

**Peggy Elaine Stattel, Class of 1992
Rutland Chapter**



What is your favorite area of gardening to learn about?

I can't choose one area. I love my home garden in Vermont but love to research gardens in other areas. I grow lemon seedlings – and one tree - from lemons bought at the grocery store and have an orchid and poinsettia that I've kept for years.

I love growing vegetables and like to experiment with heirlooms or hybrids. But I am addicted to flowers and love learning about new varieties. I also love to see what will grow and what I will cry over.

What is your favorite pest to manage?

Slugs!!! I hate those little suckers. I have even resorted to hand picking them off plants (wearing gloves of course). My preference is organic methods because I don't like to use chemicals in the garden even on my ornamentals. I am saving eggshells as I write this. I sprinkle them around my perennials so that the little stinkers get sliced if they come near.

What would you consider to be your pride and Joy in your home garden?

This changes from year to year. I love my annuals but my perennials – many of them - have been given to me by other gardeners and friends. If I had to choose one thing, I guess it would be my raspberry patch. I have always loved raspberries and love the fact that I can go outside on a summer morning, and putting fresh berries on my breakfast makes me smile.

What is your favorite gardening 'go to' book or other resource (educator, column, magazine, etc.) for research and learning on horticulture topics?

The first gardening book I ever purchased was Dick Raymond's "*Down-to-Earth Vegetable Gardening Know How*". I used it as a resource to get me started before I took the EMG class. I read it cover to cover and even purchased another one because I wore out the first one. I have many gardening books now – and now we have the internet – but this is still my favorite. I actually got to meet Mr. Raymond. He lived in Ferrisburgh, VT. He came to one of our EMG meetings. It was the last public meeting he ever attended. I have a picture of the two of us. He was just as knowledgeable and gracious as I hoped he would be.

Do you have a favorite garden you like to visit? Favorite nursery to buy plants?

I haven't been able to travel for the past few years but I love tropical plants. I've visited family in Florida and was so excited to see all the variety of plants that grow there. I've been to botanical gardens and arboretums in New York and the Midwest. I love to purchase plants from local farmers in Vermont. For things I need to order online I stick with New England growers.

What EMG projects do you work on?

When I became a MG, there was a help line in Rutland. I had young children and worked full time so I wasn't able to volunteer there. The Rutland Herald wanted someone to write a gardening article from time to time and I volunteered. The first article I wrote was about asparagus. The editors liked it so much they asked me to do it every week. I became the garden columnist for them for 15 years. For the first two years I did it as a Master Gardener but after that they asked if I would consider working for them. I did that and learned a ton, visited many local gardeners, gave talks and did a ton of research. It was wonderful.

Also, in 1992 there was no internet, cell phones and to complete my hours I helped out at the Vermont State Fair. I coordinated the time slots for MGs calling them, sending cards and trying to make sure all times were covered. I also took my vacation during fair week so I could make sure the card table and folding chair that we had in the Bergstrom Building was manned at all times. We gave out flyers and answered questions of fairgoers. During that first year, Paul Williams, the superintendent of the Agriculture Department asked me to help judge vegetable entries. I was delighted to be asked. Except for last year, I have done that every year since.

I also help out with our chapter's annual plant sale. I work the sale each year to set up and help shoppers. One of my favorite things to do is go on the radio the day before the event and promote it on our local radio station. That's been a hoot.

What has changed about gardening since you first became a Master Gardener? What hasn't changed?

When I took the MG class the teachers travelled around the state to all the sites – Burlington, Rutland, Bennington, etc. It was an excellent way to get to meet and know the experts of gardening in our state. It was fabulous. Things were hands-on, we visited apple orchards, farms and met the people who grew our food. Just a great experience. Now the class is taught on line and the intimacy just isn't there.

What hasn't changed is the people. Master Gardeners are some of the nicest people I've ever met. Not too many people from my class are still around but I have some of their plants, their wisdom and stories with me all the time.

What do you like about being a Master Gardener?

It's the only organization I've ever been a member of for this long. 29 years. There's a new group but they are as dedicated, talented and wonderful as those who have come before them. I'm semi-retired and don't do as much as I used to but still hope to participate now that I'm retired from working. Being a Master Gardener has been a joy in my life.