

Master Gardener Awards of Excellence Winners

On October 20-23, 2019 Master Gardener Volunteers from all over Florida gathered in Kissimmee, Florida for contests and classes. Many of them left the conference with an award in one of twelve categories:

- Beautification
- Communication
- Demonstration Garden
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Educational Display
- Educational Materials
- Florida-Friendly Landscaping
- Service to 4-H and Youth
- Newsletter
- Outstanding Master Gardener Volunteer Team
- Outstanding Master Gardener Volunteer
- Personal Communications

Listed below are the twelve winners and a description of the fantastic work they did.

Beautification: Osceola County – Books and Butterflies: West Osceola Public Library Butterfly Garden



Eight Master Gardener Volunteers (Lisa Barry, Ashley Brant, Rebecca Feldkamp, Kim Heinrich, Sharon Mantia, Lorna Sauter, Harold Sauter, and Bill Silberman (team leader)) worked with two local Girl Scout troops to plant a butterfly garden in front of the West Osceola Public Library. The Master Gardeners selected plants that would both attract butterflies and provide excellent

hosts for larva. They collected the materials for the garden and then taught the Girl Scouts how to plant their garden. The garden now serves as an educational resource for programs at the library and helps beautify the entrance. The project was successful, as many butterflies have been spotted and children have been checking out books at the library to help them identify the different butterflies and caterpillars.

Communication: Leon County – Five part series of articles in the Tallahassee Democrat detailing planting a spring garden at the Tallahassee Museum’s 1880’s garden



Photo by Brenda Buchan

Master Gardener Volunteer Brenda Buchan published a five-part series in the Tallahassee Democrat on planting a spring vegetable garden at the Tallahassee Museum. She detailed the process of planting with descriptions and photos so that readers could follow her lead and start their own vegetable gardens or simply learn more about gardening. Her project not only reached many readers, but it also encouraged more visitors to the Tallahassee Museum and inspired interest in the 1880’s garden. In addition, public awareness of the Master Gardener program in Leon County has increased, which will hopefully inspire more people to volunteer.

Demonstration Garden: Leon County – Redesign of VegHeadz Demonstration Garden



A team of Master Gardeners in Leon County worked together on the process to design and implement a new vegetable demonstration garden. The project included building a new storage area, rebuilding the compost bins, creating small demonstration beds, building new raised beds, and implementing an edible forest garden. The project's emphasis is on redesigning the area to be more sustainable, easier to maintain, and able to produce healthier plants. The garden serves as a tool for educational programs within Extension as well as a place for visitors to explore gardening. According to Extension records, 2,522 people have visited the gardens for various Extension activities.

Diversity and Inclusion: Martin County – Indiantown Community Garden



Master Gardeners in Martin County (Paula Smith, Patty Beonde, Dave Welter, and Tony Beonde) worked tirelessly to build a community garden within a community in Indiantown that

suffered from insecurity. They formed connections with nearby community organizations such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, KinDoo Catholic Family Center, Habitat for Humanity, and Boys and Girls Club to build the garden and connect the plots with families who are interested in growing their own food. Since many of their community participants didn't speak English, they also developed fliers in their native languages and translated any demonstration sessions. They have built a highly successful community garden with 30 garden plots, fruit trees, a Little Free Library, and a sandbox for children. Their efforts benefit a diverse audience of varying ethnicities, ages, cultures, economic levels, and disabilities.

Educational Display/Exhibit: Pinellas County – Lobby Display Case



The winning team in front of their latest creation

A trio of Master Gardener Volunteers (Jeanne Jones, Penny Cathey, and Anne Swain) took on the project of creating educational displays for the shared lobby of the Florida Botanical Gardens and Pinellas County Offices. The topics of the display were changed every few months, with some of the topics being fall vegetable gardening, spring wildflowers (pictured above), succulents, and Master Gardener Program is 40. The intent of the project was to inform those who visit the lobby of horticulture topics they may not have been aware of previously. The Master Gardeners have successfully run the project for two years and plan to continue it.

Educational Materials: Okaloosa County – Handbook, Handouts, and Curriculum for the Landscape Design Workshop in Okaloosa County Life Long Learning Center



Karen Kirk-Williams, a Master Gardener in Okaloosa County, created and teaches an interactive Landscape Design Workshop at Northwest Florida State College (with the help of other volunteers) that is offered every fall and spring semester. Her six-week-long course helps students design and implement their own landscape plan. Each class includes an hour of instruction and an hour of one-on-one time with participants for individual planning. She has created educational materials such as the course curriculum, a handbook, and handouts. She has been teaching the course since September 2017 and has had her educational materials used approximately 380-400 times since then. Pictured above is a finished landscape that her student, Mary, designed and implemented.

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™: Bay County – Ask a Master Gardener Volunteer Booth



Ask a Master Gardener booth at St. Andrews Farmer Market

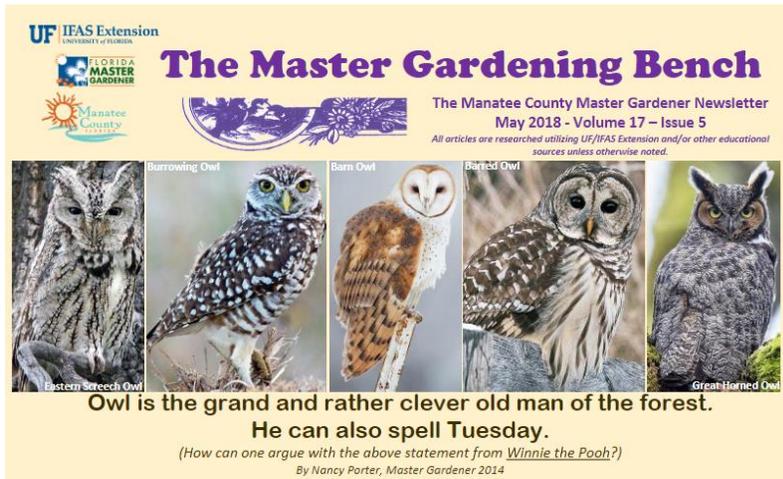
36 Master Gardener Volunteers donated over 600 hours of service in Bay County by providing research-based gardening advice to the community following the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles. They set up their booth at various businesses in Northwest Florida to help people make good landscaping choices after their landscapes were destroyed by Hurricane Michael. They reached 775 people in 2018 and 1304 people in 2019. They used a variety of methods to advertise their program, including Facebook, television advertisements, and yard signs and banners. These Master Gardeners identified a need in their community and answered it by providing their advice in a place that is convenient to their target audience.

Service to 4-H and Youth: Clay County – R.C. Bannerman Learning Center School Garden



Master Gardener Volunteers (Glenn Thigpen, Barbara Beyerl, Marti Whipple, Laurie Edelman, Amy Morie, Victor Robers, Olena Sirianni, Karen Rook, and Don Clark) successfully established a garden with the Bannerman Learning Center, which is a school for students with different educational needs. They secured the funds for the project through writing grants and then built the garden with students and staff at the school and university. Students have enjoyed working in the garden and learning from their mentorship with the Master Gardeners. The students have also exhibited 700 plants in the Clay County Fair since 2016 and earned over \$800.

Newsletter: Manatee County – The Master Gardening Bench



Master Gardeners in Manatee county work together to produce their newsletter called “The Master Gardening Bench” 10 times per year. Their purpose is to educate home gardeners and the general public about recent research-based information on gardening. Their newsletter is distributed to over 5,500 recipients every month over e-mail, as well as through 300 paper copies that are available at libraries and Master Gardener events. Examples of some of the included articles are “Grapes for Manatee County,” “Post-Hurricane Care for Trees and Shrubs,” and “Pests in the Pantry.” Articles are usually one page or more in length to provide in depth information that will benefit the reader.

Outstanding Master Gardener Volunteer Team: Bay County – Hurricane Michael Landscape Recovery Series



Landscape Recovery Class

A team of Master Gardener Volunteers (CA. Whitehurst, J. Green, Wood-Putnam, L. Tubridy, C. Biegler, H. Longo, and C. Sims) in Bay county worked together to assist in repairing the damages inflicted by Hurricane Michael by educating residents how they can repair their landscape. As a team, they planned and carried out four 3-hour sessions that covered trees, shrubs, perennials and groundcovers, and turfgrass. The sessions reached over 5200 people through the in-person sessions and through online coverage on Facebook. The Bay County Audubon Society bestowed its 2019 Conservationist of the Year Award to the team for their excellent efforts.

Outstanding Master Gardener Volunteer: Santa Rosa County – Suzanne Spencer



Suzanne in the middle with plaque and her fellow Master Gardener Volunteers from left: Jean Ann Hartman, Rachel Coggins, Mike Burba, and Annie McIlhenny

Suzanne Spencer of Santa Rosa County showed her passion for the Master Gardener Volunteer program through her exemplary volunteer efforts, which total 1661 service hours. Some of her projects included assisting clients at weekday plant clinics, working in the greenhouse, preparing presentations for the Speaker's Bureau, fulfilling positions within the Executive Committee (including being elected President in 2019), developing the Santa Rosa County Roadside Wildflower project, planning and carrying out a native tree sale that promoted Extension services, and mentoring a new student during their certification year. Suzanne received the 2019 Volunteer of the Year award from the Florida Wildflower Foundation for her efforts to establish 70 miles of roadside wildflowers, which has saved the FDOT an estimated minimum of \$1000/mile/year.

Personal Communications: Polk County – Betty Harrison

Betty Harrison has volunteered at the help desk in Polk County for 5 years, with two shifts per week. She typically receives two phone calls per hour and responds to one email per shift. She used her expertise to answer three difficult questions in detail and followed up with a comprehensive follow up email.