2017 URI Master Gardener Program
SOUTHERN REGION COORDINATOR REPORT
THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
2017 SOUTHERN REGION REPORT
Submitted by Tom Hoagland
Compiled from reports submitted by Master Gardener Leaders

PUBLIC EDUCATION STATISTICS:

PROJECTS: ELEVEN TOTAL

Clients: 1123 adults --- 234 children

SCHOOL GARDENS: THIRTEEN TOTAL

Clients: 376 adults --- 1,494 children

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:

Clients: 392-2,000

Presentations: 18

KIOSKS:

Clients: 346

Events: 17 (not counting farmers’ markets)

SOIL TESTING:

Clients: 305

Events: 74

Tests: 529
TOTAL SOUTHERN REGION REACH:

Clients: 1,499 adults --- 1,728 children

TOTAL FOOD DONATION:

1,950 lbs. from the East Farm Demonstration Garden and East Farm Giving Garden. Food was donated to local soup kitchens and food pantries.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR INCLUDE:

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS (EXCERPTS FROM PROJECT LEADER REPORTS)

Kettle Pond Fish and Wildlife Center

The newest project in the Southern Region is the Native Plant Garden at Kettle Pond Fish and Wildlife Center, located at 50 Bend Road, Charlestown, RI. Over the last 8 months the design for the garden, finalized by MG Leader David Vissoe, designer Tysh McGrail and US Fish and Wildlife Service Manager Janis Nepshinsky, was installed by placing cardboard and newspaper over open space at the side of the Center, topped with quality topsoil and, after Hope Leeson's RI grown plants arrived on June 24th, planted by a dedicated team of Master Gardeners, USFWS volunteers, and a professional wildlife biologist. Initially, the plants struggled under the summer sun but were saved by mulch and constant watering by Fish and Wildlife staff and Master Gardeners and other team members. Nearly all survived and while some just slept and a few crept but none leapt in this first year! In September, the garden became an official URI Master Gardener Project. A great team has evolved over time with members coming from all over Rhode Island to learn to weed, plant, edge beds, collect seeds, make plant plots, and plan and install interpretive signage and educate visitors. It’s been a great and exciting year for this new garden and the team of volunteers; many events and presentations are planned for 2018, hopefully involving schools and other group tours. There’s a lot more to be done— come join us or just plan a visit!

Wilcox Park

This project has begun a grant-funded partnership with Annie White of Nectar Landscape Design Studio LLC out of Burlington VT, who will be acting in a consultant capacity for the New England Wild Flower Society moving forward into 2018.
NEWFS will design a proposed layout for a new pollinator garden to be installed during the summer of 2018 at the park as well as all the herbaceous plants. All plants will be grown by NEWFS from seed and will be locally sourced wherever possible. NEWFS will conduct two workshops associated with the project and provide the presenters. One will be a two-hour lecture on planting for pollinators. The meeting room in the Wilcox Library is an excellent choice for the lecture, with a capacity of 150 or so. The other workshop will be held at the garden site on the day of the planting. Wilcox Park workers will handle the site preparation which will be limited to sod removal and soil amendments.

Our project through Master Gardener Program will be able to supplement the plants provided by NEWFS to expand the garden with some shrubs. The intention will be to utilize RIWPS grown plants. These NEWFS workshops will be included in the 2018 listing of Wilcox Park/Westerly Library workshops via the Project’s internal newsletter and continuing education calendar (over 600 people). It will also be marketed externally as an event listing on the URI calendar, our websites, social media, and in our monthly email blasts (over 12,400 people).

Public Outreach for 2017 included:
- Insects in the Garden, Friend, Foe, Escargot; Speaker: Pam Gilprin
- Coastal Lawn Care; Speaker: Vanessa Venturini
- How to read your extensive soil test report from UMASS or UCONN, more about soil, soil testing and soil amendment additives; Speaker: Dr. Robert Rafka
- Controlling Wildlife in the Garden and Landscape Plantings; Speaker: Michael Lapisky
- Multiple Champion Tree and Native Plant tours, participation in docent tours, kiosk, soil testing and workshops continue to expand

Charlestown Schoolhouse

Highlights for 2017 included Spring on Earth Day, with a class for children that taught them about how plants grow, by building “make and take” mini greenhouses to plant at home. In May we held a hands-on class at the Senior Center, making kitchen counter herb gardens. Throughout the summer, as visitors enjoyed a constant profusion of colorful blooms, we shared the migration path and challenges of the Monarch butterflies, giving information and free packets of milkweed seeds to all! September’s wildly successful “Fairy Houses and Gnome Huts” brought 3 generations of enthusiasts together, building whatever their hearts desired out of a huge selection of natural materials collected locally by our Master Gardener team. In November a seminar on Fall planting for Spring blooms wrapped up the year.

One particularly poignant moment occurred in mid-summer: with blooms at their peak, a couple from Pennsylvania was inspired to stop and admire. An avid gardener, the women shared stories with Sharon who was working that day. As time passed the visitor told her that the next day was the one-year anniversary of her son’s passing after a 3-year battle with cancer. She said, “You don’t know how much this time spent really means to me—being here.” Sharon gave her a plant to take back to her garden. When Sharon told the story to our group, we decided to plant a Hydrangea in the son Aaron’s memory. Sharon remarked, “It is humbling to be made aware of the joy and inspiration our little garden may bring to many.

Public Outreach for 2017 was conducted monthly with Thursdays in the Garden and included: Pollinators: Bees, Butterflies and Birds; Color for Late Summer Garden; Hydrangeas and Hibiscus; and Putting Your Garden to Bed.
East Farm Demonstration Garden

This year the focus of our outreach was to increase diversity among our visitors by attracting more minority population adults and children in order to learn and share with each other. Our connection to the Baptist church in Johnston brought 20 children and 4 adults to the garden. The Color Me Healthy program that was highlighted recently in The Dirt newsletter brought in many minority visitors and several foreign families living in Graduate Village. Future planned events in this category include a Veteran’s tour on November 1 in an attempt to help with individuals working to reenter society after homelessness or addiction, bringing more seniors with early stages of Alzheimer disease to use visits to the garden as therapy to engage long-term memory, and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction events.

Some 2017 successes included: achieving an all-time harvest record of 1500 pounds of produce for donation including late carrots and turnips harvested in November; rebuilding the fence around the garden in cooperation with Rudi’s Rangers; bringing more native plants inside the garden; growing new, different and improved varieties of vegetables; more companion planting; forging a stronger relationship with Dr. Alm of the URI faculty; installing a native pollinator garden alongside Dr. Alm’s office; more emphasis on native and pollinator plants throughout the entire East farm property; and improving the centerpiece pergola in the garden by growing vining miniature gourds on netting strung around the perimeter.

4,200 pounds of apples were donated to local food pantries this year from the East Farm Apple orchard. This includes the Rhode Island Food Bank, The Jonnycake Center, St. Peter’s Pantry in Narragansett, Interfaith Food Cupboard in East Greenwich, and Rhody Outpost (at URI).

We hosted a number of community picks (including many Master Gardeners and interns), Girl Scout troops, school groups, and a huge crew of international grad students from URI who picked for themselves and their food bank.

Canonchet Farm

Friends of Canonchet Farm held 38 Habitat Restoration work sessions where 164 volunteers worked 1,502 hours and learned:
- to identify invasive and native plants
- best practices for removal and disposal of invasive plants
- best practices for working with the hazard of poison ivy and for ways to avoid tick bites
- proper care and maintenance of garden tools

Our clients are the general public. Our work crews include many Master Gardeners and interested local members of the public. Friends of Canonchet Farm has a website, http://canonchet.org, where photos, events and work session schedules are posted. FOCF is also on Facebook.

We held four very successful work sessions building our relationship with the University
cooperating and training URI student groups during which 120 students worked and learned about the Habitat Restoration project at Canonchet Farm.

- November 13, 2016: 45 members of the URI Women’s Rowing Team worked on the Canonchet Farm trail.
- March 25, 2017: 10 URI Alpha Phi Omega students cleared invasive plants along the trail.
- April 8, 2017: 11 URI Conservation Biology students removed invasive plants on Lake Canonchet and Little Neck Pond.
- September 30, 2017: 54 members of the URI Women’s Rowing Team worked on the Canonchet Farm trail.

**Desourdy School Gardens (excerpts from school garden mentor reports)**

**Compass**

This was the first year we had involvement with Compass and it is still a developing partnership. Their school is a unique one because it is entirely farming, gardening, and environmentally geared so all of their education is based in this area. We simply advise when needed and volunteer on projects as we are invited. The students learn a tremendous amount from their gardens and greenhouse. They have garden studies in all of their classes whether it be science, math or literature; their entire education is farm-based.

This year we had two meetings to discuss the Master Gardeners’ involvement in the school. We discussed the school’s needs and how the Master Gardener mentor program works. We were able to view their gardens and greenhouses and address areas where they had concerns. Sharon Bridge advised them on care for their lavender labyrinth. We discussed the native plant gardens and some suggestions for their shade area. Kayla Hetherington was able to spend some time with the children as they planted some native plants in garden beds they designed outside of one of their classroom buildings. The children enjoyed digging the holes, aerating, and adding compost before putting the plants in the ground. Many questions were answered that day! On an average day at Compass, the children are in the gardens or greenhouses often learning farming and conservation.

**Hope Valley**

During map making, the students are asked to sketch a garden map of the raised beds, their contents and the surrounding garden area. The winning map gets distributed as part of the season’s gardening packet, which is most important to our summer gardeners. Students and gardening families logged their gardening tasks and harvest numbers. Garden prep got the garden area cleaned and ready for seed and seedling planting. Maintenance included weeding, watering, raking, trimming and harvesting. Clean-up happened once all veggies were done for the season. Students also learn how to identify plants, which surprisingly is difficult for many. In the summer, students range from pre-school to high school.

Students learned the entire process of how to have a productive vegetable garden and what it means to be of community service. We give back to our own community. All of the harvest is donated to the needy and elderly of Hope Valley. The specific distribution network is partnered with folks from the First Baptist Church next door.

**Richmond**
During the 2016-17 school year, several classes utilized the greenhouse to do gardening experiments based on their Gem's Net Science Curriculum. The Richmond Goes Green Event was an all School Greenhouse Event to introduce the parents and their children to the greenhouse. Students participated in various stations. Planting a pumpkin patch, sorting seeds, participating in a coloring station on the parts of a plant, planting individual pea and bean seeds to take home, and participating in a scavenger hunt focused on learning about pollinators as well as the difference between annuals and perennials. This event was featured in the School Garden Mentor Video.

During the Staff Orientation Day, refreshments were served in the greenhouse; and teachers came in before their staff meeting to see the greenhouse and gardens. Also each week over the summer months, parents and their children took turns watering the school garden, learning about the importance of monitoring the weather for rainfall and watering when it has not rained.

Dunn’s Corners
Each grade incorporates a different aspect of curriculum into their garden space: Insects, Native American companion planting, water cycle, pollination, seeds. Children are enjoying planting, watering, tending and harvesting. They have ownership of the garden and see it as part of their school environment. Their ongoing enthusiasm is the greatest success.

West Vine Elementary

We had several school and community activities this year. One was Fall Festival at which children were able to decorate and do activities in the garden. Another was Winterfest, when we decorated the garden with white lights and showcased art projects and poems. We also collected scarves and hats for the local Pawcatuck neighborhood center. Spring time we had our garden opening where we invited our local town leadership Board of Education and other invited guests. The children worked on flower hats and sang songs with the music teacher. We also had art in the garden where children worked with their art teacher and displayed their artwork for one day for the community to come and see. Our committee worked with the Pequot Sepos Nature Center and jointly conducted many curricular-based activities in the garden, directly working with teachers and students.