

Down to Earth

Michigan State University Extension Master Gardener Program—Genesee County

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Letter from the Program Coordinator

Barslund Judd

For those of you that I haven't had the chance to meet, my name is Barslund Judd. I'm the Extension Consumer Horticulturalist and Extension Master Gardener (EMG) Program Coordinator for Genesee County. Over the last few weeks, I've had the opportunity to visit quite a few projects and they look fantastic! This month I wanted to take the opportunity to mail each volunteer in the EMG Program a physical copy of the newsletter. In the future, digital copies will continue to be available on the Volunteer Management System (VMS) website. Please enjoy reading this issue, and if you'd like to see a topic covered in the future, don't hesitate to reach out to the newsletter committee.

Since starting in October of last year, I have had the privilege of visiting 30 projects, taken the EMG training (to be completed this month), organized EMG training in Clio, trained 2 groups of hotline volunteers (with Bob Bricault), planned a pollinator class in Flint, presented 5 times, attended national EMG training in Montana, held a MSUE awards ceremony (with the help of the EMG banquet committee), consulted with 3 local community gardens and visited 8 local nurseries/greenhouses. It's been quite an adventure! My goal is to not just exist in this community, but be a part of it.

I've recently been asked what the responsibilities of the MSU EMG Program are and what the local MGAGCM association handles. Below is a summary of these roles and responsibilities.

MSU Extension and Program Coordinator Responsibilities:

- Administers and oversees the EMG Program
- Provides EMG trainee classes
- Approves all projects
- Signs off on publications and newsletters
- Manages the EMG Code of Conduct
- Approves volunteer hours for approved projects
- Recertifies EMG volunteers based on volunteer hours and education hours

Master Gardener Association of Genesee County and EMG Responsibilities:

- Supports the MSU Extension Master Gardener (EMG) Program
- Helps raise money to support the MSU EMG Program
- Helps identify volunteers to support projects, programs, and special needs
- Helps with the coordination of special events and the newsletter
- Serve as ambassadors for MSUE and the EMG Program
- Provide outreach and education, on behalf of EMG Program, to the communities in which they live and serve

I hope this helps to clarify the relationship between the MSU Extension Master Gardener Program and the MGAGCM as we move forward in serving our community.

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Newsletter Committee

- Sue Crisp (**Project Report**)
- Mary Yelland (**Article Liaison**)
- LaDonna Gamble (**Hotline Articles**)
- Joanne Gensel (**Association Page**)
- Michelle Chockley (**VMS Corner**)
- Carol Pittard (**Editor**)
- Vicki Perkins (**Jr. MGs**)

Correction for April DTE

The CREATORS and Makers of the ORIGINAL outreach Q&A light up boards are MSUE Volunteer Master Gardener Pam Redden and her husband Bob Redden. Bob has also been very helpful in sending me original files to make more copies of these wonderful tools!

My apologies for the error in the last newsletter.

-Joanne Gensel

Featured MSUE Project

Genesee District Library (GDL)

Koteswara 'Sasi' Vemuri - Project Lead

Susan Crisp

This project is receiving a Michigan Nursery & Landscape Association's (MNLA) Landscape Beautification Award on May 31st at 10:00 a.m. in the garden area. Congratulations Sasi and project team!

In 2010 this project was born with community and library administration support. Our late Jim Harrow, an Advanced Master Gardener, was requested to design the garden we enjoy today. The project theme was a garden creation to nurture the love of nature and reading by the children and families visiting the library. Plantings greet you at the edge of the parking lot and continue on to the left of the library entrance with a large variegated flower bed. The "yellow brick road" curves to the right of entrance pulling you to the bench seating areas under shade trees with surrounding gardens and a white picket fence to insure children's safety. More adventure awaits you at the far end of the beds with a weaving path between many varieties of shade plants. Adults and children enjoy these beautiful, colorful plantings that continue with color throughout the season. It leaves you with a sense to create beauty and harmony in your own part of the community.

Come out and enjoy the gardens during library open hours, located near the Pasadena entrance to Sunset Hills Cemetery.

Genesee District Library
4195 W Pasadena Ave.
Flint, MI 48504
(810) 732-0110



Majestic Mulch

Mary Yelland

Mulch! It's that time of year! As master gardeners, we have learned the importance of organic mulch. Organic here is referring to mulch that comes from once living organisms. This would not include rocks and shredded rubber tires. There are a few options among organic mulches. Ground cypress bark, because it naturally contains phenolic compounds, is more rot resistant and may cause weed suppression. Recycled pallets are a source of ground mulch. They are good at conserving moisture. Even though it is available undyed, these mulches are often artificially colored. A product naturally produced as a by-product of the lumber industry is hardwood bark or shredded bark. This decomposes quickly and helps provide nutrients for plants.

Dr. Bert Cregg, MSU professor of horticulture, said the best performer overall was ground red pine bark. There are other options such as shredded leaves, straw, and pine needles. Un-composted grass clippings or whole leaves are not recommended as they will form a thick mat that hinders moisture and oxygen movement to plant roots.

Mulch regulates soil temperature, diminishes moisture loss, can discourage disease transmission, reduces weeds, and adds much needed organic material to the soil. In MSU trials, most organic mulches performed similarly. All mulched trials did better than mulch-free gardens. What a great thing to do for the garden! Now that you want mulch, how much do you really need? Bags are heavy and bulky, and the cost adds up quickly.

More is not better. You can over-mulch. When thick layers of mulch are added every season, perennials can be smothered. Too much organic material around a plant's crown may encourage rot. As thick mulch dries out, it can cake together and form a water-resistant layer. Instead of retaining moisture, the mulch then repels rain. Mulch piled around tree trunks provides a dark and damp environment inviting to insects and root rot. Keep a 6-inch mulch-free ring around trees. MSU publications recommend from 2-4 inches of mulch on a garden. If you are re-mulching an already existing bed, just an inch is recommended.

Mulch is most often sold by volume in a 2 cubic foot bag. It is sold by cubic foot instead of weight due to variations in moisture content. If a bag of dry wood chips weighs 20 pounds dry, it could easily weigh twice that if saturated with rain. If you had a box 1 foot by 1 foot and 1 foot deep, the bag of mulch would fill your box twice.

References:

- https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/smart_gardeners_improve_their_soil_and_weed_control_with_organic_mulch
- https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/mulching_tips_for_the_landscaper
- https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/mulch_madness

Mulch Calculator

Fill in the boxes with your measurements and multiply.

Length of garden	X	Width of garden	=	Square feet of garden

1. Copy your answer from the first row to the second row.
2. Look at the chart for the thickness of mulch you want and copy the number from the shaded column into the second box.
3. Divide to get the number of bags of mulch you need to get.

Square feet of garden	÷	Square feet of coverage	=	Number of bags of mulch needed

How thick do you want the mulch?	Square feet coverage in a 2 ft ³ bag.
1 inch	24 square feet
2 inches	12 square feet
3 inches	8 square feet
4 inches	6 square feet

MSU EMG Outreach Report

Wojo's Spring Garden Party—April 24, 2019

Wojo's planned a great event to get families out of the house and into the green house. The Spring Garden Party was an excellent kick off to spring and gardening even though the weather was wet and gloomy. The



event was focused on the family especially the kids. The activities included a scavenger hunt, assorted games and activities, face painting, a bubble machine, popcorn and candy corn. The staff was dressed in "spring attire" flowery tops with a distinct tropical flair.

MSUE was represented by Junior Master Gardeners and Extension Master Gardener volunteers. We had adjacent tables near the front of the store. Vicki Perkins had her "Juniors" helping children make pressed flower Mother Day cards with real flowers and lots of pressing...with a mallet! The Junior Master Gardeners helped make about 170 cards over 5 hours. Right next

to that MSU Extension Master Gardener volunteers had our new Spin to Win wheel.... giving out garden-based stickers. We also had two Q&A light up boards and a "friend or foe" Q&A poster.

The Volunteers were: Loretta Ellwood, Devera Brower, Judy Trombley, Linda Jaworski and Marie Allard.

At the end of the day Wojo's was very pleased to have both teams help make their day a success!

Vicki Perkins—May is always a busy time for the Jr. Master Gardeners as we volunteer outside at the Flint Farmers Market 3 weekends during the month. We just finished a new project! We made paperclip bookmarks for Mother's Day using 4 inch paperclips, hot glued individual silk flowers onto it, and then we put a piece of green felt on the back of the flower to finish it off. The weather was very cold, and we only made about 30 of them on Saturday. We had 1 brave Jr who did all the work that day.

Edible Flint Distribution Day—May 15, 2019

MSU Extension Master Gardener volunteers worked a table at the May 15 Edible Flint Garden Kit distribution day as well as assisted with fellow Master Gardener Deb Hamilton in her working duties as the organizer of the Edible Flint event

The day was mild and VERY windy with some light rain during the afternoon. In spite of the weather the volunteers had a satisfying day setting up the venue and assembling the kits for distribution.

The outreach table was "wo"manned by Susan Fischer and Joanne Gensel. We had about 20-25 visitors. Susan and I helped local entrepreneur Ed Harrison by "showcasing" his rain barrels in front of our table...It helped Ed and kept the wind from blowing everything off our table!



MSU EMG Outreach Report Contd.

I-75 Rest Area Memorial Weekend—May 24, 2019

Friday May 24 2019, was the annual I-75 Rest Area Outreach hosted by MDOT. The Master Gardeners had a tent and table set up with some our new “tools” and current handouts. Ruthann Donaldson, Loretta Ellwood, and Marie Luck-Allard worked the crowds. We had over 50 folks interact with us during our 5 hours!

The I-75 rest stop has gardens on both sides of the building. Project lead Ruth Sutton and crew have done an impressive job. This sentiment was voiced repeatedly to the outreach team during the day. Many of the travelers stopped to just compliment the gardens and thank the Master Gardeners for the hard work and beautiful results. MDOT works closely with our excellent crews of Master Gardeners to provide beautiful and educational display gardens for travelers to explore while “stretching their legs”. All the rest areas in Genesee County are currently gardened by MSUE Volunteer Master Gardeners and Michigan Department of Transportation. MDOT provides the supplies and MSU EMGs provide the inspiration and hard work.



Your Volunteer Management System (VMS) Questions Answered

Michelle Chockley

How do I know if a project is approved and how to enter on VMS?

Click on the 2019 Approved MSU-EMG Volunteer Projects under Links.

A screenshot of a web browser displaying the Michigan Volunteer System (VMS) website. The browser's address bar shows the URL "https://michigan.volunteersystem.org/users/index.cfm". The page content includes a "General Information" sidebar with links for "Member Roster", "Projects", "Newsletters/Documents", and "Photo Albums". The main content area features a notice: "The 2019 re-certification process is closed and your re-certification card will be mailed to you before April 1st." Below this, it states: "If you have unreported hours from 2018, you may now log into the VMS to report these hours. When entering the hours, you should use a 2019 date so that you use a 2019 hours report. All reports have a 2018 date, we will not include that data in any report. We do recommend that you include '2018' in the activity description so you/we know the hours were completed in 2018." A blue arrow points from this text to the "Links" sidebar. The "Links" sidebar contains several hyperlinks, including "#2019 Association Meeting Speakers & How to enter on VMS", "#2019 Fall MSU EMG Volunteer Class registration Info & Link", "*2019 Approved MSU EMG Volunteer Projects", "2018 Instructions on how to complete EMG Volunteer Project Form", "2018 MSU Community Volunteer Project Proposal Form", "2018 MSU EMG Volunteer Project Form", "Car Pool sign up step by step", "Down to Earth (DIE) Newsletter", "May 2019 'At A Glance' Calendar Volunteer Opps", and "Plant Stake Order Form - MGAGCM". The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the time as 6:36 PM on 5/20/2019.

Tip: Enter your hours monthly. You can “lump” hours for the month. For example: Total hours at Flushing Trail for May. Then do one entry for the month and SAVE.

Check with Barslund Judd, Master Gardener Coordinator or one of the VMS Ambassadors if you have questions about whether an activity is approved. Contact info on VMS home page.

Fun Stuff!

The Buzzz!



Greetings Gardeners- We're in full swing at the Hotline! It appears lots of inquirers are taking advantage of soil-testing, planting and other garden prep advice. I want to remind you to keep a look out for announcements, warnings and predictions about emerging diseases, harmful insects and other things we need to look out for each season. Sometimes there are notices at the MSU Extension office (Hotline counter or flyer on wall), in newsletters such as this DTE, MGAGCM Facebook page, many MSU websites and I've even seen stories on the news. It would behoove and benefit us all to follow instructions on how to lessen/get rid of the problem or even collect samples or report sightings when asked. The last article I read about was the spotted lanternfly headed this way!

How do I keep my hanging baskets looking good and healthy throughout the summer? Well this writer has been there! I would go to water my spindly, flowerless hanging baskets and the water would go straight through the bottom! That is because I was not watering or fertilizing often enough. **Read on:** https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/long_live_the_hanging_basket

My soil test came back saying I was low on potassium and also my lawn is mossy. These are likely two separate issues. If the soil test shows low potassium (K), you can purchase it at most places that sell lawn/garden supplies. Follow instructions to determine amount and application. Moss is likely the result of soil compaction, too much water, too much shade or poor drainage. <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/cfiv/homeowners/100402.html>

How do I get rid of garlic mustard? The earlier in spring the better with this invasive species! Try to pull it by the roots as best you can and don't mow it as it will spread. Dispose of the pulled plants and roots- don't leave them lying around. **Here's a good picture of the plant and more info:** https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/annual_invasion_of_garlic_mustard_is_now_underway

What's a good hardy lavender variety to avoid winter kill? Lavender is actually native to warmer climates of the Mediterranean, Northern Africa, Western Asia and the Middle East and is a member of the mint family. **This article has lots more lavender facts and pages 5 and 6 suggest some varieties better suited for warmer climates:** https://www.chicagobotanic.org/sites/default/files/pdf/plantevaluation/no42_lavender.pdf

Gardening With the Kids



Grow your own pineapple!

1. Cut off the top of a pineapple about 1 inch below the cluster of leaves.
2. Allow it to dry for several days
3. Plant the pineapple top in a pot with the soil at the base of the leaves
4. Pineapples are tropical, so the plant must be kept warm.

After about a year the pineapple plant should be large enough to produce fruit. If the pineapple has not produced a flower, try this trick. Put an apple next to the plant and put a clear plastic bag over it. Leave it covered for a couple of days. The ethylene given off by the apple encourages the pineapple to bloom. The fruit forms out of the middle of the plant. It is ready to eat when it is a golden color.

Master Gardener Association Genesee County

The Master Gardener Association of Genesee County Michigan (MGAGCM) is an association of Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs). Membership is optional for certified Extension Master Gardeners. The MGAGCM provides support to local EMGs through project funding, plant signage, and extra educational opportunities.

Greetings from Joanne Gensel, MGAGCM Board member and MSU VMS Ambassador

As most of you know I am the Outreach Director on the Board of the MGAGCM as well as a VMS ambassador with MSUE. This allows me to see what is happening from both sides of the window. I would like to use this space as an Association board member to encourage everyone to consider why they became a Master Gardener and find time this month to reconnect with others at the membership meeting and help us develop our Association to be informative, fulfilling, and FUN!

The Association belongs to every member. As an association, we provide a monthly meeting hosting a guest speaker for our enjoyment and an educational hour. We also enjoy snacks, socializing with each other and conversations about our projects! The association hosts a holiday gathering in the fall and a picnic in the summer. The Association is all of us working together. The board members take the responsibility of finances and guiding the Association as directed by MSUE. Working together, we all have the same goal.

The MGAGCM board meets the first Monday of the month at the Flint Township Police Dept. 5200 Norko Dr. at 1:00. All are invited to sit in and listen. If you have a topic to discuss, contact Vicki Laurin, President of MGAGCM, in advance to get on the agenda. We try to keep discussions timely and on topic. The minutes will be posted on the association web page on the password protected page. This is your opportunity to be heard!

Survey Results:

The results of the recent survey are done. We've heard you loud and clear! MSUE project report/updates need to be revised at monthly membership meetings. The new format will start around August. We will highlight one project at each membership meeting. The Extension Master Gardener project team will have the floor to show photos and talk about goals, achievements, challenges and issues. I would also like to have a write up in that month's DTE regarding the featured MSUE project so everyone else who does not attend meetings can enjoy our EMG projects. If you would like to showcase your MSUE project at an association meeting, please let Vicki Laurin know.

MGAGCM Committees:

Strategic Planning – Chaired by Kit Purell, all_4_adventure@hotmail.com or 248-789-2221

This committee is working to define who we are (as an association), what are our goals, how do we get there with action plans and specific tasks. (It is MORE interesting and fun than it sounds in my description). Contact Kit if you would like to join us.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)– Chaired by Vicki Laurin, laurinvicki@gmail.com or 810-744-0725

This committee is comprised of board members and association members and is responsible for the association Bylaws, fiscal guidelines of association funds, nominations and elections and much more. The SOP's can be found on the association web page. You can find a link on the home page of VMS, under LINKS.

Genesee County MSU Extension Volunteer Master Gardener Volunteers are an outstanding group, serving and providing our community with education, support and beautifully cared for garden sites.

Project related questions or those regarding educational or volunteer hours, should go to Barslund Judd, Master Gardener Coordinator, juddbars@msu.edu or 810-244-8531.

Thank you and have a wonderful gardening season! We look forward to see and hear about your MSUE projects.
Joanne Gensel, jhgensel@gmail.com or 810-339-0764

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Websites:

MMGA Inc Website

www.michiganmastergardener.org

MMGA Inc. Facebook Page

www.facebook.com/MichiganMG/

MGAGCM Website

www.geneseecountymg.org

MGAGCM Facebook Page

www.facebook.com/groups/216904628327310/

Upcoming Events:

MGAGCM Garden Tour—June 23

10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Davison/Otisville

Fall into Spring Educational Conference—Oct 5

8 a.m.-3 p.m.

Mott Community College Event Center, Flint MI

Time to Harvest!

Mary Yelland

Historically known as “pie plant”, rhubarb is an herbaceous perennial. The leaves and roots are toxic due to oxalic acid, however the bright red stems are commonly harvested. Harvest of rhubarb stalks should stop by the end of June so the plant can regain strength for the next year. Your rhubarb plant will be less productive if it allowed to flower. So, if a flower stalk forms pull it off and discard it. If you have some rhubarb in your garden here is a recipe to try.

Rhubarb Muffins

Muffin Batter Ingredients:

1 egg

1 ¼ cups brown sugar

1 cup buttermilk

½ cup vegetable oil

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

2 ½ cups flour

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

1 ½ to 2 cups diced fresh rhubarb

½ cup pecans or walnuts (optional)

Topping:

1/3 cup sugar

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon melted butter

Combine egg, brown sugar and vegetable oil. Mix in buttermilk and vanilla. Add in flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt and mix just until blended. Stir in rhubarb and nuts if you want to use them. Fill paper lined muffin cups ¾ full. Combine topping ingredients and sprinkle over muffin batter. Bake at 375°F for 20-25 minutes or until muffins are done.