and plant care practices, or changed their practice of watering in order to reduce evaporation, runoff and plant diseases.

  One survey respondent said, “I believe that this program has and continues to have significant impact in our county, and the current leadership has found creative new ways to be in the ‘right place at the right time’ with timely information.”

- **Crow Wing County** - Crow Wing County

  Master Gardeners, in partnership with University of Minnesota Extension, Crow Wing County, the Northland Arboretum and Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District collaborated to bring to county residents a “CWC Backyard Composting Program” funded by a 2-year waste reduction grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The goal of the program was to reduce the amount of municipal solid waste sent to the county landfill by increasing county residents’ participation in waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting. The program’s success will be evaluated by a number of factors, including the number of compost bins sold and the number of contacts reached at workshops and information booths. In 2011, 350 people attended presentations and 510 compost bins were sold.

  “I believe that this program has and continues to have significant impact in our county.......” Anoka Co. survey respondent

- **Lake of the Woods County** - A major project for the Lake of the Woods (LOW) Master Gardeners was the installation of a raingarden at the former 1923 Canadian National Railroad Depot in Baudette. The local Extension committee desired to create and install a raingarden in this area as a public demonstration of an environmentally appropriate way to address rain run-off and snow melt from large buildings. It addressed a significant run-off issue that came about during a restoration of the building. Project partners included U of M Extension-Lake of the Woods County, Lake of the Woods Soil and Water Conservation District, LOW Master Gardeners, and the Depot Preservation Alliance. LOW
Master Gardeners had major roles in plant selection and planting of the raingarden. They will also take the lead in providing educational signage about the project and the value of raingardens.

- **Wright County** - For ten years, Wright County Master Gardeners have used the Buffalo Fishing Clinic to provide education. The day-long event draws 5000 youth and parents to the shores of Buffalo Lake. The Master Gardener booth offered six different stations that provided hands-on activities to teach youth about the importance of native plants to benefit and improve water quality. Youth learned how native plantings reduce runoff while filtering the water and how native plants benefit wildlife in the lake environment. Youth were able to pot native plants to take home.

### Food Access

Whether it is an issue of economic need, food safety, healthy eating, or supporting local sustainable agriculture there continues to be a growing interest in food gardening and access to fresh produce in communities across Minnesota. Master Gardeners have stepped up programming in many locations to meet this need whether it was organizing a community garden, teaching vegetable gardening techniques, or establishing demonstration gardens.

In 2011, of 38 counties reporting:

- **13** counties report conducting programs that involved growing food. Many either organized community gardens or provide education to community gardeners. Some established new farmer’s markets that increase the access to locally grown food.

- **Hennepin County** - The Master Gardener-led Urban Gardener Program expanded from 2 to 3 locations in 2011! The program teaches vegetable gardening skills to local residents in city neighborhoods where access to fresh produce is limited. Programs usually include an opportunity for Urban Gardeners to have access to a community garden space. Three community organizations helped deliver the program in 3 different neighborhoods. This resulted in 30 graduates from Sabathani Community Center in south Minneapolis, Heritage Park in north Minneapolis and the Glendale Townhomes / CAPI in southeast Minneapolis. The Glendale program was extremely interesting to participants and educators. Translators assisted non-English speaking participants. At this site 5 different languages were spoken during the presentations – English, Hmong, Spanish, Somali, and Oromo!

A very diverse group of Hennepin County residents graduate from the Master Gardener-led Urban Gardener Program at Glendale Townhomes/CAPI in Minneapolis. The class, taught by Master Gardeners in English, was translated in four other languages.

- **Kanabec County** - Kanabec Master Gardeners continue to manage and support the Mora Community Garden. Residents gardened in 17 large plots and 7 Junior Master Gardeners used 2 large plots. The Master Gardener manager provided education on garden pests, the importance of weeding, proper harvesting times, and other topics as she worked with individual gardeners.

In other efforts to provide education around food access, a Master Gardener employed by Kanabec County worked with management to install two large raised beds at the Public Service Building. These gardens are used as a teaching tool for WIC clients as well as county staff. The vegetables are used in salad bars for county staff meetings or are given away.
• **Steele County** - Steele County Master Gardeners partnered with the City of Owatonna, Riverland Community College, and Steele County to create the Steele County Community Garden. The garden contained thirty 20’ x 20’ garden plots available to residents of Steele County. Twenty four families rented plots in 2011 and two plots were managed by Steele County Master Gardeners with all produce grown in these plots donated to the local Food Shelf. Over 250 lbs was donated in this first year. The remaining plots were bulk planted to sweet corn and shared by all gardeners. Classes were conducted in the spring on various aspects of good gardening techniques including planting information, pest management, fertilizing, and weed control. Later in the season Master Gardeners hosted an open house for city and county officials. Master Gardeners taught several short courses on preservation techniques for the harvest and served a light supper showcasing garden crops.

• **Traverse County** - Master Gardeners partnered with local 4H members, Minnesota 4H Foundation and West Central Wellness to open a community Farmers Market. Each partnering group played a vital part in the pre-planning and development stages to bring the Farmer Market vision to reality. Master Gardeners and 4H members broke ground for the project in 2009 with a “Grow to Share Garden” program. Minnesota 4H Foundation grants partially supported the garden program in 2009-2010.

In 2010, Traverse County Master Gardeners wrote and were awarded a SHIP (State Health Improvement Program) grant administered through West Central Wellness, a program of Traverse-Grant-Stevens-Douglas Public Health. The funds were to promote healthy living in the community by establishing a local Farmers Market. As SHIP grant recipients, the garden project moved into Phase II in 2011 and established the Wheaton Community Farmers Market.

The Wheaton Farmers Market provided a unique community event throughout the summer and early fall season. Every Thursday evening local vendors sold fresh produce, home-made foods, jams and jellies, soaps, and crafted items. Market nights often featured 4H clubs serving a light evening meal and area musicians providing entertainment. A Master Gardener booth at the market offered perennial plants for sale, hands-on demonstrations and resources to answer home gardeners’ questions. The market served not only as a venue for local growers, but a great venue for building community relationships.

• **Watonwan County** - Master Gardeners received a State Health Improvement Program (SHIP) grant to assist with creating a community garden. Master Gardeners oversee community gardens in St. James and Madelia. Master Gardeners provide assistance and information to families using plots to grow their own produce.
Youth

Getting youth excited about plant sciences and growing gardens can produce multiple benefits - increased exercise, healthier eating, improved academic performance, stronger connection to nature, discovered interest in the horticulture industry.

Master Gardeners are teachers and coaches in the classroom and the garden. Often working with other organizations or institutions, Master Gardeners use Junior Master Gardener ™ curriculum and other horticulture resources to make hands-on learning fun and memorable.

In 2011, of 38 counties reporting:

- **24** counties reported conducting gardening programs with youth in 4-H groups.
- **21** counties reported working with youth through school programs that range from conservation day activities to creating a school garden.
- **20** counties reported partnering with other youth and community organizations to engage youth in gardening.
- **2** counties report they continue to work with youth gardening programs supported by State Health Improvement Program (SHIP) grants.

**Carver-Scott Counties** - Youth programming was a special focus in 2011 for Carver-Scott Master Gardeners. They started a Junior Master Gardener ™ (JMG) program in the city of Victoria. Parents and the school system asked that the program be repeated in 2012, and requested a second site be added to reach more students.

Master Gardeners also began a project with the Shakopee School System’s Senior High Environmental Ethics class. The program began with a tour of the Master Gardener teaching gardens in Jordan which became the inspiration for this group. Master Gardeners worked with the students and their teachers to draw a series of garden plans for the school that includes theme gardens, eco-lawn areas, and food plots. Master Gardeners work in conjunction with school staff to lead monthly horticulture-related sessions with the students during the school year.

**Douglas County** - An ongoing project with Alexandria’s school district since 2008, the Douglas County Master Gardeners continue to develop and grow an outstanding youth and school gardening program with other Extension and community partners. The program seeks to have a positive impact on student eating habits, provide hands-on education to connect youth with nature, and provide healthy, locally-grown food for the school cafeteria. Master Gardeners continue to be an integral part in planning, teaching and working side-by-side with youth, food service volunteers and interns in the garden. Some accomplishments to date include:

- Creating of a year-round gardening education program, culminating in the flourishing Woodland Community Garden at an elementary school.
- Beginning with four raised gardens and 30 children, the program has grown to 25 raised beds, two handicapped accessible beds and 120 children participating.
- Providing produce served in the school’s summer meals program with extra produce donated to a local food bank.

In Alexandria, young gardeners take pride in showing off their garden produce. Douglas County Master Gardeners continue to grow an outstanding youth and school garden program.

**Faribault County** - Faribault County Master Gardeners provide gardening books for children and parents. The books are placed in each of the three main libraries in Faribault County. Master Gardeners worked with the local librarians to select eight book titles that include: Grow It Cook It, Green Thumbs, Fun with Gardening, Kids Container Gardening, Nature Crafts for Kids,
Roots, Shoots, Buckets and Boots, and Gardening Wizardry for Kids. The books provide gardening information to county residents now and for many years to come.

- **Hubbard County** - The Century Community School Garden began as a way to connect children and their families with locally grown fresh food. A Statewide Health Initiative Program (SHIP) grant covered the cost to build raised beds. The gardens provided the means for families to raise produce and benefit from the harvest of fresh fruits & vegetables. Master Gardeners provided education opportunities to the gardeners on vegetable gardening, composting, planting & harvesting. Throughout the summer approximately 127 children and 36 adults were reached.

- **Mower County** - A youth gardening program is a primary focus for Mower County Master Gardeners. In the garden, youth plant seeds and seedlings started by Master Gardeners. Weekly sessions at the garden during the summer include maintenance and teaching about nutrition, healthy choices and gardening through hands-on activities. Strawberry-rhubarb jam made from garden produce was a hit. Teachers include Master Gardeners, Extension staff and an educator from Mayo Health Systems. More than 50 youth participate in one or more of the weekly sessions. Participants are encouraged to work toward a Junior Master Gardener™ (JMG) certificate. In addition to the vegetable plots, the garden includes a pond, butterfly garden, and five rain barrels used as the main source of water for the garden. Produce not used in the program is donated to a local food shelf – 120 pounds in 2011.

A ‘Teen Challenge’ contest was added to the program in 2011. Working in pairs, older youth received a $20 budget from a special grant. Each pair was given a 3’ x 5’ plot of land. The pair had to clear the sod, then prepare the soil, plant and maintain a garden.

- **Mille Lacs County** - One Master Gardener in Mille Lacs County worked with Milaca School District Give-Me-5 mentoring program. This program brings together at-risk youth in grades 6 through 8 with community mentors to build confidence through learning new skills. The Master Gardener taught youth how mix a potting soil mixture, then they planted marigold and impatient seedlings. They learned how to care for the plants and went home with a Mother's Day gift.

- **Murray County** - University of Minnesota Extension-Murray County, including the Murray County Master Gardeners, provided an Arbor Day program for local first graders. Each student, teacher and aide was given two free seedlings, one tree and one shrub. Master Gardeners taught students about the history of Arbor Day. They taught students about the type of seedlings each received and how to select a site and plant the seedlings appropriately.

- **Nicollet County** - The St. Peter Community Education Volunteers in the Park (VIP) Program approached Nicollet County Master Gardeners to plan and lead an educational program that would engage youth in planting and caring for the garden outside the Community Center. Youth are ages 10 years or older, interested in community involvement, eager to learn, and had to apply and be selected to become VIP youth. Master Gardeners taught ten sessions from June through August. The focus was vegetable/herb/flower gardening that maximized space with the addition of containers and vertical tree branch tripods. The program has had positive impact on the youth and the Master Gardeners. A 10-year old boy in the program exclaimed, “This is so much fun!”

- **Otter Tail-East County** - Master Gardeners collaborate with 16 other organizations to host
Otter Tail County Conservation Days. The goal of the event is to familiarize fifth grade students from schools across the county about the conservation and protection of our natural resources. During the event six different 25-minute presentations are made, some taught by Master Gardeners. Over 425 students participated.

- **Master Gardeners in Washington County**
  The mission of the Giving Garden at Retail Construction Services (RCS), a local business, is to provide food for the needy in the community. Over that past three years, 7,200 pounds of fresh produce has been donated to local food shelves. The company also wants to support positive youth development through the garden.

Several Master Gardeners have worked on the development of the garden with the RCS business over the past three years. One Master Gardener has supervised work at the garden. Thirteen youth from the Area Learning Center in Stillwater, along with six RCS employees, are involved. One long-term outcome of the garden is for at-risk students to learn gardening skills and develop a shared interest in growing plants. Students create garden plans and discuss gardening best practices. This year students experimented with planting wide rows which, as hoped, increased yield.

The COO of RCS summed up the success of the garden saying, “We look forward to not only the fruition of next year’s produce to share, but the continued fruition of a community coming together, one seed at a time.”

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**Recognizing 2011 Volunteer Benchmarks**

These Master Gardeners completed the following benchmarks for years or hours of volunteer service:

- **30 YEARS**
  - Marjorie Klint, St. Louis
  - Lone Cooke, St. Louis
  - Warren Banks, Dakota

- **25 YEARS**
  - Diane Booth, Cook
  - Susan Gooch, Douglas
  - Marilyn Kapsner, Morrison
  - Irene Becker, Morrison
  - Lynette Tillman, St. Louis
  - Michael Peterson, St. Louis
  - Janice Fagre, St. Louis

- **20 YEARS**
  - Ken Frederick, Blue Earth
  - Lynn Hacker, Brown
  - Elsa Bye, Fillmore
  - Veronica Malone, Hennepin
  - Lucie Lund, Hennepin
  - Karen Frazier, Hennepin
  - Mary Jane Smetanka, Hennepin
  - Roger Holm, Kandiyohi
  - Barb Niemczyk, Kandiyohi
  - Casey Funk, Olmsted
  - Judith Keough, Rice
  - Mary Halverson, Sibley
  - Sherry Akins, Washington
  - Anna Barker, Washington
  - Howard Markus, Washington
  - Lynne Markus, Washington

- **20,000 HOURS**
  - Leonard Gloeb, Ramsey

- **6,000 HOURS**
  - Steph Bethke-DeJaeghere, Lyon

- **3,000 HOURS**
  - Barbara Harlan, Anoka
  - Marc Battistini, Dakota
  - Kathleen Wenzel, Dakota
  - Sherry Lawrence, Olmsted
  - Lynette Tillman, St. Louis
  - Jayne Hennek, Stearns
  - Michael Porcaro, Washington