



2006 Annual Master Gardener Program Impact Report (amended 1.27.07)

The CE Education Center and the URI Master Gardener Association co-hosted the Northeast Regional Conference in Newport, RI in June 5-8, 2006. Over 400 CE volunteers and staff attended from the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states and beyond. 257 URI volunteers recorded 35,000 hours over a 3 year period in planning and execution, 19.2 FTE (Full Time Equivalent).*

As of 1.27.07 we have 334 active volunteers.

- * 51,524 hours (includes conference hours)

- * 28.3 FTE's

- * \$1,030,480 DVE (Donated Value Equivalent).†

The combined total of career hours of these volunteers is just over 184,000 reported hours. 114 FTE's or a donated value equivalent of \$3.1 million dollars.

The 2006 intern class had 104 students and to date they have

- * 6300 hours,

- * 3.46 FTE

- * \$126,000 DVE.

64% of the class of 2006 has now earned a Blue Pin and the title of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension Master Gardener.

URI Extension Master Gardener Program Impacts:

Our Extension Master Gardeners work in a wide variety of activities throughout the year and around the state. The following is a summation of the types of activities we are involved in.

1. Campus programs and projects: These include the hotline, children's program, Healthy Landscapes, a joint project with the URI Department of Natural Resources, Greenshare Field Day and Plant A Row for the Hungry.

- * 5600 hours

- * 227 volunteers

- * 3.07 FTE

- * \$112,000 DVE.

This year, the **Children's Environmental Program** hosted 31 schools across the state. 26 Extension Master Gardeners helped coordinator Cathi Cote educate 1256 students about the natural environment with many exciting new hands on activities.

Plant a Row for the Hungry is a national Extension Master Gardener effort with nearly every state participating.

Plant a Row for the Hungry donations as officially reported to and recorded by Extension Master Gardener Sue Scotti .

- * East Farm Vegetable Garden - 957 pounds

* FTE = \$1820

† DVE = \$20

- * East Farm Apple Orchard - 2925
- * Individual gardeners - 4573 pounds
- * Total - 8455 pounds (over 3 and a quarter tons!!)

Hotline

3968 or 440 per month calls from March –mid-November. 15 volunteers staff the hotlines which are held 4 days a weeks from 9AM to 2PM March through Thanksgiving.

Email responses:

1211 or 110 per month average from January – November We began answering emails from the Channel 10 Plant Pro site, the CEEC website and the MGA website in 2003. Currently, one volunteer does this remotely from her home. This volume has nearly quadrupled from the first year when the average was 29 emails a month. The emails have come from 72% of the United States including Alaska and Hawaii and 18 countries including Canada (several provinces), Australia, India, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iraq and South Africa. Most are military or diplomatic embassy personnel.

Speakers Bureau:

24 volunteer and staff speakers reached over 1000 people from garden clubs across the state in 33 separate venues. 9 talks specifically covered environmental concerns like pesticide use, Xeriscaping, Composting, Healthy Landscapes, and Sustainable Landscaping. Other community groups reached included the Lake Mishnock Conservation Association, Northern RI Cooperative Extension, North Kingstown Senior Center, Lifespan, Northern RI Conservation District, the Lincoln-East Providence – Warwick- and Cross Mills public libraries, Groton, CT Rotary Club, East Greenwich Parks and Recreation, New England Association of Retired Teachers, Big Sisters, RI Rose Society and the Newport Flower Show.

URIMGA.ORG

Website contacts are difficult to pinpoint exactly as to how many people are accessing the site but an average of nearly 15,000 page requests per month is a conservative estimate!

2. MGA administration and its' programs. This includes board, committee and Master Gardener Foundation duties, mentors, website maintenance and the upcoming 2007 Gardening with the Masters tour.

- 5900 hours
- 157 volunteers
- 3.24 FTE
- \$118,000 DVE.

3. Statewide Community Outreach.

- * 4600 hours
- * 181 volunteers
- * 2.52 FTE

* \$92,000 DVE, have been given on statewide projects like flower shows, info booths, and community projects. These events reach in excess of 100,000 people.

35 **Ask a MG Booth** events from February to October were attended from one day events to multi day events like the Providence and Newport Flower Shows. Over 125 volunteers participated in one or more of these events.

Opportunities are on the rise and we plan many new regular training opportunities for volunteers to work at these venues including long term regular commitments to Roger Williams Park and possibly Schartners Farm.

4. CELS/East Farm Activities: This includes the Greenhouse and the vegetable garden teams

- * 10,000 hours
- * 212 volunteers
- * 5.49 FTE
- * \$200,000 DVE.

5. Special Projects: Special projects include the GAP Garden to Table project which is a joint training effort with the URI Department of Food Safety and Nutrition, Prescott Farm and the Blithewold project where EMG's helped create a list of native and sustainable plants on the Blithewold property.

- * 800 hours
- * 40 volunteers
- * .4 FTE
- * \$16,000 DVE.

Nearly 30 volunteers have helped at Prescott Farm in the last two years. For 2006, they produced 120 pounds of organically grown heirloom vegetables and donated it directly to Lucy's Hearth in Middletown, a 24-hour emergency and transitional shelter for mothers and their children who are homeless due to economic hardship, family crisis, divorce, eviction, and severe shortage of safe, affordable housing.

INTERGENERATIONAL HORTICULTURAL THERAPY PROJECT

Hattie Ide Chaffee Home, East Providence, RI

Twelve EMG's have gone through training and most are assisting in this particular project. The goal of this project is to provide hands on training and a lecture workshop to EMG's about horticultural therapy. This involves working with the residents on activities that were conducted both indoors and outdoors in two accessible gardens. A three-hour lecture workshop was conducted to provide background information on horticultural therapy and working with elders.

As part of the training they participated in a gardening activity with 5 residents of varying functioning levels and challenges.

The next goal of this project is to develop a trained horticultural therapy specialty group of EMG volunteers who can serve at a variety of sites.

MaryBeth Miller, the volunteer coordinating this project, is developing a HT training schedule for EMG's that are interested in this as an advanced specialty. The sessions would be conducted in January through April at various sites. Then volunteers would sign up to work at the approved project location of their choice.



Photos by Susan van Leaven, MG

Citizen Science Projects and Partnerships.

1. Chet Clayton Rose Garden Report 2006

On Saturday, April 29, the Rose Garden on the CE Education Center grounds and the URI Botanical Gardens was planted. Under the direction of Michael Chute, more than 20 volunteer EMGs

planted approximately 94 rose plants of 16 varieties. All of these roses were selected for their sustainability. Five educational presentations were given by nationally accredited Consulting Rosarian and judge and URI Extension Master Gardener, Michael Chute and his wife, Angelina, an Honorary Master Gardener accompanied him. Both are American Rose Society (ARS) Consulting Rosarians, a national certification. Michael is also an American Rose Society accredited horticultural judge.

Excerpts from the Chet Clayton Sustainable Rose Garden Evaluation Summary

On Saturday, October 21, 2006, nine URI Master Gardener rose garden volunteers met in the Clayton Rose Garden to perform the first annual evaluation of the sixteen rose varieties. Varieties were judged on eight end-of-season categories: canes, foliage, blackspot resistance, mildew resistance, other diseases, insect resistance, habit, and uniqueness. These evaluations yielded a sustainability score and an overall score.

To the surprise of a few of the evaluators, there was an infestation of late season black spot on many of the plants. Black spot is the most common fungal disease of roses and the two lowest scoring varieties had become defoliated by season's end.

A general observation was that there was negligible insect damage. Evaluators noticed and discussed the difference in size of the same varieties depending on which side of the garden they were planted.

A well-maintained rose garden will show a 100% gain in overall size in its second season – so varieties with five or six bushes should be culled down to three or four. This also serves to control fungal diseases by increasing air circulation in the garden.

In 2007, we will evaluate twice; once in late June at peak bloom to include an accurate evaluation of flower form, color, and fragrance as well as winter hardiness, and again in October to judge the garden performance throughout the entire season.

The Clayton Rose Garden opened to rave reviews in its first season. It sparkled on Green Share Field Day, September 17, 2006, the highlight of the season. An estimated 3000 visitors came that day. The general impression by gardeners and public alike was very complimentary.

This garden is also a highlight of the URI Botanical Garden at the College of the Environment and Life Science graduation ceremony adjacent to the garden. At least 3 summer weddings took place in and around the rose garden and Professor Will Green from the Community Planning Department hosted the freshmen Landscape Architecture students in a welcome buffet in September. This sustainable rose garden also figures prominently in the development of the URI Botanical Gardens under the direction of Dr. Brian Maynard.



Photos by Caryl Freedman, MG

2. The Lilac Phenology Network East Farm Project Site

URI was one of the original participants in the Lilac Phenology Network which actually started in Quebec and the Northeast U.S. URI dropped out of the program many years ago. Now the network is administered by Dr. Mark Schwartz, a geographer at the University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee. When he spoke at a Global Warming conference in Providence in 2003, it was noted by Master Gardeners that Rhode Island was no longer represented in the Lilac Phenology Network.

This study is one of many tools that is being used to determine changes in weather and climate patterns, providing data for the exploration of other issues such as Global Warming.

Daily observations are made by a URI Extension Master Gardener to determine the dates and weather conditions when Lilac leaves and flowers break open. These observations, along with weather data obtained from the adjacent weather station at the Master Gardener Field House, will be reported via Internet to a national data base.

The Lilacs involved in the national study are of the species *Syringa chinensis* or “Red Rothomagensis.” This variety was chosen because of its well-defined phenological events, cold hardiness and resistance to heat and drought.

3. GAP – Garden to Table

URI EMG's are partnering with the Nutrition and Food Sciences Department with support from a USDA grant to do follow-up interviews and training for home gardeners about safe food handling for the produce they grow in their own backyards. Using the data collected during the interviews, educational programming will be developed and trained EMG's will be called upon to help bring that education to the vegetable gardening public. This is a regional research program and EMG's in the other New England states will be doing the same.

In spring 2005 20 trained Master Gardeners did on-site interviews of vegetable gardeners across the state. Teams of 2 MG's (interviewer and recorder) conducted 4 or 5, one hour interviews with home fruit and vegetable gardeners about food handling practices – from the garden to the table - on produce they grow at home.

The training was conducted by Martha Patnod and Dr. Lori Pivarnik, the project directors. As part of the USDA grant, a survey, which went to over 5000 people across RI surveying for information about food handling practices of home gardeners, showed the need for development and implementation of educational programming.

In the fall of 2006 a Powerpoint presentation and display boards were shown to the volunteers. They received more training about doing presentations before groups and became familiar with the display boards for use at various Ask A MG sites, especially farmers markets during the 2007 season and other health fair venues will be identified to share this timely information.

4. Healthy Landscapes – Department of Natural Resources

12 volunteers took the training sessions aimed to have EMG volunteers be able to present a prepared Powerpoint presentation to community groups who request it as well as a full color display and brochures for use at various Ask a MG booths or other related events throughout the year. Last year, trained Extension Master Gardeners assisted with the installation and maintenance of a rain garden located on the Town Hall property in North Kingstown. This garden is making an impact by protecting the adjacent Wickford Harbor from potential pollutants flowing from the roof and a portion of the yard into the harbor. This year there were three requests for trained speakers at two conservation associations and a garden club with a total of 125 in attendance in West Greenwich, N. Scituate, and Jamestown. The University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension (URI CE) Healthy Landscapes program provides tips on landscaping best management practices aimed at protecting surface and groundwater resources.

General Gardening Programs

2006 Spring Gardening Seminar

The University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners along with the Cooperative Extension Education Center co-sponsored an annual all day Spring Seminar in late March that had an audience of 120 people. The seminar was held on the Kingston campus in the southern part of the state. Attendees came from across the state. A team of a dozen Master Gardeners organized the registration, speaker keepers and break-time activities.

Topics covered included Rain Gardens for Water Quality and Conservation, Composting, Interpreting your Soil Test Results, Drip Irrigation, Organic Vegetable Gardening and Design and Care of Water Features. Several other design topics were also offered. Every topic was taught by a URI Master Gardener volunteer. Rosanne Sherry, the state MG Coordinator was the only staff member presenting a topic.

Soil testing was also offered by trained Master Gardeners. Displays were set up showing composting and rain barrel designs.

Attendees left our seminar with many new ideas to start this spring in the garden. Many indicated they came specifically to hear the presentations on rain gardens, drip irrigation or composting and now felt confident in setting up a successful system.

For 2007, we have a goal of expanding the number of attendees to 150 and relocate the seminar to a centralized location in Providence. Eventually, we hope to rotate between the northern and southern parts of the state.

2006 Summer School

This was our third year of this gardening series. We held 8 weekday sessions in the late afternoon in the URI Botanical Gardens from late May to early September. The 89 registered attendees represent an increase of 75%, a 53% increase in revenue (\$2340) and a 60% increase in individual registrations from the first year.

Surveys were handed out at the end of each class. No surveys were returned in 2 of the sessions. Participation in the remaining surveys varied from 23% to 100% per class. The general responses from the surveys indicated that the information given in each class was very helpful. Staff and certified Extension Master Gardeners lead the classes. Topics this season included Wildflower Gardening, Vegetable Garden Basics, Sustainable Roses for the 21st Century, Organic Pest Controls, Perennial Garden Management, Composting Basics, Rain Garden Design and Easy Lawn Care Basics.

2006 Fall School

This was the third year of the fall school program, a series of eight evening gardening lectures with an emphasis on sustainability and environmentally friendly practices. Staff and certified Extension Master Gardeners lead the classes.

* 80 registrants paid \$150 each. Total revenue was \$12,600. Evaluations were given out the last two evenings and 35% were returned.

* 96% of the respondents indicated the classes were enjoyable, useful and they would recommend the program to a friend.

* The classes were rated between 40% and 92% as very good or excellent. Soils and Fertilizers, Perennials Management, Vegetable Gardening/Composting and Organic Pest Controls were the most favored.

* 42% of the respondents indicated that the most important things learned were the use of sustainable landscape plants and the identification of and avoiding the use of invasive plants. A new understanding of the importance of watering practices and fertilizer uses were also indicated as areas where they planned to make changes in their management techniques.

Advanced Training

As part of an on-going expansion of advanced education training opportunities for Extension Master Gardeners I developed a year long training program for the Hotline volunteers.

A group that ranged from 10-20 regular hotline volunteers participated in the monthly 3 hour training session. Each session covered in depth a topic of relevance such as Fruit, Lawn, Disease and Insect ID, Organic Practices, Pruning and Propagation. Three specific goals were,

1. Learning Goals - to increase the volunteer's knowledge of gardening and resources
2. Skills Goals - to help the volunteers become more comfortable with computer information retrieval as we transition this service to more computerization.
3. Service Goals - to measure the impact and value of training on volunteer service

An evaluation sheet was given after every training and at the end of the season. Quizzes were given each time as well and recognition of attendance at 5 or more sessions awarded a pin addition and a perennial plant ID CD. Participation in these in-service trainings counted as 3 hours volunteer time.

Eight end of season evaluations were returned. Overall the training was received very favorably and several new items to focus on were identified to continue the trainings next year. One long term goal is that this training will serve as a basis for other similar volunteer task trainings for Ask a MG booth venues at Roger Williams Park and Schartner's or other large scale events we participate in.

Addendum after all end of year reports were compiled 1.27.07.
Affecting pages 1-3 of the 2006 Master Gardener Program Report.

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Project categories:

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