2010 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

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.

Extension Close Encounters with Agriculture Program – Close Encounters is a program designed to promote environmental stewardship to fourth grade students in Montgomery County public and private schools. Sponsored by the University of Maryland Extension (UME) and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) with the coordinated support of the Master Gardener External Special Events Committee. During 2010, the program was presented to 1,986 students and 421 parents and teachers for a total of 2407 visitors to the program.

Committee Activities

Black Hill Butterfly Habitat: Since its inception in 2005, the Master Gardener project at the Black Hill Butterfly Habitat on Route 121 in Boyds has been a win-win situation for Master Gardeners, Black Hill Regional Park, the general public, and the environment. It gives the public a butterfly habitat to observe, enjoy, and learn from in a very natural setting. It teaches Master Gardeners and the public about the essential relationship between native plants and wildlife. The highlight of each season has been the Master Gardeners’ participation in the Park’s annual Monarch Fiesta Day celebration for the general public.

In 2010, we also participated in the Parks’ Earth Day celebration in April. At both events, Master Gardeners interacted with the general public, mostly families, on how they too could have a butterfly habitat in their back yards. To date, this project has not required any financial input from the Master Gardener organization. MGs supply the gardening knowledge and the brawn, Black Hill Regional Park supplies the plants, seeds, and occasional funding for educational signage (designed and prepared by Master Gardeners) and meadow demarcation materials.

The Derwood Demonstration Garden: The goal of the Demonstration Garden is to educate Montgomery County residents about what plants will grow well under prevailing conditions of soil and climate while illustrating Integrated Pest Management techniques. The Demonstration Garden consists of 10 gardens: Shade, Wildlife, Kitchen, Vegetable, Herb/Fragrance, Butterfly, Children’s, Ponds, Therapeutic Horticulture including a Garden for Youth With Autism, and Turf Plots.

With MGs assistance, autistic youths planted and maintained tree raised beds. Vegetables and flowers harvested from those beds were entered in the County Fair and many won ribbons and cash prizes.
The Horticultural Therapy group also grew plants which provided materials for their many programs, as well as materials used during the October Harvest Festival activities. Visitors during the festival participated in many activities and were given information and tours.

In 2010, each of the gardens was inventoried and plants were identified and labeled. MGs used that information to develop an interactive on-line map of the garden and then uploaded it to the MG web site: http://www.agnr.umd.edu/Extension/gardening/mastergardeners/local/Montgomery/AskMG/demogarden/demogardenkey.html

Throughout the year numerous groups of master gardeners from other Maryland counties as well as local garden clubs visited the garden. A new thirty-foot long, three bin composting system was built for the garden as an Eagle Scout project. A Mason Bee house was constructed and placed centrally in the garden to enhance plant pollination. Unique arbors made of cattle fencing were installed in two locations. A renovation of the Butterfly Garden was begun. Eighteen master gardeners led key functions, supported by approximately 40 other Master Gardener volunteers. The garden was honored by winning the 2010 “Keep Montgomery County Beautiful” award.

During the 2010 growing season more than 100 pounds of produce from the vegetable garden was harvested and donated to the Manna Foods Center in Gaithersburg.

The External Special Events Committee: The committee coordinated support for various public events sponsored by the University of Maryland Extension (UME) and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC). These included UME’s Close Encounters, a 9 day educational program for fourth grade students in Montgomery County’s public and private schools (approximately 2,400 students, teachers and parent chaperones participated). The Annual Harvest Festival attracted about 2,500 contacts. In addition, MGs provided information about safe and effective horticultural practices to attendees at the annual Washington Cathedral Flower Mart. As a result, MGs interacted with over 5,400 residents at these events—both children and adults.

Grow It Eat It (GIEI): During 2010, members of the GIEI committee participated in Earth Day events at Long Branch Regional Park, Audubon Naturalist Society’s Woodend location. They also attended meetings of community and faith based organizations to advise gardeners about types of vegetable to grow, proper placement of vegetables and discuss common pests prevalent during the summer growing season. GIEI materials were available at MG’s popular walk-in plant clinics and other outreach, educational events including the MG’s Special Work Action Team (SWAT) events.

GIEI Co-chairpersons attended quarterly state GIEI meetings and met several times with the local MG Coordinator and the Strategic Planning committee, SWAT and Speakers Bureau chairpersons to discuss the future directions of GIEI as it pertains to Montgomery County. GIEI developed and organized a Train the Trainer training session at which the Senior Agent & State Master Gardener Coordinator taught more than 45 master gardeners about the latest GIEI resources available to the general public. By the close of 2010, GIEI was focused on
educating the MG organization and its committees on what EIEI offered in the way of resources and expertise to each committee and its members. GIEI educational activities and resources will be represented in all MG initiatives while GIEI functions under the umbrella of the SWAT committee in 2011.

**Internal Special Events Committee:** The Committee provided benefits to the Master Gardeners by organizing and running several events. These events are two plant swaps - one in May and one in October, a potluck luncheon in June, and a holiday party in December. This includes a workshop to create centerpieces for the Holiday Party tables.

**Landscape Design Group:** In 2010 seventeen projects were completed. The projects included 8 non-profit organizations, 6 schools, 2 homeowners associations and 1 government facility. The clients included the Izaak Walton League, Hospice Caring, the American Zen College, the Montgomery County Pre-Release Center and the Stonestreet Building of the Montgomery Historical Society. Eight more requests came to us but after the initial contact, there was no follow-up by the client.

In 2010, a concerted effort was made this year to have more MG participation in the projects. As a result, 12 Landscape Design Group members served as project leaders and an additional 13 members worked with them, including some interns.

Our completed projects:
- Bradley Hills ES courtyard
- Pre-Release Center side easement
- Hospice Caring, Inc. labyrinth
- Izaak Walton League of America (HQ Gaithersburg) butterfly garden
- Izaak Walton League of America (Rockville) pollinator garden
- American Zen College shrine & patio area
- Bealle ES butterfly garden
- Thurgood Marshall ES consultation
- Crossways consultation
- Heritage House (MC Fairgrounds) front & side gardens
- Rock Creek Valley ES consultation
- Stonestreet-Montgomery County Historical Society herb garden
- Kenwood House – Chevy Chase consultation
- Izaak Walton League of America (Rockville) butterfly garden
- South Lake ES consultation – front area
- Norbeck Manor Homeowners Association consultation – 2 street intersections
- North Bethesda MS Green Kids Project

**Montgomery County Fairgrounds Gardens:** Two demonstration gardens are currently maintained year round at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds: one at the Agricultural Triangle and one at the Heritage Center.
The 62nd Annual Montgomery County Fair in August, 2010, marked the 16th consecutive year of MG participation in the Fair, and a further expansion of the MG gardens. These gardens promote the horticultural educational priorities of Montgomery County Department of Environmental Services, the Master Gardeners and the University of Maryland to fairgoers and others attending the Fairgrounds. The focus of these priorities is Integrated Pest Management (IPM), water conservation, use of native plants, and composting.

Over the years of MG management and evolution at the Agricultural Triangle garden, MG has maintained an educational focus and has created extensive public interest as measured by the over 4,500 individual visits to the garden during the 2010 Fair. The Agricultural Triangle garden has a backdrop of four trees - two crape myrtles (Lagerstroemia lipans), a river birch (Betula nigra), and a Legacy Sugar Maple (Acer saccharum). The garden itself consists of five raised planting beds, each enclosed in a dry-laid stone wall. The beds are separated by wide pervious gravel paths. The garden also contains a rain garden and a rain barrel demonstration area. It is the practice of MG to combine native and non-native flora, and include vines, shrubs, flowers (both perennials and annuals), and vegetables to show suggested plant combinations in landscaping.

In 2010 the Agricultural Triangle garden was improved by the addition of more than 40 native plants donated by the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection. These plants include beauty berry (Calacarpa americana), two varieties of aster, threadleaf coreopsis (Coreopsis verticilata), and several types of fern. In addition, the State of Maryland donated three truckloads of compost and mulch from its Leafgro program.

The MG renovation of the Heritage Center garden began in 2010 and it is estimated the project will take an additional year or two to complete. The renovation was started by the removal of turf and the application of compost and mulch to create a 100’ x 15’ planting bed at the entrance, as well as the identification and evaluation of all plants surrounding the building. This resulted in treatment of two evergreens for spider mites.

**NIH Herb Garden**: During 2010, Montgomery County MGs worked in the National Library of Medicine (NLM) Herb Garden every Monday morning for 4 hours from April through October. Eight MG volunteers contributed a total of 370 hours and discussed the medicinal herb plants with approximately 37 interested individuals. The garden has become a popular getaway for NLM workers and visitors who come to do research at the Library. NIH patients and those who visit them find rest and solace on the benches in the garden as well. The garden is open to the public long as the grounds of the National Institutes of Health are accessible through the security gates. Occasionally special tours are scheduled with groups of interested people. There is a website for the garden: [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/tour/garden.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/tour/garden.html).

**Newsletter**: The monthly newsletter is distributed electronically to the Master Gardener membership and is also available on the MG website. The newsletter provides an opportunity for Master Gardeners to communicate with other Master Gardeners on topics of horticultural interest as well as education, and advanced training opportunities.
Plant Clinics: Walk-in plant clinics have continued to attract county residents seeking authoritative help and advice with gardening matters. Over 2295 contacts were reported for 2010. MGs offered advice at eleven locations, with the addition of locations at Poolesville Library and a Bethesda Farmers Market in 2010. At Brookside Gardens in addition to the existing all-year Saturday and Sunday sessions, Wednesday and Thursday sessions were added from April through October to accommodate user needs. MGs hope to resume offering the plant clinic at the Gaithersburg library on Montgomery Village Road when the renovations are finished in the spring of 2011. After highly successful trial clinics at Olney Farmers Market in September and October 2010, monthly plant clinics have already been scheduled for 2011. The number of volunteer hours in 2010 for Plant Clinics was 3017 – a slight drop compared to 2009. However, the number of contacts – 2295 - was considerably higher than in 2009.

The Program/Education Committee - The primary effort of the committee is the planning and coordination of speakers for MG monthly meetings. Secondary activities include introduction of the speaker at each meeting and providing appropriate Thank You cards and a gift for each speaker. Each of our three committee members is responsible for a specific task in the overall effort; coordinating activities to insure that the overall monthly objective is met.

In an effort to insure that the membership is familiar with the latest ideas in the area of horticulture, landscaping, and home gardening our committee organized and scheduled monthly presentations by professional specialists for each Master Gardener meeting. Talks were presented by lecturers from the University of Maryland, University of Delaware, USDA, Brookside Gardens, University of Maryland Extension and others. Topics included "Strengthening Your Body for Gardening and Life", "Getting the Garden Ready for Spring", "Uncommon Fruits and Vegetables" and "How to Find Your Own Garden Style". The Committee members try to have speakers cover a range of topics from the latest big picture to everyday gardening tips so that Master Gardeners can continue to educate the citizens of Montgomery County on the latest in home horticultural practices. As in other years, part of the work this year was spent planning meeting speakers for the year 2011 and beyond, continuing the effort to provide the best in education for our members.

The Outreach, Education, Marketing & Public Relations Committee responded to a community request to develop a wall size (12 ft x 5 ft) public display promoting the Montgomery County Master Gardener Program. The Committee solicited photographs, artifacts and memorabilia from Master Gardener program chairpersons in order to create a photo montage highlighting the numerous education, communication and service activities. The display received extremely positive reviews and was scheduled to remain in place at the Heritage Building, Montgomery County Fairgrounds through July, 2011.

During 2010 a wide range of MG initiatives and presentations including press releases, articles and community calendar postings were covered more than 22 times by key area media outlets. The Committee also continued to expand its outreach and marketing initiatives through the use of alternative media outlets. The Committee worked with the Montgomery County Office of Public Information (OPI) by providing content for the OPI's inaugural bi-monthly, county-wide "Paperless Airplane" online newsletter. Electronic distribution has expanded the promotion of MG activities to the County's growing diverse communities.
The **Speakers Bureau** educates Montgomery County residents on current best practices for landscape, ornamental and vegetable, and turf management. In 2010, speakers gave 64 presentations and counted 1892 contacts within the community. The Speakers Bureau received $2,240 in honoraria for the MG organization. The Bureau was ably supported by the Mini-Conference Committee, which coordinates and staffs the external mini-conference held in February. In 2010, 103 members of the public attended the 10th annual Mini-Conference, with a waiting list of nearly 20 additional people and raised $3,005 for the organization. In addition, the Bureau organized an internal mini-conference educational experience for MGs in November. Between the Speakers Bureau and the Mini-Conference committees, volunteers logged more than 2100 volunteer hours.

Some internal accomplishments in 2010 that helped to support our mission were the development of guidelines to be used as a reference for new and existing committee members, and plans for continued outreach to members of the new class. Also the formation a technology support group to manage and support the equipment used by committee members and speakers, has enabled the Bureau to better focus on its mission.

**Special Work Action Team (SWAT)** works to increase public awareness of the Master Gardener Program by bringing information to many public settings. In 2010, MGs staffed Information Tables at retail nurseries, garden clubs, school and community events, and plant sales, and served nearly 1,000 people.

In addition to one-time events, the SWAT team focused our efforts on school and community gardens. During the year, a team met regularly with staff from Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to develop strategies to allow vegetable gardens on school property. In 2010, SWAT members worked with MC Parks to provide consultants to community gardens. Teams visited 3 community gardens and answered questions, provided MG and GIEI educational materials to the gardeners. MGs also provided similar services to church and temple gardens, nursery schools and homeowner association gardens.

**Telephone Hotline:** Forty five MG volunteers answered gardening questions from approximately 506 people who called, emailed, left voice messages on the answering machine or came into the Nancy Ballard Telephone Hotline Room from January to November, 2010. However, with the persistent decrease in gardening calls during January, February and November, it was proposed that a revised schedule be implemented in 2011 excluding January and February and possibly November.

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 Program has provided horticulture programs at 15 locations throughout the county. Most of these are conducted on a monthly basis, and serve both youth and senior citizens with special needs.

The facilities include:
- Alfred D. Noyes Children’s Center, Youth Detention Facility, Rockville
Most programs are monthly, but some are seasonal, such as the outdoor herb gardens at 3 of the assisted living facilities, and the weekly gardening projects for youth with autism, youth at the detention center and at Rock Terrace Special Education School. MGs design and prepare all the materials for the hands-on horticulture activities for participants of these programs. 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 MG 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. 36 MGs have devoted a total of 1251 hours of volunteer time in these activities with 1437 contacts.

The Youth Program is involved with various youth programs in public and private schools as well as youth detention centers. Several Master Gardeners are working with Rebecca Davis of the Extension Service at Washington Grove Elementary School. The program, “Growing Healthy Habits” (GHH), was developed by the School of Agriculture at the University of Maryland as a gardening and nutrition education program for students in elementary schools which have an enrollment with over 50 percent of the students on free and reduced lunch (Title 1). GHH uses the growing of food as the teaching vehicle to link nutrition and gardening concepts in both in-school and out-of-school youth educational settings.

Master Gardner Jenny Brown coordinates a school garden – Green Kids - a not-for-profit grant funded organization that helps schools achieve “Green School” certification. MGs have helped with planting days at the Lathrup Smith Center where Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) conducts outdoor activities for 6th grade students. They have also organized a garden cleanup day for a new science courtyard at Rolling Terrace Elementary School, a nature trail at Woodlin Elementary School, a conservation landscape installation at
Rockville High School, and two student-planted landscapes at North Bethesda Middle School.

Several MGs are working with Alga Piechocinski, the 4H coordinator for the University of Maryland Extension (UME) with the Committee for the Service for Autistic Children and Young Adults (CASA). MGs are also assisting with 4H programs for the Montgomery County Department of Juvenile Services and at Rock Terrace Middle School for Children with Disabilities.

MGs are working with Ivy Mount School in Rockville, a private school for students with severe Autism and Asperer’s Syndrome. With the help of Rebecca Davis of the UME, a “Growing Healthy Habits” program has been undertaken for the school’s lower grades. MGs are working with 4H to develop a curriculum for the upper grade students which will include career opportunities for the students. MGs helped the students plant trees and shrubs which, according to the latest reports, are still flourishing.

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: 18,481
♦ Total number of volunteers: 344
♦ More than 16,734 contacts made
♦ Fifty-three trainees completed a comprehensive five-week training program
♦ This work is valued at over $394,754.16 according to the latest data available at http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html

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Master Gardener Volunteer Organization 2010

President…………………………………….Sheryl Freishtat
First Vice President…………………………Barbara Waite-Jaques
Second Vice President……………………..Taffy Turner
Treasurer…………………………………….Julia Horman
Recording Secretaries…………………….Liz Hofmeister & Brad Foss

Committees
Black Hills Butterfly ………………………..Martha Von Durkheim
Computer/Web Design………………………Gary Cahn
Derwood Demonstration Garden……………Maria Wortman
External Special Events…………………….Elsie Sullivan & Taffy Turner
Fairgrounds Demonstration Garden……..John Zeglin & Tom Stanton
Grow It Eat It ………………………………Lynn Neagley & Anne Abend
Internal Special Events…………………….Kathi Dyer & Terri Pitts
Landscape Design…………………………..Leonard Friedman & Carol Hall
Mini-Conference ……………………………Pat Wolfe & Mike Parizer
Newsletter Editor…………………………..Stacie Guthrie
Plant Clinics…………………………………..Hayley Goris & Sue Kuklewicz
Program/Education……………………….Kate Crawford, Joe Ginther & Pat Kenny
Public Relations…………………………….Kathy Eighmey
Speakers Bureau…………………………….Paula Jean Hallberg
Strategic Planning…………………………Leonard Friedman & Frank Lostumbo
Strategic Work Action Team ………………Pat Lynch
Telephone Hotline…………………………Nancy Farrar & Barbara Waite-Jaques
Therapeutic Horticulture……………………JoAnn Mueller & Alyce Wertheimer
Youth Programs ……………………………..Ron Anderson
Class of 2010 Chairman ……………….Donald Snyder

Rain Barrel at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds Demonstration Garden