Northern Region Report
Submitted by Betsy Polhemus, Northern Region Coordinator
Compiled from reports submitted by Master Gardener Leaders

Public Education Statistics:

Projects: Eight Total

- Clients: 750 adults --- 945 children

School Gardens: Six Total

- Clients: 139 adults --- 804 children

Public Presentations:

- Clients: 557
- Presentations: 30

Total northern region clients: 2,261 adults --- 1749 children

Total food donation:

- 600 lbs grown by the Good Shepherd Community Garden, Seekonk Meadows and individual gardeners via the Plant a Row program. Food was donated to local soup kitchens and food pantries.

Highlights from the Year Include:

Captain Isaac Paine Elementary

The school garden at Isaac Paine Elementary in Foster, Rhode Island is remarkable in its use as a teaching platform across grades and disciplines. The garden is serving as an authentic learning environment for geology, math, life sciences, physical science, art and horticulture. Our School Garden Mentors, Rebecca Payette, a URI Master Gardener who is also a teacher at the school, and Ed Haynes, have contributed to the following:

- The third grade team uses a Foss Science kit on plant development to focus on
hydroponics with growing peas. They decided to compare the growth of a pea seed using both hydroponics and soil.

- Grade 4 science classes used the gardens with their Foss energy kit where they tested the soil and other minerals and objects for magnetic qualities.
- Title 1 math groups applied their math skills by finding the area and perimeter of the raised beds and then gridding them out to help with planning and planting the beds.
- 5th grade science classes explored solutions and mixtures in the courtyard. They made mixtures from items in the courtyard and tested their concoctions. This year they would like to tie it further into what is in the garden soil and what needs it has.
- The art teacher brings several of her grade levels out for nature drawing/journaling and uses plant cuttings and flowers to press and incorporate in other ways to her art lessons.
- Throughout the school year 25 5th graders participated in a Garden Club. Just before Earth Day the Club members helped to sort seed packets and create Earth packs to share with all the students at the school. They included planting instructions, as well as the URI planting calendar. The garden club also helped to create rock plant markers for the donated plants we got from URIMG greenhouse.

- This year they constructed row covers which helped them extend the season and fall harvest. Several groups of students from grades 3-5 were a big help in putting the gardens to bed in fall and prepping the beds for planting in spring. A Master Gardener visited in the spring to teach the students about soil. They learned the importance of soil testing and how to amend the soil to grow a strong plant. They learned the importance of proper watering, as well as spreading natural mulch in the perennials beds to conserve water and suppress weeds. They learned to identify several types of weeds in the gardens, as well as how to properly remove and dispose of them.

**Project Highlights (Excerpts from Project Leader Reports):**
DAGGETT FARM
Although the activities at Daggett Farm begin early in the spring in the greenhouse, it is when activities move outside that Master Gardeners begin to interact with the public as they leisurely walk through their many raised beds. A formal three-part lecture series was offered to the community this year which included talks on pollinators, gypsy moths and composting. These talks, held in the gardens, were all very well attended. Additionally, an ongoing demonstration of soil conservation was provided in the garden where soil is sifted, debris removed, and the soil amended before being returned to the gardens. This year a reclamation project was begun in a garden planted many years ago. Information about the historical nature of this garden is being researched. Daggett Farm is successfully partnered with the Arc of Blackstone, a social services organization in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and with the City of Pawtucket. Master Gardeners at Daggett Farm advertise their programs through the use of flyers, the Valley Breeze, URI Facebook, and through the Arc of Blackstone.

GLOCESTER HERITAGE GARDENS: REUBEN MASON HOUSE MEDICINAL GARDEN AND JOB ARMSTRONG STORE

Two historical garden, one at the Dr. Reuben Mason House and the other at the Job Armstrong Store, are wonderful examples of gardening in the 18th century.

Dr. Reuben Mason House had their 6th Open House and Garden Day in June which included a kiosk, guided tours and soil testing. Job Armstrong Store had their first Open Store and Garden Day in September. These two events drew many visitors to the gardens where Master Gardeners highlighted their efforts to conform to an earlier way of life where principles of land stewardship was a natural endeavor. The interspersing of vegetables, herbs and pollinators was demonstrated. Watering only those plants that are newly planted or wilting was discussed as a means for water conservation. This year a new web site, glocesterheritagegardens.org, was developed integrating the history of the gardens and communicating information about current developments and events. Communication at this project, via the leader’s emails to all MGs and this new web site, is outstanding. This project is successfully partnered with the Glocester Historical Society.

CUMBERLAND MONASTERY
Master Gardeners met at the Monastery twice a week this spring, summer and fall, at their gazebo garden. The public regularly visits the garden throughout the week; and when Master Gardeners are present there is an opportunity for unhurried interaction. Questions are answered, discussions ensue, and people often leave the garden with a plant that they were particularly interested in. One major focus of the Master Gardeners at the gazebo this year was pollinators. Three classes were held for the community concerning pollinators, and new pollinator plants were planted in the garden. Additionally
the public was taught about land stewardship. Planting vegetables among the pollinators was done for the first time this year to maximize garden space and ensure pollination of the vegetables, and deferring fall clean up to the spring was discussed giving bees and insects a place to over-winter in the garden. Each Saturday soil testing was offered and was very well attended. The group uses the local newspaper and the Valley Breeze to advertise their activities. The Monastery garden is successfully partnered with the Town of Cumberland.

**GOOD SHEPHERD COMMUNITY GARDEN**

This is a community garden in urban Pawtucket supported by Master Gardeners. A demonstration bed was installed this year for teaching and produce donation. Eighty pounds of produce was donated to the Good Shepherd Food Pantry. Regular demonstrations were provided in the garden; and five more formal talks were given there to introduce and emphasize planting a garden with a second crop in mind, composting, and hand watering. These principles of land stewardship are key to gardening in a small urban site. This garden partners with the Good Shepard Church which provides the land for the community garden and a conduit for communication to church members.

**JOHN HUNT HOUSE HERITAGE GARDENS**

Three gardens from the 1700’s and Victorian age have been maintained and used to educate over 200 people this summer. Regular tours of the museum and gardens and seven formal talks were provided. Land stewardship principles were emphasized through on-site soil testing, planting native pollinators, planning a second harvest and hand watering. The successful partnership with the Historical Society provides regular garden help and an opportunity to interact with a steady stream of visitors to the museum.
Seekonk Meadows

This land, located on 9 acres, was reclaimed and turned into a community gathering space. Three sustainable gardens (Library Foundation Garden, Sharon’s Memorial Garden and the Gazebo Garden) were created there; and Master Gardeners provide regularly scheduled in-garden talks and demonstrations. Eight programs about land stewardship and best gardening practices were held this year. Topics discussed included gardening without pesticides and dividing plants to maximize use of garden space and plant health. A Master Gardener kiosk was provided at the gardens in June during their Summer Kick-Off Celebration. The MGs researched, installed and maintained a new Xeriscape garden this summer demonstrating best practices in water conservation. This year MGs worked with the town as well to repair the irrigation system at the Library Foundation Garden.

Slater Mill

Multiple gardens at Slater Mill demonstrate how people lived off the land in the 17th and 18th century. The gardens include herbs, vegetables, medicinal plants, and plants for dyes. Master Gardeners focused this year on principles of land stewardship, a perfect fit in this historic site. Pest elimination through hand picking (no pesticides), use of compost to reduce use of fertilizer, the integration of native pollinators throughout the garden, and the no-till approach to garden preparation and maintenance were demonstrated and on display in the garden. Plants are labeled for easy identification. Master Gardener trained docents from the Slater Mill Historical Society lead tours of the Mill and gardens on a daily basis as requested. This partnership with the Society provides Master Gardeners, during their twice-weekly workdays, an opportunity to interact with these visitors.

Desourdy School Gardens (Excerpts from School Garden Mentor Reports):

Mount Saint Charles Academy, Woonsocket

Our theme is recycle, reuse, reduce. Students who work in our garden are a part of the Environmental Club. We planted our seeds in used yogurt containers, we made our signs from can lids, and we reduced the number of pots needed to purchase by reusing last year’s materials. Students planted most of the vegetables and flowering plants themselves this year. We took part in the URI Bee study with Dr. John Taylor and also examined insects collected and discussed good bugs/bad bugs. We discussed different problems such as blight and weeds and watering techniques. Students planned and maintained an herb garden, butterfly garden and a new system of mammoth sunflowers combined
with cucumbers. We were featured in the URI Master Gardener Programs’ School Garden Mentor video where our high school students discussed the garden’s connection to their career path.

Willett Elementary, Attleboro, MA

Prior to spring planting, we held a School Garden Speaker Series. We had a beekeeper give a talk about bees and pollinators and how kids can help keep them healthy. We also had a URI Master Gardener, Rusty Morrow, come in and give a talk and demonstration on composting. All kids (K-4) participated. One week we had a nutritionist from our local YMCA giving a talk in every classroom about eating nutritious foods, including fresh vegetables. We plan to have a farmer, ecologist, and possibly a soil expert join us during the "off" season this winter. We always have planting days with every classroom in the spring, as well as days when we invite parents to help us prep the space. We ran the Summer Garden Club again. This is when children and their families sign up to care for the garden for a week at a time all summer. In return, they get to enjoy the harvests of food and flowers. We have a new program in which students can elect garden time (e.g. gardening tasks, observations, scavenger hunts) as a reward for good behavior.