

# Master Gardener Volunteer Program

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

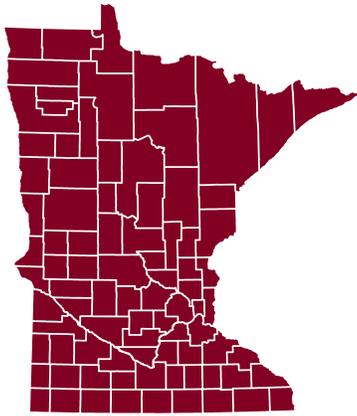


Master Gardener Volunteer Program is growing with the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum

**2,380**  
MASTER GARDENERS

**143,734**  
VOLUNTEER HOURS

**212,404**  
MINNESOTANS REACHED



## Master Gardener volunteers have statewide impact

Master Gardeners are your neighbors who volunteer to teach University research-based horticulture information in local communities. They work to strengthen community bonds, support healthy choices and promote healthier plants for more livable communities.

The activities of the Master Gardeners benefit schools, community gardens, youth programs, environmental education programs and farmers markets, to name a few.

### Master Gardeners also field questions from the public:

In 2015:

**61,818** IN-PERSON

**9,025** VIA EMAIL

**1,200** VIA PHONE



Photo: Steve Kohls,  
*Brainerd Dispatch*

### CROW WING COUNTY

## From runoff to rain garden

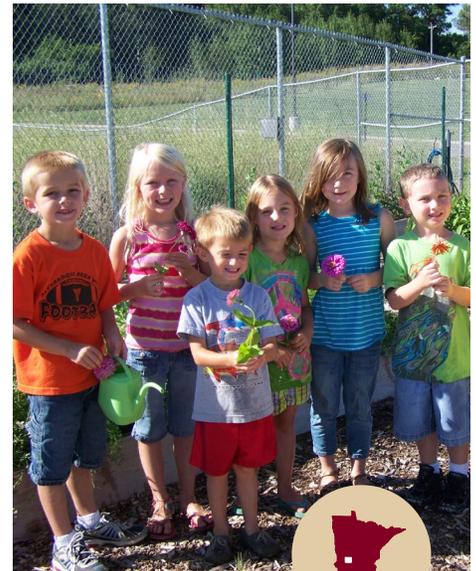
Rain gardens help decrease the volume and speed of stormwater flow, and that's exactly what Little Buffalo Creek needed. The creek flows into the Mississippi River and has been exhibiting signs of trouble: erosion, pollution and increased water temperature after rains.

Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) began a significant rain garden project thanks to \$130,000 from the Clean Water Fund, part of the Legacy amendment. Seventeen landowners agreed to have a curb-cut rain garden installed on their property and to maintain it for years.

Trained Master Gardeners were there to mentor these landowners during the first two growing seasons on rain garden design, plant selection, weed identification and maintenance. Jackie Froemming, Extension educator, coordinated and co-facilitated the stormwater and rain garden workshop for the 18 Master Gardener volunteers who stepped up to help.

The rain gardens, installed in September of 2014, divert at least 15,000 gallons of stormwater in a one-inch rain event (figure statistic provided by Beth Hippert, SWCD).

"The difference in the amount of chemicals and all the bad stuff going into the water was just amazing. And it's all because you dig a hole, and you make the water go in the direction it's supposed to go," said Deb Hoffmann, Master Gardener.



### DOUGLAS COUNTY

## A school garden as fun as the playground

A child holds a small magnifying glass to a potato plant, examining the underside of the leaves with eyes full of curiosity. She and her peers are guided along by a Master Gardener in their Woodland School Garden, learning about good bugs and bad bugs. This is just one of many lessons they learn in the school garden.

"They are amazed to find potatoes, radishes and carrots growing underground," said Master Gardener Diane Henry.

From May to September, Master Gardeners meet with elementary students and pre-K to pre-fifth grade child care groups five days a week. Kids are active and they learn the week's lesson by doing: amending the soil with compost, watering the vegetables, keeping pests away. Children record their progress and thoughts in their journals.

The 214 students involved are rewarded throughout the season by seeing the plants grow, watching pollinators visit their flowers, pulling their first of many carrots from the ground and tasting that delicious tomato. They proudly deliver their produce to the school cafeteria, where it is served to students throughout the summer months.

"I could eat all the pea pods," said Matthew, a student. Seeing how food is grown is one step in establishing healthy eating habits.



Photo: Karl Foord

### KANDIYOHI COUNTY

## A closer look at native bees

Pollinators are in peril. Awareness of this issue is growing, but questions remain—especially when it comes to answering the question, “What can I do to help?”

Master Gardeners are perfectly positioned to provide research-based information and technical assistance. One way they do this is by inviting researchers from the University of Minnesota and partner organizations to speak with their communities. Kandiyohi did this last fall by inviting Crystal Boyd, entomologist with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), to speak about her native bee research happening in and around the county.

The Master Gardeners chose this topic because much of Boyd’s research was done in Kandiyohi County, and bee health has been a major topic across agriculture and horticulture in the recent months. Native bees are also important pollinators for prairie and grassland conservation.

About 50 attendees learned about bee species native to the Upper Midwest, and how to attract pollinator activity in their own gardens. According to Boyd, “You might be amazed by a rainbow of diversity if you look closely while bees are sipping nectar.”

When issues become prominent, people look for information they can trust. They know they can get that from Master Gardener volunteers.



### RAMSEY COUNTY

## Building community in public housing

Raised garden beds dot the grounds at several different St. Paul public housing high-rises. In caring for the plants together, residents build community and a sense of accomplishment while also getting exercise, outdoor exposure and healthy produce. Four Master Gardener volunteers meet with residents twice a month during the growing season to provide hands-on support and guidance.

“I like just being a part of something,” said Laurie Arnold, one of 75 St. Paul public housing residents working with Master Gardeners to improve the landscape in front of their buildings.

“Master Gardener Roger Hintze has been so helpful and supportive of us in this whole process. He comes out twice a month and works with us to answer our questions. It’s like you’re getting a pat on the back. And that thrills me because ‘OK, we’re doing something right,’” said Antrinita Wright, resident.

The residents involved in the gardening enjoy and share the fresh, healthy produce with their neighbors.

Master Gardeners have provided crucial support and education since the start of their work with St. Paul public housing in 2012, including helping influence the decision to expand St. Paul public housing gardens from two to 14 in 2015. Master Gardeners have been invited back next season.



### WINONA COUNTY

## Garden serves as program foundation

Tending a garden often has cognitive, psychological, social and physical benefits. That’s why Winona Occupational Rehabilitation Center (WORC), which provides job opportunities for individuals with disabilities, is using raised bed gardens as a foundation for a therapeutic program. The program, known as SET (Skills, Education and Training), helps clients further develop vocational, personal and social abilities to succeed in the workplace and everyday life.

Master Gardeners and SET clients worked together in every phase of gardening during the 2015 growing season: planning, planting, maintaining and harvesting. Short classes were led by Master Gardeners nearly every week on seeds, soil, how plants grow, weeding, watering and insects. The accessible, adjustable garden beds provided opportunity for hands-on learning—and plenty of fun too!

Clients diligently watched over the vegetables throughout the season, and they were rewarded with delicious vegetables to sample and use in a related educational cooking program, which reinforced the importance of vegetables in a healthy diet. 2015 was the first year of this project, and the WORC plans to continue it.

WORC published in their newsletter, “The Winona Master Gardeners have helped from the beginning, and we are extremely thankful for all of their help and expertise.”



## Master Gardener volunteers make a difference

It's an exciting time for the Master Gardener Volunteer Program. Thanks to the partnership between University of Minnesota Extension and the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Master Gardeners have access to even more research-based continuing education opportunities on a variety of topics affecting the lives of Minnesotans, including local food, clean water, climate change, protecting pollinators and more.

In 2015:

- 224 new Master Gardeners completed the University-taught core course—Horticulture for the Home Gardener
- Master Gardeners logged 27,078 hours of continuing education
- 132 Master Gardeners participated in testing 48 vegetable and flower varieties across the state

Master Gardeners then share their knowledge in their own communities. Learn more at [extension.umn.edu/master-gardener](http://extension.umn.edu/master-gardener)



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