



Gardening for Community

The July 2018 Newsletter of the UFM Manhattan Community Gardens

IN THIS ISSUE

Summer workdays
Musings of an elderly gardener
New board members
Charitable gardeners
Compost, mulch and chips

Workdays

Upcoming workdays are:

July 7

August 4

September 8 and Social at Collins Lane

September 16

October 6 and Social at Riley Lane

October 14

November 3 and Annual Meeting

Musings of an Elderly Gardener

by Al Schmaderer

President Dave asked me to set down some memories of my time at the Manhattan Community Garden (MCG). I grew up on a farm in the high plains of northwest Kansas. There, the soils and climate are conducive

to growth of wheat and corn, but gardening is another matter. Lack of rain and hot southern winds play havoc with vegetables and fruit. My job brought me to Manhattan some 50 years ago and I felt that I finally had found an ideal place to garden.

After retirement, neighbors Dave and Bernice Schoneweis introduced me to the Manhattan Community Garden. I was lucky to get two plots at Riley Lane near the water hydrant and tool sheds. So now my wife and I enjoy not only the vegetables we grow but also fruit from our strawberry, raspberry and blackberry patches.

The MCG buildings and equipment have greatly improved in the last twenty years. When I first joined we had the old building now used to store hand tools and gasoline, plus an old pole building where we stored wheelbarrows and engine-powered equipment. That old building had a dirt floor and a very unsecure door. Sometimes we found evidence that a transient had spent the night. I never understood how a man could get restful sleep below the many active yellow-jacket nests in the rafters.

Usually I am available at my plots to answer simple questions like the lock combinations. Some of my friends accuse me of living at the garden because I am there every time they arrive. I don't. But I can answer your questions, enjoy meeting new people, and hope to see you all down there sometime.

Make the Newsletter Better

David Claus, MCG Board President

I know many of you would like to make the newsletter even better. Here's how you can help. Is there a topic you would like to see covered or a gardener who should be featured? Email us at info@tryufm.com

Are you planning to **not renew** your plot for 2019? Please let us know as soon as possible. E-mail us at info@tryufm.com

Recruiting New Board Members

The MCG Executive Board consists of up to fourteen gardeners, each elected to serve for three years. Responsibilities are:

- Attend monthly meetings
- Chair at least one committee
- Provide leadership and assistance at signups, workdays, and social events
- Be an advocate for the MCG
- Communicate with fellow gardeners regarding issues and concerns

New board members are nominated and elected at the November annual meeting and begin service the following month. Terms are staggered to allow new board members to serve with experienced colleagues. This fall we will need three or four new board members. If you are interested contact John Piskac, piskac@att.net.

We are pleased that we already have one volunteer, Molly Webb. Molly has called Manhattan home since 2015 and joined the garden in 2016. As novice gardeners, Molly and her husband Christian love learning from their experienced garden neighbors and anticipate getting to know more of the community in the years ahead.

Charity Gardeners

We gardeners are a charitable bunch. We routinely share produce with neighbors, family, and each other. But some Manhattan Community Gardeners are charity groups whose intent is to donate not only their time and energy, but all the garden products to the community.

The Men's Garden Club has long maintained plots for that purpose, donating all produce to the Flinthills Breadbasket and other charity groups. (And some club members are covertly working this year's un-rented plots to donate the produce.) Other community-service groups include Project Impact and a Girl Scout troop.

At Riley Lane, a therapeutic recreation class offered to special-needs adults through Manhattan Parks and Recreation takes the concept to a whole new level of community good. The triple-benefit program works like this:

- First, the gardening activity itself is used as therapy, allowing the participant to engage with soil, water and living plants in ways seldom available to persons with physical and/or mental disabilities. The garden setting allows the participant to interact with the natural world through smell, taste, touch, and sound.

- Second, the vegetables and herbs are used in a separate cooking-therapy class, creating another opportunity for participants to experience activities seldom available to them.
- Third, the plot's "natural materials" are used in the arts & crafts class to build a "fairy garden".

Phyllis Tatum, Parks and Recreation Gardening Assistant, says that to prepare the plot for special-needs populations, "This year, our Riley Lane plot is being "reworked" to allow for more wheelchair access, more planting and growing opportunities and easier upkeep.

We have installed three wheelchair-accessible tables of varying heights which allow different wheelchair sizes full access to the table. We are using the front half of each table for the fairy garden and the back half (deeper) for plantings to assist in "screening" our garden from the alley. The tables will have trellises added to allow for more vertical gardening.

Two other planters have new borders, allowing for taller items such as potatoes, corn, beans and squash. This fall we will install a trellis "tunnel" between the two low planters for more vertical gardening. Newer pallets have been painted and installed, and guttering planters added to grow herbs, flowers and strawberries. All the planters and pallets will have a watering system with a multi-faucet manifold and soaker hoses. We installed a border around our flowers on the north side and are working with concrete blocks as planters along the east.

The pathways have been sized for wheel chair accommodation and will be laid with weed barrier to assist with upkeep."

Compost, Mulch and Chips

John Piskac, compost/mulch committee

Our **Compost** comes from K-State and is a mixture of wheat straw and manure from cattle, poultry, or hogs. The mixture is composted with turning for six to eight weeks to break down the carbon in the straw. During this process microbial heating increases the temperature to 150° F or more, ensuring that pathogens, insects, and weed seeds are destroyed. At Collins Lane some compost also comes from the Riley County Transfer Station and consists of grass, leaves, and other vegetation that was wetted and composted for up to four months.

Compost is added to soil to improved soil tilth, to increase the water-holding capacity of soil and to enhance microbial action. Neither compost is considered "organic" by USDA standards.

Mulch is placed on soil to cover it, thus conserving moisture and controlling weeds. We purchase the round bales of prairie hay locally and usually get good quality hay composed of native grasses and forbs mowed prior to seed production, which means it contains very little weed seed. After the growing season, reasonable amounts of prairie hay mulch can be tilled into the soil and composted in place.

Wood Chips come from the Riley County Transfer Station and consist of small pieces of trees and shrubs. Chips are used only on the pathways to control weeds. They should not be tilled into the soil.



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