



Wood County Master Gardener Association

Wood County Wisconsin

October 2026

President's Message

Ah, October-the time of Pumpkin festivals, cranberry harvest and apple crisp. The warm smells of cinnamon and cloves, the jaw dropping seas of floating red berries and the cool, crisp mornings are all the stuff of October. The first frost seems to signal that it's time to put gardens to bed for the winter.

Despite the slowing outdoor activity, our Master Gardener group is as busy as ever. Our Fall Plant Sale was held on September 19 and 20 in conjunction with Maple Fall Fest in Marshfield. Despite a very rainy Saturday, we had a few brave souls who ventured out and visited our tables. Sunday's weather was more cooperative for both us and the festival. Many thanks to those who helped in any way--plant donations, set-up, take down, pricing, those who staffed the sale (and braved the rain) and especially to those who were on the Plant Sale committee.

The September membership meeting featured Kendra Wilhelm from Wood County Land and Water Conservation. She presented on invasive look alikes. Many invasive plants have beautiful, showy flowers which may be tempting to add to a garden. Kendra presented alternatives to those plants as well as control methods should invasives get into our gardens.

Our October meeting will be dedicated to furthering our progress on our strategic plan. The focus group met in September and we considered the brainstormed ideas. We consolidated some that were very similar, discarded the undoable, and those ideas that we are already doing and will continue to do won't necessarily be included in the new plan. Please include the October meeting on the 27th in **your** plan. We need your input to make this successful.

As I close, I leave you with this quote from one of my favorite artists, **"As long as autumn lasts, I shall not have hands, canvas and colors enough to paint the beautiful things I see."** -

Vincent van Gogh, Dutch painter

Happy Autumn

Terrie

Information on October meeting p. 2

WIMGA Corner p. 2

Ed. Opportunities for C.E. Credit p. 3-7

Plant Sale Update p. 8

Gardn Walk Wrap Up p. 9

Calendar of Events p. 10

Important Notes p.10

October Garden Guide p. 11

October Membership Meeting



October Membership Meeting

October 27 6pm

McMillan Library

490 East Grand Avenue, Wisconsin Rapids

We will be concentrating on the Strategic Planning process. We need all members input to reflect the needs of all members and the organization. Plan to attend to help shape the future of the organization. Bring your ideas to help Wood County Master Gardeners grow and prosper.

WIMGA CORNER

As the gardening season slows down a bit, WIMGA has restarted the regular continuing education program. If you missed Diana Alfuth's September presentation on **Garden Myths**, you can find it recorded on the WIMGA website where it will be until October 28th.

Two programs are scheduled prior to the winter holidays. On October 20th, Simon Gilroy, a UW botanist, will be presenting **Are Plants Listening to Me?** On November 4, retired University of Minnesota professor, Mary Meyer, will speak on **What's New with Ornamental Grasses**. Her specialty throughout her career was growing grasses in the Midwest, a topic she has written about extensively.

Both presentations are scheduled via Zoom beginning at 6:30 PM. Be on the lookout for the WIMGA email for the Zoom connection.

If you've started marking up your calendar for 2027, you can make note of the WIMGA annual meeting to be held January 11, 2017 via Zoom. The featured continuing education topic of the evening will be **Continual Color Without Continuous Hassle**.

Education Opportunities for C. E. Hours

From UW Extension Horticulture

UW Extension Horticulture [Wisconsin Horticulture – Division of Extension](#) This site has a plethora of resources to explore. It is a great source for getting Continuing Ed credits. It has print and video resources for free use. Sign up to receive their monthly newsletter with pertinent topics: [Sign up](#) If you need Continuing Education Hours, go to [Online Program Archive – Wisconsin Horticulture](#) to view many of the recorded programs This is a good way to get your Ed hours without having to travel or pay for conferences, etc.

Ask the Experts is back!! Now renamed **Ask Your Gardening Question Live**, it will be on Wednesdays at either 1:30—2:30pm or 6:30—7:30pm, not both in one day. The October session is on **October 21 at 1:30**. To register for the zoom invite go to: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)

Houseplant Propagation Workshops These workshops will discuss several methods of propagating houseplants. The attendees will then move to the greenhouse and practice the methods. Each person will take home several plants propagations.

All workshops are at the Dane County Extension Building in Madison. Cost is \$20 and you must register to attend. Dates are Oct 11 at 9:30am, October 17 at 1pm, October 24 at 9:30am and October 28 at 1pm. See the UW Horticulture Extension Website, click on Programs tab, then Calendar of Events to register for the session you want to attend.

From the Plant Disease Diagnostic Clinic

The Clinic will sponsor a Zoom presentation on a plant disease-related topic each month. To register for one or more talks, go to [2026 PDDC Monthly Disease Talk Registration Form | Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic](#)

Orchid October 28 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Learn about common diseases of orchids. This presentation will include information on how to identify these diseases, as well as information on how to manage them.

Marshfield Public Library Garden Guru Program

Thursday October 15 6pm All About Succulents

Do you want to grow houseplants but can't keep them alive because you get busy and forget to water? We have a group of houseplants made just for you... Succulents! These plants that are much more forgiving of sporadic watering. Come learn from Wood County Master Gardeners about a variety of succulents and how to take care of them!

Melinda Myers Webinars

No webinars posted for October to the end of the year. Watch past programs on Webinars on Demand. Go to Melinda Myers website and scroll down the right hand column to the orange button "Watch On-Demand Webinars".

Rome Area Garden Chats 2026 Events

April 15
9:30-10:30



Growing Rhubarb and Asparagus
Discussion Led Becky Gutzman

May 6
9:30-10:30



***Design and Plant a Container**
Make-and-Take at Foss's Garden Center

June 17
9:30-10:30



+Crafting Outdoor Wind Chimes
Make-and-Take with Laurie and Boots

July 15
9:30-10:30



Grow, Harvest and Preserve Herbs
Discussion Led by Donna Streiff

August 19
9:30-10:30



Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
Discussion Led by Janell Wehr

Sept. 16
9:30-10:30



Designing a Landscape
Discussion Led by Janell Wehr

Oct. 21
9:30-10:30



+Forcing Bulbs for Christmas
Make-and-Take with Laurie Francis

Events led by
Master
Gardener
Educators at
the Lester
Public Library
of Rome
unless noted.



*Participants will purchase plants for their containers from Foss's Garden Center. Containers may be brought from home or purchased from Foss's. Please register in advance at the library.
+A small fee will be charged. Please register and pay in advance at the library. Payment upon registration is required.

Assessing Flower and Vegetable Performance

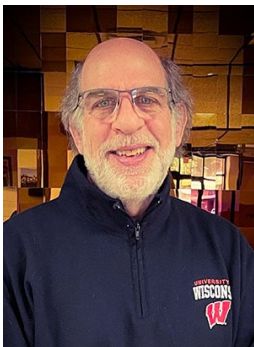
September marks the transition from summer to fall, and with it the growing season winds down. As crops and flowers fade away, assessing how things went this growing season provides a head start on next year. Taking some time now to jot observations, thoughts and ideas down can be extremely valuable when planning for next season.

For example, start with vegetable gardens. One of the key disease management tools is crop rotation, or planting crops in new locations within the garden from season to season. Having a sketch or map of the garden showing exact previous locations of crops is necessary to ensure this is done properly. Before crops are removed, make sure all details from this season are recorded. While doing this, include cultivars planted and their performance, including yield quality and quantity, disease outbreaks, and any other notable positives or negatives.

Decisions on exact locations and cultivars for next year can be made in the off season but consider rotation rules in your initial thoughts now. Crops within the same family should not be planted in the same spot in the garden for at least three seasons. Major families share common disease and pest problems. For example, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and potatoes are all solanaceous crops, so next season putting peppers where tomatoes are this season is not rotating crops properly.

Even though perennial flower gardens come back each year, individual seasons can bring varied results. Inferior flower quality and quantity for a specific plant oftentimes indicates it is time for dividing them. Spring is typically better than fall for most species, so make note of this now. Plants that have been in the same spot for many years may also be influenced by a change in the site conditions. For example, perennials needing full sun may have received plenty of sunlight when initially planted, but now maturing trees may be creating more shade on that spot, thus the plant may need to be moved to a better location for it next year.

Marking where established perennial plants are this fall, such as with small stakes, can help next spring as new shoots arise from the ground not just for dividing purposes, but also for identity and location. Newly emerging shoots oftentimes may not resemble larger developed plants. Having plant locations marked is extremely useful to confirm where they are growing well before plants have emerged and developed into easily identifiable forms. In addition, many popular warm-season ornamental grasses, especially native species, emerge significantly later than other spring flowering perennials in the same planting bed. Well-placed markers remind us they will be along soon!



About the Author

[Bruce Spangenberg](#) is a Horticulture Outreach Specialist with UW-Madison Division of Extension. Get answers to your lawn, landscape and garden questions anytime at "[Ask Your Gardening Question](#)."

Plant Hormones Change With Seasons

Signs of autumn are found throughout the yard and garden. Leaves turn color, fruit ripens, and plants go dormant. The calendar tells us fall is here, but how do plants know when to undergo these changes and be ready for the dormant winter season ahead?

In northern climates like Wisconsin, plants need to match active growth with optimum growing conditions and inactive growth, or dormancy, with adverse conditions. This is controlled through hormones, organic compounds produced internally, that change in concentration from season to season. There are growth-promoting and growth-inhibiting plant hormones. Levels of each respond as conditions around the plant change, with temperature and light being key factors.

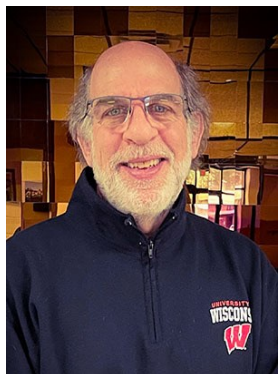
Early sunsets and shortening days are becoming very apparent to us now, but plants began reacting to this weeks ago. The process of [leaves turning yellow, orange, and red in fall](#) started as the active growth hormones, which promote chlorophyll (green pigment) in leaves, started to decline due to longer dark periods accumulating each day. Once chlorophyll fades away, other colors show up.

Ethylene is the aging and ripening hormone of plants. Concentrations of ethylene increase at the base of leaf stalks, degrading the cells that hold leaves on twigs, thus leaves fall to the ground. Ethylene also drives ripening processes of apples, crabapples, tomatoes, and other fruits. The best way to ripen green tomatoes off the vine, such as all those picked before fall freezes, is to maintain them at room temperature in a paper bag or shallow box. Ethylene will do the rest.

Once plants have finished active growth in fall, it is important not to resume active growth before optimum growing conditions of the next growing season return. Enter abscisic acid, the dormancy hormone. Buds in trees will develop high concentrations of abscisic acid in fall. The same holds true for seeds of many native plants. While these concentrations remain high, abscisic acid prevents growth-promoting hormones, such as auxins, from increasing and stimulating active growth again.

Plants need to be exposed to a certain amount of cold to lower abscisic acid levels. This safeguard prevents plants native to cooler climates from being fooled by a warm spell in winter. Even though it may be warm and moisture is available, growth cannot start again until abscisic acid has dissipated in buds, or in seeds.

Finally, another safeguard exists in spring. Once the cold period has been met, inhibiting abscisic acid may be gone, but growth does not immediately resume. Accumulating warmer temperatures, measured by degree days, are required before growth-promoting hormones start to increase.



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Plan For Spring Flower Shows Now

Spring-flowering bulbs providing dependable splashes of color are a welcome sight as winter fades. Now is the time to plan for a dazzling landscape display next spring. Following just a few simple guidelines for planting this fall provides great color every spring!

Bulbs purchased to plant this fall, or those that are already in place in the landscape, are packed with all the energy they need to start growing next spring. The energy necessary to break dormancy, grow shoots, and develop flowers is produced and stored during the prior growing season. This is why one important rule of spring-flowering bulb care is to allow leaves to remain after bloom each year. These green leaves take in sunlight and convert to storable energy. Bulbs grown in production nurseries for sale this fall have gone through this same process.

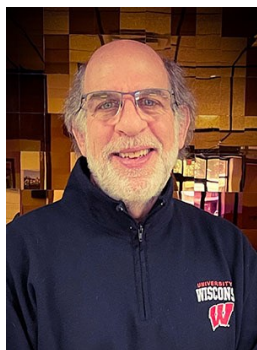
Spring-flowering bulb structures are remarkably similar to seeds. Like seeds, there is a dormant living portion that becomes the growing plant, stored energy, and some sort of protective cover. Examples include true bulbs such as tulips, narcissus (daffodils), snowdrops, and hyacinth, along with corms, such as crocus. When choosing bulbs at garden center outlets, look for healthy, unblemished structures and avoid those that are off-color, soft, and diseased. Smaller yet healthy-looking bulbs mixed in with larger ones of the same kind may not flower the first spring after planting.

Choose the proper location, and spring-flowering bulbs will be dependable year after year. Good soil drainage is the first critical criteria for planting sites; sitting in wet soils is the one big reason plantings may fail. Heavier clay soils can be amended with organic matter, such as compost, peat, or rotted manure, to a depth of about eight inches. Likewise, adding these materials to excessively dry, sandy soils can help hold more moisture.

Ensure there will be adequate sunlight for spring-flowering bulbs, even after bloom. Allowing green leaves to produce the energy needed for ongoing productivity is a second key criteria for planting sites. Oftentimes those that bloom early planted under shade trees have enough time before the tree foliage develops and casts significant shade. Bulbs planted in excessively shaded sites, however, may decline each successive year because of insufficient sunlight.

Squirrels digging up recently planted bulbs in fall is often an issue. One remedy is spreading poultry wire just under the soil surface after planting. This prevents squirrels from digging them up, but next spring shoots will easily emerge through the holes in the buried wire.

Do some research on all spring-flowering bulb choices and their bloom time. With some planning, landscapes may have continuous color displays from early to late spring!



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PLANT SALE BUZZ



Some 2026 Plant Sale Comments

From Friday and Saturday's rain my gauge was just below the two inch mark. Our sales were affected by the rain, our normal entrance was blocked by a big trailer and the economy probably had an influence. Karen put out more plant sale signs with arrows to direct the public and the radio guy made hourly announcements to try to make us more visible.

If you average our profits from 2021 to 2024 it would be \$3,852 each year. Last year's profits were 20% less at \$3060. 2026 estimated profit is 50.46% below our usual average profits. History has shown that on Saturday we earn two-thirds of our profits. Sunday's sales were 27% lower than Saturdays.

Estimated gross earnings \$2,785.00 – estimated expenses \$859 = estimated net \$1926. Venmo sales were \$260 of our earnings.

I am so grateful and appreciative of the work the plant sale team did this year--Bea, Cathy, Donna, and Jan. They managed tasks, did coordination and provided their thoughts and ideas. Some of those tasks were Bea making phone calls, a special skill of hers. Donna raised her natives and got others to adopt a jug. Such a learning experience for members who are now sharing the workload. The other three team members purchased plants, which Cathy and Jan watered while they were stored in Wunrow's greenhouse.

On Friday, the set-up crew was able to quickly raise eight unfamiliar canopies as well as getting most of the products under cover before it started raining. Twenty feet of products sat in the elements; we could have used two more canopies. Because of the sidewalls and tarps covering the sides of the canopies, it was tight quarters to work in.

The most difficult and time-consuming task of cleaning, sometimes identifying, pricing, and tagging plants takes numerous hours. The workers managed this with laughter and companionship. (This is why we ask plant donors to do as much of this before bringing their plants to the sale.)

We also lost sales because of water-soaked labels and price tags that came off pots. It was difficult for workers to identify these unmarked pots, let alone replace price tags and labels. We learned that paper tags need to be completely covered front and back if there is any chance of rain.

With the economy straining the consumers' budgets, luxury items like dry arrangements do not fit in. Sales of this product has been down the last two years.

—Jill



Garden Walk Closing Out 2026/Looking Forward to 2027

The Wrap Up.

Aside from a leftover plant label or two, supplies are back in storage, expenses have been reconciled, and if we haven't said it at least 9 different ways-thank you, master gardeners for helping as garden guides, with ticket sales, serving as mentors and more!

We enjoyed another hugely successful year .

The Future.

The Garden Walk Selection Committee has been diligently searching for prospective gardens for 2027 since GW 2026 ended mid-July. . . and finally, the search is over. We have 7 gardens on the "dock" now for 2027! One, is tentative, so hold on with us and hope for the best. 2027 gardens will be decked out with whimsy, curb appeal, native plants, complement views of the Wisconsin River, feature heirloom plants, raised bed vegetable gardening, creative design with family travels in mind, and showcase an incredible playhouse, budget-friendly garden ideas and much, much more.

This is where we leave it until January 2027. Our team has worked hard and long hours and my appreciation as Garden Walk chairperson goes without saying, however I want to acknowledge their hard work and dedication. Please join me in thanking the following Master Gardeners on the Garden Walk Team:

Chris Grimes: co-chair, publicity, garden mentor, anniversary celebration plans, selection committee

Cathy Schutz: activities, mentor, welcome committee, refreshments, selection committee

Deb Rokke: mentor, educator, label maker, garden stone craftswoman, refreshments, garden selection

Judy Miller: garden mentor, garden rep, community relations. refreshments

Micky Erickson: garden owner, host to reception and basket raffle

Diane & Jim Nickel: garden selection committee, maps, creative gifting

Ann Rozner: creative gifting

Jan Meyer: garden selection, basket raffle, refreshments, garden stones

Barb Herreid: basket raffle, mentor

Famia Marx: garden stones, budget & sponsorships

Stacy Musch, Donna Streiff, Karleen Remington: Education planning, providing education & mentoring

We are now in recess until 2027. If you are interested in joining this fun and dynamic team, please indicate your preferences on the survey form provided with the dues requests in November.

Calendar of Events*

Oct 20 WIMGA Educational Event**

Oct 27 Membership Meeting-Strategic Planning*

Nov 4 WIMGA Educational Event**

Nov 17 Membership Meeting-Wild Ones Speaker

Jan 17 WIMGA Annual Meeting**

*See additional information in this newsletter

**Sign up and information in your WIMGA newsletters



Karli, our administrative assistant in the Extension office, will be on LOA from August 20 through the end of the year. In her absence, Wendy, (Wendy.young@woodcountywi.gov) will assist us with printing needs, newsletter mailing, etc. Please be sure to submit any printing needs to her at least a week before you need them.

The computer program we use for preparing and printing our newsletter is being phased out in October. If you know of another, or are using another, user friendly program please contact Donna. Next month's newsletter will probably look very different.

Also note, we have a policy of not printing phone numbers in Master Gardener articles, because of problems in the past of people using member numbers for phishing/scams. Please refer to the "Members Only" page of the Wood County Master Gardener website for phone and address info. Emails can also be used for phishing and scamming purposes, so check with the member before replying to any questionable requests supposedly from a MG.

October Garden Guide

Taken from Portage County Master Gardener website

- On October 1, start treatment of poinsettias for bract coloration. Place in total darkness for 15 hours every day for 2 months. Night temperature should be 65-70 degrees F. Keep soil moist.
- Plant peonies until October 15. Mulch after ground freezes.
- Seed perennials such as Oriental poppy, Iceland poppy, gas plant, primrose, scabiosa, phlox, pansy and penstemon. Mark where planted.
- Plant spring flowering bulbs. Bulbs can be planted up to six weeks after first fall frost. Fertilize existing bulb beds with bone meal, milorganite, or 5-5-5 fertilizer.
- Harvest gladiolas at least six weeks after bloom and before ground freezes. Cure for three days at 80 degrees before storing. Label and store at 40-45 degrees in open trays.
- Remove iris leaves to prevent over wintering of iris borer eggs. Cut leaves to four-inch fans.
- Store tuberose at 45 degrees F, tuberous rooted begonias at 45-50 degrees, and caladium at 60 degrees.
- After killing frost, rose bush foliage should be stripped and old leaves cleaned from bed. Shortly before ground freezes, roses should be given good deep soaking. Prune branches enough to prevent whipping around in wind or to fit under rose cones.
- Sow seeds of hardy annuals: cleome, pinks, candytuft, larkspur, bachelor buttons and calendula. Mark where planted.
- Plant Jerusalem artichoke during last two weeks of month.
- Prepare vegetable garden soil for early spring planting. Remove old stalks to prevent insect and disease problems next year. Spread manure, incorporate into soil.
- Rejuvenate rhubarb by dividing into quarters and replanting.
- Cut back asparagus ferns and dispose to prevent insect and disease problems next year. Incorporate manure into soil and mulch with straw.
- Use mulch around Brussels sprouts to moderate soil temperature and prolong harvest.
- Water plants well for more cold tolerance.
- Plant garlic 2-3 inches deep and cover with 4-6 inches of straw mulch.
- Rake, chop and compost any fallen leaves from lawn.



- Fertilize shade trees when leaf color changes and leaves drop.
- Plant dormant deciduous trees and shrubs from now until ground freezes. A two-inch layer of mulch reduces freezing and thawing, which can damage roots.
- If fertilizing lawn one time a year, apply it in the third week of September. If fertilizing twice a year, apply in September and early June.
- Water evergreens and foundation plantings before ground freezes.
- Protect woody ornamentals and fruit trees against mice.

2026 WCMGV BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Wood County Extension Horticultural

Agent Janell Wehr janell.wehr@wisc.edu

The Wood County Master Gardener Association is a non-profit organization with a mission to educate and share information with its members and the community alike. In addition, it is our charge to promote the UW Extension from which we are founded. We are a diverse group interested in the latest research-based horticultural information.

Future Article Submissions

Please send items for inclusion in the newsletter by the 25th of the previous month to: streiffonclay@tds.net

Wisconsin Master Gardener

Website: <https://mastergardener.extension.wisc.edu/>

Wood County Extension

Website: <https://wood.extension.wisc.edu/>

Wood County Master Gardener Association Website:

<https://wood-county-master-gardeners.org/>

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