

# Master Gardeners of the Ozarks

Home gardening is a favorite activity of many Southwest Missourians. Gardening is an excellent way to beautify our landscape and provide a healthy activity for the homeowner. It also is a huge industry in our region and impacts water quality. To help address the general horticulture and gardening needs of the public, a thriving Master Gardener program is present in Stone and Taney Counties. Master Gardeners are University of Missouri trained volunteers who assist with organized horticulture education programs for the gardening public. As of December 31, there were 75 active Master Gardeners in the Master Gardeners of the Ozarks group. Of these there are 47 who reside in Stone County, 23 residing in Taney County, two in Christian County and three who live in Barry County.

## 2008 Annual Report

### Master Gardener Total Impact

The Master Gardeners of the Ozarks had a very eventful year in 2008. The activities of Master Gardeners in this area were coordinated by Tim Schnakenberg. A total of 4,651 hours were reported in 2008 (up 20% from 2007) by fifty-one Master Gardeners who served the entire year and reported. They reported making 926 contacts with persons in the community in 2008, which is probably a very conservative number of actual contacts. The first-year Master Gardeners are required to provide 30 hours of service and seasoned Master Gardeners are only required to provide 20 hours. This year the Master Gardeners each averaged 91 hours of service. According to the latest figures from the Independent Sector organization, the hourly wage for Missouri volunteer hours currently is \$17.19. If you put a value on the education and service hours provided to the community, the value totals almost \$80,000 worth of volunteer time!

### Organization and Structure

The Master Gardeners were lead this year by Kathryn Kuhfal, President, Louise Mansfield, Vice-President, Julie Jacob and Ann McMahan, Co-Secretaries, and Alice Troyke, Treasurer. The Master Gardeners met monthly, alternating between Branson and Reeds Spring and the executive committee met frequently between meetings. A newsletter, edited by Devere Olmstead, helped keep the group informed of activities and new knowledge in horticulture. Kathryn Kuhfal served as liaison to the Christian County Master Gardeners. A handbook was updated and distributed by Jane Schwarz. Casey Jo Kellner represented Southwest Missouri on the State Master Gardener Board.

### Spring Gardening Conference

The Master Gardeners hosted a Spring Gardening Conference in March in Branson. The focus for this year's program was "Spring Forward in the Garden". Ninety-four residents attended the program and learned about butterfly gardening, garden photography, Missouri weather patterns and their impact on gardens, daylilies, new annuals. Attendees came as far as Hickory and Lawrence Counties as well as most from Taney and Stone Counties. Ninety-three percent of the evaluation respondents rated the program as outstanding or above average.



*Kathy Workman, Christian County Master Gardener, inspires the crowd as she discusses techniques in butterfly gardening at the Spring Gardening Conference in March. Over 90 people attended this event.*

### **Fall Gardening Workshop**

In October, the Master Gardeners hosted their popular Fall Gardening Workshop in Kimberling City. Nearly 50 people attended the program from Stone and Taney Counties. Topics covered raised bed gardening, amending soil, native flowers and responsible use of chemicals. Ninety-seven percent of the evaluation respondents rated the program outstanding or above average.



*The Master Gardener Class of 2008*

### **Master Gardener Training**

A Level I Master Gardener training was conducted in the fall for people interested in being trained to be a Master Gardener. This program is intensely popular and we keep an on-going list of people who wish to be trained. Fifteen people took the 30 hours of instruction which was held in Branson. Topics covered included Soils/Composting; Plant Growth; Integrated Pest Management; Turf Management; Diseases/Plant Diagnostics; Landscape Design; Trees; Insects; Annuals/Perennials; Vegetables; and Fruits.

### **Kimberling Area Library Children's Garden**

This was a very productive year on the development of the Master Gardeners Children's Garden at the Kimberling Area Library. The committee, headed by Alice Troyke, developed the grounds and established several theme gardens with the purpose of making learning fun and educational for younger children. They accomplished a lot on limited funds. Programs with children were initiated and more are planned for 2009 as other phases of the garden are developed.



*Master Gardener Julie Jacob teaching children about insects during a summer program at the Kimberling Area Library and Children's Garden..*

### **Dewey Short Visitor's Center Landscaping**

One of the largest and most active efforts by the Master Gardeners was the landscaping project at Dewey Short Visitor's Center located on the Taney and Stone County border. This large committee headed by Carol Gerhart met regularly to develop and maintain the plantings throughout the year. This project has greatly enhanced the grounds of this frequently visited center. The site was focal point of the 2008 state Master Gardener conference tours.



*Master Gardeners continued to improve the landscaping at the Dewey Short Visitor's Center. The area was also used for educational events.*

### **2008 State Conference**

The highlight of 2008 for the Master Gardeners was when they hosted the state Master Gardener Conference in Branson. This commitment required the planning by a large committee of Master Gardeners. The event was held at the new Hilton hotel in Branson September 26-28, 2008. The committee, lead by Casey Jo Kellner, worked on this project for many months to iron out every detail. The event is brought in around 200 Master Gardeners from Missouri and surrounding states. Tours, educational events, advanced



*The logo of the 2008 State Conference. The theme for the event was "Gardening Secrets of the Ozark Mountains".*

training, vendors and special speakers were a part of the conference. The theme for the conference was "Gardening Secrets of the Ozark Mountains". In the evaluation form, 98 percent of the respondents indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the conference overall (rated 3 and 4 on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being "very dissatisfied" and 4 being "very satisfied".)

### **Continuing Education**

Sixteen percent of the time reported by Master Gardeners was devoted to further developing their knowledge in the horticulture field. They are required to report at least six hours of continuing education each year. They averaged about 15 hours each of continuing education this year.

### **Special Activities**

The Master Gardener program brings together people who possess a variety of talent and funnels those abilities into an organized effort to create a positive impact in quality of life, environmental resources and financial decisions on landscaping for residents. The Master Gardeners also report many individual activities that make significant impacts. Thirty percent of their time was dedicated to public assistance, youth, elderly and beautification projects. Many are involved in working with the elderly, youth, the disabled, helping neighbors and fellow garden club members with horticulture decisions and flower shows. Beautification projects are plentiful and many help with landscaping places such as Twin Island Estates, church gardens, senior center landscapes, community gardens, the TCRC, DD Community Center garden, and Main St. Branson. Many Master Gardeners assisted with community events by passing out literature and promoting the program. Specifically they set up booths in Crane, Blue Eye and Hollister for those events.



*An advanced training session during the State Master Gardener Conference in Branson.*

### **Educational Outreach**

In 2008, the Master Gardeners continued their educational outreach to participate in teaching ten evening horticulture courses at Gibson Tech in Reeds Spring in the spring and seven in the fall. This activity has also served as a small income source for the program. The speakers bureau also continued to be an outreach of the Master Gardeners. This program was promoted to provide speakers to various community group meetings and functions. Thirteen presentations were listed in a brochure used to promote the program in Stone and Taney Counties.



*Fran Phillip working on her individualized Master Gardener project at the Kimberling City Senior Center.*