



## 2016 Project Spotlight

### Environmental Stewardship

## *Native Plant Garden at the Macon Museum of Arts & Sciences*

*Served by Macon-Bibb County Extension and MGEVs*

Learn

Serve

Grow

A native plant garden positively impacts the environment, as the use of native plants in the landscape can allow for decreased use of inputs like pesticides and fertilizer. In addition, these plants provide food and habitat for a variety of native wildlife. In Macon, GA, this type of beneficial garden evolved from a research garden to a Master Gardener native plant demonstration garden.

In the 1990s, the Native Plant Garden started as a variety trial garden on the Wesleyan College campus. When the trial came to an end, Master Gardener Extension Volunteers (MGEVs) repurposed the garden as a demonstration garden on native plant materials. With the onset of construction on the college campus, MGEVs relocated as many plants as possible from the full sun trial garden area to a shaded, walking trail area at the Macon Museum of Arts and Sciences. This process took a year to complete, but the hard work and diligent efforts of MGEVs have since been rewarded.

Today, the garden thrives in its new location. MGEVs have worked tirelessly to lay out, label, map the garden beds, provide appropriate and informative signage, and address the natural landscape challenges of the new location. These challenges included shade from surrounding trees and washing of the sloping landscape during heavy rainfall. With the installation of shade-tolerant native plants, undergrowth plant-ings to help prevent erosion, and a small retention pond to catch rain water, Central Georgia MGEVs of Bibb, Houston, Twiggs, and Crawford counties have played vital roles in ensuring the establishment and success of this garden on the museum grounds.

The garden is open to the public and museum visitors. Surrounded by walking trails, it is an ideal passive educational opportunity and is also utilized frequently for tours for numerous school groups. The garden is used by the resident naturalists/educators at the museum, and youth are taught about ethnobotany as they are walked through the area. Often, the walking trails are teeming with adults, children, and pets as they visit the peaceful area.

In 2013, the garden was awarded the Native Landscape Award at the South Georgia Native Plant & Wildflower Symposium. Then, in 2014, MGEVs partnered with a local Girl Scouts group to coordinate a spring festival and butterfly release. The festival took place in the garden and included crafting activities and educational gardening sessions on topics like recyclables, container gardening, medicinal purposes of native plants, and promotion of butterfly growth.

Not only are youth, museum visitors, and community members learning from the Native Plant Garden, but MGEVs have increased their knowledge of and interest in middle Georgia native plants. In addition, MGEVs have gained a greater appreciation for native plants. The garden continues to serve the local community and museum visitors. Plans are in the works to provide QR codes on the garden signage with links to short educational videos about the native plants.

**2016 Project Contributions:**  
**200.50 Volunteer Hours**

*Special thanks to MGEVs working hard to make this project successful!*



The Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Program prepares volunteers to support UGA Cooperative Extension in delivering gardening information to Georgia's citizens and communities. Since 1979, Master Gardeners and UGA Extension have helped Georgians become healthier, more productive, financially independent and environmentally responsible.