



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
BARRON COUNTY



MASTER
GARDENER

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EXTENSION

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Encourage, foster, support, and promote horticulture for all Master Gardener Volunteers and residents of Barron County and to promote the UW-Extension from which we are founded.

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WINTER NEWSLETTER 2020

KARE 11's Bobby Jensen—this year's featured speaker at Spring Expo

This year's Spring Expo will be held on Saturday, April 4th, at the WITC Conference Center in Rice Lake. The keynote speaker is **Bobby Jensen**, KARE 11's garden and landscape expert. Bobby is a television personality who is sometimes known as "The Garden Guy." For 25 years he has partnered with Belinda Jensen (no relation) in their weekly gardening segment "Grow with KARE." Bobby's knowledge and love of landscaping and gardening began at the start of the "green revolution" in the 70s. He has owned a landscape design and installation company and has been a horticultural expert and buyer for large garden centers in the Twin Cities.

Bobby's first presentation will be **"Deer Resistant Plants."** The best way to keep the deer from eating our gardens is to plant things that are unappetizing to the curious critters. Bobby will discuss various plants including perennials, groundcovers, and annuals that may do the job.

Bobby's second program will be **"Rethinking Your Landscape."** Learn how to remedy the landscaping blunders that have been creeping into your yard. He recommends low-maintenance landscaping for maximum curb appeal. And placing the correct plants will allow you to create eye-catching displays throughout your garden.

Carrie Larson will present **"New and Exciting Annuals for your Garden in 2020."** Carrie works with



McHutchison Horticultural Distributors out of River Falls where they specialize in annual flowering plants. She is a sales person who helps many Wisconsin and Minnesota greenhouses select new Proven Winners and other special annuals for the coming spring. Carrie will share ideas for successful containers and let us know which annuals will thrive in sun and which ones do best in the shade.

Dick Lienhardt, Eau Claire Area Master Gardener Volunteer, will present **"Practical Vegetable Gardening."** Need some "dos" and "don'ts" to help you in your vegetable garden? Dick will discuss garden soil prep, plant selection and placement, fertilization, and pest control. Dick is not always a "by the book" gardener and will talk about his successes and failures in the garden.

Lunch and snacks are included with the ticket price of \$30 (\$35 at the door) and a limited number of vendors will be selling garden items.

Good Luck to Becky Schley!

Becky Schley recently accepted a teaching position at the Chippewa Valley Technical College in Eau Claire. Becky was the Agricultural Educator for Barron & Polk Counties, and also served as advisor to the Barron County Master Gardener Volunteers. Before her departure, Carol Kettner spoke with Becky about her experience in Barron County.

One of the things that really stands out to Becky is how supportive Barron County residents are of agriculture. There are many leadership initiatives going on in the county and she expressed her amazement at all of the opportunities for young people related to agriculture.

Becky really enjoys hands on experiences and is looking forward to that in the classes she will be teaching at CVTC. She said one of her most memorable experiences as the Agricultural Educator was going to a farm to do some soil testing, thinking she was going to test 15 acres. Upon getting there she learned that she would be testing 100 acres on the hottest day of the summer, walking the whole way. That taught her to ask the right questions and be prepared for whatever happens.

When it comes to the Master Gardener Volunteer program, Becky said she had no idea that the MGVs did so much education to help people in the community. She participated in the recent Master Gardener training to further develop her knowledge of horticulture.

"I really enjoyed working with the organization. Everyone is so inviting, and I see a lot of camaraderie in the group. I have learned how to take the right kinds of photos and ask the right questions when it comes to solving problems. Through the Master Gardener training, I learned how to dig deeper and how to use resources that I hadn't used before."

Even though she was here for only a little more than a year, Becky Schley has become an advisor who is always willing to learn and take on new challenges. We wish her the best of luck in her new career.



Becky gave a presentation on Asparagus at the Master Gardener Training.

Fun Facts About Asparagus

It takes three years for asparagus plants to reach maturity. So be patient and you will have an asparagus patch for many years.

Chickens can be very helpful in reducing the weeds around asparagus.

White asparagus is not a different variety – it is just covered with soil as it grows and immediately put in a dark box after picking.

Asparagus tolerates salt more than many plants, so that explains why people sometimes put salt on the ground to kill weeds. But this is not recommended since the salt forms a crust on the ground resulting in the need for more water.



Master Gardener Interns Complete Training

If you have ever wondered just what is required to be a Certified Master Gardener Volunteer, a group of newly trained Barron County MG interns can answer that question. A master gardener volunteer must complete a minimum of 24 volunteer hours per year, in addition to 10 hours of continuing education. But before that, training is required that is essentially taking a class in the foundations of horticulture. The interns attended class for 13 weeks, watched lectures online, and read assigned materials. Finally, each person had to research a topic and make a presentation to the class during the final session.

This year's training was coordinated by Sheri Snowbank, Carol Kettner, and John Peter. Each week, participants were assigned lectures to watch, and chapters to read, to get the basic information about each horticultural topic. Class sessions included hands-on experiences with soil, plants, and insects.

An integral part of the class involved simulations of issues that Master Gardeners encounter when helping out at a farmers' market, the horticulture building at the county fair, or answering questions for the general public. As representatives of the University of Wisconsin, MGs must use research based information when answering questions.



Participants spent time learning how to find answers when asked about plant problems.



The "class of 2019" Master Gardener interns: Laurie Anderson, Larry Miller, Jan Knutson, Clarice Baumgartner, Rebecca Harlander, Rebecca Schley, Judy Hermann, Sheri Clark, Nick McMillan, and Deb Picknell. (Missing from the picture are Jeannine Kettner, Jill Fries, and Kim Frandsen.)



Sheri Snowbank explained how knowing about the different parts of an insect can show how it damages or benefits a plant.

Trouble in the Coneflower Hybrids

BY: Marilyn Saffert

The Purple Coneflower, otherwise known as *Echinacea Purpurea*, is a hardy and attractive American wildflower. Surprisingly, it is a daisy-like flower that is pink rather than purple. Though it is a zone 3 hardy perennial, it is not considered a long-lived perennial. But the good news is that if that original plant dies off, you will probably find true baby seedlings to take its place in the garden.

In the mid-1990s, plant breeders began making crosses between several varieties of our native coneflowers. The array of colors and forms of the new hybrids is amazing. There are different shades of red, yellow, orange, or white. There are doubles, and pom-poms, and other unusual flower forms to choose from at the garden center. Should you try Tomato Soup, Bubblegum, Orangeberry, or Milkshake? How about Coconut Lime, Salsa Red, or Mac & Cheese? Then there's Sombrero Red, Puff Vanilla, and Supreme Cantaloupe.

A few years ago, when we started purchasing them, we assumed that they would be as easy-care as the old standbys. Sorry to say, but many of the new

introductions will not perform dependably in the garden.

They may live for a year or so, and then disappear. Others may never even bloom before they die. Check to see what zone hardiness is promised for each variety. Zone 3, zone 4, or zone 5?

Many of the new varieties do not set seed because they are sterile. If some of them do throw down seeds, they will probably produce strange and ugly seedlings. Or they might

revert to the lovely old-fashioned pink version. This would not be so bad if the new plant had not been so expensive in the first place. If you are so inclined, there are two varieties that you can start from seed - Cheyenne Spirit and PowWow Wild Berry.

Coneflowers, like most wildflowers, like good drainage. They won't thrive or even live when they are standing in water during



Echinacea Puff Vanilla has double anemone type flowers with white ray florets and light yellow cone florets.



Echinacea Merlot has burgundy-black stems that are strong enough to break scissors! Like a fine wine, this beauty has great fragrance.

Trouble in the Coneflower Hybrids Continued. . .

the summer months or get frozen in ice during the winter. Another hint: You should remove all the flowers and buds during that first year in the garden. At the end of the summer, there should be a good strong crown which is essentially a little rosette of leaves on the soil.

Another thing to consider is that native coneflowers are excellent food sources for pollinators, but the jury is still out on whether hybrids are as beneficial. We know that hybrid Echinacea's with double and triple blooms are useless to pollinators because the extra petals block nectar and pollen. However, preliminary studies on the

subject suggests some single flowered hybrids are as attractive to pollinators as their parent plants.

Additionally, since some hybrid varieties are sterile and do not produce viable seeds, they do not support seed eating birds. Humans reproduce most hybrid varieties through vegetative propagation, either by tissue culture or by cuttings and divisions.

Most hybrids are genetic clones of each other and do not contribute to genetic diversity within the Echinacea gene pool. Less genetic diversity transmitted to the next generation of plants leaves Echinacea species at risk for disease and decay of their genetic line.



The wide variety of hybrids come in all shapes, textures, and colors.

Landscape Design Principles

Winter is a good time of the year to think about what you might want to change in your yard. Perhaps you have some areas that just don't seem to work, but you are not sure why. Or maybe you purchased a new home recently and your landscape is a blank slate. Some knowledge of the basic principles of landscape design may be helpful.

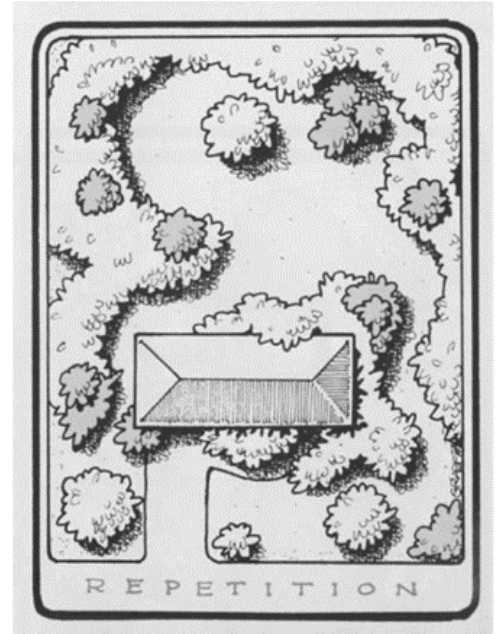
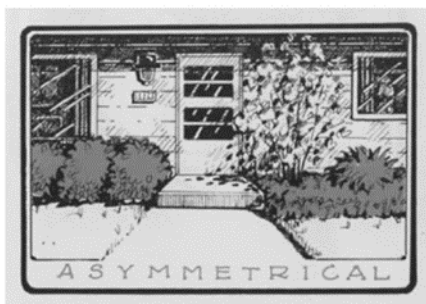
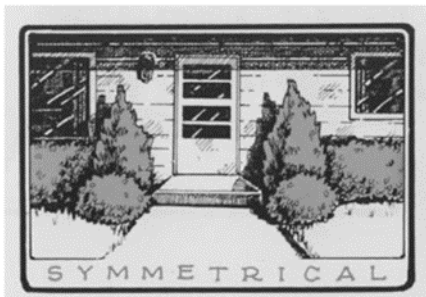
Making a simple sketch of your property and looking at what you really like or dislike is a good start. If you have a well-established yard, don't try to tackle it all at once. Start with a small area. And **REMEMBER** – many of the landscaping shows on television end up with high maintenance spaces that look great today, but are overgrown within a year.

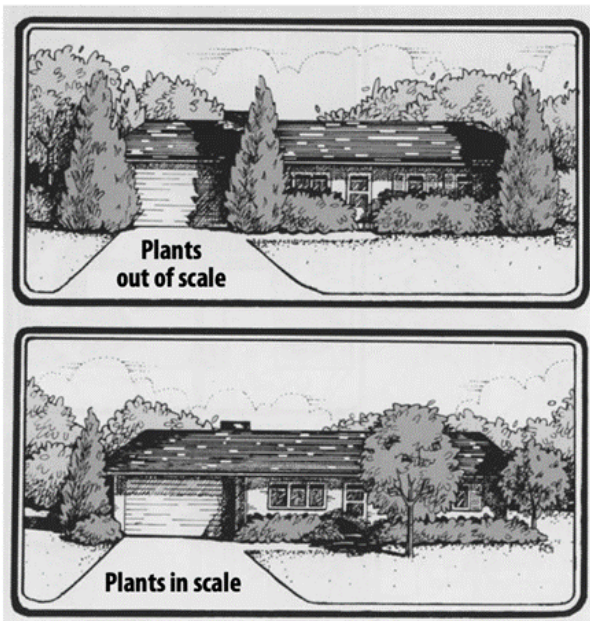
Home landscape designs vary according to family needs and preferences, but successful designs have certain underlying principles in common, including **unity, balance, emphasis, scale, space, and lines**.

A landscape has **UNITY** when its predominant features have some visual characteristics in common. For example, plants with similar forms, colors, and textures can create unity, both on your lot and in your neighborhood. This is also true of lawns and paving materials. **Repeating** a design pattern, color, or texture in several different locations helps create unity. Planting beds and turf areas are very important to tie the landscape together and create a sense of unity.

Plants and landscape structures of similar visual importance help create **BALANCE** in a landscape design. With color, form, texture, size, and other features, you can direct attention to several areas of the yard. Balance may be **symmetrical** (formal), in which each side of the yard is similar in pattern, or **asymmetrical** (informal), in which each side attracts the same attention, even though objects and spacing are not repeated.

Areas or focal points to which attention is drawn create **EMPHASIS** and keep a design's unity and balance from becoming monotonous. A single contrast in color, texture, form, or height—such as that provided by a bench, tree, pool, or flowerbed—can provide emphasis. In Madison, Olbrich Gardens use garden benches and obelisks for emphasis. These objects can have appeal in all seasons of the year.





SCALE refers to the size relationships among plants, structures, and open spaces. A four-foot-high shrub with a four-foot spread may be too large—and therefore out of scale—in front of low windows. However, next to a high-rise building, the same shrub would be out of scale because it is too small. In some home landscape situations, group plantings will compensate for plants with too little spread.

Your entire yard or land can be considered a block of **SPACE** with dimensions of length, width, and height. Plants, fences, and buildings are used to divide it into smaller living spaces analogous to the rooms of your house. These outdoor “rooms” should have separate identities and should meet your use area needs. The rooms should have openings that direct movement from one to another.



The “walls” can be as simple as a path lined with a favorite low maintenance perennial, or a hedge of bushes. Before you plant, though, make sure you are not using an invasive species or one that has major disease issues. (Buckthorn was a popular hedge plant before people realized how it can easily take over many other areas; and boxwood is suffering from a deadly blight across the country.)



LINES may be straight or curved. Landscape designers frequently lay out patios, decks, and planting beds using straight lines that extend—or parallel—house and lot lines. Straight lines tend to create a more formal look for your landscape. Equally



successful—and more naturalistic—designs can be created with curved lines. Loosely curved lines are easy to mow around and also provide a good flow through your landscape. Notice the photo on the left has all straight lines and neatly clipped plants, while the one on the right has a curved path with more natural, unpruned plantings.

These design principles will help you shape the areas around your home. But you

can’t design a landscape based only on the placement and size of plants and structures. The appropriate plants and construction materials must also be selected. Both plants and building materials can be selected for their form, texture, and color.

Keep these elements of landscape composition in mind as you revise or begin a new design. You may be pleasantly surprised at the results.

(This information is from the UW Extension *Learning Store* publication: Planning and Designing your Home Landscape. The complete publication is 32 pages long and has many suggestions for planning a landscape and selecting plants. It can be viewed or downloaded at <https://learningstore.extension.wisc.edu/products/planning-and-designing-your-home-landscape>)

Gardening for Life and Health—Choosing the Right Tools

From a booklet published by the Gardening for Life committee of WSU Master Gardeners in Spokane County, Washington

Gardening can be a joy, or cause pain and frustration, as we deal with aging, a disability, or a chronic condition. This is the first in a series that deals with those issues.

Gardening can be physically demanding when it requires digging, lifting, bending and kneeling. For people with physical problems such as loss of strength or mobility, it takes ingenuity to reduce the pain that can result from what should be a pleasurable pastime.

In recent years, industry has responded to the needs of gardeners by adapting favorite tools to make them easier to use. Some gardeners prefer to adapt the tools they have used over the years. Each gardener must decide which is best for his or her own needs.

be used and moved throughout the garden.

For gardeners who need help getting up, reversible kneelers are useful. They are padded for kneeling but have arms that can be used for lowering the body or for pushing up to a standing position. There are no many sturdy stools on wheels for sitting while doing garden tasks in either regular beds or raised beds.



Tips for Choosing Adaptive Tools

Trowels, weeders, and forks come with soft ergonomically sound handles, which are less painful for the gardener with arthritis or carpal tunnel syndrome.

Try products which modify the handles of long tools, such as a D-grip type or T-grip attachment.

Hand tools which locate the grip upright are good choices for gardeners with weak wrists.

Gardening involves getting close to the soil. For many, this can be a painful experience without the help of special aids. Kneepads can help while kneeling, or a cushion can



For those who are more comfortable sitting, a lightweight chair that can be moved around the garden easily can be very helpful.

For a person using a walker in the garden, a simple bicycle basket attached to the front provides a place to carry plants or tools.

For gardeners who need to sit, hoes, rakes, and trowels are available with lightweight telescopic or extendable handles which expand to 18 inches. These same extendable tools are great for ambulatory gardeners who find regular length tools uncomfortable.

Another good alternative for seated or small gardeners is to use children's size garden tools. Adapting the wooden handles of long tools may also be a good option.

Gardening for Life and Health continued . . .

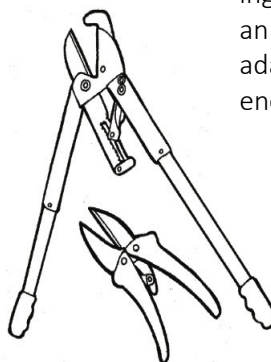
Other helpful tools are the long-arm grippers for picking up litter without bending over. Some of these come with a soft touch handle. There are even grippers with magnetic ends to make it easier to pick up a dropped small tool or other metal object.



Specialized pruners are available that hold the blossoms after cutting, to eliminate bending.

For gardeners with decreased hand strength, hand pruners and standard pruners can be almost impossible to use for any length of time. If the problem is not severe, consider using a smaller pruner or a rotating blade pruner that uses less effort.

Don't be afraid to try out a pruner in the store before you buy one. Some put a great deal of pressure on the hands, while others have a much lighter touch.



To minimize walking and bending, wear a fishing or hunting vest or apron to carry around hand tools.

Use a luggage or grocery cart or a golf bag to move equipment and tools that cannot be carried easily.

Using garden carts to carry mulch, fertilizer, or other heavy objects can prevent back strain. Use carts that will double as seats for gardening.

Lightweight hoses or expandable hoses that stretch to a 50-foot or even 75-foot length are ideal for plants and containers. Attaching a wand with a multi-function nozzle to a hose can make it much easier to use when sitting in a wheelchair or on a stool.



If weak fingers are a problem, slide one hand through a cup with a large handle to scoop up dirt or dip water out of a bucket.

One of the simplest ways to adapt tools for a more comfortable grip is to cover hard handles with foam. You can buy expensive ones made especially for various tools, but a piece of basic foam pipe insulation works just as well.



Whatever your issues, whether it is a chronic condition, recovering from surgery or an injury, or simply feeling the effects of aging, adapting your garden tools can make a big difference in enjoying gardening.

Standing Seed Planter

Construct this planting device that allows the gardener to plant seeds without bending. The slanted end can be used to draw a furrow. Drop seeds at regular intervals through funnel to provide the seed spacing. To cover furrow, turn pipe over and drag along soil.

Supply List:

- PVC pipe 2-3 inch diameter
- Small plastic funnel
- Duct tape



Instructions:

1. Measure length to user's waist while standing.
2. Cut PVC to this length at sharp angle.
3. Attach small funnel at other end, securing with duct tape.

PBS Wisconsin

GARDEN & Landscape Expo

February 7-9, 2020

Garden & Landscape Expo is presented by PBS Wisconsin and UW-Madison Wisconsin Horticulture - Extension as a fundraiser for PBS Wisconsin.

**CHECK
THIS
OUT!**



ABOUT

PBS Wisconsin's Garden & Landscape Expo is a midwinter oasis for people ready to venture out and dig their hands in the dirt. Now in its 27th year, this three-day event celebrates the latest trends in gardening and landscaping, and attracts more than 20,000 people from across the Midwest. Join other gardening enthusiasts to share ideas, gain inspiration and connect with professional landscapers. All proceeds support PBS Wisconsin.

Info: wigardenexpo.com

	One Day	Two Day	Three Day
Advance	\$8	\$13	\$16
At Door	10	15	18

Things to do at the Garden Expo:

- Learn something new at one of more than 150 free educational seminars and stage demonstrations.
- Connect with dozens of landscaping professionals who can help deliver your landscape dream.
- Visit with hundreds of businesses, independent contractors, nonprofits and artists to share ideas and learn about the newest in gardening, landscaping and local foods.
- Discuss innovative gardening techniques with Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Horticulture experts.
- Relax with a casual walk through beautiful garden displays—courtesy of **Wisconsin Nursery & Landscape Association (WNLA)**.
- Purchase seeds, tools and everything else you need to be ready when the trees bud and the ground thaws.
- Cultivate a love for gardening and the outdoors with your entire family in **Nature Cat's Backyard!**
- Attend the Sunday **farmers' market**, featuring farmers, food artisans and local food retailers.

From Barron County residents who have attended in the past:

“Amazing! There are so many sessions; it is hard to choose which ones to miss.”

“Besides all the things you learn from the speakers, there are lots of vendors who give you so many ideas.”

“It is a lot of fun to talk with the people you hear on Public Radio all the time.”

“It is kind of a winter get-away without ever leaving the state. You come back so excited to try some new or different things in your yard.

Master Gardener Calendar of Events:

Barron County Master Gardener Volunteer Meetings

Barron County Government Center, 7:00 pm

February 6 – Sam Finazzo will speak about Peonies

March 5 – Kevin Schoessow will speak on Tomatoes

April 2 – Kristina Beuning will speak about her certified organic CSA

Seminars and Workshops

North Central Wisconsin Master Gardeners

Visions 2020 - January 24-25

Location: Wausau

Keynote Speaker: Roy Diblik

More information: marathon.uwex.edu

Eau Claire Area Master Gardeners

Winter Garden Seminar - February 1

Location: Eau Claire

Keynote Speaker: Bonnie Blodgett

More information: eauclaireareamastergardener.org/education

PBS Wisconsin

GARDEN & Landscape Expo

February 7-9, 2020

Location: Madison

More information in this newsletter.

Chippewa Valley Master Gardeners

Think Spring - February 15

Location: Chippewa

Many breakout sessions occur throughout the day.

More information: chippewa.extension.wisc.edu

Dunn County Master Gardeners

Spring Begins – March 7

Location: Menomonie

Speaker: Diana Alfuth

More information: wimastergardener.org/events/spring-begins/

Barron County Master Gardeners

Spring Expo - April 4

Location: Rice Lake

Keynote Speaker: Bobby Jensen, co-host of *Grow with KARE*

More information in this newsletter.





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Resources—Where to find answers!

Factsheets—<https://pddc.wisc.edu/>

Fruit—fruit.wisc.edu

UWEX Publications—<https://learningstore.wwex.edu>

Insect Info—<http://labs.Russell.wisc.edu/insectlab/>

General Wisconsin horticulture info—<https://hort.Uwex.edu>

Horticulture training and articles—<https://wimastergardener.org/articles>

Weed identification—<https://weedid.wisc.edu>

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