



2009 Annual Master Gardener Program Impact Report

As of 12.31.09 we have 358 ACTIVE volunteers. "Active" means volunteering 20 or more hours in 2009. An 8% increase from 2008.

- * 40,603 hours
- * FTE (Full Time Equivalent) 19.52
- * \$ DVE (Donated Value Equivalent).¹ \$812,062

The 2009 intern class had 105 students and to date they have:

- * 5571 hours (a 7% increase from 2008)
- * FTE 2.68
- * DVE \$111,431

48% of the class of 2009 has now earned a Blue Pin and the title of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension Master Gardener (EMG).

In 2009, 196 active volunteers completed 3136 hours of educational time. This amounts to about 54% of all active volunteers. Most of these hours were completed with special programming by the URI Master Gardener Association (MGA) or by the URI Master Gardener (MG) program. Several people completed the Tree Steward Program and the URI Master Composter & Recycler Program.

URI Extension Master Gardener Program Impacts:

Our Active EMG volunteers 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. Over 10,000 people were directly contacted by Master Gardeners. The attendance figures at large-scale fairs and events added up to 40,000 or more. Media contacts in local and regional newspapers, television, and magazines swelled the potential contacts to over 1 million.

1. Campus programs and projects: These include the Learning Landscapes Program, Plant a Row for the Hungry, Master Gardener hotline, Clayton Rose Garden, Chestnut, Squid fertilizer and rain barrel research, GreenShare Garden School Day, President's Garden and joint projects with URI Department of Natural Resources and Sciences.

- * 5510 hours
- * 178 volunteers
- * FTE 2.67
- * DVE \$110,200

This year, the **Learning Landscapes Program** hosted 30 schools from across the state. EMG volunteers (36) helped coordinator, Vanessa Venturini, educate 2671 students about the natural environment with many exciting new hands on activities. Classes were held in Kingston and Providence. The winter program was held at the Roger Williams Park Botanical Center in Providence and had 286

¹* FTE = \$1820 DVE = \$20 (this Value of Volunteer time ranges nationally from a low of \$9 to a high of \$27. Master Gardener value nationally averages \$17-\$22)

students enrolled, some of which were from Title 1 schools (defined as 40% of its student body coming from low-income households).

Plant a Row for the Hungry is a national EMG effort with participation from almost every state.

Donations as officially reported to and recorded by Master Gardener Sue Scotti for the Plant a Row for the Hungry:

* East Farm Vegetable Garden - 325 pounds. This reflects a two-thirds reduction over last year due to weather and raiding rabbits.

* East Farm Apple Orchard -5530 pounds to the RI Community Food Bank

* Individual Master Gardeners - 1000 pounds

* Prescott Farm - 80 pounds.

* Total - 6935 pounds of food grown, harvested and delivered to community food banks.

Our toll-free **Hotline** received 2899, or an average of 362, calls per month from March through October. Volunteers (19) staff the hotline which is open 4 days a week from 9AM to 2PM March 1 through October. This reflects a 9% reduction in calls as an ongoing decrease of hotline calls. The service will be rigorously reevaluated after the 2009 season.

Email responses: Garden questions totaled 1310 emails or an average of 108 emails per month.

Although the number of emails declined from 2004, the general trend over the years is upward. Email questions are answered from the Channel 10 Plant Pro site, the URI Mallon Outreach Center's website and the MGA.

In 2008 a second email address was created for the MGA website. These emails were answered by volunteers staffing the hotline. The total number of gardening questions received from the new email address is factored in the total number of emails received by all addresses.

Speakers Bureau: Volunteers (14) and staff speakers reached over 500 people from across the state in 22 separate venues. Environmental concerns like composting, and Sustainable Landscaping were discussed in most of the presentations. Venues for presentations included several garden clubs in RI and nearby MA, including Warwick, Johnston, Riverside, Portsmouth and Burrillville public libraries, and Save the Bay Green Landscaping Workshop.

URI CELS Outreach Website: <http://uri.edu/cels/ceoc> The Outreach Center website had 7257 "Absolute Unique Visitors" in total. Out of this total the Master Gardener link had 2813 "Absolute Unique Visitors." These numbers reflect the first complete calendar year of data. Every program at the Outreach Center has a link on the home page directing visitors to specific pages about the program.

2. MGA administration and its programs: This includes board, committee and Master Gardener Foundation duties, mentors, garden tour and Volgistics database and website maintenance.

- 10,648 hours
- 218 volunteers
- FTE 5.4
- DVE \$213,028

Figures for 2009 include at this time the MG day at Hattoy's Garden Center. 104 tests were completed. A 60% increase from the year before.

3. Statewide Community Outreach:

* 7206 hours

* 256 volunteers

- * FTE 3.48
- * DVE \$144,168

These volunteers have worked on statewide projects like flower shows, information booths, and community projects. These events helped to reach out to nearly 50,000 people.

39 “**Ask a MG Information Kiosk**” events from February to October were held. Events ranged from one-day programs to multi-day events such as the Rhode Island Flower Show. Participation included over 200 volunteers working over 2000 hours at these events, representing more than 30 % increase in participation over last year.

Kiosk events provide excellent opportunities for exposure of the Master Gardener program to the general public, recruiting new class prospects, advising and problem solving with gardeners, presenting environmental and sustainability education, and supporting our corporate and educational sponsors. The blend of education and public relations requires an outgoing, approachable environment at the booth. Our display kiosk improves the image and seems to motivate the volunteers to move outside of protected space.

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

- * 14,777 hours
- * 223 volunteers
- * FTE 7.1
- * DVE \$295,558

In 2009 the 5,000 square-foot vegetable demonstration garden at East Farm continued as a GAP-certified garden (Good Agricultural Practices). GAP is part of a voluntary food safety program developed by the Federal Department of Agriculture and United States Department of Agriculture for fruit and vegetable growers. The goal is to help reduce food borne illness. The GAP program describes key steps that growers can use to help reduce or minimize contamination of produce by disease-causing organisms. Food safety is everyone’s responsibility from the farmers to consumers.

5. Roger Williams Park Botanical Center: This includes MG’s trained as Docent tour guides and kiosk workers.

- * 372 hours
- * 24 volunteers
- * FTE .18
- * DVE \$7450

In our third full year at the park, we ran two docent training series of 3 sessions each. A total of 15 volunteers participated.

20 docent guided tours were led from January through December. May and October were the busiest months. Participants totaled: 463 adults and 95 children. 12 different MG docents participated on these tours.

For the second year, Master Gardener volunteers acted as docent tour guides of the Roger Williams Park Botanical Center for middle and high school participants in the Providence After School Alliance’s (PASA) summer program. The PASA program provides a variety of after-school activities where they can learn new skills, discover and enhance artistic and athletic talents, explore nature, make healthy social contacts and develop a positive self-image which will help them to avoid alcohol, drug use and

other harmful behaviors. The volunteers who participated gave approximately 50 hours of their time to make this program work. The docents toured approximately 95 participants, including PASA staff.

Citizen Science Projects and Partnerships.

Each year EMG's are asked to participate in a wide variety of one time events. These include partnerships with faculty, the university at large or other outside environmental or horticultural organizations.

1. At least 3 volunteers helped in a campus wide bulb planting project. They were asked to help demonstrate proper planting technique to URI students who participated.
2. Five individual EMG's answered the call to assist at the Children's Museum in Providence. They asked for consultative help in developing a maintenance plan for a native plant garden.
3. **Asian Long Horn Beetle Surveys.** About a dozen MG's attended special trainings hosted by RI DEM and RI Tree Council regarding the identification and scouting surveys for Asian Longhorn beetle in Cranston and Warwick. Initial reports are that no beetles have been found. RI however, continues to be vigilant especially in industrial areas and ports of call as easy targets for these beetles to slip in on infested firewood or wooden packing materials from shipping. Along with this effort we also did several presentations to civic groups regarding this concern and had information at all kiosk venues from early summer through the fall.
4. **Late Blight.** Starting in early July the state's commercial and homeowner tomato growers were attacked with Tomato late blight. This was in direct response to the very rainy spring and early summer that we had endured. 18% of the July hotline calls were directly in response to this problem. Emails for the month were averaging about 13% of all contacts pertained to LB.
5. **FFA (Future Farmers of America).** 3 Master Gardeners were invited to judge the landscape exhibits at the Washington County Fair and the Foster Fair. Master Gardeners judged 5 exhibits by high school students.
6. A new state wide community project was initiated by MG's this year . Community gardens called Harvest from the Heart. One each in Coventry, Smithfield and Newport. The Coventry garden totaled in its first year 667 pounds of fresh vegetables. The Smithfield and Newport gardens produced 200 pounds each with plans for garden expansions.
7. MG Robert Rafka did a special soil test training and talk for the Southside Community Land Trust staff.
8. One MG responded to a call from RI Natural History Survey and RI DEM for a brief training and field work to identify aquatic invasive plants. To this end this year, we are piloting advanced certification training for MG's to attend and eventually be called up to assist such groups in future field surveys or eradication projects. We will be actively looking for these sorts of new partnerships in the future.
9. **Tomato Variety Trial.** Several volunteers assisted Dr. Rebecca Brown with a tomato variety trial. All produce harvest from over 1200 plants will be donated to the RI Food bank. As the season progressed many plants were hit by Late Blight, thereby reducing the yield.

10. **Boy Scout Merit Badge Project.** Carol Seaman did a fabulous job of organizing this effort. The Scouts could earn a Landscape Architecture badge and earn credits toward a Gardening badge. 40 scouts attended the one day event. 19 Master Gardeners assisted as station leaders. An end of the day evaluation revealed a tremendous success.

11. About 12 MG's assisted grounds keeping staff to plant flower beds around campus in time for Commencement.

General Gardening Programs

Our Garden Schools expanded this year to include sessions at Roger Williams Park Botanical Center in Providence during the evening. The sessions focus on sustainable practices of soil and water conservation, plant selection and pest controls. Overall, the schools had 45 registrants, a 32% overall drop from 2008.

2009 Spring Gardening School

24 attendees came from around the state. This was a drop of 60% over last year's attendance. This year's sessions occurred on 6 evenings in April and May on the Kingston campus. Topics included: Growing Healthy Vegetables, Eco-Lawn Care and IPM/Organic Pest Controls.

2009 Summer Gardening School

This was our fifth year of this gardening series. We held 4 weekday sessions in the late afternoon in the URI Botanical Gardens in July and August. The 20 registered attendees represent drop in registrations from the previous year.

Surveys were handed out at the end of each class. The general responses from the surveys indicated that the information given in each class was very helpful. Staff led the classes. Topics this season included Healthy Vegetables, and Perennial garden management.

2009 Fall Gardening School

We did not hold a Fall School this year.

Advanced Training

Late in 2008, the Landscape Design Mini Series was developed. The series consists of 3 classes (a total of about 8 hours). The goals of the class were to increase the MG's knowledge of the design process, give them hands-on opportunities to work with designer tools of templates and graph paper, and to work with the actual conditions of their home landscape. A potential service goal in the future would be to utilize these trained MG's to consult on landscaping project requests. We will continue to offer this series until all interested MG's have been trained. 40 MG's attended the 3 sessions in 2009. New in 2010, we will elevate this series to a certificate level so MG's can be called upon to assist design projects if they are requested.

In 2010, we will also offer two certification series will be added on Native Plants/Invasive Plants and coastal Zone landscape design and resource protection. The goal of this training will be to educate Master Gardeners in invasive plant identification, management and in restoration of native ecosystem following invasive plant removal. The training parallels a certification program run by URI Extension for green industry professionals.

The URI Master Gardener Association (MGA) has greatly enhanced their advanced training courses bringing a number of regionally and nationally known speakers to Rhode Island. Over 15 separate classes on a range of popular horticultural topics were held in 2009. Volunteers received educational credit for attending the classes.

Submitted by Rosanne Sherry, RI State MG Coordinator 1.28.2010