

## **MASTER GARDENER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

### **August 24, 2022**

The meeting of the Extension Master Gardener Advisory Committee was called to order at 1:30 pm by Candice Hart. The meeting was held via Zoom. Also in attendance were: Kelly Allsup, May Bach, Travis Burke, Sally Cook, Barb Dahlbach, Sarah Fellerer, Jennifer Fishburn, Brittnay Haag, Constance Handel, Jenny Lee, Judy Panico, Gwen Podeschi, Sarah Vogel, Jennifer Warren, Jana Waite, Jane White, and Vicky Wyffels.

1. No introductions were made since no new members have been added. Minutes from the May 4 meeting were approved.
2. We briefly discussed the application process for the state awards. Everyone agreed that the current process of judging through Qualtrics is easy to use. Jennifer Fishburn suggested that the judging window could be shortened. May Bach suggested it would be very helpful if all award applications included pictures of the applicant. After some discussion, Candice agreed to shorten the judging window and that applicant pictures would not be required.

Candice indicated one applicant did not get awarded due to overall low scores and insufficient content in the application.

3. As of the meeting, 220 people had registered for the upcoming state conference. The goal is 300, with space for 400 people. The only tour still available is Morton Arboretum. Registration for the conference closes on September 6.

A new MG T-shirt is included in the registration cost for all attendees. Additional shirts have been ordered and limited quantities will be available for purchase (\$10). The T-shirts have been ordered from a new vendor. General roll-out of the new apparel vendor is in process but no target date yet.

Candice will bring some books from pubs plus which will be available for purchase. Additionally, Candice confirmed she will bring several boxes of the Urban Tree Identification Guide and she will ask Chris Evans to bring several boxes of the Management of Invasive Plants and Pests of Illinois. Both of these will be available at no cost, probably at the registration desk.

The final email that goes out right before the conference will include things to do and restaurants in the Tinley Park area. Nancy Kuhajda won't need any additional help to run the conference. There will be a silent auction but it's not expected that counties contribute anything as Nancy has a lot of stuff already.

4. Givepulse is the new time tracking and reporting system that will replace VCMS. Progress on creating and testing the new system continues, with two trial groups launching this fall. Full rollout to Master Gardener and Master Naturalist programs are expected in January.
5. Candice plans to work on the rebranding efforts for the on-line MG training this fall. The rebranding effort is being done to limit confusion since the training is open to both individuals who want to volunteer as MGs and individuals who want the horticulture knowledge but do not plan to volunteer. Since it is currently labeled "Master Gardener" training, it can be confusing to the latter group.
6. Kelly Allsup has been hired part-time to head up the MG Manual Rewrite project. Kelly has been contacting MG groups across the country to see how our manual compares. Kelly had several questions for us to discuss concerning the manual such as Who is our audience, What is the manual's mission, and What are the manual's strengths and weaknesses. **As you think about these questions, feel free to send your thoughts to Candice and/or Kelly.** The key to the manual rewrite project is to understand the audience, the mission and identify how to keep the material updated.

The current manual is written in an academic style and the audience is MGs. A hard copy manual is preferred when going through training as the USB format can be difficult to search. But once MGs complete their training, they tend to do on-line searches to research questions rather than use an outdated manual. The updated manual will reflect the rebranding efforts (see #6 above) so the audience is Master Gardeners, the general public and anyone in the horticulture industry.

One of the strengths identified in the current manual is the chapter on Vegetables. It has a lot of helpful information which has been updated and published in a stand-alone publication, Vegetable Gardening in the Mid-

west. Another strength is the chapter on Diseases with several pages of color pictures. This chapter could also be expanded with additional pictures.

We also discussed what topics should be included in a new manual. Suggestions included Alternate Gardens (xeriscaping, rain gardens, water gardens, pollinators, natives), Invasives, and Tools (ergonomics, tool care, using the right tool). We thought some chapters could be combined (vegetables and herbs; annuals/perennials and ornamental grasses) or eliminated (roses).

This is a huge undertaking and will require a group of people to help. There is an Education and MG Manual sub-committee with 1 member - Gwen Podeschi. May Bach and Judy Panico agreed to join this committee. If you are interested in being part of this committee or have any ideas about this project, please contact Candice.

## 7. Other Business:

The Mastering Urban Tree Health and Identification advanced training has held 4 workshops this year. This training will continue yearly. A longer term project is planned to expand the tree selection but this project has not been started.

The reduction in required volunteer hours will go into effect January 2023. Active Master Gardeners will be required to volunteer 20 hours (down from 30) and earn 10 hours continuing education (unchanged). Interns will need to volunteer 40 hours (down from 60). Candice will communicate this to all Master Gardeners later this year but it is okay for us to start communicating it also.

For our next meeting, Candice will contact Diane Plewa to see if we can incorporate a Plant Clinic tour on Tuesday, November 1. It was also suggested a tour of the Poison Garden would be educational. Candice will share a list of hotels that are used when staff stay in the area.

The 2023 conference is planned for Peoria for September 7-8, 2023. Planning is well underway. The 2024 conference will not be held in Lake Coun-

ty. Candice will reach out to the various counties to see if there is any interest in hosting or it will go back to campus.

8. The next meeting will be held November 2 from 10 am - 3 pm at the Champaign Extension Office. Candice will order lunch. If people want to bring a side or dessert, that's great but not required.

Meeting adjourned at 2:44 pm. Respectfully submitted by Judy Panico, secretary.