



SMART GARDENING BRINGS POSITIVE CHANGE TO MICHIGAN GARDENS

17

tip sheets were updated and improved for accessibility.

155

Smart Gardening volunteers shared resources on sustainable gardens, shorelines and plant health care.

OVER 11,500

individuals were reached by Smart Gardening educational efforts.

PRIORITY

A R E A S

Michigan State University (MSU) Extension’s Smart Gardening initiative equips gardeners with earth-friendly, sustainable techniques, proper planting options and more. Through media, outreach events and conferences, as well as printed and digital materials, Smart Gardening provides the resources for gardeners to make decisions such as choosing plants that match site conditions, using nutrients properly through soil testing, maintaining areas near shorelines and improving water quality. As private, residential yards comprise a high percentage of land use, the information shared through Smart Gardening outreach has shown gardeners contribute positively to these efforts and share what they have learned with others.



MSU Extension Master Gardener Smart Gardening volunteer Jackie Manchester-Kempke assists participants in learning about honey bees.

Smart Gardening is a messaging campaign that encourages gardeners to use more sustainable pest, disease and nutrient management practices. These management practices are presented at a basic level and provided through digital, print and in-person outreach options via MSU Extension Master Gardener Smart Gardening volunteers. Gardeners who adopt “smart” practices take beneficial actions that maintain and enhance lawns, vegetable gardens, home orchards and shorelines.

Free tip sheets and bookmarks highlighting the MSU Extension Lawn & Garden Hotline and Ask Extension

For more information, visit:
www.canr.msu.edu/home_gardening/tip_sheets

“ I love the program; it has taught me a lot which I continue to use in my own gardens. ”

• Smart Gardening program participant

resources are a core component of Smart Gardening outreach materials. In 2023, MSU Extension Master Gardener Smart Gardening volunteers and consumer horticulture staff conducted Smart Gardening outreach at 17 venues in Michigan's Upper and Lower Peninsulas. MSU Extension Master Gardener Smart Gardening volunteers assisted outreach efforts by providing individuals with one-on-one assistance.

In 2023, 155 Smart Gardening volunteers volunteered over 1,100 hours amounting to over \$35,000 of economic impact. These Smart Gardening volunteers also applied learned concepts in their own gardens and statewide volunteer projects. Over 2,400 individuals participated in over 30 virtual and in-person Smart Gardening presentations on topics including pruning, pollinators and deer prevention. By using multiple types of communication, Smart Gardening is capable of reaching individuals at various statewide events. Both live and self-paced

Smart Gardening with Vegetables 101 courses were offered to aid beginning gardeners in learning effective strategies for growing their own food.

Fifty print and digital tip sheets span seven topic areas of shorelands, pollinators, fruit, vegetables, plants, lawn and soils. These provide clear information on smart practices within garden management. Tip sheet content is regularly evaluated, and consumer horticulture educators recently collaborated with community, food and environment educators and enhanced Smart Gardening offerings with more material on waterfront and aquatic invasive species. In the last year, educators reviewed 17 tip sheets, updated content and added QR codes to offer faster ways for individuals to find and share materials. Making gardening information available in accessible formats at a variety of events allows gardeners to make smart choices that lead to action that protects Michigan natural resources and pollinators.