



*Master Gardener News*



**2021 Officers:**

- Deb Buechner, President
- Connie Wilsnack, Vice Pres.
- Linda Haddix, Secretary
- Ann Marie Fuerst, Treasurer
- Kim Leizinger, Reporter
- Judi Benade, Reporter

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**Columbia County MGV Activities**

- Now** Enroll in MGV Program for 2021
- 3-20** LGGG – Virtually – 9:30 am to 1:45 pm
- 3-20** First Day of Spring
- 3-23** MGV Meeting – 6:00 pm via Zoom
- 3-31** Last day for MGV Enrollment for 2021
- 4-1** April Fool's Day – Don't get caught!
- 4-6** Election Day
- 4-15** Tax Day
- 4-27** MGV Meeting – 6:00 pm Admin Bldg, Rooms 113,114, 115

*Note from the President ~*

By the time you read this, Spring will have sprung! Daylight Savings Time, First Day of Spring, St. Patrick's Day, the Spring religious holidays Easter and Passover, and (drumroll) "Let's Get Green and Growing" all are good indicators that soon we will be able to get outside and enjoy warmer weather and longer hours of daylight.

We may already be able to see perennial plants from last year's gardens and flower beds peak out of the ground, anxious to grow. There may be some angst to see if all our favorites lived through the harsh cold spell we experienced in mid-February. We do these things every year, but each Spring it feels new and exciting.

I hope all your favorites made it through the winter and that you are able to acquire all the things you hope to grow this new season.

Deb Buechner  
President



**Columbia County Master Gardener's Association**

**Minutes - February 23, 2021**

In attendance were: Jane Breuer, Terry Socha, Rita Socha, Judi Benade, Milissha Meicher, Ann Marie Fuerst, Connie Wilsnack, Marie Rohrbacher, Deb Buechner, Len Betley, Kate Rietmann, Ardyce Piehl, Bill Damm, Jean Damm, Becky Gutzman, Pat Trapp, Donna McElroy, Jane Considine, Lila Waldman, Marcy Read, Linda Haddix and George Koepp.

The meeting was called to order by President Deb Buechner at 6:01p.m.

Introductions were made, with a question asked - "What seeds have you started yet"??

The secretary's report was presented. Motions were moved, seconded and passed to accept the report.

The Treasurer's report was also presented. Ann Marie reported she's received dues from all but three MGVS, two of which have dropped out and one with no response. The only deposits which were made were the dues, with no expenses reported. A motion made by Jean with second made by Rita to accept the report.

Becky asked how many dues paying members we have on our list. Ann Marie stated 35. Our annual check will be sent to Byron Hacker at the state level in the very near future.

**Old Business:**

There has not been news of our tax exempt status as of yet, but since it is tax time, this is not unusual. George mentioned that it is a good thing that we now can post "inc." behind our name. We can potentially sign agreements, such as for a bus tour, etc. George talked to Mike at the UW, who said it was a great decision by our group and other county MGVS will possibly do the same. It's a great decision to be recognized as an entity in Wisconsin!

"Let's Get Green and Growing" - All should have received the registration information by now, with 84 reservations already received. Becky did post the information on Facebook as well. Becky will also post more on our speakers very soon. Next planning meeting is March 1<sup>st</sup> via Zoom. Things are coming along nicely. George made some posters and some are available for pick up if anyone is interested in posting. It was mentioned that Pardeeville Garden Club has forwarded the information to their members.

Someone mentioned the Eau Claire MGVS have posted they will have their annual session for four consecutive weekends.

**New Business:**

George reminded all to log into the UW system reporting system before **March 31<sup>st</sup>**. There are a few questions to answer, that's it. This is the same website where hours are reported. If you can get it to report hours, you are already registered. **DO IT SOON!!**

On April 1<sup>st</sup> "Onboarding Light" will be presented by the Master Gardener Program and information will be shared with us. We are encouraged to participate in this session as 10 hours of continuing education hours can be claimed.

Master Gardener's Week will be April 5 through 8, 2021. More information will be included in the next newsletter.

Our annual Directory will be released soon - let George know of any changes.

Pat Trapp asked about our hour requirement for this year. The volunteer requirement for 2021 will be waived; please report 0-24 hours online. The 10 hour CE requirement is still in effect.

If anyone has any suggestions for meetings or subject matter, get ahold of George. He's received a few so far, so keep 'em coming! We must still follow state standards, however.

It is possible that in the near future we may be able to get together in person as things lighten up with COVID issues. We shall see...

A motion was made to adjourn by Judi, with a second by Pat. Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

After the meeting, a video made by Janell Wehr, Horticulture Educator in Marathon and Wood Counties, on Starting Seeds Indoors was presented.

Submitted by Linda Haddix  
Secretary

**Columbia County Master Gardener Treasurer Report  
February 23, 2021**

Bank Balance January 31, 2021 \$4,038.44

Deposits since last meeting in Jan.

Jan. 27,2021 90.00

Jan. 29,2021 45.00

Feb. 3, 2021 15.00

Feb. 8, 2021 60.00

Total: \$ 210.00

All deposits are from MGVS dues for 2021

Expenses: 0

Current Balance as of 23 Feb, 2021 \$4,248.44

# Columbia County Master Gardener Volunteers

March 23, 2021 - Zoom On-line

## Meeting Agenda

Call the Meeting to Order (Deb)

Secretary's Report, February 23, 2021 (Linda)

Treasurer's Report (Ann Marie)

Introductions

### Old Business

Update on Tax exempt status

LGGG

### New Business

2021 MGV Enrollment – Use the online reporting system (ORS) before March 31

“Onboarding Light” – will be shared after April 1 – will count for 10 hrs of CE

Master Gardener Volunteer Week: April 5-8, 2021

2021 Volunteer opportunities – Projects and Chairpersons

Other

Next Meeting: April 27, 2021 - “In-Person” and on-line. Admin Bldg - Rooms 113, 114, 115

Adjournment

March Program: “Mason Bees”, Judi Benade

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**MASTER GARDENER**  
**Volunteer**  
**WEEK**  
**April 5-9 2021**



**Monday:** Shoutouts, emailed thank you including info on perks for enrolling, statewide project announcement

**Tuesday:** Shoutouts, Webinar 6:30 pm  
(Susan Carpenter, Pollinator Plants)

**Wednesday:** Shoutouts and Thank a MGV Day

**Thursday:** Shoutouts, Webinar  
(WiBee lab group, time tbd)

**Friday:** Shoutouts

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## SHORELINE GARDENING FOR HEALTHY LAKES MARCH 18TH, 6:00-7:30PM

Healthy shorelines provide many benefits, especially when it comes to keeping our lakes free from pollution and places where we want to live and play. In this webinar, you will learn what rain gardens are and how this special type of low maintenance garden can filter pollutants, recharge the groundwater and reduce pollution of local waterways. You will also learn the attributes of intact, healthy shorelines, and what services they provide, including habitat, improved water quality and decreased erosion.

This is a free event, but registration is required. Please use the following link to register: <https://go.wisc.edu/663c99>

Once registered, a connection link to the webinar will be sent the *day before the event*.

### **Presented by:**

**Paul Skawinski** - Lakes Outreach Specialist and Statewide Coordinator of the Wisconsin Citizen Lake Monitoring Network. He teaches Aquatic Botany at UW-Stevens Point, is the author and photographer of the popular field guide Aquatic Plants of the Upper Midwest and is also an avid native plant gardener.

**Patrick Goggin** - Extension Lakes team. He helps lake organizations with their community goals, shares lake management tools and resources for aquatic ecosystems, and helps people in gaining a better understanding and appreciation for the native flora of Wisconsin lakeshores. He works for the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point's College of Natural Resources and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension.

Hosted by UW-Madison, Division of Extension, Walworth County, in partnership with local, regional and statewide organizations. Questions can be directed to Julie Hill, [julie.hill@wisc.edu](mailto:julie.hill@wisc.edu)



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## Planting Last Year's Vegetable Seed

By Judi Benade

The big upsurge of interest in gardening made it difficult to find seeds and plants last Spring, and several seed companies have predicted a similar situation again this growing season. I usually have seeds left over from prior years, and decided it is time to actually research which seeds store best and how to do it right. There was scant information about flower and herb seed, and I only learned that these seeds are expected to remain viable for at least one year. This article focuses on the details I could find, which was about the viability of saved vegetable seeds.

Here is a chart that lists the number of years vegetable seeds remain viable when they have been stored properly:

Vegetable	Years	Vegetable	Years
Asparagus	3	Muskmelon	5
Beans	3	Okra	2
Beets	4	Onion	1
Broccoli	5	Parsnip	1
Brussels sprouts	4	Peas	3
Cabbage	5	Peppers	2
Carrot	3	Pumpkin	4
Cauliflower	5	Radish	5
Corn	2	Spinach	5
Cucumber	5	Squash	4
Eggplant	4	Swiss Chard	4
Kohlrabi	3	Tomato	4
Lettuce	5	Turnip, Rutabaga	4
Leek	2	Watermelon	4

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## Planting Last Year's Vegetable Seed (cont.)

These general guidelines are useful, but if there is time before planting season, it is wise to test whether your seeds will actually germinate. Count out a number of seeds, 10 or 20 or more, and place them in damp paper such as a coffee filter or paper towel. Fold or roll the paper so the seeds will stay evenly moist without touching each other. Put the packet in a plastic bag or jar where they will stay damp, label the seed so you know which is which, and place them in a warm location. Follow the heat and moisture conditions you would provide if you were starting these seeds in soil. Check the paper rolls periodically to make sure they remain damp. The seed packet will indicate the number of days required for germination, and that is the time to open the germination paper. If more than half the seeds sprout, you can decide whether the seed is viable enough to plant in your garden.

The best way to store left over seed is in an environment that is the opposite of germinating seeds. Keep the seeds below 40 degrees F in a place that remains dry. Storing seeds in the refrigerator or freezer is a good choice, but you need to control the humidity. Seeds need to remain below 8% moisture during storage, and this is difficult to maintain in the refrigerator or during our humid Wisconsin summers. Put the seeds in moisture-proof containers, something that would not let water seep in if it was submerged. A glass or plastic jar with a tight lid works well, but simply putting seeds in plastic bags is a gamble.



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## Shkipiye Kwiitha

By Kim Leizinger



The next full moon will be March 28th otherwise known as the worm moon. The Shawnee call it the Sap Moon, Shkipiye kwiitha. I prefer the name, sap moon. Sap moon, it is time to be sugarin.'

Though Native Americans were the first ones to discover sugaring, today, Quebec is the world's largest producer of maple syrup, exporting 70 percent of the world's demand. Who doesn't recognize the red and white flag of Canada bearing the sugar maple leaf? Wisconsin has identified the sugar maple, *Acer saccharum*, as our state tree. The sugary sweet syrup from the maple tree has definitely made its impact upon us even leading the United States and Canada working together to define laws that classify the grading of maple syrup.

Sap flows from the xylem of the tree, or from the roots to the tips of the branches. The sap collected at the start of production yields a lighter amber colored syrup. As the chemistry changes in the trees, the later sap boiled down will be darker in color. As sap flows from the trees we can't see the color change with our naked eyes, for it always looks like pure clean water.

March is the time we tap trees in southern Wisconsin. Not only can sugar maples be tapped to collect their sap, but also, red maples, black maples, silver maples, birch trees and even the box elders. The box elders are in the same genus as the maples, or *Acer*. If you don't like the idea of hauling approximately 40+ gallons of sap to cook down to make one gallon of syrup, you can always give boiling hickory bark a try too.

If you are curious to give sugaring a try, here are some things to consider for backyard sugarin':

- tap trees that are at least 10 -12 inches in diameter (measure at 4 1/2 feet off the ground or diameter breast height, dbh).
- day temperatures to tap should be when the temps are climbing into the 40 degrees Fahrenheit and ideally below 50 degrees Fahrenheit.
- night temperatures should drop to below freezing. This is when the sap runs the best. Cool nights and warm sunny days are a sugarer's delight.
- sap can spoil, so one must keep it cold or process it in a couple of days.
- stop collecting sap when the buds break

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Things you will need:

- cordless drill to drill holes
- hammer
- a drill bit that corresponds to the method you plan to collect sap. For example, if using metal spiles, one would use a 7/16ths drill bit. The size of the drill bit may vary based on spile.
- Disinfectant for the drill bit (i.e. rubbing alcohol) -remember we don't want to be spreading diseases!
- spiles -these are the gadgets that are inserted into the trees (or gently tapped in with a hammer)
- a method or device to collect the sap, this could be plastic bags, tin cans, or plastic tubing that flows downhill to a large collection vessel.
- Food grade buckets or some other food safe container to collect and store sap
- containers to cook sap
- thermometer (i.e. candy or digital)
- containers to store processed syrup in - canning jars & lids work
- time, for endless hours of boiling the sap

Other items to make your sugarin' project easier:

- filter - for any debris that falls in the raw product
- large spoon - to skim off foam during processing/cooking
- wool filter - for finishing the sap to remove small particulates

Once you have selected and tapped your trees that meet the criteria. The next job is checking on them daily and collecting the sap. And with any luck, collecting the sap will always be uphill from where you plan to cook it down.

You will need to cook the sap down, and outside is best. There will be a lot of moisture/evaporation. Think of a hot, humid, Wisconsin July day. The Internet has a whole host of unique building ideas and You Tube videos that can keep you up all night on how to build rocket stoves, to converting pressure tanks to cook down your bounty.

To finish the sap to syrup, it must reach a boiling point of seven degrees over that of boiling water, approximately 219 degrees Fahrenheit. I find finishing sap indoors is easier to control on the stove top vs. outside. If you go over the seven degrees, you will risk creating sugar sand. It is harmless and settles to the bottom of the finished product. Sugar sand will be rock hard and inedible for consumption. If you finish the sap less than seven degrees over the boiling point of water, the finished product will be runny or less thick. It will still taste good and store fine. If you don't have a method to can the finished product, it can be stored in a glass jar in the freezer. The good news is, it will not freeze solid in the freezer and will be ready for consumption when you are.

The sugarin' season is short, usually lasting only a few weeks. If you missed out this year, the good news is, next year is just around the corner. Happy sugarin.'

Kim Leizinger

## Air Plants By Judi Benade



I've been seeing such attractive air plants in the greenhouses and garden stores lately, with skimpy information about the unusual care these distinctive houseplants require. It turns out they thrive on bright indirect light and consistent abundant moisture, but you soak the leaves, as there is no soil around the plant. Here's the inside scoop about how to successfully care for an Air Plant:

Air plants are a diverse genus called Tillandsia, part of the bromeliad family. These plants originate in tropical and subtropical rainforest areas of the new world, both North and South America. Although Tillandsia appear to have roots, the small tendrils at the base of the plant help the plant cling to rocks or branches and do not transfer water or nutrients. Instead, Tillandsia absorb water and nutrients through special cells on their leaves. Tillandsia leaves frequently have attractive exotic shapes and the plants produce a bright flower if they receive sufficient moisture and light. After flowering, the plant creates new plants via offsets, miniature plants called "pups" that form around the base of the original. The parent plant then dies.

Air plants lack of roots and soil lets you experiment with many creative and unusual plant displays. They can rest on marbles or in a child's tea set, can add texture and color to a seashell collection, perch on driftwood, rest on a saucer on a bookshelf or inside a terrarium. You can even move Air Plants outdoors during the seasons when there is no danger of frost. Locate the plants in a bright shady or partially shaded spot where they don't receive harsh afternoon sun. Occasionally our summer humidity and rains will keep the plant adequately moist, but do monitor the outdoor plants, as you often need to supplement the rain.

Provide moisture by placing the Air Plant, or the plant and its container completely submerged in water. When the plant has been getting warm bright light it needs to be dunked about once a week. In cooler, darker seasons, air plants require less watering, about twice a month. During the winter, my Air Plants are happy in a southern window near African violets, and only need occasional visits to a bowl of water. When summer arrives, that southern exposure becomes too bright, so I move both types of plant to a north window instead. If Tillandsia leaves turn pale, the tips of the plant turn brown or form an excessive twist, this either indicates the plant is getting too much light or that it needs watering more frequently.

## Air Plants (cont)

Air plants thrive on water without softener salt or added chemicals, so use spring water, well water or distilled water. If your water comes from a municipal source, let it stand overnight to allow the chlorine to dissipate. Submerge the whole plant in room temperature water for about 20 minutes, then let the plant dry for about 30 minutes by suspending the plant upside down after shaking it out well. Drops of water left standing on the leaves or trapped in the plant's base harm the plant by creating rot, indicated by dark patches and slime.

Sometimes people spray air plants with a fine water mist. This does mimic the environment of the plant's home, and can prevent the plant from getting too dry during our indoor heating season, but spraying alone cannot provide enough moisture for the plants in our climate. To grow healthy, sturdy plants, add a small amount (half or quarter strength) of balanced fertilizer to the water every third or fourth time you water.



## Friends of 4-H Appreciation Award

Annually, the Columbia County 4-H Leaders Association recognizes several individuals; businesses; or groups as "Friends of 4-H." Then, at the annual 4-H Celebration and Recognition Program, each is recognized and thanked for the support given to Columbia County 4-H. In a pandemic year, that was not possible to do in-person, so our Columbia Co. 4-H Leaders Association President, Jen Martens, recently created door wreaths for each to hang on their door until we can gather in-person and recognize them. Friend of 4-H Award winners for the 2020 4-H year were as follows:

Appreciation Awards will be presented to the **Columbia County Master Gardeners** for their continued support in educating youth about gardening and horticulture and **Paul and Mary Becker** for their on-going support of youth in Columbia County who take part in the Columbia County Fair.



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## Meeting Guidelines are Beginning to Change

For events from April 1 through May 30:

- Increasing total event participants to 50 indoors (or 30% of room capacity) / 150 outdoors
- Increasing pod numbers to 20, with additional flexibility to have one large group if there is no safety reason to have participants in pods
- Increasing length of events to 4 hours
- Removing approvals for events that are under two hours and under 20 participants
- All of the above options are for events planned now that will occur April 1 or later



## Wanted - Portage Community Garden Manager

We are looking for a CC MGV to take over the responsibilities of the Portage Community Garden Manager. **Thank to the efforts of Charles and Sue Bradley for doing this for the past 10+ years.** They have moved to Madison, and are not able to do this anymore.

Here are some of the duties of the Garden Manager:

- Build a strong connection with all gardeners
- Coordinate garden fee payments and plot locations
- Coordinate water availability to the garden mid-May thru August
- Plan garden meeting opportunities for gardeners
- Provide technical gardening support
- Coordinate purchase and delivery of compost for the gardeners
- Coordinate maintenance projects of the garden fence, storage shed, water system

Contact George if you would be interested in serving in this capacity. All of the time you spend doing this counts as MGV Project Volunteer Hours.

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# Training and Pruning Apple Trees

A1959 from the Learning Store

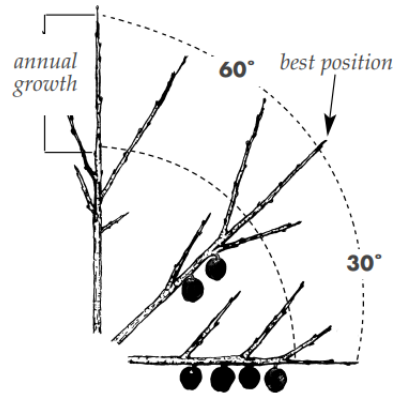
<https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0145/8808/4272/files/A1959.pdf>

Apples are the most common fruit tree planted in Wisconsin. In addition to providing fruit, apple trees can be a pleasing addition to the home landscape. However, unlike most shade trees, apple trees require annual training and pruning from the time of planting to produce an attractive and productive tree.

Proper training and pruning are also a valuable part of an effective pest management program. Pruning to open up the canopy improves air flow, reducing some disease problems. An open canopy also allows better access for managing insect pests. March is an excellent time to prune, while the tree is dormant.

Training and pruning cannot compensate entirely for poor horticultural factors such as poorly matched scion (the above-ground portion of the tree) and rootstocks. For example, if a strong spur-type scion, which produces little vegetative growth, is grafted to a dwarfing rootstock, the resulting tree will “runt out.” That is, it will produce little new growth and small fruit, regardless of how it is pruned. On the other hand, a vigorous scion on a standard or semi-dwarf rootstock planted in a fertile soil will become a large, unmanageable tree that cannot be pruned into submission.

For the rest of this document and more details, follow this link to obtain the entire six page document: <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/>



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