2017 CENTRAL REGION REPORT
Submitted by Charlie Junod
Compiled from reports submitted by Master Gardener Leaders

PUBLIC EDUCATION STATISTICS:

PROJECTS: EIGHT TOTAL

Clients: 667 adults----154 children

SCHOOL GARDENS: THIRTY-TWO TOTAL
(FIFTEEN NEW IN 2017)

Clients: 683 adults----5,690 children

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:

Clients: 803 (No Flower Show in 2017)

TOTAL CENTRAL REGION REACH:

Clients: 3,389 adults --- 1,569 children

TOTAL FOOD DONATION:

1,642 lbs. grown by the Roger Williams Park Produce Donation Program, House of Hope and by individuals in their home gardens participating in Plant a Row for the Hungry. Food was donated to local soup kitchens and food pantries.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR INCLUDE:

PROVIDENCE SCHOOL GARDEN INITIATIVE

Through the School Garden Initiative (SGI), URI Cooperative Extension provided a range of services to elementary, middle and high schools interested in creating or enhancing existing school garden areas, connecting them to the school curriculum, and empowering teachers to use the school garden as a platform for instruction. A team of URI Master Gardeners participated in the SGI as trained School Garden Mentors, assisting schools to build greenhouses and gardens. Many of the lessons learned working at the district level will be applied to schools statewide in 2018.
In 2017, URI Cooperative Extension provided services to 20 schools in the Providence Public School District including:

1. Assemblage of school garden teams, planning of integrated garden programs and/or designed vegetable gardens, edible forest gardens and pollinator gardens;
2. Assistance with the acquisition of supplemental grants for garden materials and supplies to enhance support and sustainability of garden programs; and
3. In-garden professional development training session to increase teacher comfort with using garden as teaching platform.

**SEED TO TABLE SERIES WITH THE PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The Providence Public Library and the URI Master Gardener Program teamed up to conduct a pilot Seed to Table program for twenty people who lived or worked in Providence. Their experience ranged from very little veggie gardening knowledge to experienced gardeners who wanted to refine their skills and broaden their knowledge base. Several were teachers wanting to learn basic veggie gardening skills so they could pass that knowledge on to their students.

The program consisted of eight Saturday morning sessions of presentations about vegetable gardening including garden design and soil; square foot gardening and caring for the garden as well as five hands on gardening experiences at a community plot in the Roger Williams Community Garden. Attendees learned firsthand how to build a square foot garden, prepare the bed, plant seeds and plants, care for the garden, control pests and harvesting techniques.

Our URI Master Gardener team consisted of John Gaynor, Sandra Cook and Angela Deller who gave their presentations at the Providence Public Library; and Cyndee Fuller, Lynne Farr, Sandra Cook and Bill Baddeley who conducted the onsite education at the Roger Williams Park Community Garden plot.

**PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS (EXCERPTS FROM PROJECT LEADER REPORTS)**

**PRODUCE DONATION PROGRAM (PDP) AT ROGER WILLIAMS PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN**
Since 2011, the Community Garden in Roger Williams Park (RWP) has served as a hub in the community, connecting volunteers, gardeners and the public to each other and our local food system. With five workshops this year, URI Extension Master Gardeners planned and delivered a variety of topics to the public free of charge. Topics included pollinator conservation, biodiversity, soil conservation through the use of a hugelkultur bed and composting. Several of our clients have been the Providence Rescue Mission, St. Vincent DePaul Society, the Perspective Corp., Southside Land Trust and the Providence Public Library, the latter hosting five sessions of their Seed to Table program at our garden.

Also, Perspectives Corporation and their leaders had two plots in the Community Garden which we assisted. We taught 7 mentees and four supervisors to plant produce from seed and seedlings, watering, weeding, supporting plants, and harvesting. We continuously interacted with RWP Community gardeners in the same way and provided answers to their myriad questions. Several successes this year have been expanding the project to year-round gardening in the Roger Williams Park Botanical Center greenhouse where we are currently laying out and seeding our first crops. We also received an honorable mention as the Central Region’s Project of the Year.

ROGER WILLIAMS PARK BOTANICAL CENTER DISPLAY GARDENS

The Roger Williams Park Botanical Center (RWPBC) is part of the Providence Parks system. It is open to the public 6 days a week; and many opportunities exist to expand our outreach to the public. The RWPBC outdoor garden has a strong collection of New England native and other sustainable plants. Over 400 such plants were labeled with the Latin and common names, country of origin and the cultivar. No pesticides are used in the garden.

The RWPBC is a superb venue for workshops since the gardens offer the public ideas that they can implement in their home gardens. This project team held four Saturday workshops on such topics as the care and growing of roses, flower pressing, and gardening for the birds. Master Gardeners interact informally with visitors and share their passion for the garden, their knowledge about best gardening practices, and information about the plants. The volunteers also mentored 4-6 non-neurotypical young adults from Perspectives, teaching pruning techniques, how to plant a garden plot and other gardening skills. This is an area that could be expanded on in 2018.

Crew workers are always engaged in sharing information with each other. Decisions about plant removal, thinning and pruning are made collaboratively. New recruits work alongside veterans. Plants are researched and knowledge is shared. Research is done for new plants which are needed to fill in gaps in the garden, replace plants that we feel are too aggressive or create more diversity in the garden for color, texture, length of season bloom and educational interest.

SMITH’S CASTLE
We participate in three events held by the Castle Association each year. At each event, we staff a kiosk, offer soil testing and give garden tours. This year we used our main historic garden to talk about pollinator conservation. We showed that even formal gardens can contain many native plantings to support pollinators. We linked biodiversity as well. We focused on soil conservation and early IPM ideas in our Three Sisters gardens.

Our clients are the public who come to tour the house, families who attend the three festivals, and many school groups. We are currently working with a 4th grade class from Rocky Hill to design some interactive materials for children to use in the gardens. Their project theme is “Being Caretakers of History.” Their main goal will be to figure out ways that they can help the Castle in their mission to both preserve and share the site’s long history. The students will focus on the gardens later next year, working with us and the Tomaquag Museum to demonstrate how Native Americans were careful land stewards and what we can learn today from their practices.

DESOUDY SCHOOL GARDENS (EXCERPTS FROM SCHOOL GARDEN MENTOR REPORTS):

DELSESTO MIDDLE SCHOOL, PROVIDENCE
This year we designed and built a hybrid school-community garden on school grounds. DelSesto’s Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) Academy participated in the planning process, creating interdisciplinary lesson plans for the entire process. URI Extension staff assisted with grant applications that successfully raised over $10,000 for project. The school is committed to using the garden as a teaching platform for outdoor lessons.

HAMILTON ELEMENTARY, NORTH KINGSTOWN
Educational activities that took place in the Hamilton Elementary garden this year included:

- Soil testing class in the spring; and the students created teams where they took samples from different parts of the raised beds and dried the samples.
- Square foot gardens were created in 4 beds where participation could be maximized. Each student monitored their own square foot.
- 11 (grades 1-4) “square foot garden template creation” classes were conducted that would later be utilized for planting within the gardens.
- 11 (grades 1-4) “outdoor planting with square foot garden templates” classes were conducted. During this time students remembered how many seeds they needed by utilizing their templates and took temperature of soil to make sure seeds could be planted.
- 4th grade students collected soil for diagnosis as part of their soils component.
- 2nd graders came out to plant their Three Sister Garden. During that time they learned about companion planting and the connection to Native American Indians and Early European settlers.
- 3rd graders collected Black Swallowtail caterpillars that were feeding on the carrot plants in the garden and integrated them into their life cycle component.
• An ambassador program was utilized to connect 5th graders with kindergarten classes. During this outdoor lesson, 5th graders helped kindergarteners plant the pole beans in the Three Sister Garden.
• A sign-up sheet for volunteer families was created for watering, weeding and harvesting throughout the summer months.
• Summer campers also watered, weeded, reseeded and harvested garden beds.
• Fall Harvest: Grades K-5 (17 classes) came out to observe their square foot, see what changed, and to harvest any fruits or vegetables at that time.
• A Fall Harvest Lunch was provided for all students. Reading the menu, they observed what things were growing in the gardens and how those ingredients were used in the lunch menu.

Gladstone Elementary, Cranston

Educational Activities included year-round afterschool program with 3 season in the school year and a camp during summer vacation. Each afterschool green thumb club meets for about 10 weeks each season to learn from the garden. After relocating the garden and overcoming ongoing issues with the “greenhouse” (igloo style structure) we built 6 raised beds. We had a lot of help from their middle school garden group and its mentors in helping to build and support the garden and surrounding fence.

The students learned a lot of basic plant knowledge as they had major construction and remaking over the space and new beds this year. We utilized the Junior Master Garden (Eat, Grow, Learn & GO) curriculum pieces along with some farm to table lessons.

Kennedy Elementary School, Providence

We designed and planted a perennial pollinator garden and a shady outdoor classroom space with families and School Garden Mentors. The garden is used as part of the garden club during the school day and is accessible during recess time as well. Teachers will be working to integrate the garden into their curriculum using the “School Garden Science” publication.

Mount Pleasant High School, Providence

URI provided technical assistance for assembly of a high tunnel kit and built the structure with School Garden Mentors. The high tunnel will be utilized by the Birch Academy, providing vocational and life skills training opportunities for students with mental and physical disabilities. We assisted with grant applications that successfully raised approx. $3,000 for the project.

Waddington Elementary, East Providence
Educational activities that took place included the structures of life, life cycles, insect study, pollinator plants, host plants, parts of plants, growing herbs, making mini greenhouses, trying kale soup and kale chips, bug hunts, detrivore hunts, leaf hunts, five senses and harvesting.

The 4th grade conducted a biodiversity audit. The school garden occupies 1% of the total school area, but has the most biodiversity! 5th grade studied bees and designed bee "ace" cards. The students learned biodiversity, life cycles, habitats, parts of plants, identifying insects, parts of insects, healthy eating, food webs and chains. We also teamed up with other school groups to study creek that lines school property and made permanent anti-litter signs with student artwork. 4th graders learned stewardship by cleaning out creek trash.