Master Gardener
Project of the Year Tips
Under 50 Members
Greene County - 2016

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A special thank you to Connie Whitman for providing many of the details and pictures for this slide set.
Also a special thank you to Paulettta Tobey, chair of the awards committee last year.
Key 1 - Vision

- Beautify
- More color
- Textures
- Curb appeal
- Draw attraction to beds
- No one wants to look at an electric pole or crepe murder!!!
Key 1 - Vision

- Economic Development
- Desirable place for families
- More folks say lets go to the fair!!!
- We can check out the flowers and get some cotton candy!!!
- More groups will use the fairground facilities to host special events
- Attract new businesses
Key 1 - Vision

- Foster Conservation
- Reduce soil erosion by mulching, establishing plants, and bordering with stones
- Minimize use of irrigation water by using more drought tolerant plants, mulch, and paper under beds
- Enhance environment for beneficial insects with food and pollinator friendly plants
Key 1 - Vision

- Educational
- Hands on learning for all
- Live plants for teaching students and other individuals
- Signs with brief descriptions about plant characteristics and benefits
Key 1 - Vision

- Promote Master Gardener Program
- Entice enrollment of new members to join the fun and learning
- Improve retention of current members by having quality projects
- Develop project over time - SCOPE & NEW IDEAS
Key 2 – Site

- Public access
- The Greene County Fairgrounds are open to the public for many events held there annually, including the fair which starts on Labor Day
- Greene County hosts the oldest fair in the state
Key 2 – Site

- People traffic – Over 40,000 attend the fair annually
- Many other events are conducted at the fairgrounds annually, some including the Spring Livestock show, 4-H Competitive Events, and Paragould Dog Show
Key 2 – Site

- Visibility
- Located near Highway 49, the major North-South thoroughfare in Paragould
- Master Gardener landscape beds are located at the South, East, and West Entrances to the fairgrounds
Key 2 – Site

- Terrain – relatively flat – perfect for raised beds since drainage is an issue in some places
- Some erosion on main entry is addressed with hardscape
Key 2 – Site

- Water source
- City water has always been available to use for the landscape beds and new plantings
- In 2015 an outside hydrant was added by the fair board to make watering landscape beds more convenient
Key 3 – Partner

- Fair board support
- Request help and expertise of Master Gardeners
Key 3 – Partner

- Funding
- The board budgets money yearly to buy plants for the landscape beds
- Mulch is also purchased by the board for new beds and to replenish established beds
Key 3 – Partner
Key 3 – Partner

- Labor
- Extra backs and brains welcomed
Key 3 – Partner

- Networked
- Know other agencies
- Know businesses
- Know folks with resources
Key 4 - Members

- Chair provides leadership
Key 4 - Members

- Core group ensures success
Key 4 - Members

- Online reporting shows member project support
- 2015 and 2016 statistics show 10% of GCMG volunteer hours were logged working with the fairgrounds project
Key 4 - Members

- Project review committee evaluates success
- MG Exec Board plays a key role
Key 4 - Members

- Awards committee select project to submit for state competition
- Exec Board is providing more input with this process
2010 – Started out simple
Fair grounds beds had fallen into disrepair
The fair board asked for help from the Greene County Master Gardeners
Old beds were weeded, plants pruned, mulch applied, and some new plants added
Broken railroad ties around entry ways were removed
Gravel around crepe myrtles removed
Beds bordered with limestone rocks
Key 5 - Planning

- Tied with other fair horticulture work opportunities
- Exhibit building pots were replaced and planted with colorful annuals and perennials
- Members also took lead for the flower exhibits
- Some members assisted with home garden exhibits
Key 5 - Planning

- Big push for more educational beds and plant markers the last 3-4 years
- Plant markers
- Substantial work on entrance beds focusing on beauty reduced erosion
- Beds by fair office improved with additional plants – annuals, perennials, and ornamental grasses
- Butterfly garden added in 2015
Key 5 - Planning

- SCOPE - Continues to grow and evolve – Some 25 beds!
- Potential future efforts for the project include an herb garden, wildflower garden, brambles patch, and beautification beds at livestock entrance
Soil is not created the same
- Watch for nutgrass and other weeds
- Newest entrance beds on west have some of the richest soil from Greene County – 200 bushel corn potential
- Manure included
Key 6 - Resources

- Mulch
- The magic bullet!
- Icing on the cake!
- Best weeds and water management tool for any garden
Key 6 - Resources

- Plants from fair board, MG members, and others - Kinsley

Phlox, Liriope, Vinca, Daylilies to name a few – from GCMG
Key 6 - Resources

- Plant food
- Limited use since most plants are low maintenance
Key 6 - Resources

- Water
- Yes when needed
- Yes working to minimize when too rainy
Key 6 - Resources

- Hardscape
Key 7 – Educational Element

- Plant markers
- Used to identify most plants in all beds
- Martha Chiles takes the lead on markers
Key 7 – Educational Element

- Educational signs
- Nectar and host plant signs
- Plan to use more as project grows
- Greene County Master Gardener signs are in many of the beds to promote the program
Key 7 – Educational Element

- Teaching beds
- The butterfly garden is a great example – visitors see pollinators like bees, butterflies, and humming birds.
Key 7 – Educational Element

- Educational exhibits
- Vegetable
- Flowers
- Artistic arrangements
- 4H Giant Pumpkin and Watermelon
Key 8 – Focal Point

- Butterfly mania – bed shaped like a Monarch butterfly
Butterfly bed in the making!!!
Key 8 – Focal Point

- Certified by North American Butterfly Association
- Meets required criteria with specific plants
Key 8 – Focal Point

- Nectar plants – Phlox, coneflower, gaura, aster, and black eyed susans

Butterfly bush

Nectar Plants in the Butterfly Garden
- Most adult butterflies get their nutrition from flowers.
- Especially good are native plants like Echinacea (coneflower), liatris, and Butterfly weed.
- Other favorites are lantana, penta, and agastache, and zinnias.

Other Ways to Get Nutrition
- Some butterflies get nutrition from tree sap, rotting fruit, or animal dung.
- Mud puddles provide minerals, especially for males of certain species.
Key 8 – Focal Point

- Host plants – Milkweed, bronze fennel, Dusty Miller, and parsley.
- Plant markers indicate what type of butterfly need that plant. Example: a Monarch butterfly has to have milkweed.
Key 8 – Focal Point

- Pollinator friendly
- Many plants are in bloom the week of the county fair
Key 9 – Media Effort

- Print media
- Paragould Daily Press
- Premiere
Key 9 – Media Effort

- Social media
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Pinterest
Key 9 – Media Effort

- Television
- Plans are to invite KAIT8 to spotlight butterfly garden
Key 10 - Evaluation

- Assessed by project chair frequently
Key 10 - Evaluation

- Assessed by GCMG board yearly
Key 10 - Evaluation

Assessed by GC Fair Board yearly
Thank You

- The Greene County Master Gardeners wish you the best in your pursuit of a winning Project of the Year!
- A special thanks to Janet, Julie, and the state MG awards committee for making the awards program available.