



THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT  
**EXTENSION**  
MASTER GARDENER

ANNUAL REPORT  
2020



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Program Impact .....	2
Programs in Review .....	3
Program Statistics .....	4
Volunteer Awards .....	5
Program Spotlights .....	6
Volunteer Projects .....	8

## EXTENSION MASTER GARDENERS ARE YOUR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS WHO SHARE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH-BASED HORTICULTURE INFORMATION AND PROMOTE HEALTHY LANDSCAPES, HEALTHY PEOPLE AND A HEALTHY PLANET.

### Contributors & Photographers

Lisa Chouinard, Joanna Cummings, Beret Halverson, Cindy Heath, Ann Hazelrigg, Mary Peterson, Cathy Yandow

### Cover Photo

Pandemic Community Gardening, Steven Herbert

## PROGRAM IMPACT: COVID RESPONSE PROJECTS

As winter 2020 came to an end, program staff learned that University guidelines would require cancellation of all in-person volunteer and program events. This forced a reframing of the approach to connect with and support the gardening network across the state. While days stretched into months and we waited for further guidance, staff moved forward hosting virtual project leader sessions to connect and provide research-based COVID guidelines to volunteers.

Those sessions revealed there was a strong desire to connect with others about gardening and share resources. Once it became clear that regular summer in-person classes could not be offered, we partnered with Extension Food Safety Specialist Omar Oyarzabal to host a webinar and an Across the Fence episode called "Gardening Safely During COVID." We hosted three online monthly "Pest and Disease Updates," with Ann Hazelrigg throughout the summer. Public outreach resources were offered through our "Gardening During COVID" webpage, including an interactive "Gardening Resource Map" enabling anyone to post and connect about gardening resources or mentorship they wanted to share or were seeking to find for free.

The "[Getting Started with Vegetable Gardening](#)" factsheet was published in response to the surge in gardening interest. At the same time, our wonderful and resilient master gardener and composer volunteers responded by creating locally focused online education classes and videos, augmenting staff efforts to provide research-based horticulture information to the public across the state. Many local chapters continued to connect and support one another through online meetings and events. In May, the 2020 Master Gardener course concluded, and the newest graduates found themselves in a unique position to use their knowledge to help others, while also needing to consider carefully the health and safety risks for themselves and their families before deciding to volunteer. One intern-volunteer sums up the experience of graduating from the Master Gardener course during the pandemic:

*"Becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer is important to me because I've long respected those in my community who have achieved this status. I trust their knowledge and the work they've put into accomplishing their certification. As we've all been affected by the pandemic, it's amazing to see how so many people have turned to the land again, starting seeds and growing flowers and vegetables, taking up outdoor hobbies, really tending to their land or to their one houseplant. I hope to be an active part of my community, sharing research-based knowledge and inspiring others to enjoy gardening as much as I do. I'd love to start projects in my local community to beautify our town, and to work with local groups and schools towards shared educational goals.*  
~2020 Master Gardener Student

In July, UVM announced volunteering could resume outside in small groups, and several new Master Gardener projects expanded to focus on food insecurity and producing fresh vegetables for Vermonters in need. As summer stretched into fall, the volunteer committee was able to pivot the annual conference from hybrid to virtual format. There was record interest and attendance from people across Vermont and the country because the conference theme, "Gardening for Resilience," resonated with the challenges and opportunities the pandemic presented. Workshops on sustainable landscaping, seed saving, composting and gardening to sustain the body and soul were extremely well received and appreciated.

## 2020 PROGRAMS IN REVIEW: MASTER GARDENER & COMPOSTER VOLUNTEERING

In program year 2020, 366 active volunteers put in over 6,157 volunteer hours leading 99 community gardening and composting projects throughout the state. These activities positively impacted 34,136 Vermonters and provided 56,416 pounds of fresh produce.

**Nursery Discount Program:** Each January, we reach out to nurseries and garden centers around Vermont asking for discounts for active Master Gardener Volunteers. In 2020, 24 businesses responded. Master Gardener and Master Composter Volunteer projects around the state received seeds, soil amendments, tools, and plants to help advance their project goals.

**Educational Resources:** In 2020, volunteers received a master list of approximately 215 conferences, webinars, workshops, garden tours, blogs, podcasts, websites and a list of horticultural experts to explore for local chapter education workshops.

**Grant Opportunities:** We curate and distribute a list of approximately 30 grant programs and foundations to our network annually.

**Volunteer Recognition:** Each year the state office recognizes people who have volunteered for 250, 500, 750, or 1,000 hours. Due to the pandemic, local chapters were unable to host recognition events, so Cindy Heath coordinated an online volunteer tribute. <https://go.uvm.edu/b5lxf>

**Intern Support:** New Master Composter and Master Gardener Volunteer-interns are matched with mentors who share their interests. In response to the pandemic, most mentoring initiatives took place online via video conferencing, and were related to horticulture research, developing plant inventories, and writing horticulture-based articles for print media, and electronic newsletters. During 2020, interns were able to connect virtually with Master Gardeners and Master Composters around the state for guidance and support in their areas of interest. This opened new opportunities for connection and mentorship with people across the state.

**Chapter Leader Support:** Program staff attended chapter meetings and networking events virtually to share COVID guidelines, program policies and resources, success strategies and best practices for leadership. The six volunteer chapters held self-supported virtual meetings to adapt to pandemic conditions.

**Project Leader Support:** Eight new projects were added in 2020, and there are now 71 Master Gardener and 27 Master Composter volunteer-led projects around the state. Sixty-one Project Leaders attended two virtual networking calls to share information and receive guidance on volunteering during the pandemic. Volunteer project leaders supplied materials to support their projects, with assistance from program staff who helped to connect volunteers with special interests to projects in their geographic area.



Photo credit: Barton Seed Library, Mimi Haley

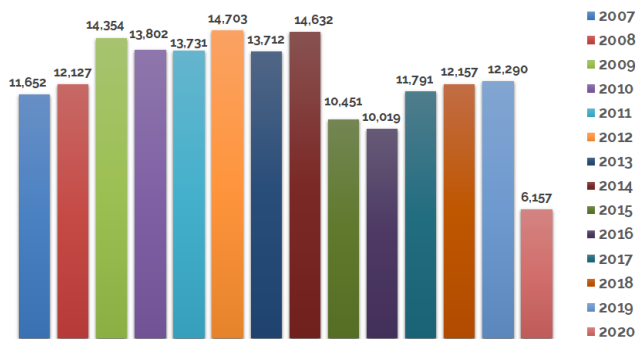
# THE NUMBERS

For August 2019 through August 2020

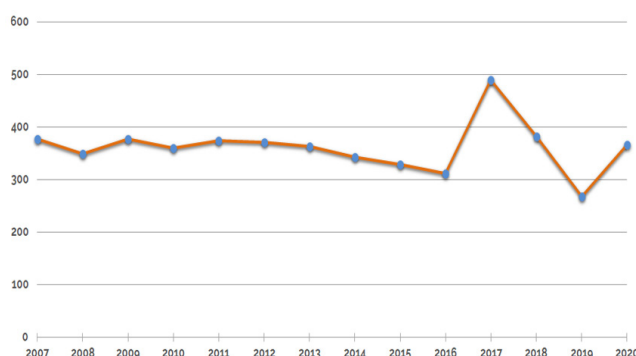


Continue to improve  
advanced training programs  
and online offerings.

## Volunteer Hours



## Number of Volunteers



## UVM Master Gardener Helpline

**11** Volunteers

**144** Phone Calls

**13** Ask Extension

**638** Emails

## Program Statistics

**\$167,470**

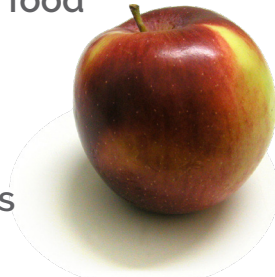
(6,157 hours @ \$27.20 per hour)

## VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS THIS YEAR

### Food Security

**56,416** pounds of food donated

**50** Volunteers reached food insecure groups



### Reach

**38** Volunteers reached Vermont youth (up to 17 years old)

**65** Volunteers reached low-income groups





## 2020 EXCEPTIONAL VOLUNTEERS & AWARDS

### Exceptional Volunteers

The Extension Master Gardener Program honors and thanks the following volunteers who went above and beyond this year:

- Dottie Sundquist '09 - Bennington Chapter Chair
- Marie Ambusk '06 - TREE-Age
- Gordon Clark '17 - Vermont Victory Gardens
- Susan Still '19 - Conference Co-Chair/ Windsor Chapter Chair
- Peg Solon '19 - Conference Co-Chair/ Windsor Chapter Chair
- Julie Marks '19 - NW Chapter Volunteer Newsletter

Several Master Gardeners volunteered more than 100 hours in 2020 during the pandemic: Christine Barnes, Bartlett Leber, Nancy Felix, Heather Hamilton, Karen Tuininga, Patti Westburg, Jim Corven, Susan Adams, Susan Still

---

### Awards

Thank you to the following volunteers for their service in 2020:

#### 250+ hours

Gianetta Bertin '09, Deborah Bieg '16, Bartlett Leber '18, Sheila McKay '14, Patricia Morrow '12, Terri Stone '16

#### 500+ hours

Heather Smith '10, Deb Squires '12

#### 750+ hours

Christine Barnes '08, Dorothy Sundquist '09

---

### Lifetime Members

The UVM Master Gardener Program currently has 30 Lifetime members, all exceptional volunteers who have contributed 1,000 or more volunteer hours to the program. This year we would like to recognize Mary Ann Castimore '04 who earned 1,000 hours in 2020.



## Program Spotlights

Photo credit: Yellow Barn Community Garden volunteers, Bennington, Beret Halverson

## UVM MASTER GARDENERS

### Master Gardener Helpline

Winter 2020 was mild without a lot of winter desiccation. Cool temperatures and wet weather persisted through mid-May resulting in gardeners having to replant several times due to prevalent root rots. The weather remained fairly dry over the rest of the summer throughout the state. By the end of September, northeastern Vermont (~30% of the state) was in "severe drought," with the rest of the state categorized as being in either "moderate drought" or "abnormally dry." Due to the warm dry weather, plant diseases were not prevalent though many gardeners complained about seeing a high level of insect damage throughout the growing season. For the second year in a row, we saw the common fungal tomato leaf spot diseases that overwinter in Vermont. Thankfully, late blight did not show up in Vermont.

As with most things in 2020, the Helpline/Plant Diagnostic Clinic office was closed for the entire gardening season due to the COVID pandemic. Program Assistant Lisa Chouinard and a dedicated team of 11 Master Gardener volunteers did an exceptional job shifting to answering questions from home. Due to the campus office closure, the Helpline and Clinic were only able to accept specimen samples from commercial growers in 2020. Despite the increased popularity of gardening, we saw a slight decline in the overall number of questions we received in 2020; 62 fewer questions were received than in 2019. (795/857). Emails increased by 264 in

2020 (651/387), and phone calls decreased by 326 (144/470).

We wish to extend a big, heartfelt thank you to the 2020 Helpline volunteers for their commitment and dedication to serving Vermonters through this challenging year. We could not have continued to answer questions from the public without their flexibility, support, and dedication.

### Master Gardener Helpline by the Numbers

- 11 volunteers
- 144 phone calls
- 638 emails
- 13 Ask An Expert (now called Ask Extension)

### Online Courses: Master Gardener & Master Composter

In 2020 online courses were offered using the Extension Foundation Campus Moodle website.

- Master Gardener - 105 students
- Master Composter - 93 students
- Total students in 2020 - 198

### Annual Conference

The 4th Annual State Conference, "Gardening for Resilience," was held on Zoom on November 5-6, 2020. There were 252 participants, (37 out-of-state, 215 in-state). Speakers included Sylvia Davatz, Seed Saving; Natasha Duarte and Cat Buxton, Soil Health and Community Composting; Dan Jaffe Wilder, Building A Resilient Landscape; Jamaica Kincaid, Gardening;

Sustaining the Body and Soul. Conference Committee Members included Bob Kesner (marketing); Beret Halverson, Cindy Heath, Peg Solon (co-chair/speakers); and Susan Still (co-chair/fundraising). The UVM Extension Media Team provided technical support.

### **Gardener One-Time Assistance**

We help anyone in Vermont looking for one-time gardening teachers or workshops. In 2020, there were 30 one-time requests fulfilled by Master Gardener and Composter volunteers. Most requests came from libraries, senior housing communities and school programs.

### **Classes for Everyone**

In 2020, two new online programs were offered to the public. The Creating Pollinator Friendly Landscape Course (38 participants) is a self-paced online course for small landowners and home gardeners in Vermont focused on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies to attract pollinators and reduce pesticide use in your garden. Summer Pest and Disease Updates (147 participants) was delivered as a one-time program by Beret Halverson and Ann Hazelrigg throughout the summer. Ann is a UVM Extension Associate Professor and plant pathologist who oversees the UVM Pesticide Education and Safety Program, the Community Horticulture Programs and is Director of the UVM Plant Diagnostic Clinic, a statewide resource for commercial growers.

### **Gardening Resources for the Public**

- 2,380 page views of Gardening Resources website
- 210,000 total website views
- Four program newsletters - March, June, August & October
- One Master Gardener Newsletter, Spring 2020
- All newsletters - <https://go.uvm.edu/qe70j>
- 35 Gardening Press Releases/News Stories

## **Press Releases/News Stories and Authors**

### **Gordon Clark:**

- Seed-Starting Tips for the Veggie Garden
- The Joy of Winter Composting
- The Profound Health Benefits of Gardening
- The Time is Now for Vermont Victory Gardens

### **Bonnie Donahue:**

- Cutting Back: Alternatives to Traditional Lawn Care
- Friends in the Garden
- How to Grow the Best Cucumbers
- How to Maximize Lettuce Season
- Making the Most of Summer Basil
- Out with the Old, In with the New
- Plan Ahead by Looking Back
- Plant Bulbs Now for Spring Bloom
- Rehabilitating Your Perennial Garden
- Renovating the Strawberry Patch
- Saving Summer Herbs for Winter
- Tips for Container Gardening
- Tips for Harvesting Pumpkins and Winter Squash

### **Beret Halverson:**

- Conference Helps Gardeners Grow Their Expertise
- Cultivate Your Green Thumb with MG Course
- Gardening During the Pandemic (w/Omar Oyarzabal)
- Master Gardener Program Graduates 45 Interns
- New Course Offered on Pollinator Gardens
- Registration Open for State Gardening Conference
- UVM Extension Course Teaches Composting Basics

### **Erin Hunt:**

- Five Gardens to Visit from the Comfort of Home

### **Nadie VanZandt:**

- A Home Gardener's Seed-Saving Primer
- Amaryllyis: A Gift That Keeps on Giving
- Disposing of Leaf Litter in Tick Country
- Does Your Soil Get a Passing Grade?
- Growing Flowers with Vegetables
- Growing and Harvesting Haricots Verts
- Managing Japanese Beetles
- Norfolk Island Pine: The Living Christmas Tree
- Stalking the Hornworm
- The Jerusalem Artichoke: An Unsung Hero

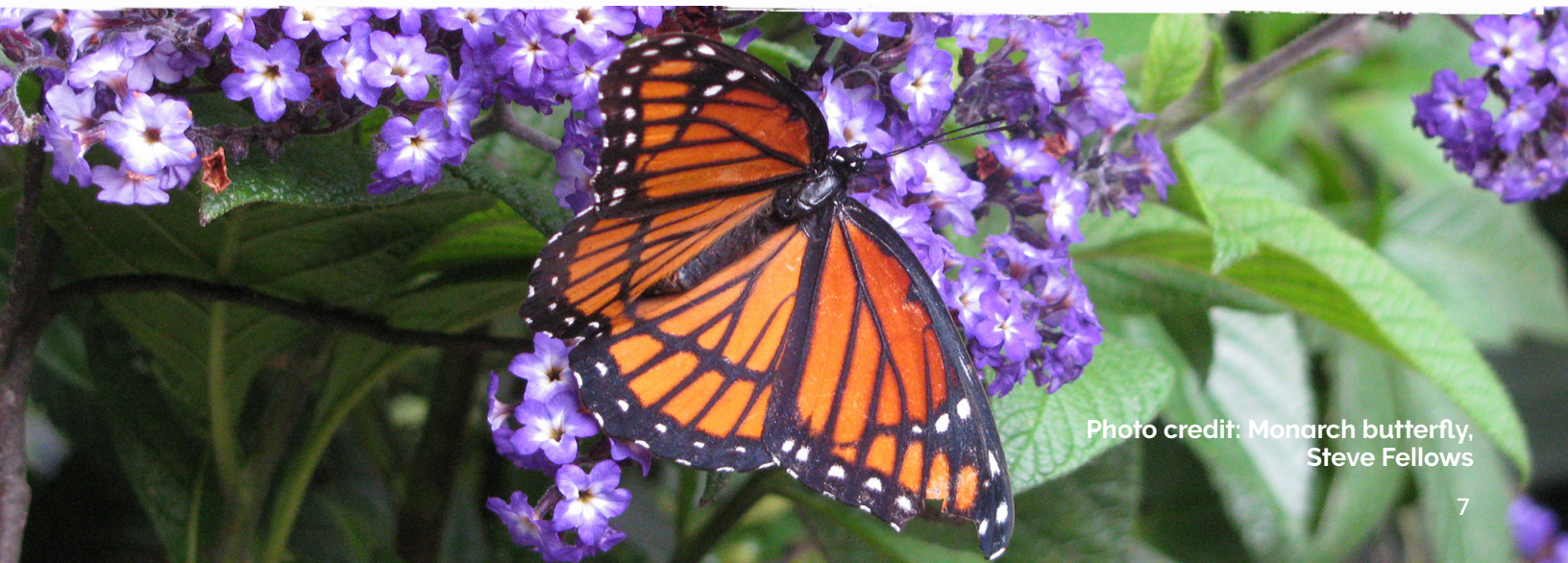


Photo credit: Monarch butterfly,  
Steve Fellows



## Volunteer Project Spotlights

### **PROJECT 1: Vermont Victory Gardens** **Gordon Clark, Coordinator, EMG '17 &** **Andrew Simon**

The Vermont Victory Garden (VVG) project set out to assist those who wanted to produce some of their own food or grow food to donate to meet community needs. The program provided gardens with planning support, assistance with acquiring materials for garden construction, free seeds from High Mowing and donated vegetable starts, scales for weighing donated produce, and expert coaching from planting through to harvest. Garden groups whose locations prevented them from finding a Master Gardener match also received remote assistance such as how-to webinars. The project ultimately connected 26 garden groups seeking to support their food-insecure neighbors with 30 Extension Master Gardeners to assist. Some groups responded to the Vermont Victory Garden call and started anew in 2021, while other garden groups were already doing the work. Joining VVG enhanced their efforts and provided an influx of resources. Two types of gardens projects were initiated:

**Neighborhood Network Gardens** - Four (or more) families in a neighborhood established gardens on their properties, planted and maintained in common, and harvests shared among the participating families.

**Community Food Shed Gardens** - Larger gardens were planted on the land of local public or non-profit institutions (houses of worship, libraries, and fire stations, among others) with the intent of producing nutrient-

dense and/or good storage crops (e.g., beans, potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash) with harvests to be distributed among community members and local food banks.

The Vermont Victory Garden program was heavily promoted among print, virtual and social media platforms, and produced and donated more than 6,600 pounds of food to community food shelves.



Photo credit: Susan Adams, Deborah Rawson  
Memorial Library Garden, Jericho, Gordon Clark

## **PROJECT 2: Northfield Community Plantings - Posy Pots, Christine Barnes, EMG '09**

The town of Northfield has 17 gardens of various sizes and shapes, developed for a variety of reasons. In 2019, members of the Northfield Community Development Network and Northfield Gardeners discussed an adaptation with a particular focus on drawing families to the community, becoming familiar with the town, and considering it to be a positive place to raise a family. The plan included a playful "treasure hunt" which involved driving a carefully designed road trip through the area with the purpose of visiting a handful of valued sites in the town. Each site was marked by a "posy pot," a large colorful planter filled with eye-catching summer flowers. Visitors meeting this challenge could present a photo of each site to one of the designated venues for a free beverage. Sites included the artistic and colorful welcome signs at the north and south ends of town; the original school building in the town, still tall and strong after a century; the recreation area (pool, pavilion, playing fields); the WWII Memorial in Northfield Falls; and the Gold Star Families Memorial at Norwich University.

Had COVID restrictions been a lesser factor (restraint was exercised in inviting people from other parts of Vt. or other states) the focus would have been different. Volunteers might have featured the vibrant school system complex (K-12), the nationally recognized Darn Tough Socks factory, and Norwich University's Shaw Outdoor Center among other community assets. Instead, in these challenging times, the posy pots became an effort to provide some bright surprises, a playful moment to neighbors in their daily routines. As life moves along toward emerging resolutions to the current struggles, the exquisite flexibility and vibrant displays of flowers and gardens present many opportunities to bring hope and spirit to all who share them.



Photo credit: Todd Dippel

## **PROJECT 3: Rick Marcotte Central School Vegetable Garden, South Burlington Amy Simone, EMG '11**

This year provided a chance to renovate the school garden at Rick Marcotte Central School. Volunteers removed a bed that was too shady and a new one was built. A spot was created for pollinator-attracting perennial flowers. All the crops grown were donated to Common Roots who offered them at their South Burlington Food Shelf free farmers market for food shelf customers. Although it was disappointing to not plant with students, this year was a great opportunity to do some work that volunteers wouldn't normally have time to do. And the garden provided a bumper crop of onions, garlic and leeks! Volunteers were also able to plant garlic with a small group of 1st graders in the fall.



## **PROJECT 4: Wheeler Park: The Tree at Dinosaur Land, Doris Van Mullen, EMG '18**

Since the beginning of time, trees have furnished life's living essential elements of food and oxygen. In response to a challenge set forth by the National Garden Club's President Gay Austin "to improve our observation of our diverse environments and plant native trees in neighborhoods across the U.S.," the Master Gardener Volunteers and Burlington Garden Club (BGC) members responded by finding a special native tree to plant. The journey began by consulting with Dr. Mark Starrett whose areas of expertise at UVM include horticulture, plant pathology and woody ornamentals.

Starrett helped the group select and purchase a special native red maple tree called "Red Sunset" from a local garden center. The Red Sunset maple tree has a superior fall color with vibrant leaves in shades of

red and orange. Clusters of showy red flowers also appear in early spring before the leaves. The silver bark and the red branches also provide great winter interest.

The new tree was planted in the Vermont Garden Park. Jan DeSarno, master gardener and Burlington Garden club's co-president, consulted with South Burlington City Arborist Andrew Noonan for advice on planting, soil and location. His recommendation was to move the children's sand pit and place the tree in that location. This placement provided better sunlight as well as an acidic soil type, which this tree prefers.

The Red Sunset maple tree grows approximately 50 feet high, and its canopy spreads branches over 40 feet wide. This will provide the perfect shade cover for children visiting and playing at Dinosaur Land. The South Burlington Parks and Recreation Department crew planted this special and happy tree on September 4, 2020. Master Gardener volunteers and Burlington Garden Club members watered it over the remainder of the fall. It was purchased with funds from the Burlington Garden Club, and maintenance of the tree will be part of the volunteer work of the Master Gardener Volunteers and Burlington Garden Club members.



Photo credit: Heather Hamilton, Yellow Barn Community Garden



## COMMUNITY HORTICULTURE STAFF



**Lisa Chouinard**

Program Assistant



**Beret Halverson**

Outreach and  
Education Coordinator



**Dr. Ann Hazelrigg**

Director, Plant  
Diagnostic Clinic,  
Community Horticulture,  
Pesticide Education and  
Safety Programs



**Cindy Heath**

Volunteer Coordinator

### JOIN US

Become a Master Gardener or Composter Volunteer and help UVM Extension Community Horticulture create healthy plants, people, and a healthy Vermont environment.

To find out how to become a volunteer visit [www.uvm.edu/mastergardener](http://www.uvm.edu/mastergardener)

### SUPPORT US

Your support helps us continue to train new volunteers and students, provide continuing education to members, operate the Garden Information Helpline, and place volunteer educators in local outreach projects throughout Vermont.

Visit [go.uvm.edu/emg-fund](http://go.uvm.edu/emg-fund) to learn more or to donate.

*Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. University of Vermont Extension, Burlington, Vermont. University of Vermont Extension, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating, offer education and employment to everyone without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. Any reference to commercial products, trade names, or brand names is for information only, and no endorsement or approval is intended. This work is supported by Crop Protection and Pest Management Program [grant no. 2017-70006-27143/1013802] from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.*



National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Publication date: June, 2021