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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 and Photographers:

Stephanie Albaugh, Lisa Chouinard, Beret Halverson, Cindy Heath, Ann Hazelrigg, June Jones, Gabriella Maia, Karen Patno, Annette Preiss, Sheryl Rapee-Adams, Robilee Smith, Sue Stanne, Sarah Tichonuk, Kitty Werner, Cathy Yandow.

(front cover) *Williston in Bloom* is an annual demonstration project where Extension Master Gardener volunteers learn how to plant and maintain flower baskets, which then hang along the Williston streets. Photo: June Jones and Sue Stanne.

TO OUR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS,

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

This has been a year full of exciting changes for the Master Gardener and Master Composter programs. I accepted the position as state program coordinator at the end of August 2016. Since then I have enjoyed meeting and working with students in the 2017 class as well as all of the amazing veteran Master Gardeners and Composters who are so dedicated to our program.

After taking time to get to know the program and volunteers, I have focused on several program improvements:

- streamlining online tracking systems for volunteer hours;
- enhancing online course delivery system; and
- expanding course marketing and communication.

A new online form was developed to make tracking gardener and composter volunteer hours easier. There is also a new way for partners to request EMG volunteers, and for EMGs to make online membership dues payments and donations. Thanks to the UVM Foundation, these upgrades will make it easier for members to report hours, and free up staff time to focus on improving and creating educational opportunities for our members.

Funding for the program continues to rely heavily on course fees. With the help of EMG marketing expert Bob Kesner ('10), we have developed a marketing and outreach plan which includes three volunteer development committees:

1. Marketing Initiatives
2. Statewide Events
3. Membership Benefits

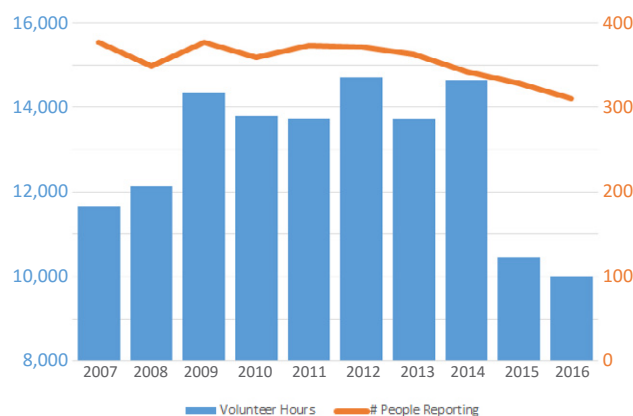
The plan's goals are to increase the number of people taking the EMG course, build brand recognition for all EMG programs, and continue to grow our reputation as the premier provider of unbiased, research-based gardening knowledge in Vermont.

Delivery of the Master Gardener Course continues to evolve. 2017 was only the second year that the Master Gardener Course was offered online, a transition that was necessitated by the closure of statewide Vermont Interactive Technologies (VIT) system in 2015.

This year, we switched from the Go-ToMeeting webinar platform to Zoom, provided by eXtension.org, part of the national Cooperative Extension System. A majority of students found Zoom very easy to use, and many commented on the great interactive capabilities of the two-way web cameras and chat functions. Sound was occasionally problematic, due to the Internet bandwidth capabilities of each user's individual connection. Overall, we found this delivery method attracted younger users with busy work and family schedules who might not have otherwise been able to take the course.

Member communication has been another key area of focus for the program this year. I hope that you have had the opportunity to read the first edition of our spring newsletter, *Vermont Extension Master Gardener News*, created with the support of EMG and Member Support Specialist Kitty Werner. We will be developing a second issue of the newsletter for distribution this fall. In addition, this annual report will be made available to our members and the general public.

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS



(above) More than 300 Extension Master Gardeners reported their 10,000+ hours of volunteer service in 2016!

In 2016, there were 564 Active Master Gardener volunteers who made 8,701 contacts with the public about home gardening, pesticide reduction, water quality, sustainable landscapes and local food production. Fifty-five percent of our active volunteers reported their time, totaling 10,019 volunteer hours.

These volunteer EMG hours demonstrate the impacts of the program to our communities, administrators and external funders. Just think about all the bragging we might do with the Dean of the College of Agriculture, the state legislature and our funders if there were more than 500 people reporting hours. Keep up the good work, and let's see if we can improve our numbers for 2017!

LOOKING AHEAD

Program goals for 2017-2018 include:

- continuing to develop the online course curriculum and technology;
- adding advanced trainings and events;
- expanding support for local projects and chapters.

We are considering moving the EMG course to the eXtension Moodle online course format. This platform, similar to UVM's Blackboard learning management system, will upgrade our capacity to integrate chat rooms, quizzes, tests and additional functionality into the course format. We are also considering using a "flipped classroom" model. This structure asks students to watch lectures before the live, interactive question and answer sessions. It is a format that provides a more in-depth opportunity for students to interact with instructors after learning the content.

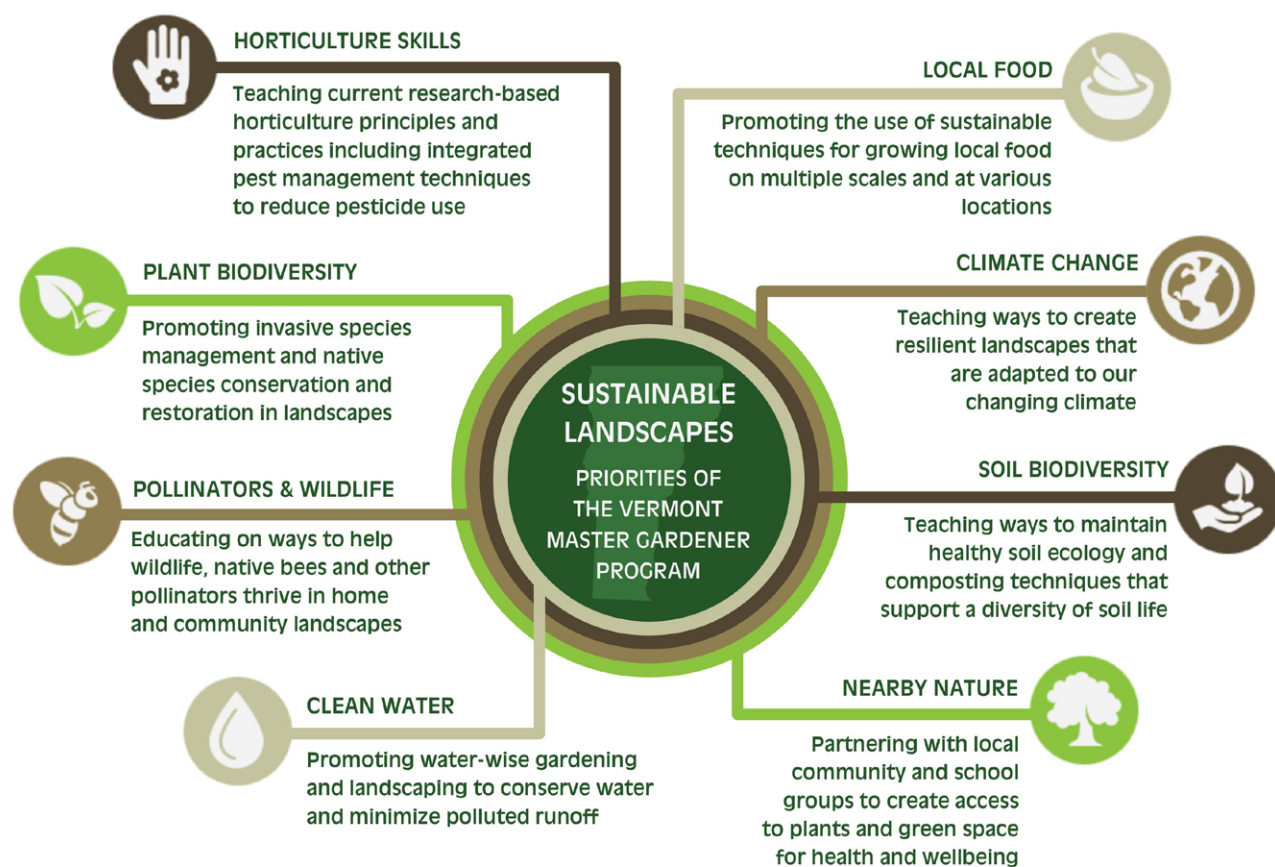
This year, local chapters did a terrific job connecting with new students. Providing chapter steering committee members with student contact information at the beginning of the course helped steering teams invite students to watch the class together, join local hands-on classes, and attend social gatherings. Students also started scheduling volunteer time during the class. This process was very helpful to those with busy schedules who were looking ahead to the spring and summer

months. In 2018, the local chapters will continue to play a key role in organizing opportunities for students to gather both during and after the classes.

There have been a number of requests for statewide advanced training and event opportunities, that might bring together EMG's from around the state. We are looking into the possibility of adding more opportunities for 2018. If you have ideas, suggestions or would like to get involved with one of our committees (events, membership benefits or marketing), please get in touch.

Our staff is working hard to serve you, and we appreciate all of the positive feedback and kinds words of encouragement. Thank you for everything you do to help make our Master Gardener program one of the best in the country. Stay in touch and keep up the great work supporting gardening projects across Vermont.

~Beret "Bret" Halverson
Statewide Coordinator



Adapted with permission from University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardener Program.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Member Education

The 2017 Master Gardener Course was delivered online using the Zoom webinar system. This year, for the first time, two different track options were offered:

Volunteer Track: Students completed a National Plant Diagnostic training. They went on to become eligible to be Master Gardener Interns and earn their certification as Extension Master Gardeners.

Non-volunteer Track: Students enrolled in the course only and earned a Vermont Gardener Certificate, without certification as Master Gardeners.

This year, 107 students enrolled in the course. Seventy-three students chose the volunteer track, and 33 students chose the non-volunteer track.

Topics covered in this year's course included: botany, entomology, soil science and composting, annuals and perennials, healthy lawn care, weed biology and management, landscaping for pollinators, vegetable gardening, fruit trees and pruning, rain gardens, woody trees and shrubs, healthy lawn care, native and invasive plants in Vermont, sustainable landscape design, plant pathology and IPM. In total, 81 percent of all students completed the full course requirements for their specified track.

Advanced Trainings

Two advanced trainings were offered in the spring of 2017. In April, Helpline volunteers participated in a Soil Test and Interpretation Training with UVM Extension Agronomist Heather Darby. The goal was to increase volunteer's confidence in interpreting soil test results. This webinar training was recorded and posted on the EMG website.

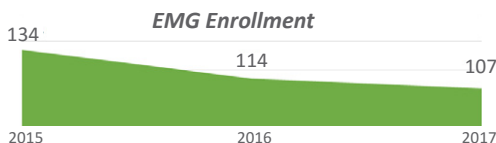
In early June, new interns and Helpline volunteers went on a Tree-Pest and Disease Walk with UVM Extension Pathologist Ann Hazelrigg and V.J. Comai from Bartlett Tree Experts. The group was able to see first-hand several common woody tree/shrub diseases and pests including black knot, cedar apple rust and bronze birch borer.

(right) V.J. Comai from Bartlett Tree Experts led a Tree-Pest and Disease walk with UVM Extension Pathologist Dr. Ann Hazelrigg, EMG Helpline volunteers, and 2017 Interns.



I LOVED THE INFORMATIVE TREE WALK WITH VJ! BEING ABLE TO SEE EXISTING PROBLEMS UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL HAS SO MANY USEFUL BENEFITS. THERE SURE IS AN ENDLESS AMOUNT TO LEARN. I APPRECIATED THE OPPORTUNITY YOU HAVE GIVEN ALL OF US! HUGE THANK YOU!

~JANE (EMG '97)



STUDENT COURSE SURVEY 2016 CLASS (1 YEAR):

- ✓ 46% had not heard of IPM before the class
- ✓ 89% adopted a new IPM practice as a result of the course
- ✓ 69% applied proper weed control strategies (to avoid disease and reduce areas harboring insects)
- ✓ 50% chose a biological control instead of a pesticide
- ✓ 31% chose a less toxic pesticide to manage an insect pest, weed or disease
- ✓ 54% gained more thorough understanding of pesticide label

STUDENT COURSE SURVEY 2015 CLASS (2 YEARS):

- ✓ 18% had not heard of IPM before the course
- ✓ 100% adopted a new IPM practice as a result of the course:
 - 65% researched plants before buying and planting them
 - 47% chose resistant vegetable varieties
 - 53% inspected plants regularly to detect problems earlier
 - 65% improved air circulation in the garden or landscape to discourage diseases (thinning, wider spacing)
 - 65% improved soil properties by incorporating good quality compost

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Master Gardener Helpline

2016 was a busy year for Master Gardener Helpline volunteers. Twenty-one Helpline volunteers answered 1,029 gardening questions from the public over the course of the busy season from April through October. The Helpline was open five days a week from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. during this time. Lisa and I would like to extend a BIG thank you to all our Helpline volunteers for their commitment to learning and growing with us. We are now looking for new volunteers for 2017 and beyond. If you love research, feel comfortable telling clients “I will research that and get back to you,” and have phone answering and computer skills, we want YOU! We are also looking for remote volunteers to help answer emails. Please contact Lisa in the EMG office if you are interested.

Maybe you heard that the EMG Helpline moved? The University needed to close the office space on Spear Street and as a result the Master Gardener Helpline moved to the Plant Diagnostic Clinic in UVM’s Jeffords Hall. This new arrangement allows for easier volunteer management and provides an upgraded facility. EMG volunteers now have easy access to the resources and knowledge of Plant Pathologist Dr. Ann Hazelrigg and Lab Assistant Gabriella Maia.

In March 2017, Helpline clients received a survey about IPM practices and reduction of pesticide use. The majority of respondents indicated the Helpline information they received helped them to identify a pest or disease problem, and taught them to use a cultural practice before using a pesticide. Overall, the information clients received did not necessarily apply directly to pesticide reduction, but 37 percent of respondents said they reduced pesticide use as a result of the Helpline volunteer’s assistance. These results indicate the importance of educating home gardeners on use of IPM strategies to manage pests and diseases rather than relying on pesticides.



(above) 2016 EMG Helpline volunteers. Photo: Dr. Ann Hazelrigg.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT SURVEY - 2017 RESULTS

Did the information you received help you identify your pest or disease problem?

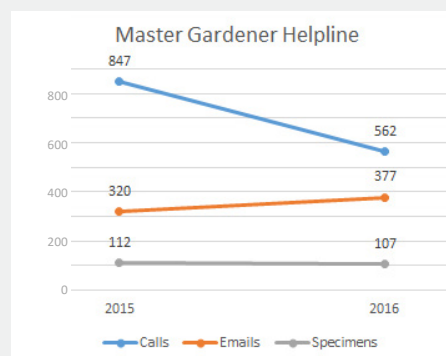
93% Yes
7% No
0% Does not apply

Did the information help you use Integrated Pest Management (IPM; cultural practices first and least toxic pesticides as a last resort) to manage your pest/disease problem?

60% Yes
8% No
32% Does not apply

Were you able to reduce the use of pesticides as a result of the information you received from the Plant Diagnostic Clinic (PDC)?

37% Yes
17% No
46% Does not apply



I THOUGHT THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM WAS GREAT AND VERY ACCOMMODATING TO PEOPLE WITH A HECTIC SCHEDULE.

~2017 EMG STUDENT

Support of EMG Chapter Network & Project Leaders

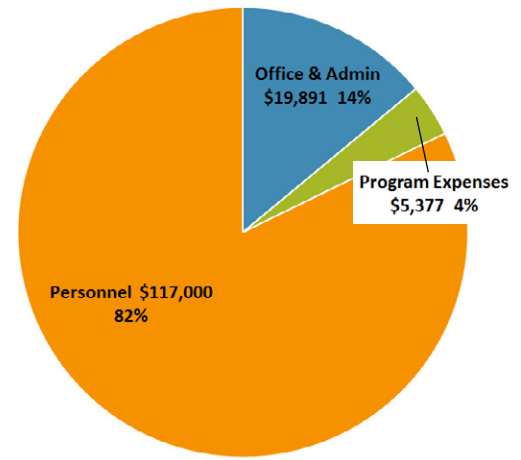
Our staff supported the EMG Chapter network with outreach materials and educational resources. The seven chapter steering teams have been active this spring hosting meetings, social gatherings classes and plant sale fundraisers. In July 2016, two new part-time member support specialists were hired to support local EMG project leaders. Cindy Heath (Southern Region) and Kitty Werner (Northern Region) are scheduling site visits with each project leader during this summer and in early fall. The goal of the visits is to learn about the challenges and successes of each project so we can better support Chapter efforts. Please reach out to Cindy and Kitty if you need project support.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

In March of 2017, the annual report for the Master Composter grant was submitted to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources and resulted in an additional year of funding for 2017-2018. The EMG program continues to participate in national programs and receive USDA grant funding to promote Integrated Pest Management in communities. In May, we submitted a Ben & Jerry's Capacity Building grant proposal which could provide up to \$20,000 in funding for three years. If awarded, these funds will be applied towards our marketing plan and staffing. We will know in October if this application was successful.

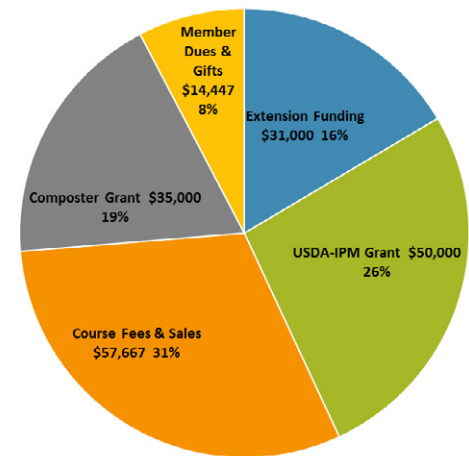
In early 2017, UVM Extension and the EMG program were reintegrated into the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), and Charles (Chuck) Ross, formerly the Vermont Secretary of Agriculture, Food, and Markets was appointed as the new Extension Director. In 2016-2017, the majority of funding for the EMG program came from grants (45 percent), while course fees made up 31 percent, Extension funding makes up 16 percent and membership dues and gifts made up 8 percent. During FY2016, program expenses, and office and administrative expenses were reduced by \$5,136.

Program expenses: copying and printing, shipping and postage, and travel. Office and administrative expenses: equipment, telephone charges, software licenses, course speakers and UVM's indirect fees (office space and utilities costs). Personnel expenses: the salaries and benefits for the state program coordinator, program assistant and two part-time member support specialists.



FY2016 Expenses

FY2016 Funding



Outreach Project Volunteer Placement

In 2016, EMG staff placed 43 Master Gardeners with partner organizations to assist with one-time events. Requests came from many different organizations including: The St. Albans CO-OP, The Champlain Senior Center and Bennington Solid Waste Alliance. Volunteers helped at these one-time events by staffing Ask-A-Master Gardener Info Tables, writing garden articles, and giving presentations. We also conducted a reorganization of long-term, ongoing EMG projects. The project database was used to create a new map feature which was recently added to our website. The map displays all EMG projects across the state. Currently, there are 83 EMG projects.

View the interactive map of projects:
www.uvm.edu/mastergardener



(left) There are so many wonderful EMG volunteer projects around Vermont, like the Hartland Library Herb Garden coordinated by Helen Prussian, EMG '16 (far left) and supported by Lisa Portelli, EMG Intern '17 (left).



PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS

Milton Public Library Garden

The Milton Public Library Garden project began in 2015. The spot is in full sun and is about 29 feet by 40 feet. Gardening starts in March with seeds donated by High Mowing Organic Seeds. Class participants are students from first to fifth grades who start plants and participate through mid-August. Each student also selects seeds for their own garden and plants a mini six-pack container to take home. Master Gardeners help the students plant several cold-tolerant crops in April that are ready to harvest by the time weekly garden classes start in June. Between six and nine teenagers help the younger students finish planting, weeding and mulching the garden. Later, students harvest what is ready and go inside to prepare what they picked to eat. Gardeners have made strawberry lettuce salad, kale chips, basil pizza, pea stir-fry, a spiral zucchini/garlic dish, and a cabbage stir-fry. Blueberry pizza and refrigerator bread-and-butter pickles will be on the menu for this year. There are 31 blueberry bushes, and an herb garden and asparagus bed are being added this season. When there are extra vegetables, the students take them home. Later in the season, some of the extra vegetables are given to town employees and their families. ~Annette Preiss, EMG '02

(above) Students harvest lettuce at the Milton Library Garden. Photo: Beret Halverson.

(below) EMG volunteers chat with Champlain College faculty, students, and staff at their annual Wellness Fair. Photo: Karen Patno.

Champlain College: Ask-A Master Gardener Table

Champlain College held its annual wellness fair for faculty and staff on February 8, 2017, and many students dropped in to check it out. Master Gardeners were on hand as well as other vendors including organic foods, health clubs and massage, acupuncture and wellness programs. EMG Intern Leslie Carew and EMG Karen Patno organized two tables to showcase the program and home gardening resources. They spoke with many faculty, students and staff about the Master Gardener and Master Composter programs. They provided gardening advice, resources on invasive species, planting times in our area, when to start seeds, and more. Many students asked questions about Master Gardeners; what they do and how they help in the community. There was a lot of interest in the EMG course and available volunteer opportunities in the greater Chittenden County area. Leslie and Karen introduced over 100 people to home gardening resources, created excitement for the upcoming gardening season, and hopefully brought in a few new EMG's to the program. ~Karen Patno, EMG '16



PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS (CONTINUED...)

The Windsor Chapter Plant Sale

When the temperatures were hovering around freezing last March, the Windsor Chapter steering team members were looking ahead to Mother's Day weekend when the group hosts two plant sales to benefit chapter education programs and activities - one in Hartford and one in Springfield.

With the support of the Hartford and Springfield Recycling Center staff, chapter members and area nurseries were invited to donate plants. Members responded with healthy, vigorous and unusual plants for customers to consider. Nurseries donated plants, including Henderson's Nursery in Hartford (thank you, Sylvia and Jim!) and In the Garden Nursery in Cornish, N.H. which also provided discount coupons (thank you, Jason Grady and Mom!). Sales planners received seeds to give away from Longacres Nursery in Lebanon, N.H. and a fine selection of primulas from Henry Homeyer in Cornish.

Both recycling centers saw a steady flow of visitors checking out the colorful plant selection. The Hartford sale had an added bonus of an extensive display of invasive plants and insects provided by Bob Little Tree (EMG '08), whose demonstration garden is located at the Hartford Recycling Center. The Springfield sale was adjacent to Carol Bacon (EMG '01) and Debbi Trent (EMG '05)'s native plant demonstration garden project. This provided great visibility for these longstanding EMG initiatives, and both sites sold most of the donated plants.

This effort raised \$500 which will be used to host educational events in 2018. Thanks to the following participants: Master Gardeners Helen Prussian ('16), Bob Little Tree ('08), Gloria Hammond ('03), Bea Cole ('10), Barbie Kurkul ('12), and Cindy Heath ('10); Master Composter Phil Hammond ('10); and EMG 2017 Interns Rachel Obbard, Lisa Portelli, Jessica Saturley-Hall, Laurie Hausler and Shelley Davis who helped with plant donations, staffing, and answering customer questions about plant behavior.

~Cindy Heath, EMG '10, Member Support Southern Region



EMG 2017 Interns Laurie Hausler (left) and Rachel Obbard (right) at the Windsor Chapter plant sale. Photo: Cindy Heath.

Montpelier: The Garden at 485 Elm Street

After several years of relying on a single coordinator, the Montpelier community garden decided to adopt a shared leadership model and sought support from experienced Master Gardeners in the community. After successfully writing a Kitchen Gardener's International Grant to support one gardener in taking the Master Gardener course, coordinator Sheryl Rapee-Adams saw that the UVM EMG mission dovetailed perfectly with the goals for the garden. Supported by local EMG staff, Sheryl filled out applications for The Garden at 485 Elm to become an official Master Gardener and Master Composter project site. The garden's applications were approved at the end of the 2016 gardening season. Throughout the summer this year, there will be composting every Tuesday afternoon. Master Composter volunteers are invited to come work side-by-side with community gardeners, develop the compost demonstration area, and share their home composting knowledge with the public. Master Gardeners share their expertise through a mentorship program aimed at supporting less experienced community gardeners and the public. The Garden at 485 Elm is also affiliated with and supported by the Vermont Community Garden Network.

~ Libby Weiland,
Vermont Community Garden Network



Sheryl Rapee-Adams at The Garden at 485 Elm. Photo: Kitty Werner.



(above) Programs such as the composting program at Charlotte Central School take advantage of the expert advice of EMG Helpline volunteers like Jane Murphy (right). Photos: Abby Faulk and Beret Halverson.



PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS (CONTINUED...)

Charlotte Central School Composting Program (with a little help from the Helpline)

Dear UVM Extension Master Gardener Program,

We are so glad Master Gardeners are here to help us! I've been volunteering at the Charlotte Central School where there's a wonderful school-wide composting program. This school compost project is a worthy one, as over three tons of cafeteria waste has been diverted from the landfill.

When I joined the volunteer team last winter, I asked about the many raised bed gardens that surround the compost shed. Much to my surprise, the compost had not been added to the gardens due to concerns about possibly contaminating the vegetables that would be used in the children's lunch program. Everyone working on the project wanted to complete the loop and put the compost to good use, so we discussed getting the compost tested, and I shared that we could get the soil tested through the UVM Master Gardener program.

We recently received our compost test results (they look good!) but the big surprise was the soil phosphorous and potassium scores were exponentially off the scale. The potassium levels are five to six times the optimum, and the phosphorous levels are a whopping 100 times greater than they should be. Given the risk of adding phospho-

rous to Vermont's watershed, I am SO glad the Master Gardener Helpline provides help interpreting the results of soil tests. Even though it will take a long time to grow crops that will slowly remove the phosphorous from the soil, we are now on that path and everyone who tends the school gardens knows that they can't add fertilizer with phosphorous in it. We're discussing making the compost available to local gardeners.

We now know that adding the compost would have made matters worse. Your services helped us identify this problem and determine how to tackle it. I dread to think what might have happened without your program. We might have innocently added the compost to the gardens, which given its high pH could have made it even harder for the poor plants to absorb nutrients from the soil. This would have been a huge setback for the compost program which is doing so much to help the children and families in Charlotte learn how to recycle and compost properly.

THANK YOU for the Master Gardener Helpline's wonderful advice and the lab's diagnosis and instructions!

Sincerely, Robilee Smith, EMG '15

We would like to extend ample thanks to all our AMAZING volunteers and partners. Lifetime EMG members are people who have committed **1,000** or more volunteer hours to the program. As of June 2017, **20 volunteers** have reached this remarkable milestone. Thank you to everyone who contributed time and effort so generously to the program. Extension Master Gardener would not be what it is today without you!

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION
 April 2014

Sue Starnes, EMG '03

In recognition of your dedicated service as
 Project Leader - 2013

For UMN Extension Master Gardener
 Volunteer Region 8B Northern Cass
 County, Minnesota

Nancy Holte
 Executive Director

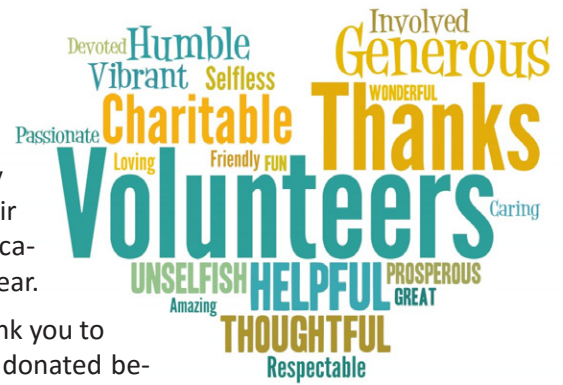
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
 Extension

Lifetime Members who have contributed 1,000 volunteer hours:

Susan Adams '08	Judith Irven '95	Elaine Nordmeyer '97	Daryle Thomas '94
Marie Ambusk '06	June Jones '99	Ann Serman '95	Patti Westburg '12
Cindy Griffith '00	Mary Mazur '92	Jan Sherman '06	Marge Westphal '97
Ronald Hebert '00	Jane Murphy '97	Susan Stanne '03	Maureen Yates '97
Donald Hipes '95	Marijke Niles '02	Peggy Stattel '92	Jeff Young '05

Also, a BIG thank you to everyone who donated beyond membership dues. Thank you so much for your additional support this year!

Last, but not least, we recognize **Gardener's Supply Company** for their generous Gold Level contributions to our program in 2016-2017. These funds will help increase scholarship opportunities for the Master Gardener course.



The EMG Advisory Board is made up of one or more members from each of the seven local chapters. The board meets annually in October. The last meeting was held on October 18, 2016 at the Berlin Extension office, and the 2017 meeting is scheduled for October 17 at the Justin Morrill Homestead in Strafford, Vt. If you are interested in joining, let us know!

Bennington: Penny Ela, Dottie Sundquist
 Central: Laurie Curtis, Kitty Werner, Mary Evslin,
 Northwest: Marijke Niles, Shari Johnson, Kelly Wakefield
 North East Kingdom: Vacant - *contact us if interested!*
 Rutland: Judith Nevin, Margery Salmon
 Windham: Maureen Bell, Jessie Krause Herron
 Windsor: Nicole Conte, Helen Prussian

Outgoing 2016: Linda Langer, Barbara Graham



(above) EMG project coordinator Christina Shaw and her mother at the Benson Heights Senior Center Gardens. (right) EMG Advisory Board.



UVM Extension Master Gardener Program

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LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT



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HELP US CONTINUE TO GROW!

Are you wondering how you can support the Master Gardener program?

- **VOLUNTEER**, report your volunteer efforts, and send us your success stories.
- **SERVE** as a chapter steering team member or a project leader.
- **VOLUNTEER** at the Master Gardener Helpline.
- **RENEW** your annual membership each January.
- **SPREAD** your positivity, enthusiasm and passion for garden education across the state!

Inspired to do more? Consider making an additional financial contribution to the Master Gardener program. Membership dues and donations make up 10% of our operating budget. With nearly half of our funding coming from grants, your donation makes a huge difference in the quantity and quality of educational opportunities we are able to offer. Remember that reporting volunteer hours and paying for membership renewals, dues and gifts may now be done online. All credit card payments are secure and easy!

HOW TO SUPPORT

Visit www.uvm.edu/mastergardener

For dues and gifts, click "Support Us"

To report hours, click "EMG login" > "EMG Forms and Logos"

Thank You!

(right) Morgan Corbett and the participants in the El Jardin Project at Rochester School aren't afraid of the dirt! Photo: Kitty Werner.





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(above) Flowers at the St. Albans Taylor Park Display Garden, run by EMG project leader Kelly Wakefield (EMG '08).