

Heart of Missouri Master Gardeners (HMMG)
November 17, 2020
Meeting held via Zoom

Members present: John Brothers, Carol Clark, Julie Deering, Mary Ellen Degnan, Steve Ferguson, Bev Forderhase, Mary Ann Gates, Nancy Gay, Marsha Goldberg, Pam Humphreys, Jan Ivey, Mary Beth Jennings, Anne Johnson, Susan Miller, Michelle Motley, Carolyn Oats, Marie Pasley, Charles Paxton, Donna Puleo, Danielle Schaefer, Colleen Smith, Hsiao-Mei Wiedmeyer, John Williams, Matthew Wilson, Letitia (Tish) Johnson.

Our guest speaker, John Stolwyk, introduced himself. He is a retired engineer who recently moved with his wife, Susan, to Columbia. Susan's family has some forested land west of Jefferson City that has an unusual concentration of sugar and black maples. With the help of the family, he has been tapping trees since 2014, and in 2020, made 40 gallons of syrup. He doesn't sell it, but gives it away to family and friends. John recognized the demand for local, natural food products and the large numbers of tappable trees in Missouri, so in 2019 he started the Missouri Maple Syrup Initiative.

Missouri was a big sugar producer from its maple trees before transportation made it easier to get sugar from the tropics and prior to beet sugar production. John started a website: mosyrup.com and the Missouri Maple Syrup Initiative with the goal to develop a network of syrup makers. He and the Initiative are trying to encourage more Missourians to make syrup to sell at local farmer's markets. Back in 1880, Missouri produced 16,225 gallons compared to only 330 gallons in 2017. States like Vermont makes over 2 million gallons a year. Steep slopes leading down to river banks are thick with sugar maples. Other trees such as red maples, silver maples, box elders, and even walnut trees can be tapped to make syrup. However, they have lower sugar content in their saps. You can mix these saps without telling a difference in the taste.

To tap the trees, you need to drill a 5/16-inch hole 1½" past the bark and insert plastic spiles. Sacks or buckets are placed under the spiles to collect the sap. The sap will flow when the daytime temperatures are above freezing and the nighttime temperatures are below freezing (mid-January through March). John uses 5-gallon cooking totes to take the sap to a stainless pan and concrete block cooker. It takes a great deal of firewood. You need to cook the sap to get the sugar content increased from its natural 1-3% up to 65%. It takes 40 gallons of sap to make 1 gallon of syrup. It can take several days to boil down. It boils at 219-220 degrees. This is just the first boil. It is not recommended to do this inside because the humidity created during the cooking can cause damage to home interiors, especially to wall paper. The final boil may be done indoors. There are four ways to determine if it's syrup: temperature, density, quality of drops, and bubble/foam. The next step is filtration to take out sugar sand and other debris. You need to pour it into the filters while it is still hot. The color varies based on the time of year the sap is taken from the trees. The lighter the color the lighter the taste while darker sap can have a richer coffee-like taste or even an almost burnt flavor to them. Vermont classifies the various tastes. The syrup is bottled at 185 degrees to get a good, sanitary seal. It takes vinegar and a lot of elbow grease to clean the pans when finished.

John gave Tish 5 kits to distribute to interested members. The kits contain 2 spiles and a couple pieces of tubing. He advised that the spiles should be removed before the trees develop buds in the spring. Whenever the trees have buds, the sap is bitter. John recommends not tapping trees that are less than

10 inches in diameter. You can put up to 3 taps in a tree with a 3 feet diameter. The holes do not damage the trees as the holes will heal within a year or two. John has a list of suppliers on his website.

Charles Paxton, President, called the business meeting began to order at 6:45. The first item on the agenda was to approve the minutes from the October meeting. The minutes were approved.

Pam Humphreys gave the Treasurer's report. HMMG received the remaining \$222.99 from the Rotary grant in September. There were no deposits or expenditures in October. The current balance is \$4,283.02 in the checking account plus CDs for a total of \$14,586.77 in assets. Approximately \$1300 of the assets belongs to the Butterfly House. The treasurer's report was approved. Dues for 2021 need to be sent to Mary Licklider, 2021 treasurer. They are still only \$5.00 and the check should be made out to "Heart of Missouri Master Gardeners". Pam will send out an email reminder with Mary's address. The deadline to send her the checks will be December 15th in order to give Mary plenty of time to get a check ready to send to MOMGA (Missouri Master Gardener Association) by their February deadline.

Elections were held at the October meeting for the 2021 officers. Marie Pasley will be president, Michelle Motley will stay on for another year as vice president, Tammy Green will be secretary, and Mary Licklider will be treasurer. Julie Deering and Tammy Green will continue to be the chairs of the demonstration rows at JFG. Brenda McGavock and Chris Walker will be the Butterfly House committee chairs. Donna Puleo will be in charge of the Wildflower garden. Marsha Goldberg will develop an open Facebook page with Donna's help. Currently we only have a closed Facebook page. The open one will allow us to record and post short educational videos. We still need someone to be the newsletter editor. If we don't get anyone to volunteer, it may become part of the secretary's duties. At October's meeting it was decided that we would continue to support Jefferson Farm and Gardens. The search for other options as a focus for the group, did not yield a better plan. The offer that CCUA presented to us would be too restrictive. Also, Tim Reinbolt and Steve Calvin really want us to stay involved with JFG and will provide as much support as possible.

Julie Deering reported that despite the late start last spring, 11 members participated this past summer. We have 28 rows and we will no longer distinguish between organic and best practices. She is planning on having two work days a month similar to those that the Butterfly House has. They will be scheduled for the morning of the 2nd Saturday of the month and the evening of the 3rd Thursday of each month. Members will also have access to the gardens at other times.

Brenda McGavock talked about continued support of the Veteran gardens. She will no longer chair that group since she will now be co-chairing the Butterfly Committee. The work there is mainly just weeding and helping maintain the garden, but has been enjoyable and appreciated by the veterans working there. It is an opportunity for members get volunteer hours if we want to continue working with them. Charles decided to table the discussion on it for now as we have no chair at this time.

Tish Johnson wants input from the HMMG membership about what we need from an Extension support staff member. There is an open position and she wants information that could help decide what the job description should be. Tish pointed out that Don Day had worked very closely with HMMG before he retired and had been a great asset to us. Tish will ask Don for his input. Charles noted that we need someone to be a liaison between us and MU. A horticulturist degreed individual was encouraged.

This year there will be a virtual Mid-Mo Expo. Tish would like some suggestions about days of the week and times to schedule the event as it is unlikely that many people will want to sit in front of their

computers for a 6-hour long period of time. It might be better to spread it over 3-4 weeks. She also requested suggestions on topics to cover and specific speakers. The following were suggested: how to grow hemp, fermentation, marijuana cultivation, winter sowing, and how to grow bonsai and orchids.

There was a discussion about the videos for our open Facebook page. We will need volunteers to create short videos no longer than 5 minutes to post on the page weekly or monthly. We would like to make the public more aware of HMMG.

Our next meeting will be January 19th. The program has not been set at this time. Michelle assured us that she will get a program set up. Anyone with topics or specific speakers that they would like to hear from should let Michelle know.

Marie thanked the outgoing officers for their efforts this past year.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m. Colleen Smith, secretary