

Agriculture & Natural Resources **IMPACTS**

Training Volunteers for Meaningful Work and Impact

WHAT WE DO

University of Illinois Extension partners with committed citizens to **enrich their lives, communities, and natural areas through continuing education transformed into community service.** Both natural resources and landscaped areas have many benefits, including support of native and beneficial species, providing health benefits to residents, and expanding food access.

Volunteer training is provided by educators, specialists, and outside experts with training in botany, horticulture, plant pathology, entomology, natural resources, sustainability, and related areas. Local leadership is provided by educators with support from program coordinators. The programs are supported by a full-time state Master Gardener specialist and a part-time Master Naturalist coordinator.

KEY PROGRAMS

Illinois Master Gardeners. Master Gardeners involve people in improving the quality of life by helping them use sound management practices for home and urban natural resources, by creating aesthetically pleasing environments, by promoting well-being through people-plant interactions and horticultural therapy, and by contributing to a safe, abundant food supply through home fruit and vegetable production.

Illinois Master Naturalists. The Master Naturalist Program provides science-based educational opportunities that connect people with nature and help them become engaged environmental stewards. The program educates and trains adult volunteers to share natural resource information with others in their communities; and to assist with environmental conservation and restoration activities.

Extension supports volunteer programs by providing training and program coordination, enabling Illinois residents to build knowledge and help build **healthier and more sustainable communities.**



photo: Amanda Christensen



VOLUNTEER AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- **2,719** Master Gardeners and **913** Master Naturalists from **83 counties** in Illinois donated their time in 2019.
- Volunteers contributed **302,487** hours with an estimated value of **\$8,133,870**
- **284 community gardens** provide services such as therapeutic support, food donation, life skills training, environmental stewardship, and youth education.
- These gardens donate over **80,000** pounds of produce with an estimated value of **\$116,000** annually.
- Through the Growing Together program, Master Gardeners in 24 communities have partnered with food pantries and SNAP-Ed educators to pair produce donations with nutrition-support education and environmental changes.

Extension-Supported Gardens