Mount Hope Farm Master Gardeners

2017 Annual Report

Overview

2017 proved to be another great year for the URI Extension Program Master Gardeners. With two Master Gardener Projects containing almost 5,000 square feet of gardens made up of 40 garden beds as well as a monthly Kiosk with Soil testing, it’s been a busy year for our volunteers.

Throughout the year we’ve had a number of Master Gardeners volunteer their time rehabbing gardens, working at kiosks and growing a large amount of produce for donation to the Bristol Food Bank. There have been over 55 weddings along with other events at Mount Hope Farm that have found many guests strolling through the gardens and learning about the various plants and the URI Master Gardener Program. The 2017 growing year wrapped up with Mount Hope Farm’s Farm Fest which brought in hundreds of attendees to admire Mount Hope Farm and the many gardens maintained by the Master Gardeners.

Each Master Gardener that volunteered at the farm this year could often be found answering the questions of the many folks that took in the gardens or asked questions at the kiosks. I’d like to think our Master Gardener volunteers are some of the best Ambassadors of the URI Master Gardener Program that can be found. We are certainly very thankful for the dedicated group of so many Master Gardeners that made the projects and kiosk at Mount Hope Farm so successful this year.
Kiosk

The Kiosks and Soil Testing were very busy with approximately 80 visitors that left contact information and many, many others that availed themselves of the Master Gardeners that they peppered with a multitude of questions. When questions couldn’t be answered they were provided with contact information for the Master Gardener Hotline. Needless to say, there were a lot of challenging questions asked.

Additionally, 40 Soil Tests were conducted with helpful guidance provided to each client on soil care and treatment. We had a fantastic crew of eight Master Gardeners that would turn out to assist with these kiosks that were held on the second Saturday of each month. Of the 7 scheduled, 6 kiosks were held with the last scheduled kiosk being rained out. An additional Kiosk was attended to by Master Gardeners at the Farm Fest which found even more questions being answered.

2017 was a great year for the Kiosk and we look forward to next year providing garden education and soil testing.
With almost 900 square feet of floral gardens made up of 7 garden beds and almost 1,600 square feet of produce gardens made up of 19 garden beds, it was a banner year for the Grow 4 Good garden. Of course, banner translates to busy with the maintenance required of the many garden beds by a number of dedicated Master Gardeners. Working together as team, the gardens were kept show ready which made it possible for guests of the farm to enjoy cocktail hours in the gardens.

One of the most important aspects of the Grow 4 Good Garden was that through the many volunteer hours spent by Master Gardeners growing a large variety of vegetables, almost 1,900 pounds of produce was grown and donated to the Bristol Food Bank to help those in need. The Bristol Food Bank serves almost 400 households in the East Bay.
In addition to training amongst the Master Gardeners, we also had an opportunity to spend time educating a number of members of Mount Hope Farm’s 4H program where we spent time teaching about plants and talking about sustainability and demonstrating how to save seeds.

It was an excellent year in these gardens made possible by the many excellent Master Gardeners that volunteered here.
The gardens at Governor Bradford House, which was built in 1745, are made up of five different gardens with 14 garden beds totaling almost 2,300 square feet of gardens. Working with Mount Hope Farm’s Horticulturist, Kris Green, the Master Gardeners began the year by completing the rehabilitation of two large gardens made up of 7 beds totaling over 1,500 square feet of garden. What were once gardens being overrun with ingrown plants that rarely flowered are now two glowing gems. Brides now find themselves surrounded by a variety of beautiful plants that provide blooms complementing, but of course never overshadowing, the many wedding ceremonies that are held in these gardens.

The herb garden, which is well maintained and always a centerpiece of questions has continued to provide herbs for use in the kitchen for the many dishes provided to guests. It’s always a delight to answer questions and teach folks about how they can start their own herb gardens.
Of the two gardens that follow an old stone wall, one was rehabbed earlier this year and has now become the favored backdrop for many photos. The other was recently rehabbed with an eye towards replanting at the beginning of next year. Like the other gardens surrounding Governor Bradford house, this newly worked garden will become another much-admired garden.

**Ready for Guests**

With so many weddings and other events held at the farm along with the many guests that stay at the Inn including those that visit their young scholars at the nearby Roger Williams University, these gardens have become a show piece and an educational opportunity for the Master Gardener Program. Whether it’s a cocktail hour, a wedding or even the morning after, guests can often be found strolling through the gardens taking in their beauty in the company of family and friends. In fact, it is not uncommon to find a bride walking through the gardens early in the morning of her important day inhaling the relaxing fragrance of so many flowers.

**North Wall Garden**

There is no doubt that the Governor Bradford Gardens have thrived and once again become beautiful due the efforts of so many Master Gardeners. I’m sure the guests have noticed as well.
By the Numbers

- # of Master Gardeners on Volunteer List - 50
- New Intern Sign Ups - 10
- Total Volunteer Hours Recorded to date – 879
- Volunteer Time Labor Equivalent – $21,975
- Kiosks/Soil Testing Events Scheduled - 7
  - Soil Tests provided – 40
  - Kiosk Visitors Recorded - 79
- Educational Events Held - 3
- Total Garden Square Footage – 4,678 sq ft.
  - Produce Gardens Square Footage – 1,582 sq ft
  - Floral Gardens Square Footage – 3,096 sq ft.
    - G4G – 846 sq ft
    - GBH – 2,250 sq ft
- Approximate Garden Visitors/Educational Opportunities – 1,000+
- Produce Donated to Bristol Food Bank - 1,857 pounds
- Master Gardener Budget for 2017 - $1,260
- Plant Varieties –
  - Produce – 20+
  - Floral – Data being gathered
  - Herbs - 30+
2018

Early 2017 – Closed for Business

Planning for 2018 began in September

We look forward to 2018 and all the many great ways that Master Gardeners contribute to sustainable garden education and volunteering at Mount Hope Farm!