What's Growing On...
The latest news from the Marais des Cygnes Extension Master Gardeners

February 2022

Paola Office: 913 N. Pearl (Old KC Road), Paola, KS 66071 | 913-294-4306
Mound City Office: 115 S. 6th St., Mound City, KS 66056 | 913-795-2829

Follow the Marais des Cygnes EMGs on Facebook at www.facebook.com/mdcemg

Advanced Training Opportunities
The complete AT schedule (as of now) is on page 3.
K-State and Johnson County Zooms are approved for AT credit.

Winter Tasks
By Lenora Larson

I react in shocked disbelief when a fellow gardener remarks, “Isn’t it nice when winter arrives and you don’t have to spend time in your garden?” WHAT?! First, I don’t “have to,” I actively want to spend time in my garden as a matter of mental health. By three days indoors, panic attacks deposit an elephant on my chest until I can get outdoors again. House plants and a greenhouse are not adequate substitutes.

Friends who put their gardens to rest in early fall are genuinely curious, “What are you doing in winter?” Primarily mulching and pruning. My garden mantra has become WWMND, “What Would Mother Nature Do?” When does Mother Nature mulch? In the fall, just the opposite of most gardeners who “clean up” their gardens in the fall. As instructed by Mother Nature, I leave the leaves. My beds are not empty earth, they are full of standing dead flower spikes and fallen leaves. These protect the perennial crowns and hibernating wee critters. Occasionally I crouch down to hand-shred leaves, which reduces volume and creates a more uniform texture. Why hand-scrunch when I have a chipper-shredder? Most importantly, I enjoy this simple action and want to feel the leaves in my hands. I shudder at the thought of a cruel metal implement that would pulverize the cocoons, pupae and chrysalids of hibernating insects. And the chipper-shredder cuts the leaves into such small pieces that they do not function as mulch. The tiny particles form a water-resistant crust on the top of my beds.

When the wind blows leaves into the paths and driveway, I gather these treasures, crunch slightly, and place them in beds. The bodies of dead annual and perennial plants have a quick mash-down by hand and decompose in place. Other sources of mulch include twigs and small branches that fall from my canopy of Pin Oaks. I snap them into smaller pieces and toss onto the beds. Larger branches are relocated to a wood pile that provides winter shelter to wildlife including hibernating butterflies.

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**Advisory Board**

Chairman — Jan Thompson  
Vice Chairman — Sue Burns  
Secretary – Anita Boyett-Voke  
Treasurer – Laraine Crawford

**Members at Large**  
Janette Bennett  
Chet McLaughlin  
Barbara Shropshire

**Committees**

Courthouse Garden  
Phyllis Benedict  
Trial Garden  
Shirley New & Chet McLaughlin  
KSU Extension Office Garden  
Sue Burns  
Lakemary Liaison  
Becky Thorpe  
Advanced Training  
Barbara Shropshire  
Awards Banquet  
Donna Cook & Susan Thompson  
Symposium 2022  
Postponed  
Plant Sale 2022  
Sue Burns & Lenora Larson  
Garden Tour 2023  
Publicity  
Judy Moser & Lenora Larson  
Seeds for Kids  
Janette Bennett  
Social Media / Facebook  
Anita Boyett-Voke  
Miami County Fair  
Chet McLaughlin, Michael Poss & Sue Burns  
Linn County Fair  
Mike Brown  
New Recruits/Mentors  
Becky Thorpe  
Newspaper Articles  
Katelyn Barthol, Extension Agent

Send news and photos to:  
Judy Moser, Newsletter Editor  
judy@springvalleynursery.com

• Katelyn reports that we had a total of 2,864 volunteer hours and 444 Advanced Training hours reported by the group, even though some members didn’t report their hours.

  • On February 4th Katelyn sent out an email with several items: An updated Roster and Bi-laws, an Advanced Training calendar, and the order form for clothing items (payment needs to be to the Extention Office by February 25th). Also the link for the Project Committees Sign-Up Sheet. (Deadline for that is February 22nd).

    • Set-up for the Plant Sale will be on April 27 at 9:00 am, with the sale on April 28, 29, and 30. Katelyn will be sending the sign-up link soon. Please sign up to help!

    • Since we postponed the Awards Banquet, Donna, Susan and Betsy are determining a date (TBD) for our 2nd Quarter awards/recognition dinner.

    • Johnson County EMGs have started “Get Growing” virtual gardening classes. Registration is required in order to receive the zoom link.

    • There will be a “Come Grow With Us” event at the LaCygne library to be held in person.

    • Looking for volunteers for the Miami County Fair. Our members need to be more involved!

    • Chet McLaughlin reports that the Trial Garden will stay at Lenora Larson’s next year, and he plans to work on improving the soil with manure and to “fight the thorn trees and bindweed.” Tomato and pepper seeds have been ordered, and Chet is collecting cardboard to use in the garden.

    • Laraine, Phyllis and Janette B. made plans, drawings and budgets for a project at the Linn County Court House. Our members there will be able to earn volunteer hours without driving to Miami County. The EMGs donated $500 to the project.

    • Nancy Kalman has volunteered to build a new “Lucy Booth” (for questions at events) and would like help in designing and painting it. It needs to be ready for the Plant Sale in April.

    • Be thinking about chairing or co-chairing the 2023 Garden Tour! Betsy and Jan have written extensive plans to help the new chair(s). No need to re-invent!

    • The Hotline starts April 1. Katelyn will be sending out the sign-up link.

    • A Linn County Garden Tour just for MdC EMGs is tentatively being planned for June, 2022. The tour will count as one hour of AT.

    • Watch for email scheduling a brainstorming session to explore potential EMG Short Term Project ideas to benefit Miami and/or Linn county communities.

    • The cost of individual copies of the History Book will be determined by the number of people who want to buy one. Send Katelyn an email if you are interested in purchasing your own copy.
From Lenora Larson:
Sadness for this beautiful creature who emerged from his chrysalis yesterday in my greenhouse. He had obviously snuck in as a chrysalis on one of my plants, probably the Plectranthus ‘Mona Lavender.’ It was the closest to the Spicebush that he had fed on as a caterpillar. My

Mangave is in bloom, nectar dripping from each blossom, so he happily sipped nectar for a day, but now he is flying about the greenhouse, frantically looking for a mate. Alas, he is out of sequence with his species. Last year a sole female emerged, same sad story, death without fulfilling their destiny.
Changing of the Guards:
I truly enjoyed my time on the board. I love the Master Gardener program, learning and making dear friends. In my role as chair, I endeavored to keep up our momentum during unprecedented times and to engender unity and hope. Thank you to all for your work and support. Everyone’s contributions are acknowledged and appreciated!!!

I’m thrilled that Jan Thompson is taking over as chair. She is more than capable and brings knowledge, skills and passion for our group and our mission.

Covid- Hard to Ignore:
I’m so weary of the trials and tribulations of the pandemic, the uncertainties and countless changes, losses, restrictions. What is normal? Covid continues to present personal challenges to us all.

Thank goodness, gardening goes on! Yay!!!

2021- An Eventful Year Globally:
2021 marked the MdC EMGs 25th Anniversary!!! A book of our history was compiled. (It is available on-line at or website www.maraisdescygnes.k-state.edu or available to purchase as a hard copy.)

Gardening was a challenge, at least for me, I’m sorry to say. Weather was a contributing factor. Although my garden was among my worst, I did reap lots of tomatoes.

Some people who likely worked harder than I did had gardens that thrived. There’s always this next year. Come on, rain.

Have you ordered your seeds? Gardening is good for the soul, not to mention the mind and body.

So Much Remote:
The K-State EMGs had to go remote for meetings the first few months. Unfortunately, some events such as the Symposium and Annual Banquet were cancelled. We started meeting more in person in April, sometimes meeting in outdoors venues. Thank goodness for zoom. I really enjoyed many Advanced Trainings on-line. With JOCO EMGs graciously allowing us to view their zoom ATs, we were privileged to learn from nationally renowned experts.

New Extension Office:
The Paola Extension Office moved to 913 N Pearl in January. It was sad to abandon our gardens at the Ursuline location, although lots of plants were rescued and moved to new homes, However, the new office facilities are a big improvement. Light, spacious, and no leaks.

Angela Scherman, who supported us with her friendliness, efficiency and wealth of information at the office, retired toward the end of the year. Check out her paintings in the reception area.

We resumed our annual Plant Sale at the new office location, which was a success. This is a primary event that provides opportunities for the EMG volunteers to share knowledge with the community.

It’s a great time for camaraderie, working, sharing, laughing together, providing education and locally grown plants, natives, butterfly host plants, and pollinator plants, not to mention a primary fund raiser.

“A September to Remember” Garden Tour was pulled off again this last September. Three of our gardens were on the tour. Despite weather hurdles, we had wonderful, eclectic and beautiful gardens and delightful weather on the tour. Again, a wonderful educational opportunity as well as a leading fund raiser. Thanks to all that made this possible!

Garden Projects:
The Trial Garden was moved to Lenora Larson’s Long Lips Farm. The trial gardens experienced a lot of ‘trials’ with flooding, weeds, and drought, and could really use more volunteers. Please consider lending a hand in 2022. The Trial garden donates their produce to youth at the Osawatomie Farmer’s Market, with proceeds going to related scholarships for area high school students.

The Court House Gardens have evolved and blossomed and are really our most visible presence in our community. The bronze sidewalk medallion was restored and the rookie class project designed and planted an area on the west side where trees had been removed.

Extension Office. Upon moving to the new location, Sue Burns transitioned from coordinating the former office gardens to spearheading, revitalizing, planting

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around the Pearl St sign in front of the new office and maintaining planters at the Extension Office Entrance.

New Class:
Welcome to the new class of six who completed their training via zoom. As zoom is convenient and flexible timewise, we encourage in-person opportunities to integrate you new folks into our group to experience. You are encouraged to participate in any activity and we look forward to getting to know you better. Thanks for joining. The more you put into each endeavor, the more you get out of it.

New EMG applicants can submit applications May 1 - July 31 with weekly classes September-December.

LaCygne Gardens:
Expanded volunteer opportunities into Linn County at the LaCygne Community and Thayer Gardens.

Seeds for Kids:
A worthwhile project that we hope to expand to promote gardening for kids.

Emeritus:
Congratulations to Kathy Doherty and Richard Piezuch. Thank you for your contributions.

Holiday Happiness:
The EMGs provided matching funds of $750 with EMGs donating over $1500 to 3 area food pantries. 4-H: EMGs again donated a $500 scholarship.

Come Grow With Us:
A district gardening education program (we usually contribute $500/year, but not needed in 2021).

Winter Tasks, continued from page 1
This is the season to prune my many shrubs. The trimmings are dropped in place. My many perennial grasses become the other major source of mulch. Their shreddings create such a large volume of mulch that I can use it to top off other parts of the garden where there is not enough debris to cover the earth.

Each bed should have a two to three inch covering of leaves and garden debris. There is no need to buy mulch because my mature gardens are completely self-mulching. And there is no need to drag material to a compost pile because I am composting in place.

This layer of mulch retains moisture, inhibits weed growth and feeds the plants. I have not fertilized my gardens in 35 years because the mulch breaks down into compost through the action of small invertebrates, bacteria and fungus. As they feed themselves, these microbes also feed my plants by releasing nutrient-rich poop. Soil bacteria snatch nitrogen from the air and trade it for the carbon produced by plants in the photosynthetic process. The symbiotic circle is complete and thanks to my winter tasks, I am part of this natural gardening process.