

A monthly e-letter exclusively for Certified and Intern MGVs

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April 2020

- compiled by *Mike Maddox*

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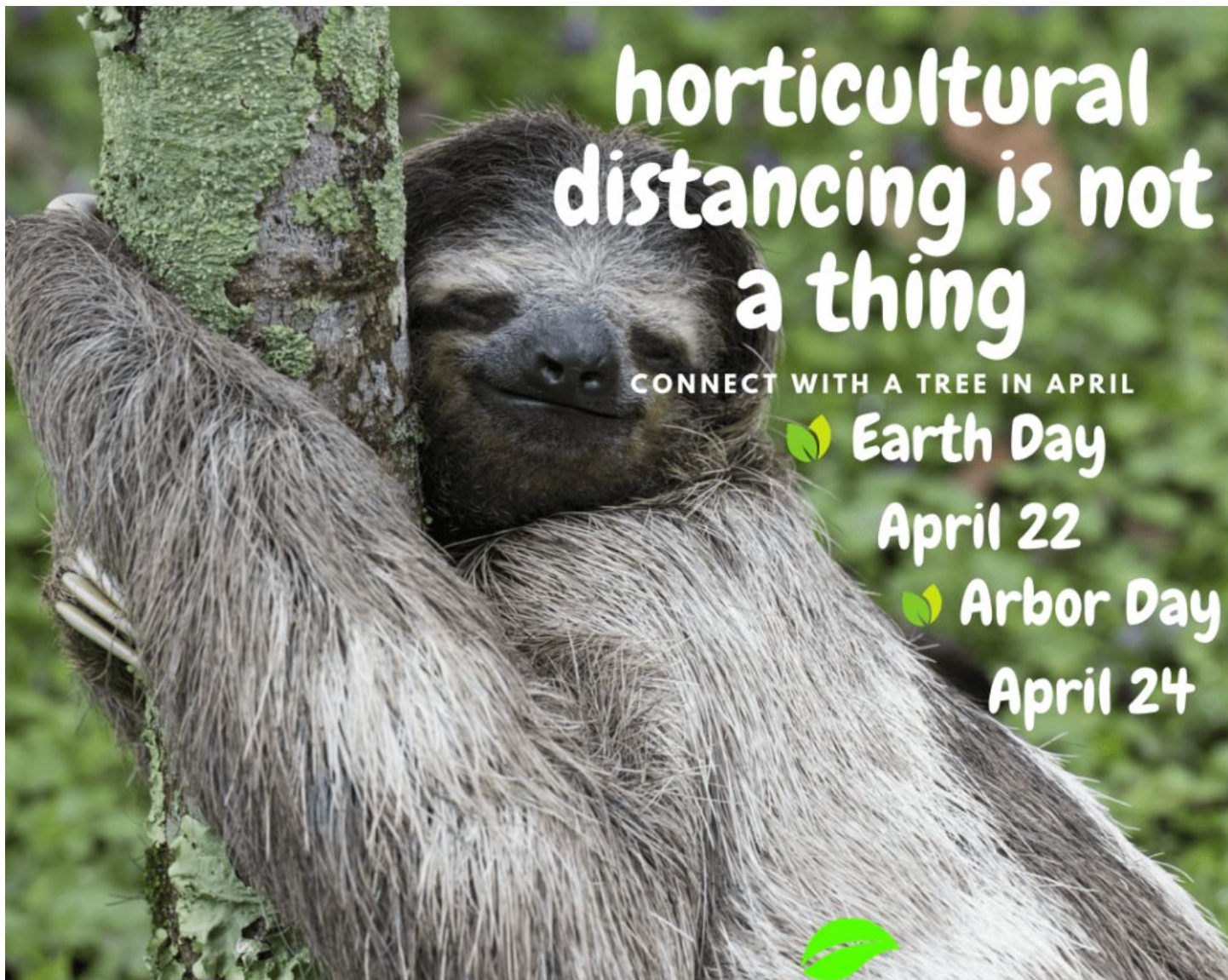
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horticultural distancing is not a thing

CONNECT WITH A TREE IN APRIL

 Earth Day

April 22

 Arbor Day

April 24



#PlantsDoThat

NICH

NATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR CONSUMER HORTICULTURE

COVID-19 Update

I know everyone is getting antsy to be outside on volunteer projects. DATCP has recently released criteria for green industry businesses to be open for their essential functioning, DO NOT interpret this as a green light for volunteering at your out of home projects.

The executive order states:

2. Non-essential business and operations must cease. All for-profit and non-profit businesses with a facility in Wisconsin, except Essential Businesses and Operations as defined below, are required to cease all activities at facilities located within Wisconsin...

We must remember we are an outreach service of the UW-Madison campus. All research, education, and outreach is cancelled, postponed, or moved online.

Furthermore, a county health department message was recently shared with me regarding MG activities:

I do not recommend this [outside volunteer activities]. The Safer at Home order recommends staying at home especially among the population over age 60. Travel only for essential purposes. The Garden beds are not essential. We are expected to peak in the month of May with the disease. It is not a good time to be doing these activities and does not send the message of staying at home. I know they are excited to work on the gardens but it is very important in order to protect our community.

Last month I made the decision to suspend the volunteer requirements for the remainder of the year. This specifically means MGVs may report less than 24 hours (this includes reporting ZERO hours of volunteer activity) to best accommodate the Safer at Home order.

Also, all face to face volunteer activities are cancelled through May and likely longer pending more information [While writing this, the Badger Bounce Back was announced; we are taking this and other evolving policy into consideration]. I'm strongly discouraging planning efforts for activities for later this spring and early summer, especially plant sales, large educational events, and travel. I do not want volunteers to put effort into activities that will then need to be cancelled.

Volunteer activities that can be done from the safety of home are the only things that may continue for the time being. Continuing education requirements will continue to be 10 hours.

- **What you can do:** Volunteer activities from home; online.
- **What you can't do:** Volunteer activities outside your home and property; All face to face activities.
- **What recommend you can't do:** planning stuff related to MGP projects/trips that would take place this summer
- **What you MUST do for the MGP in 2020:** 10 hours of CE. mandates. NO 24 HOUR VOL SERVICE REQUIRED. (but volunteering may be allowed at a later date.)

It has also come to my attention that some groups are continuing activities, such as plant and tree sales. These activities are not essential, are in violation of the emergency order, and may be subject to penalty by local law enforcement.

[Read: Halt to Master Gardener Program Volunteer Activities](#)

General COVID-19 resources

- [COVID-19 Information](#) from WI DHS.
- Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
- Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content and have it available for all participants.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve/elbow.
- Avoid direct contact such as shaking hands, embracing individuals, or putting yourself or others in close contact with one another.
- Between events be sure to use Clorox wipes or something similar to wipe down furniture, doorknobs, tables, chairs, and any other spaces that may retain the COVID-19 virus.
- Provide significant spacing (at least 6 feet) between participants and presenters – if you have lines of individuals consider putting tape on the floor to delineate individual spaces.

No Fall Training

During March's Coordinator Discussion, I also announced a "pause" to MG certification for the remainder of the year. Those currently in the pipe can finish to the best of their ability given the limited volunteer opportunities. However, no fall training as in the past.

We've been working on strategic priorities for the last year plus. You may have read about it in the newsletter: reduce confusion, increase diversity, improve programming and projects, and address the changes in staffing and resources and the changes with policies and procedures. This has been on a long, low simmer as we've addressed these issues while also doing our normal programming. Well, since all regular programming is on hold and "normal" isn't normal anymore, I've decided to embrace the chaos and use this as an opportunity to turn up the heat on these projects. I don't consider what we are doing a surprise 'cause I've talked about it before. The real surprise is the sudden focus on these activities-- but, everything is a surprise right now.

Our big plan is to release a new statewide "onboarding" experience (still looking for a good name) and implementation of new policies, procedures, and guidelines. This will ensure all MGVs have the same baseline knowledge and understanding of the program upon their start. We are also working on getting all those guidelines in place so there aren't 50+ different versions of the same thing as you can from county to county. Our goal is to have things in place for October 2020. What I hope is you consider to continue with general gardening training, serve a broader audience, and still use that as a potential conduit for new volunteers in the program. More details to be shared as they become ready.

My Favorite Plants for Sensory Stimulation

As gardeners, you know plants do the mind and body good. The data to support this claim has rapidly grown over the years! I really like the summary by the University of Washington, [Green Cities: Good Health](#). This site curates all the original citations and does a very good job at providing summaries. If you are looking for the information in a multi-media ready, visually friendly way, #PlantsDoThat by the [National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture](#) has things wonderfully packaged. Jump to those sites to learn how plants can improve our well-being.

Perhaps it is just me, but self isolation and the looming existential dread is increasing stress, anxiety, and depression. Also, for many of us, we are experiencing an increase in screen time as once face to face work is now virtual on the computer. I've been turning to my garden for my own personal therapeutic needs and it has me reflecting on my favorite things for sensory stimulation. It is through our 5 senses we take in the garden- touching, smelling, hearing, tasting, and seeing the plants is how we properly stimulate our brain in order to get the benefits from plants. Here's my personal list of favorite things in my garden:

- [Read the rest of this at the wimastergardener.org website](#)

Get Continuing Ed While Social Distancing!

Option 1: We have reopened the registration for Level 3: Placemaking Lite to give you another opportunity to make the best use of this unique time. Many MGVs who have taken this course have found it useful and enjoyable. Info, cost and current registration link below:

A version of Placemaking for Master Gardener Volunteers (offered previously in 2019) that has all of the good information and a more relaxed timeline. Course start date: *you can start immediately!*

Cost: \$25 per person

To register for Placemaking Lite: Visit the [registration website](#).

What will I learn?

- What placemaking is and how MGVs can be/are placemakers
- How placemaking is being used in communities
- How to think about MG projects in a new way to connect them to research, goals, and community needs

What stays the same?

- Class is totally online = flexibility! Do the course when it works with your schedule
- Watch videos, read, and answer questions using Google Forms (no Google account required)
- Starts January 2020
- Technical assistance provided by the state program office and Extension

What is different about this course?

- NO GOOGLE ACCOUNT REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE
- Earn 6 hours of Continuing Education
- No final project or discussion questions. (There are questions to respond to but you don't have to reply to a classmate's answer.)
- Course runs January-October 1, 2020... that's a 9 month window to complete it whenever you can with your schedule. No scheduled online meetings or due dates.



Option 2: Plants Plus is another great option to get continuing education. It is available online and for free. [See what we have available](#) or visit the wimastergardener.org website and look under Learn.

Get your continuing education with our Level 2 Plants Plus Series – a remix of past training presentations, printed materials and other references focused on specific plants or topics to help you increase your knowledge so you can better answer homeowner questions. To get 2 hours of continuing education credit for watching and reading this package of information, just complete the short quiz! Click on the image or link to access the module.



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<https://wimastergardener.org/article/vine-crops/>

Upcoming Events

MG Program Office



Mike Maddox, Director
mike.maddox@wisc.edu



Amy Freidig, Coordinator
akfreidig@wisc.edu

New email
addresses!

wimastergardener@extension.wisc.edu

Note:

Mike is currently working from home.
Amy is currently working from home with reduced hours.
Please be patient with communications during this time.