2007 Annual Report of the Montgomery County
Master Gardener Program

March 2008

Our Mission: To educate Maryland residents about safe, effective and sustainable horticultural practices that build healthy gardens, landscapes and communities.

Our Vision: A healthier world through environmental stewardship.

Committee Activities: Examples of committee work toward our mission are:

♦ Demonstration Garden Group – The Group demonstrated IPM techniques while maintaining 12 kinds of gardens of plants that grow well in Montgomery County. They are Shade, Wildlife, Kitchen, Fragrance, Herb, Butterfly, Children’s, Vegetable, Water, Therapeutic Horticulture, CSAC/4H and Turf Plots. This year the focus was on adding more native plants to the collection. Vegetables used extensively by various cultures were showcased this year in our Mediterranean, Latin and Asian plots. A plot featuring heirloom varieties was also planted. Bumper crops were donated to Manna Food. The group interacted with approximately 2000 children and adults at the Arbor Day and Harvest Festival events at the Agricultural History Farm Park. It supported CSAC/4H activities by facilitating raised-bed gardening experiences for autistic children, hosting approximately 10 autistic children weekly from May through September. It provided raised beds for the Therapeutic Horticulture group to grow many of the plants needed for their activities. Handouts for the various gardens were available in mailboxes throughout the garden. The group guided tours for organizations, as well as individual drop-in tours serving 248 adults and 157 children. Twenty Master Gardeners accepted leadership positions and headed up key functions to lead the efforts of about 70 support Master Gardeners, totaling over 1200 volunteer hours at the Agricultural Farm Park.

♦ Landscape Design Group – In 2007, eleven projects were undertaken. Two of these were major projects, each involving multiple designs. One was at Blair High School, where the Group designed student and staff courtyards, our first rain garden (in collaboration with the Friends of Sligo Creek), the main entryway and the front grounds. The second was requested by the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation. It was for garden areas in the front and rear of the Montgomery County Council Office Building, the front of the Executive Office Building and the front and rear of the Judicial Center. In both projects, the designs were challenging due to many client and site requirements. In addition, the Group assisted in the design of the new Master Gardener garden at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds that incorporated native and drought tolerant plants. We provided consultation to a community group associated with the Montrose Parkway Sound Barrier Project, the Friends of Lower Beaverdam Creek in Cheverly for the design of two butterfly gardens and
a condominium association. We also completed more typical landscape design or consultation work with five schools and one library. The library was our first xeriscape garden. There was more Group member participation this year and several were project leaders.

♦ **Plant Clinics** – Approximately 1200 Montgomery County residents contacted the Plant Clinics for gardening information this year, an increase of 19% over 2006. Master Gardeners volunteered about 2500 hours at the Plant Clinics. We successfully initiated a new Plant Clinic at the Twinbrook Library in Rockville. This was in addition to those regularly held at the Davis Library in Bethesda, the Audubon Society in Chevy Chase, the Quince Orchard Library in Gaithersburg, the Germantown Library in Germantown and Brookside Gardens in Wheaton. In 2008, a new Plant Clinic will be opening in the Gaithersburg Library in Montgomery Village. Concurrently, Master Gardeners operating the Telephone Hotline at the Cooperative Extension offices in Derwood also provide Plant Clinic assistance on a walk-in basis. Residents come with a wide variety of gardening questions. Master Gardeners assist them by identifying weeds, plants and insects, providing information on how to tackle plant problems and diseases, and advice on appropriate landscaping and cultivation practices. Whenever possible, we make our clients aware of the need to reduce the use of fertilizers and pesticides for the sake of healthy streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. Major resources used are the extensive collection of Fact Sheets and the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Bulletin produced by the University of Maryland College of Agriculture, as well as selected reference books and horticultural websites of academic institutions.

♦ **Montgomery County Fairgrounds** – In 2007, at the request of the County Agricultural Center, Inc. at the Fairgrounds, the demonstration gardens were moved approximately 20 feet over to the site of a former parking area. This provided a unique opportunity to completely redesign the garden beds, make them more accessible to visitors and create a Bay Friendly garden. The plots included a vegetable garden, perennial gardens featuring native plants, a water feature and a rain barrel demonstration garden. The Group also planted and demonstrated vegetable gardening in salad tables for compact spaces. Master Gardeners volunteered over 880 hours redesigning, building and maintaining the new demonstration area. During the week of the Fair, Master Gardeners met with over 3500 visitors to the garden, handing out information on the Master Gardener program as well as educational materials on a variety of topics and demonstrating vegetable gardening in salad tables, use of rain barrels and answering questions. The Group also continued to maintain the gardens at the Heritage building at the request of the County Agricultural Center, Inc., which demonstrates shade gardening.

♦ **Therapeutic Horticulture** – The Therapeutic Horticulture Program is a community outreach project for citizens of the county with special needs. Its goal is to provide an aid to recovery and rehabilitation, or a life-enriching, productive
leisure activity for participants through involvement in garden-related activities. The Therapeutic Horticulture Group provides horticulture programs at 18 locations throughout the county (an increase of 3 since 2005). Most of these are conducted on a monthly basis, and serve citizens with special needs in age groups from youth to seniors.

The Facilities served include:

- Asbury Methodist Village in Gaithersburg. Three programs: Assisted Living, Alzheimer’s and Dementia Unit, and Wilson Health Center.
- Aspenwood Senior Living Center in Silver Spring. Two programs: Independent Living and Assisted Living, Bartholomew House; Assisted Living, Potomac.
- Byron House in Potomac. Assisted Living.
- Friends House in Sandy Spring. Assisted Living.
- Grace House in Silver Spring. Assisted Living.
- Kensington Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Kensington.
- Layhill Center in Silver Spring. Nursing Home.
- Manor Care in Silver Spring. Nursing Home.
- Master Gardener Demonstration Garden in Derwood. Autistic Youth Gardening.
- National Institutes of Health in Bethesda. Two programs: Children’s Mental Health Unit, and Adult Health Units.
- Raphael’s House in Rockville. Assisted Living.

Most programs are monthly, but some are seasonal, such as the outdoor herb gardens at three of the assisted living facilities and the weekly gardening project for youth with autism. The programs all involve hands-on horticulture activities for participants, which are designed and prepared by the Master Gardeners. Examples of projects include: growing houseplants, vegetables, herbs, and flowers; making indoor topiaries; planting terrarium and dish gardens; forcing bulbs for indoor bloom; propagating plants; and arranging fresh and dried flowers. Participants are given individual assistance as needed and projects are geared specifically to the abilities and interests of the group. Most plant materials for these programs are grown by Master Gardener volunteers either in their own gardens or in the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden in Derwood. Purchased supplies are paid for by the facilities being served. Master Gardeners have served a total of 1,423.25 hours in these activities with almost 2000 contacts.

- **Telephone Hotline** – During 2007, 62 Master Gardeners volunteered 1,290 hours answering questions for 1,020 callers to the Hotline. Many of the callers had more than one question, some of which could be answered quickly, others needed to be researched and calls returned. We also help people who walk in with problems during telephone hours and occasionally answer questions emailed to Steve Dubik or Linda Waters. Callers and walk-ins are always appreciative of being able to converse with a live person and not having to deal with an
automated system! If time permits, the Master Gardeners also assist Linda Waters with some administrative chores such as collating fact sheets.

♦ **Special Events (Internal and External)** – The Internal Committee focuses on facilitating interactions among Master Gardeners to promote teamwork and camaraderie. The External Committee coordinated support for various public events sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). Master Gardener participation in the Extension Service Close Encounters program provided fourth grade students in Montgomery County Public Schools an educational opportunity to learn about farming, food production, nutrition and local wildlife in Montgomery County. Master Gardeners also participated in the MNCPPC’s Annual Fall Festival where the Master Gardeners interacted with several thousand residents of the county – both children and adults. Master Gardeners are an essential resource for carrying out these activities.

♦ **Speakers Bureau** – The Speakers Bureau offers presentations on a wide range of gardening topics to garden clubs or various organizations throughout Montgomery County. All presentations are based on safe, effective horticultural practices that educate county residents on methods that build healthy gardens. The Speakers Bureau also sponsors an annual Mini-conference for the residents of the county. This is a one-day conference held at the Cooperative Extension office offering talks given by Master Gardeners on a variety of gardening-related topics.

♦ **Public Relations** – The Public Relations Chair was filled in July, 2007 for the first time in more than 10 years. Goals and objectives were set and approved by the board. Administratively, the Group developed a media email list of more than 40 news outlets, web sites, and listservs in addition to a list of garden clubs. Approval was received from the Library System in Montgomery County to post fliers and brochures in their facilities. The organization’s Information Sheet was redesigned and updated.

The Group’s first effort was to promote the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden at the County Fair, which is the most visible activity that the organization does. A joint news release was issued with the County Government for maximum exposure. A theme was developed for the garden, “Building a Bay Friendly Garden” and with the Fairgrounds Group developed 3-5 “major messages” that were used in all interviews. The Group trained several Master Gardener spokespeople for this. Interviews were successfully conducted with WJLA-TV, WTOP radio, The D.C. Examiner, the Washington Times, and The Gazette newspapers where it received front page coverage with numerous photos and a video story on its web page.

“Veggie bags” were distributed to the County Council members with vegetables grown by the Master Gardeners. News releases were issued on the plant clinics as well as announcing registration for the Master Gardener Training Class of 2008. For the first time in several years the class was filled over-capacity (48 registrants) by Thanksgiving with a waiting list.
Program and Education – It is critical that Master Gardeners have the latest information on recommended horticultural practices to insure that the advice they offer homeowners on their gardening problems reflects the latest research available. Master Gardeners receive initial training in a 75-hour course coordinated by Stephen Dubik, Master Gardener Coordinator and Horticulture Consultant. Topics are taught by University of Maryland staff as well as experts from Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Maryland Dept. of Agriculture, USDA, Montgomery Soil Conservation District and business owners in the field of horticulture. There are also monthly membership meetings where professional specialists give presentations on various topics. These talks are in depth and specific. Some of these topics include roses, trees, orchids, aquatic gardening, green roofs, native plants, rain gardens and organic gardening to name a few. Since the advisory services that Master Gardeners provide through their various activities are provided on a voluntary basis, the county residents have great opportunities to conduct their gardening with minimum expense and with the knowledge that they can garden with safe and effective procedures.

Newsletter – The Master Gardener newsletter is published and distributed monthly to the Master Gardener membership. It is also available on the Master Gardener website. The newsletter provides an opportunity for Master Gardeners to communicate with other Master Gardeners on topics of horticultural interest, education, and advanced training opportunities.

A special project of the Montgomery County Master Gardeners is the Black Hills Butterfly Habitat. This project provides the public with an educational opportunity; it teaches Master Gardeners about native plants and butterfly needs; it helps our parks, and it addresses the exotic invasive weed problem. In an area of Black Hill Regional Park in Boyd, along Route 121, the Master Gardeners have created the Habitat from a weedy meadow: we have enhanced the native butterfly nectar plant Indian Hemp (Apocynum cannabinum) with additional nectar species; we have largely eradicated the invasive Japanese Honeysuckle (Lonicera japonica); and we have added butterfly host plants such as Milkweed (Asclepcias) species for the Monarch butterflies (Danaus plexippus). Working in consultation with Denise Gibbs, Naturalist at Black Hill Regional Park, the site is qualified a “Monarch Way Station #40”, as part of a program sponsored by the Monarch Watch at the University of Kansas.

Notes.
The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the activities undertaken by Master Gardeners during the past year. Any inquiries about the Master Gardener program may be directed to Montgomery County Cooperative Extension, 18410 Muncaster Road, Derwood, MD 20855

To become a Master Gardener, a month long training course, coordinated by Horticultural Consultant, Stephen Dubik must be successfully completed. A
minimum of 45 hours of volunteer work along with the training session promotes interns to Master Gardener status. To maintain active status, a minimum of 10 hours of advanced training and 25 volunteer hours are required each year.

**Highlights:**
- Total number of volunteer hours: 15,798 (7+ FTEs)
- Total number of volunteers: 291
- More than 10,967 contacts made
- Forty-three trainees completed a comprehensive five-week training program.
- This work was valued at $296,528.46 according to the latest data available at [www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org).
2007 Total Volunteer Hours
(Total Hours 15,798.00)

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<td>Bay-wise Program</td>
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<td>Community Greening</td>
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<td>Community Food Prod</td>
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<td>TOTAL HOURS</td>
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<td>TOTAL CONTACTS</td>
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**Master Gardener Volunteer Organization 2007**

President……………………Jean Byars
Vice President…………………Amanda Laudwein
Second Vice President……….Bebe McMeekin
Treasurer…………………………Gary Cahn
Recording Secretary…………… Linda Andrews-Barry & Marie Rojas

**Committees**
Computer……………………….Gary Cahn
Demo. Garden, Derwood……….Martha Fisher & Nancy Woods
Demo. Garden, Fairgrounds……Frank Lostumbo & Sheryl Freishtat
Landscape Design…………….Leonard Friedman & Carol Hall
Plant Clinics……………………Bill Connors & Hayley Goris
Program/Education…………… Bob Alde, Joe Ginther, Pat Kenney
Public Relations………………..Madeleine Carmichael
Speakers Bureau………………Maxine Callender, Adele Fein, Nancy Swope
Special Events/External………Elsie Sullivan
Special Events/Internal………..Open
Strategic Planning (State)……....Leonard Friedman
Telephone Hotline…………… ....Nancy Ballard & Arlene Cole
Therapeutic Horticulture………..JoAnn Mueller

**Newsletter Editors……..Karen Bandy & Maralyn May**

Demonstration Garden at the Agricultural History Farm Park