

## **Winnebago County Master Gardeners Annual Accomplishment Report 2009**

Winnebago County Master Gardener Association (WCMGA) has 91 members, including 4 emeritus members and 15 who became certified in 2009. We had 20 members enrolled in the Basic Training Course this past fall.

### **HIGHLIGHTED PROJECT:** Webster Stanley School-After School Enrichment Program

Twelve WCMGA members volunteered to work with 70, K-5<sup>th</sup> grade students in their courtyard garden teaching them about plants and vegetables. This project began in March by preparing raised beds and having high school industrial tech students build 2 cold frames (WCMGA provided the materials). Vegetable and flower seeds were planted in peat pots by the students and later transplanted to raised beds and cold frames. The students also participated in hands on activities, learning about the parts of the plant and eating examples such as carrots (roots), celery (stems) and sunflower seeds. The students studied soil layers and even ate a soil model made of cookies and pudding representing humus, clay, sand, broken rocks and solid rock layers. Their favorite parts were actually working in the garden planting potatoes, carrots, beets lettuce and lots of sunflowers. In early September, the vegetables were harvested to be enjoyed by students and their families. The students and staff also enjoyed seeing many sunflowers looking into their classroom windows. We plan on continuing teaching the students with the hope of turning the care of the gardens over to school parents and students. One of our goals for 2009 was to increase the number of hours volunteered in youth education. As a direct result of this project, our youth education hours increased by over 300 hours in 2009 compared to 2008.

### **MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OR PROJECTS:**

1. The first WGMGA Scholarship in the amount of \$1,000 was awarded in May to a Fox Valley Technical College horticulture student. The recipient was a 48 year-old, full time student, who was very appreciative. We plan to continue awarding this scholarship on an annual basis.
2. Our association provided 12 hours of continuing education by presenting programs on Eco-friendly apple production; Selection, planting and care of trees; Garden design; Pruning ornamental shrubs; Landscaping with ornamental grasses and Apple pruning and grafting. These programs were presented to our members as well as the general public.
3. We provided education to our community by answering questions as Plant Health Advisors; at the Farmers Market; and by manning a booth at various garden events and the county fair. We also have a member who writes a bi-monthly horticulture column in our local newspaper.
4. The Town of Rushford built a new town hall. WCMGA, together with several other groups, collaborated on 2 rain gardens and a 4' X 60' foundation garden using many native plants.
5. We continued volunteering in many other community projects, such as planting and maintaining various gardens at Parkview Health Center; Paine Gardens, UW-Fox Community Gardens, the Octagon Historical House and Lincoln School.
6. We sponsored 3 bus trips, one to WPT Garden Expo in Madison, a plant buying trip to the Madison area, and a third to the Rotary Gardens in Janesville.

## **PARTICIPATION IN THEME: HELPIING OTHERS IN DIFFICULT TIMES**

1. We participated with other Oshkosh area organizations in Shared Harvest. Their mission is to encourage farmers and gardeners to donate fresh produce to area food pantries and meal programs. We provided tomato seeds for seedlings that were distributed at the Saturday Farmers Market through an “adoption” process. Each foster parent promised to plant and care for their adopted tomato, as well as donate all of the tomatoes produced by the plant to Shared Harvest. Over 400 plants were adopted.
2. As part of our participation with Shared Harvest, we planned, planted and maintained two 4' X 12' raised vegetable gardens for the Christine Anne Domestic Abuse Center. This provided fresh vegetables and herbs to shelter residence to supplement their meals.
3. We served as a resource for 7 new Habitat for Humanity homeowners in our county. We helped the homeowner select a tree or shrub (purchased by WCMGA) and assisted them with planting. We also act as plant educators and resources for them for one year.