

EXTENSION
SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell



ILLINOIS
Extension
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER
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During the coldest months of the year Master Gardeners are as busy as ever. They are carefully laying the foundation for a surge of activity as spring approaches, thereby assuring a successful growing season full of learning, satisfaction, and economic benefit for their communities.

Winter Weather Does Not Slow Down Master Gardener Activity

The 156 University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners (MGs) who live in communities across the four counties of our unit are not waiting for the warm weather to arrive to begin their gardening activity. Planning meetings, new project proposals, educational opportunities, and special events are some of the activities our volunteers have been doing throughout the winter months.

“MGs may not currently be using their gardening tools a lot (although the five MGs in the photo did as they were evaluating a site), but you will find them using laptops, planning, organizing, studying, researching, solving engineering problems, writing grants, procuring supplies, and teaching others.” explained Ian Goslin, Extension horticulture program coordinator.

On the second day of the new year, four Master Gardeners met with three members of ART Inc., the exciting new arts education center in Peoria’s North Valley neighborhood. Detailed fence dimensions were discussed, construction approaches were debated, plant choices were considered, and a garden layout emerged. The group factored in new city ordinances, safety and manageability, and the needs of a community seeking a respite, retreat, and place of inspiration.

Around the same time, another group of MGs, along with Extension Master Naturalists, were meeting at the library in Bartonville to make plans for the county’s Juvenile Detention Center’s gardening program. “The team discussed how best to serve the needs of the young residents, how to engineer vertical gardens in a confined space on a budget, and possible funding sources,” mentioned Goslin.

MGs in Fulton and Mason counties have been working assiduously on the plans for Gardeners BIG Day, an annual region-wide horticulture event for upwards of 150 visitors. The event provides a wide variety of educational opportunities for all types of gardeners and nature-lovers.

Tazewell MG Trudy Yazujian met with Hensey Elementary school principal and Extension SNAP-Ed community worker Kellie Roecker in Washington, IL to lay out plans for their new Great Garden Detective school garden program. Yet another group of MGs gathered with partners from the Peoria Junior League and the Southside Office of Concern at Peoria City Hall to present a plan for a new garden in the shadow of OSF Medical Center in downtown Peoria. “Our Master Gardeners provide valuable expertise to planning projects such as this,” Goslin stated. “This particular meeting included discussions about water supply options and



installation, tree pruning procedures for safety and light, and fence design that included vehicle and equipment access.

“While you may not see them very often in gardens at this time of year, you will spot Master Gardeners in coffee houses, libraries, city halls, schools, and many other spots all over our region. Even the coldest months are full of activity for MGs, the beginning of the more than 10,000 hours they will volunteer in our communities throughout the year.”