



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Hardin County Extension News Release

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Hudson Named Ohio Outstanding Master Gardener

Hardin County – Penny Hudson was one of five individuals recognized as “Outstanding Master Gardener Volunteer” at the 2022 MGVS State Conference Awards Program held October 7-8 in Cuyahoga County near Cleveland. The local Hardin County OSU Extension group was also nominated for five other state awards at the conference. The project ‘Children’s Garden’ was recognized in the “Environmental Horticulture Outstanding MGVS Project” award category for small sized groups. Cessna Transport was recognized for the “Friend of the OSU Extension MGVS Program.” Mark Badertscher was recognized by his peers for being nominated as an “Outstanding MGVS Coordinator” in the paid staff category. Hardin County was also one of four counties recognized for the “Pandemic Perseverance Award” for their efforts restoring the educational Friendship Gardens after the pandemic. In addition, the Hardin County group was recognized as a platinum “Standards of Excellence” award winner. Awards presented at the conference were for the previous program year.

Outstanding MGVS award winner Penny Hudson has provided educational opportunities for Hardin County in 2021 by chairing the Friendship Garden revitalization committee. The Friendship Garden is an interactive community garden that is used to educate people of all ages. In 2021, Hudson worked tirelessly as the chairperson of the Friendship Garden committee. In this role, she helped the MGVS group make the garden even more interactive by improving a children’s play area. One activity was a scavenger hunt of plant and insect challenges. Hudson’s knowledge of plants helps other MGVS be selective in working, passing on her knowledge in a kind way.

Children in the community needed a place for age-appropriate educational activities to learn about gardening and nature in a dedicated setting. This need culminated in the Children’s Garden and Children’s Play Area, a hands-on garden where children can learn, explore, and play in the beauty of nature. Work to create an area for a Children’s Garden began in 2018 when ground was cleared to add this space to the Friendship Garden maintained by Hardin County Master Gardeners. In the beginning work focused on installing permanent structures such as an in-ground tic tac toe board and pretend

bridge, with plans to add sensory and cognitive activities in the following years. Covid restrictions shut down those plans, but in 2021 many exploratory activities were installed making the Children's Garden a popular part of the Friendship Garden today and Outstanding MGV Project nominee.

The Hardin County Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener Volunteer program was pleased to nominate Cessna Transport as their 2022 Friend of the MGV program award nominee. 2020 was a very devastating year with the Coronavirus pandemic throughout the world. The beautiful friendship garden was left abandoned for a whole year which resulted in an unattended overgrown garden. The mask mandates affected commitments of working at the beloved garden. Weeds took over and plants died in each designated garden area. The Friendship Garden on 960 W. Kohler Street, Kenton, Ohio was shut down for the whole year.

Then as 2021 began the Hardin County Master Gardeners wanted to rejuvenate the gardens. The MGV group walked through the gardens to plan to restore the garden areas. Cessna Transport, Kenton, Ohio donated \$500.00 to purchase plants for the Perennial Garden area which began the renewal process. The MGV group met to choose the plants for the area and the process began immediately. As a result, the donation sparked the beginning of the ongoing renewal of The Friendship Garden. The MGV group worked diligently until all the planned areas were complete enough to have an Open House in June, and later with multiple gardening workshops.

Outstanding MGV Coordinator nominee Mark Badertscher has been the paid Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator for over 9 years since beginning with Hardin County OSU Extension in June 2013 as the Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Educator. Some of his positive attributes that helped make the MGV program successful include being a good communicator that has been informed and kept the volunteers motivated through difficult times and challenges. The encouragement and motivation provided by Badertscher helped the volunteers stay focused and rebuild as a stronger organization after a difficult pandemic which caused some volunteers to resign or become inactive after not being able to remain involved taking care of the local educational gardens and being unable to provide in-person programs.

The Master Gardener Volunteers group learned persistence as stated in the Pandemic Perseverance award application. They are a group of less than 20 volunteers with most over the age of 60. Despite back issues, knee issues and lifting restrictions, they persevered, focusing on one project at a time. The group learned that they need to let go of some things. One example was to let go of two of their gardens by blocking them from sight with black plastic. Then they went back and planted them in 2022. They also changed their strategy to include gardening smarter, using shrubs and trees that take less maintenance.

The Master Gardener Volunteers learned that by working together and encouraging each other, they could see the light at the end of the tunnel. They were able to host their programs, despite the challenge of revitalizing all the gardens and even move forward with the goal of providing quality garden programs to other Master Gardeners and the public.

In addition to being recognized for these state awards, the Hardin County Master Gardener Volunteers were recognized with the platinum 'Standards for Excellence' distinction. This is the highest degree of accomplishment for a county Master Gardener Volunteer program, based on guidelines set up by Ohio State University Extension.

Attached photo caption – Penny Hudson was one of five individuals recognized as “Outstanding Master Gardener Volunteer” at the 2022 MGV State Conference Awards Program held October 7-8 in Cuyahoga County near Cleveland.