

# Master Gardener Volunteer Program

## 2019 Annual Report

U of M Extension's Master Gardener Volunteer Program is growing with the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.



Students touch and smell plants during a class at Centro Tyrone Guzman in Hennepin County



**2,408**  
Master  
Gardeners



**143,821**  
Volunteer  
hours



**195,124**  
Minnesotans  
reached

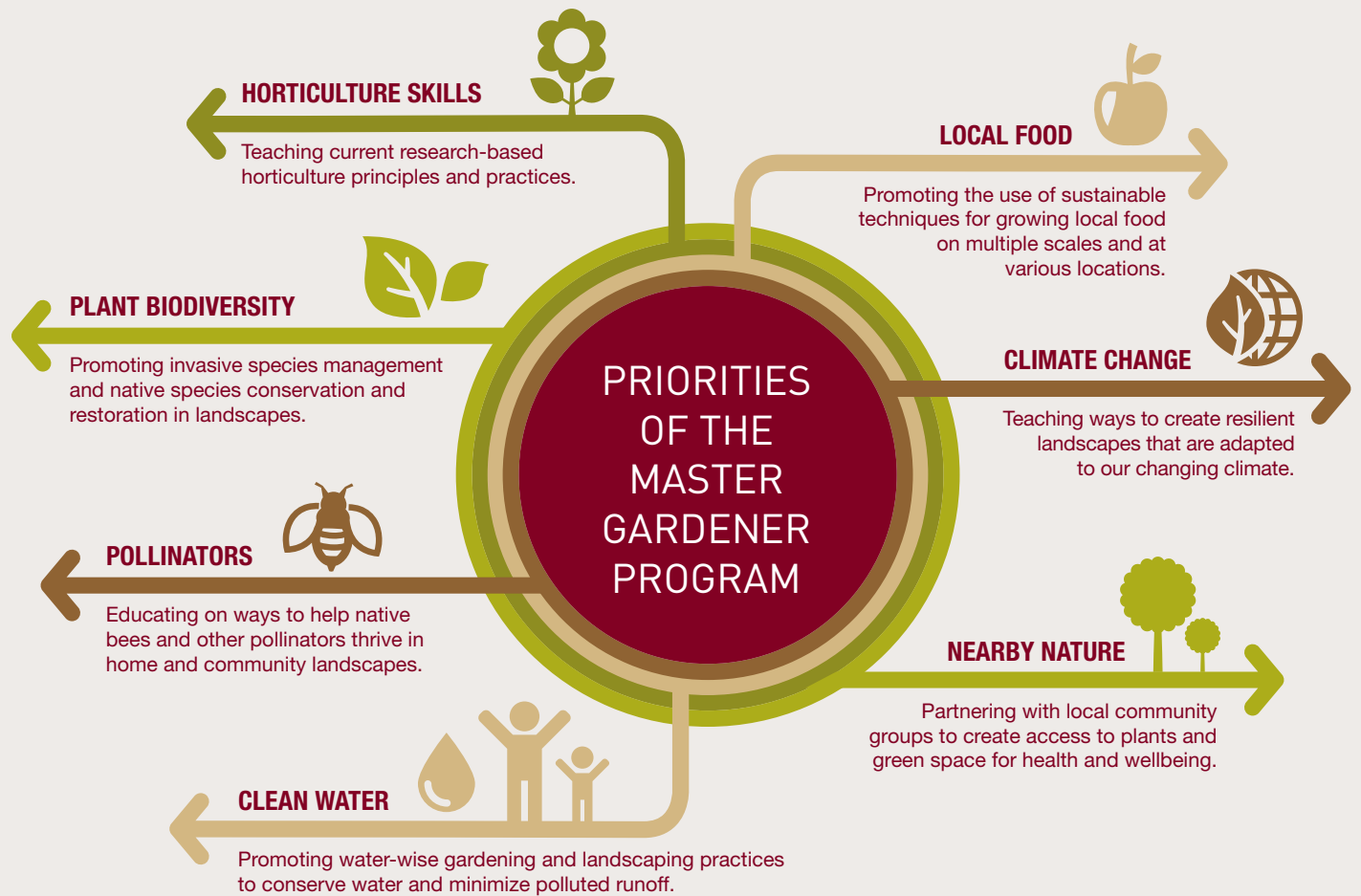


UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
**EXTENSION**  
MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

[extension.umn.edu/master-gardener](https://extension.umn.edu/master-gardener)

# Who are Master Gardeners?

Master Gardener volunteers are your neighbors who share University research-based horticulture information that promotes healthy landscapes, healthy people and a healthy planet. [extension.umn.edu/master-gardener](http://extension.umn.edu/master-gardener)



## Priority area: horticulture skills

### Local gardening know-how

Master Gardener volunteers teach research-based gardening principles and practices all around Minnesota.

- Master Gardeners in **Murray County** provided weekly hands-on gardening lessons to the children of immigrant families participating in Dream Catchers, a summer youth leadership program sponsored by Familias Juntas. “We have always had a garden with the youth, but this year we were thrilled to have the help of the Master Gardeners. I know the youth learned a great deal more about gardening than in past years. The young people in our program all come from immigrant families, and most of their parents come from agricultural families in their home



countries, so they are very happy that their children are learning about growing things,” explained Lisa Kremer, Familias Juntas project coordinator.



- The **Carver-Scott County** Master Gardeners collaborated with TreeHouse Youth Outreach to establish a community garden in Chaska for at-risk teens. Teens chose the name “The Garden of Hope” for their community garden. They learned from Master Gardeners and grew vegetables that they enjoyed for their on-site “family meals.” TreeHouse volunteer Terri Tompkins stated, “Watching the garden grow and giving it love and nourishment is a symbol of how we can give our teens hope that many of them need.”

- Veterans in the “Gardening 101” summer program learned about planning, planting, caring for and harvesting their own raised-bed garden at the Northland Arboretum. Throughout the growing season, **Crow Wing County** Master Gardeners provided weekly research-based teachings as the veterans put into practice the teaching through hands-on experience. The community was invited to visit the large, fenced-in garden area during an open house. One of the veterans mentioned that gardening helped him relax, and he has enjoyed the abundance of vegetables he was able to grow.



Photo: Steve Kohls, *Brainerd Dispatch*

## Priority area: local food

### Grow what you love to eat

Master Gardeners make local food accessible to diverse groups by teaching classes, offering hands-on demonstrations, and sometimes, creating the needed community gardens.

- “I learned how to grow what I love to eat,” commented a participant in the Vegetable Growing Basics & Beyond classes offered by **Hennepin County** Master Gardeners. Participants gained knowledge and confidence to successfully start, maintain and harvest a vegetable garden. Master Gardeners provided one-on-one help as participants



designed their own veggie garden. Participants included first-time homeowners, young couples, people interested in growing local and organic food, and immigrants who wanted to learn how to garden in Minnesota. Over 700 residents have participated since this program began over ten years ago.

- The WIC Tomato Event, offered by **Le Sueur County** Master Gardeners, featured the planting



of patio tomato plants in containers to increase the consumption of healthy, fresh veggies among participants of the WIC Program (Women, Infants and Children). Healthy eating helps with physical health, while the gained appreciation for growing vegetables helps with mental well-being.

- When city improvement projects damaged the Pine City community garden, **Pine County** Master Gardeners secured donations, grants, and the collaboration of multiple organizations and groups for an improved, larger community garden. It contains for-rent plots and raised beds, plus demonstration areas. In addition to re-establishing the garden, Master Gardeners offer hands-on,



on-site gardening classes during the growing season. The new Pine County Community Garden is an inviting educational asset that is improving the quality of life of residents.

### Priority area: nearby nature

## Learn and recharge

Connecting with nature is essential to human health and well-being. Gardening has been shown to have a positive impact on mood, and Master Gardeners make plants and green spaces more accessible to everyone.

- Under the guidance of **McLeod County** Master Gardeners, children planted the raised beds on the first day of the Hutchinson Farmers Market in May. The children took responsibility to water and care for the plants all summer. The nature-related activities, averaging 40 youth participants each month, were designed to encourage the children



to appreciate nature. “We even went from going to the market just on Saturdays to twice a week so the kids could check on their plants,” commented a parent. Special thanks to Loon Organics for the generous donation of the plants.

- **Benton County** Master Gardeners helped boost the morale of international college students by supplying houseplants with written instructions on how to care for them. Using the recently developed “Nature Heals” curriculum, Master Gardeners had conversations with each student about how plants can help us feel better and the many health benefits of caring for houseplants. For most of the college students who “adopted” a plant, this was the first time they have cared for a plant. Students and Master Gardeners plan to stay in touch with ongoing gardening conversations.
- St. Joseph’s Home for Children provides shelter, medical care and basic needs for youth 6 to 17 years old who have been removed from a situation of crisis, abuse or neglect. **Hennepin County** Master Gardeners volunteer at two garden locations with weekly educational activities during the growing season. Pastor Amy of St. Joe’s says it best, “Extension Master Gardeners invest their time, talent, services and themselves in our kids. They network and gather resources in ways that I never could provide for this program. It is experiential learning at its best, as the Master Gardeners show and share in wonderful ways. Our kids are hungry for many things, but mostly for those who care enough to consistently show up and be with them. They also make the garden such a welcoming place by keeping it weeded and cleaned up, so our staff and students find it one of the most therapeutic places on campus.”

**Priority areas:**  
**Pollinators and plant biodiversity**

## Abuzz with promise

As part of their volunteer work, Master Gardeners promote the conservation and restoration of native species and the proper management of invasive species.

- **Sibley County** Master Gardeners worked with members of a local garden club and city staff to rejuvenate an unused piece of public land in



Winthrop. The project created a 3,100-square-foot garden that included native perennial plants for pollinators and a resting area for everyone to enjoy. Interpretive signage educates the public about pollinator-friendly habitat. Now residents and visitors relax and learn in this public green space.

- After noticing the garlicky-smelling plants growing on a city-owned lot in Mankato, the **Blue Earth County** Master Gardeners took rapid action to remove garlic mustard plants, an invasive species that chokes out native vegetation in woodlands. Timely removal of the plants before



seeds mature reduces the number of plants the following spring. “We really appreciate their work,” stated Ashley Steevens, Mankato parks and forestry superintendent.

- Along 4.5 miles of the Rattlesnake Bluff Trail, **Goodhue County** Master Gardeners prepared a planting area with controlled burns and invasive species removal, including garlic mustard, buckthorn, exotic honeysuckles and Oriental bittersweet. Native plants were added to the six-acre site to provide food and shelter for bees, butterflies and birds. After the site was prepared, Master Gardeners educated residents on the value of native plants and the beauty in natural plantings since residents were accustomed to everything mowed along the trail. Trail users now notice the many pollinators the plantings attract. Educational signs along the trail share the benefits of native plants.



# Science in the garden

Children's Garden in Residence is a science-in-the-garden program developed at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. Master Gardener volunteers teach workshops in collaboration with local youth-serving organizations and SNAP-Ed educators. The program uses a garden as a living laboratory where elementary-school-aged youth learn science and



nutrition through hands-on experiences in their own garden space. The program has been evaluated for program content and aligned with Minnesota state science and health education standards.

The curriculum is highly adaptable with three distinct themes. The "In the Garden" station features activities related to the weekly garden tasks such as planting, watering, weeding and harvesting. The "Science" station features hands-on, inquiry-based lessons about life science in the garden. The "Nutrition and Healthy Eating" station features a weekly snack, nutrition theme and energizer activity that ties to the science and garden activity stations. The curriculum includes seven weeks of themed lesson plans, visual aids, and supply and set-up lists for each activity.

In 2019, 78 Master Gardeners took part in the training and brought the Children's Garden in Residence program to youth in over 20 counties throughout Minnesota including **Carlton, Lake, Olmsted, Stearns and Stevens counties**, to name a few.

## An indispensable partnership

The partnership between University of Minnesota Extension and the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum has increased research-based continuing education opportunities for Master Gardeners.

### All Master Gardener volunteers:

- Complete a core course taught by U of M horticulture faculty and Extension educators. **236** new Master Gardeners took the course in 2019.
- Share research-based horticulture in their communities. In 2019 they reached **134,386** adults and **60,738** youth. Out of those, **46,381** were people from under-represented audiences.
- Continue learning best horticultural practices in seminars and workshops taught by field experts. They earned **26,509** continuing education hours in 2019.



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## Welcome to Master Gardeners in training!

In 2020, we are welcoming more than **300** Master Gardener interns — our largest class ever!