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: This year two new committees were started – the Strategic Planning Committee and the Special Work Action Team (SWAT). Examples of committee work toward our mission are:

♦ Cooperative Extension Close Encounters Program – This program is sponsored by the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) with the coordinated support of the Master Gardener External Special Events Committee. Close Encounters is a program designed for fourth grade students in Montgomery County Public and private schools. 2,747 students and 485 parents and teachers participated for a total of 3,232 visitors to the program.

♦ 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, Turf, and the Community Services for Autistic Adults and Children (CSAAC) garden. The butterfly and wildlife areas were rejuvenated and more native plants were added. Turf-covered areas along the front fence were reclaimed to provide more area for planting. Handouts for the various gardens were completed and placed in mailboxes throughout the garden. A sign identifying the Demonstration Garden was placed at the entrance to the Agricultural History Farm Park. The vegetable garden showcased varieties used extensively by various cultures such as Mediterranean, Asian, and Latin as well as some European. Heirloom vegetable varieties were also featured. Bumper crops were donated to Manna Food. CSAAC activities were supported by facilitating raised-bed gardening experiences for autistic youth, hosting approximately 10 autistic children weekly from May through September. The garden provided raised beds for the Therapeutic Horticulture group to grow many of the plants needed for their activities. Our group interacted with many children and adults at the Arbor Day and Harvest Festival events and provided plant material for some of the activities. Twenty-one MGs headed up key functions and led the efforts of about 70 support MGs. The Demonstration Garden received Bay-Wise Landscaping Certification in 2008. In the coming season we will plant a 10’ x 12’ Grow It Eat It demonstration plot as well as host the Grow It Eat It train-the-trainer class in July.
Landscape Design Group - In 2008 fourteen projects were completed, and three others initiated. The completed projects were for 5 schools, 4 government offices, 3 communities and 2 non-profit organizations. Two of our more interesting projects involved consulting with volunteers in developing a rain garden at the Tridelphia Reservoir Nature Center and designing a small sculpture garden in a courtyard of the Friend’s Retirement Community in Olney. Several changes were made to our Program. First, we developed an Application Form to be used before a major design project is undertaken. It defines MG and client responsibilities and helps assure us that the client has sufficient resources and commitment to achieve a successful outcome. When possible, we are trying to have the client more involved in the actual design process. Second, we now provide a one-time landscape design consultation to ‘for-profit’ organizations, such as homeowner and condo associations, in order to improve our outreach. This was done at Sussex House in Bethesda. Third, we try to mentor clients more effectively by being on-site during project implementation. An example of this was directing volunteers planting garden beds at the Black Rock Center for the Arts. Finally, since the Montgomery County Public School System now requires pre-approval of all garden projects, we are cooperating with MCPS and Audubon in developing landscape design ‘templates’ for commonly requested garden beds.

Plant Clinics – Master Gardeners and Interns put almost 2750 hours of volunteer time into Plant Clinic work in 2008. This was a healthy increase of 7 percent over 2007. To our satisfaction, a clearer measure of our impact, namely the number of people we gave advice to during the year, grew even faster, to nearly 1700, or by 41%.

In the horticultural season from April/May through September all eight Plant Clinics were busy, with teams composed of experienced Plant Clinic volunteers and interns gaining hands-on training. The new Plant Clinic in the Gaithersburg Library got off to a good start in 2008 working with relatively small teams, and added 191 new clients. The Master Gardeners have been asked to continue there in 2009. In the “slow season” from October through March only the Saturday and Sunday Brookside Plant Clinics continued with regular Plant Clinic interaction with clients and training of interns, while also keeping the library open for Brookside Gardens visitors in the weekends.

We are continuing to try and expand the number of Library locations where Plant Clinics would be welcome, while also exploring such possibilities at Farmers Markets. In addition to our ongoing programs we are also preparing to become an active part of the Maryland-wide “Grow it - Eat it” campaign by educating residents how to grow vegetables.

Montgomery County Fairgrounds – In 2008, the Fairgrounds Demonstration Gardens became a major attraction of the Fair and included visitors such as County Executive Isiah Leggett. The theme of a Bay Friendly garden was enhanced with the addition of more native plants and a new rain garden. The garden plots included a vegetable garden, a butterfly garden, a xeriscape garden and perennial gardens featuring native plants. There was a rain barrel demonstration area showcasing different examples of rain barrels. The Group
planted and demonstrated vegetable gardening in salad tables and containers for compact spaces. There were also different examples of ornamental container plantings. Master Gardeners volunteered hundreds of hours designing and maintaining the gardens. During the week of the Fair, Master Gardeners met with over 12,000 visitors, handing out information on the Master Gardener program as well as educational materials on a variety of timely topics, demonstrating how to grow vegetables in salad tables, how to use rain barrels and answering questions. The Master Gardeners also continued to maintain the gardens in front of the Heritage building at the request of the County Agricultural Center, Inc., which demonstrates shade gardening.

♦ 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.

♦ 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 integrated pest management, plant disease diagnosis, trees, 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.

♦ Public Relation Committee – The following news releases were issued in 2008: Plant Clinic hours and locations; Demonstration Garden at the Montgomery County Fair. The committee had a photo-caption of the Fairgrounds Garden placed in the Gazette newspaper that was the only photo of the entire fair in the newspaper. News releases on the 2009 Master Gardener Mini-Conference were released as well as a news release about the upcoming 2009 Master Gardener Training Class.

The committee also revised the four-color Information Sheet on the Master Gardener organization.

Ongoing County Government outreach included two desktop displays that were brought to the reception areas of the County Council, County Executive and the Director of Economic Development – Gerbera daisies in the spring and baskets of gourds from the Fairground Demonstration Garden in the fall. The spring display
contained a copy of the 2007 Master Gardener Annual Report and the fall display contained an information sheet with the Master Gardener’s key accomplishments. The committee raised the awareness of the Master Gardener Board of Directors to be more consumer friendly and “up-to-date” that resulted in: the addition of the Master Gardener name on the answering machine message of the Cooperative Extension Service; the establishment of an automatic answering and message capability (with remote pick-up) on the Master Gardener Hotline number; the creation of a spreadsheet with mailing data of local news media including Hispanic and Asian news outlets; development and assistance in the creation of a database of members’ expertise; an article in the Master Gardener newsletter on the “Benefits of Membership” in the Master Gardener program; identification of listservs to disseminate Master Gardener news releases, including regional garden and horticultural clubs and home owner’s associations.

♦ **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 at 19 locations throughout the county. Most of these are conducted on a monthly basis and serve citizens with special needs in age groups from youth to seniors.

There are some seasonal programs such as the outdoor herb gardens at three of the assisted living facilities and the weekly gardening project for youth with autism and youth at the detention center. The programs all involve hands-on horticulture activities for participants that are designed and prepared by 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. Forty-nine Master Gardeners have devoted a total of 1,638 hours of volunteer time to these activities.

The facilities include:
- Alfred D. Noyes Children’s Center, Youth Detention Facility, Rockville (begun 6/08).
- Asbury Methodist Village in Gaithersburg. These 3 programs include: Assisted Living, Alzheimer’s and Dementia Unit, and Wilson Health Center (through 8/08).
- Aspenwood Senior Living Center in Silver Spring. Two programs include: Independent Living (through 11/08), and Assisted Living.
- Bartholomew House, Assisted Living, Potomac.
- Brooke Grove Retirement Village, Assisted Living, Sandy Spring.
- Byron House, Assisted Living, Potomac.
- Friends House, Assisted Living, Sandy Spring.
- Grace House, Assisted Living, Silver Spring.
- Kensington Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Kensington.
Layhill Center, Nursing Home, Silver Spring.
Manor Care, Nursing Home, Brookeville.
Master Gardener Demonstration Garden, Autistic Youth Gardening, Derwood.
National Institutes of Health, Bethesda. Two programs include: Children’s Mental Health Unit and Adult Health Units.
Raphael’s House, Assisted Living, Rockville.

Telephone Hotline – Fifty-one Master Gardeners volunteered 1,325 hours to help 1,020 callers, including 43 clients who brought samples into the office for inspection and diagnosis. In addition, one volunteer spent 26.5 hours responding to email inquiries from 41 people. Many of the people who called the Hotline had more than one question and were thankful to be able to speak with a live person. When time permitted, we helped the secretary with collating or any other activity for which help was needed. The Hotline is a valuable asset in that it enables callers to benefit from the assistance of real live Master Gardeners.

Special Events – The External Special Events Committee provided support for various public events sponsored by the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC). These included the Extensions Service’s Close Encounters program (3232 attendees), MNCPPC’s Arbor Day (1,500 attendees) and the Annual Fall Festival (3,840 attendees). In addition, Master Gardeners provided information about safe and effective horticultural practices to over 2,500 attendees at three Earth Day events, the annual Washington Cathedral Flower Mart (107 attendees), Rockville’s Flower and Garden Festival, and the Potomac Oaks Shopping Center 7th Annual Gardening Festival. Master Gardeners interacted with more than 5,500 residents at these events – both children and adults – and are an essential resource for carrying out these educational activities. The Internal Special Events Committee provides benefits to the Master Gardeners by organizing and running a Plant Swap in May, a potluck lunch in June, and ice cream social in July, and in December this group plans a Holiday Party and makes centerpieces for it.

Speaker’s Group – 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.

Special Work Action Team (SWAT) – The Special Work Action Team (SWAT) was initiated this year as a way to increase awareness of the Master Gardener program and to respond to requests from residents and groups within Montgomery County for services from the Master Gardeners. Originally conceived to respond to single requests for Master Gardener assistance in providing information tables, plant clinics, plant consultations, etc., the mission of SWAT evolved to include promising activities that we could do as pilot projects and then evaluate their contribution to the MG mission. The activities were selected through a consensus process that included the MG Board of Directors,
the MG Coordinator, Steve Dubik, as well as input from the general membership. The priority activities for the SWAT group include: one-time requests for information tables or plant clinics; distributing information at school mulch sales; offering plant information or mini-plant clinics at plant sales around Montgomery County; contacting big box stores and nurseries to offer a Master Gardener Day or a mini-plant clinic at their stores; garden consultations to schools, PTAs and teachers that request Master Gardener help; teach lessons/demonstrations linked to the school curriculum on garden-related topics at a teacher’s request. On-site community garden consultations will be limited until a Master Gardener coordinator can be found.

To facilitate activities, two Traveling Kits have been assembled to help the group respond on short notice. These are roller bags that contain Master Gardener signs, reference books for plant clinics and information tables, Master Gardener flyers and promotional materials, assorted fact sheets, and a memory stick with additional fact sheets. In addition, a page has been added to the Master Gardener website to highlight SWAT services. The SWAT group initiated its new service offerings by staffing information tables at Poolesville Day and the Travilah Shopping Plaza. The group also provided weed identification expertise and helped install native plants with the Wildlife Habitat Council at Carderock.

♦ **Strategic Planning Committee** – This committee was initiated early in the year to assess and implement a Strategic Planning Survey to the Master Gardener membership. The results of this survey showed the highest priorities of the membership were to increase Master Gardener outreach and to develop new areas of expertise. To meet the first priority of increasing outreach, a new Master Gardener ‘Information Sheet’ was written and will be widely distributed. The new Special Work Action Team was started to provide Master Gardeners for one-time requests from various groups to be at Earth Day events, mulch and plant sales and to attend school garden activities. Another outcome has been the addition of a new, larger sign on Muncaster Road at the entrance to the Agricultural History Farm Park (home to the Master Gardeners) to make the public more aware of the presence of the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden located here. In order to meet the second priority of developing new areas of expertise, another survey was presented to the membership to determine individual areas of expertise. This will allow activity coordinators to call upon ‘subject experts’ as needed. An educational ‘mini-conference’ for Master Gardeners will be held in November, 2009 and a list of Continuing Education opportunities has been added to the Master Gardener website and is continually updated. Finally, in order to lower the attrition rate and minimize the number of volunteers who do not meet volunteer or continuing education requirements, the coordinator will work with them to remedy the situation.

♦ 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 (*Asclepias*) species for the Monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*). Working in consultation with Denise Gibbs, Naturalist at Black Hill Regional Park, the site is qualified as “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 the Montgomery County 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. In order 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: 16,055 (7+ Full Time Employees)
- Total number of volunteers: 308
- More than 26,131 contacts made
- Fifty-five trainees completed a comprehensive five-week training program
- This work is valued at over $328,645.85 according to the latest data available at [www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org).
### Hours, Contacts & Volunteers for 2006, 2007, 2008

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<td><strong>Total Hours</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Contacts per Volunteer</strong></td>
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#### 2008 Total Volunteer Hours

(16,055 Total Hours)

- **Plant Clinic**: 2749
- **Landscape Design**: 839
- **Therapeutic Hort.**: 1638
- **Demo Gardens**: 3003
- **Special Events**: 1667
- **Internal Admin.**: 1879
- **Phone Bank**: 1387
- **Speakers Bureau**: 1182
- **Comm. Food Prod.**: 211
- **Baywise Program**: 101
- **Other**: 1399
Master Gardener Volunteer Organization 2008

President……………………………………….Gary Cahn
First Vice Presidents…………………………Ronald Anderson &
                                       Amanda Laudwein
Second Vice President…………………………Sheryl Freishtat
Treasurer……………………………………….Fran McClure
Recording Secretaries………………………….Lynn Furrow &
                                       Frances Smithson

Committees
Computer/Web Design………………………….Gary Cahn
Derwood Demonstration Garden………………..Martha Fisher &
                                       Maria Wortman
External Special Events…………………………Elsie Sullivan
Fairgrounds Demonstration Garden…………….Sheryl Freishtat &
                                       Frank Lostumbo
Internal Special Events…………………………Gloria Sherman &
                                       Barbara Waite-Jacques
Landscape Design……………………………….Leonard Friedman &
                                       Carol Hall
Newsletter Editor………………………………Stacie Guthrie
Plant Clinics……………………………………..Bill Connors & Hayley Goris
Program/Education……………………………Bob Alde, Kate Crawford,
                                       Joe Ginther & Pat Kenny
Public Relations……………………………….Nancy Moses Greenblatt
Speakers Bureau………………………………Adele Fein
Strategic Planning……………………………...Leonard Friedman
Telephone Hotline……………………………...Nancy Ballard & Arlene Cole
Therapeutic Horticulture………………………JoAnn Mueller
Strategic Work Action Team………………….. Pat Lynch

Rain Barrel at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds Demonstration Garden