



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Hardin County Extension News Release

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Master Gardeners Recognize 2020 Awards

By Mark Badertscher

Hardin County – More than 300 Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener Volunteers gathered virtually on Thursday, October 22, 2020 to honor peers, colleagues, and program supporters. The OSUE MGV Awards program was hosted by state MGV Program Director Pamela Bennett and Program Manager Jen Andon. The event is normally held during the face to face MGV State Conference but was moved to virtual due to COVID-19 restrictions.

OSUE MGV Awards are given to those who exemplify excellence in their work with the MGV program. The annual awards are based on programs and events scheduled the previous year in 2019. The Hardin County Master Gardener Volunteers, to fulfill the mission to educate others with timely research-based gardening information, submitted the “3rd Saturday in the Friendship Gardens” series as their project to reach the community of Hardin County and surrounding counties with gardening topics of interest. In 2019 the topics were Introduction to Beekeeping, Fairy Gardens, and Monarch Butterflies.

A local beekeeper, Mike Hubbell, came to share an “Introduction to Beekeeping.” The goal was to increase interest in those who might want to keep honeybees, whose populations have been decreasing from outside forces. The “Fairy Garden” program was a hands-on teaching event led by Master Gardener Volunteer Kim Thomas that demonstrated which containers would be appropriate to use, the scale of each plant, figurines, and other decorative items that could be used in creating a fairy garden. The “Monarch Butterfly” program was led by MGV Carol McKinley. The goal of this program was to make people aware of what gardeners can do with their landscapes to encourage this endangered insect species to thrive.

Local nominations for Outstanding Master Gardener Volunteer and Friend of MGVs were also submitted for statewide recognition. Stewart Coats was nominated by the local group as Hardin County’s Outstanding Master Gardener Volunteer for 2020. His love of producing food, whether vegetables or fruit from trees is his overriding passion. Stewart has continued to find improvements in his production

of these commodities the past year. He is always quick to demonstrate use of drip irrigation in his own gardens as well as the planting and harvesting in the demonstration garden, The Friendship Gardens of Hardin County. He researches new vegetable varieties and shares that information. He has spoken to the local Men's Garden Club, The Hardin County MGVs, as well as answering vegetable and fruit questions from county residents. Stewart was able to present on the MGV Grow Ohio Challenge to several groups to explain the value of growing and sharing harvest with the food insecure of our county.

Hardin County's nomination for this year's Friend of MGV was the Hardin County Men's Garden Club. The Hardin County Men's Garden Club has been instrumental in support the major MGV project, The Friendship Gardens of Hardin County. Their involvement with the project began at the initial construction phase in 2009 as they provided the materials and the labor to construct the pergola at the entrance to the garden. They have continued to provide funding and labor as the project continued to develop, helping in the construction of the shelter house and the shade garden structure. In addition, the Hardin County Men's Garden Club began the idea of the mid-summer "An Evening Garden Affair." They involved the Hardin County OSUE MGVs by inviting them to be the educational portion of the evening.

The Hardin County Master Gardener Volunteers were recognized at the virtual state conference 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 the Ohio State University Extension.

Attached photo caption – Stewart Coats was nominated as Hardin County OSU Extension Outstanding Master Gardener Volunteer for 2020 as part of the annual awards program for the local group which provides educational horticulture garden programs for county residents.