

ABOUT THE MASON SYCAMORE CREEK GARDEN CLUB – EMG PROJECT SHARING FORUM – 1ST PLACE AWARD

The Extension Master Gardener Project Sharing Forum is a program developed to recognize and share the wonderful Extension Master Gardener (EMG) volunteer projects occurring throughout Michigan. The program coincides with the annual Master Gardener College and is designed to share project ideas and “how to’s” with fellow Extension Master Gardeners across the state.

Entries to the EMG Project Sharing Forum demonstrate meaningful learning occurred for the project audience and met one of the following criteria: Community (Beautification or Quality of Life), Environmental Stewardship, Food (Community Gardens, General Gardens, Produce for Donations), Outreach Events, Program Support, Youth, and/or be an Innovative Project (projects outside of other categories) run one seasonal schedule and be simple to replicate. A goal of this forum is to share unique ideas and programs that can be replicated by other EMG groups with a step-by-step “how to” guide on the creation of each project. The Top 3 posters received recognition at Master Gardener College, signage to display at the project site, and highlighted on the MSU Extension Master Gardener website, the MMGA website and newsletter.

For 2018 the Mason Sycamore Creek Garden Club’s Youth Garden Club and the Sunflower Learning Center took 1st Place and was awarded Volunteer Project Sharing Forum Project at the MSU Extension Master Gardener Forum was the. This project was a vision by Sharon Rodgers (Treasurer) and creatively designed with fellow club members Diann Jackman (Club President) Mary Backus, and Jennifer Rodgers built and supported by the garden club members. Master Gardener and Youth Garden Club volunteer, Laura Grainger joined the Youth Garden Club in 2018, presented and submitted the Project Sharing Forum as part of her Master Gardener certification. The MSU Master Gardener College event was in September 2018 at Wayne Community College in Belleville, Michigan. A dedication of the garden plaque that was presented to our club as the first prize recipient was held on October 20th at 9:00 a.m. during a Youth Garden Club event behind the Historic Pink Schoolhouse. Two \$50 gift cards were given as part of the award to Meijer and Lowes.

The Sunflower Youth Garden Club & Sunflower House Learning Center program was organized in the spring of 2018 and was sponsored by the Mason Sycamore Creek Garden Club (MSCGC). It is a community program for 2nd through 5th grade youth. The mission of the program is to cultivate healthy children, families and community through educational programs, the profound act of connecting youth and families with gardening and environmental conservation issues. The Sunflower House Learning Center was made possible in partnership with the City of Mason, Mason Historical Society and many other supporters established on the grounds of the 1854 Historic Pink School House in Mason, Michigan.

The Sunflower Youth Garden Club & Sunflower House Learning Center is currently a free community-based program to create indoor as well as outdoor learning experiences for 23 (up to 30) youths. The goal of the program was outreach to youth population in our community at an age appropriate for encouraging hands-on activities in the areas of gardening, environmental awareness, and everyday application – seed to table. By offering and encouraging families to learn and share their experiences together, we believe participants in this program will learn about planting the right plants in the right place, the role of pollinators, soil and water and its conservation, harvesting, and preparing for the next growing season.

The original budget set-aside for the Sunflower Youth Garden Club & Sunflower House Learning Center was made possible through an initial project grant from the Mason Sycamore Creek Garden Club (MSCGC) for \$500. The project also received support through collaborative financial, “in-kind” contributions from garden club members and the community including a two-rain barrel grant from the Ingham Conservation District. Estimated start-up and implementation program costs was \$3,000.

The Sunflower Youth Garden Club & Sunflower House Learning Center methods of outreach include:

- ☀ Presentations from the MSU Extension Master Gardener program, Ingham Conservation District, Mason Historical Society, Michigan Historical Museum, Mason Historical Society, Red Ridge Honey, Bunker Hill Bee Farm, Beck’s Greenhouse Flower Shop
- ☀ Marketing through flyers with Mason Public elementary schools, Mason Public Library, Mason Area Chamber of Commerce, word-of-mouth, social media, local businesses and events

- ☀ Educational Sessions: One-hour “hands-on” sessions, twice monthly

Results of the Sunflower Youth Garden Club & Sunflower House Learning Center include:

- ☀ Establishment of the outdoor sunflower classroom (circular sunflower garden structure, three raised flower beds, pollinator flower beds)
- ☀ Participation from 23 youths in grades 2nd through 5th along with their parents/guardians
- ☀ Demonstrated Seed-to-Table gardening
- ☀ Provided education on pollinator’s role in food growth and interaction in our food chain
- ☀ Promoted soil conservation, composting, lasagna gardening
- ☀ Promoted soil and watershed conservation
- ☀ Installed two rain barrels to demonstration water conservation
- ☀ Provided information about ecological balance and role of oxygen
- ☀ Demonstration on tree planting with free seedling take-away
- ☀ Participated in National Garden Club Incentive to teach youth about rainbow gardening
- ☀ Registration with National Garden Club’s “Million Youth Pollinator Garden” Program
- ☀ Constructed outdoor organic learning center from timbers, rope, surrounded with annuals, sunflowers, and three instructional raised vegetable beds (cucumbers, green beans, tomatoes, onions, peppers, potatoes, herbs).

INVOLVED EMGs & PROJECT SUPPORT

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| Sharon Rodgers | Co-Chair, Youth Coordinator, MSCGC Treasurer |
| Diann Jackman | Co-Chair, Youth Coordinator, MSCGC President, MSU-EXT MG |
| Mary Backus | Co-Chair, Youth Coordinator, MSCGC Member |
| Coni Barlow | Youth Volunteer, MSCGC Member, MSU-EXT MG |
| Brenda Hershberger | Youth Volunteer, MSCGC Member, MSU-EXT MG |
| Jennifer Rodgers | Youth Volunteer, MSCGC Member |
| Connie Doss | Youth Volunteer, MSCGC Member |
| Laura Grainger | Youth Volunteer, MSCGC Member, MSU-EXT MG Candidate |

PARTNERS & PROGRAM PRESENTERS

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| Michelle Marcotte | Director of Mason Public Library |
| Elizabeth Hude | Community Development Director, City of Mason |
| Michelle Beloskur | Director, Ingham Conservation District |
| Rachel Clark | Michigan Historical Museum & Mason Historical Society |
| Doug Klein | Mason Area Chamber of Commerce |
| Diane Brown | MSU-Extension Office |
| Donna Craft | Bunker Hill Bee Farm |
| Chris Greenshields | Red Ridge Honey |
| Gary Beck | Beck’s Green House Flower Shop |
| Kendra & Trevor Patterson | Mason Barnwood & Salvage |
| Don Heck | Wolverine Engineers & Surveyors |