

## BEYOND OUR GARDEN GATES

By Maritta Perry Grau, Frederick County Master Gardener, May 2023

Looking for ideas for your home garden? You can't do better than visit the University of Maryland Extension Service demonstration gardens on Montevue Lane. This month we join the "Beyond the Garden Gates" garden tour on May 20 and 21, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Sign up to stop by then or visit any other day and tour our demonstration gardens.

Start your tour in our shade gardens at the front of the building, where you'll see many native and other perennials, such as cannas, wild ginger, woodruff, wood poppies, button flowers, and red-twig dogwood.

In the back, check out the rain barrels and the fenced-in demonstration gardens. First on the left inside our own garden gate is the Children's Garden, containing plants that appeal to the senses. Our summer "Story Time in the Garden," when volunteers read stories aloud and provide follow-up activities, are scheduled for June 7, July 5, and August 2, weather permitting.

While most of our raised beds have traditional vegetables, herbs, and flowers, often they are being grown in different ways.

- In the "focus beds," we grow produce from different countries to use for specific recipes, this year highlighting recipes from Costa Rica and Afghanistan. You'll find the recipes in the demo bed information boxes.
- You might also see large, upside-down, U-shaped half-hoops supporting white fabric to protect tender plants from late frosts in the spring or early frosts in the fall. The fabric can be folded back to open the beds to air and pollinators.
- In still another area you may spot a "three sisters" bed—that is, companion planting—with corn, squash, and beans supporting one another in growth. This planting practice was developed and widely used by Native Americans.
- Recycled containers also are put to use; for example, a barrel hosts salsa ingredients, such as cilantro, onions, jalapenos, etc. Last year, Pat Strawder, a master gardener, created a self-watering bed by growing cherry tomatoes in a small, dirt-filled bucket tucked into a larger, water-filled bucket.
- Check out the ingenious and attractive herb spiral bed. If you think you don't have room for a garden, this might change your mind. Like a high-rise, a spiral bed's real estate goes upward rather than out. You can get quite a few herbs, vegetables, or flowers in a tight space that way.
- Another unique bed is our "grow" table; i.e., a waist-high bed on stilts designed to make gardening more accessible. The floor of the bed is a heavy mesh, which allows water to drain through and water plants on the shelf below.
- Dr. Greg Susla, another master gardener, grows medicinal plants, common in nineteenth century gardens, including catmint, yarrow, chamomile, lavender, lemon balm, sedum, vinca, and wormwood (artemisia). "I chose plants that people are familiar with... Vinca is still the only source of two of the most commonly used anticancer medicines, vinblastine and vincristine," Dr. Susla explained.

- Bundles of hollow nesting tubes in “houses” for solitary mason bees increase the pollination of the fruiting trees and shrubs. In fact, last year our gardeners donated 170 pounds of food from our gardens to the Frederick Food Bank and other food pantries, according to Jeff Matt, chair of our Demo Garden Committee.

Once you leave the fenced-in area, look for

- Our three woodland edge gardens filled with native perennials;
- A copse of Paw-paws (*Asimina triloba*), deciduous, shade-tolerant, understory trees native to eastern North America. The fruits, which I’m told have a strong tropical flavor like mango, ripen by late August/early September;
- Our stormwater management renovations, including a bioretention area (lots of plants in there) to replace the rain garden that was often flooded out by heavy rainstorms and run-off from the parking lot;
- The native hedgerow that borders Montevue Lane, where you’ll find many native trees and bushes, such as redbud, fringe tree, witch hazel and bottlebrush; and perennials, including black-eyed Susans, milkweed, viburnum, iris; and grasses and sedges.

*Welcome to our gardens!*



**Children’s Garden Mailboxes:** The Frederick County Master Gardeners have a Children’s Garden designed to appeal to the senses. Periodically, volunteers read books and direct follow-up activities for the children to do. The mailboxes hold descriptions of other activities children can do on their own. (Photo courtesy of Frederick County Master Gardeners.)

**Mason Bundles:** Solitary mason bee “houses” contain hollow tubes in which each bee lays its eggs for future generations. Because the houses are hung near fruiting trees and shrubs, they increase the number of bees pollinating the fruits’ flowers and thus increasing the number of bees for pollination. Mason bees rarely sting unless attacked. (Photo courtesy of Frederick County Master Gardeners.)



# University of Maryland Extension: Stormwater Management and Demonstration Garden



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#### For Stormwater Management Practices:



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301-600-1416  
[Sustainability@FrederickCountyMD.gov](mailto:Sustainability@FrederickCountyMD.gov)  
<http://sustainablefrederickcounty.org>

#### For Master Gardener or Home and Garden Questions:



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Master Gardener Coordinator  
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Frederick, MD 21702  
301-600-1596  
[strice@umd.edu](mailto:strice@umd.edu)  
<http://extension.umd.edu/frederick-county>

**Stormwater Management:** The University of Maryland Extension Office, located at 330 Montevue Lane, Frederick, demonstrates through gardens and county-built infrastructure, many unique ways of gardening and some of the most up-to-date ways of managing stormwater and runoff. (Photo courtesy of Frederick County Master Gardeners.)

**Bioretention:** A bioretention area bordering the driveway of the University of Maryland Extension Frederick County Office at 330 Montevue Lane, Frederick, sports a pebbled dry stream bed. The serpentine path of the bed helps to control and slow the stormwater runoff from the driveway to underlying storm drains during heavy rains. (Photo courtesy of Frederick County Master Gardeners.)



For more information about the Frederick County Extension Master Gardener/Horticulture Program, gardening information and advice visit: <http://extension.umd.edu/locations/frederick-county/home-gardening> or call Susan Trice at the University of Maryland Extension Frederick County office, 301-600-1596. Find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/mastergardenersfrederickcountymaryland>. Frederick County Master Gardeners Publications, <http://extension.umd.edu/locations/frederick-county/home-gardening>; UME Home & Garden Information Center, <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/environmentnatural-resources/program-areas/home-and-garden-information-center>.

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