Northland Arboretum Gardening 101 Junior Master Gardener Earthdiggers Garden

(Arboretum G101-JMG-Earthdiggers)

Program Update for 2016

2015 proved to be a very successful inaugural year for the Arb’s Gardening 101-JMG-Earthdiggers Garden program for grades 3-6. Class and hands on gardening sessions were inspirational and satisfying for the students, their families, and Master Gardeners who taught the class. Many parents asked that the program continue to be offered next year for our youth. One grateful parent wrote; “I cannot stress to you the importance of offering affordable programs like the Gardening 101 class to the community. For some of us, this is all I can do for my children and this class has been everything to them. I have watched their confidence skyrocket and pride in their gardens. For that I will be forever grateful.”

Following the program’s success in 2015, then Arb Director Mary Corrigan and CWC Master Gardeners determined an improved garden site was needed to accommodate increased interest, not wanting to turn away any kids- young, or young at heart.

In September of 2015, Eric Sullivan of Navillus Land Company, Baxter, contributed a large share of removing existing sod and weeds from the new site, and hauled in and raised/levelled the new garden site with clean sand fill. On September 26, 2015 the Brainerd Lakes Area Master Naturalists and CWC Master Gardeners built large raised beds, increased in size and number to accommodate growing program needs. Nick Reindel, DNR Fencing Specialist (retired), Master Gardener Ken Lueken, Arb Volunteer XXX, and with the Jones family from The Farm on St Mathias providing fence post auguring, deer fencing posts were set around the garden perimeter in October before freeze up. A garden perimeter stone block retaining wall, outdoor class area, deer and rabbit fencing, gates, and soil filling the raised beds will be completed in early spring of 2016.

Beyond vegetable and fruit growing beds, the amenities for this program in the foreseeable future will include interpretative signage, an orchard, edible grapes, native plant nursery beds and education in advantages/uses of native plants, and a large Monarch Waystation. Watch for upcoming announcements for citizens, groups and commercial entity’s to participate in fundraising for these important educational aspects of the program.

A CWC Junior Master Gardener designated community garden and outdoor classroom, the project is a joint venture with the Arboretum, partnering with the Forestview Middle School JMG program, and CWC Master Gardeners. The inspiring project was selected for a Crow Wing Energized grant which provided the initial funding for this project. Home Depot, Baxter, donated all the lumber for the raised beds, as well as funds for gardening tools.

The 2016 program has been expanded to include students from 3rd to 12th grades, and offer a new Adult Gardening 101 program on the same days as the youth sessions. The goal will be for all students to understand basic gardening and nutrition. As each year’s youth and adult gardener groups complete the summer program, increasing their knowledge and abilities, more advanced sessions, based on interest, will be offered to graduates of the G101-JMG Earthdiggers program.

Information on programming and how to register:

In all the Gardening 101 classes you will have your own garden plot and learn the following:

* Picking out the right place to put a garden
* How to prepare your soil
* Planning your garden for maximum production
* Learn about different seeds and plants
* How to water, tend to your plants, harvesting, and produce uses.

G101 Junior Master Gardener Earthdiggers group will meet at the Arb Visitor Center every Tuesday starting June 7, through August 30 from 10:00 am to 11:30 am. There will be an introduction to the class on Monday, June 6 at 10:00 am and a Harvest Day/Garden Cleanup Day on Saturday, October 15 – time for the harvest/clean-up day to be determined in class.

Adult Gardening 101 will meet the same Tuesday’s as the Youth and Junior Master Gardening sessions with Adult programming from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm.

Cost per participant is $10.00 each and you can sign up by calling Northland Arboretum at 218-829-8770. Payment for the hands on sessions are due when registering. Register early, these sessions will fill up fast!

For more information on Junior Master Gardener programming, contact Senior JMG Coordinator Ken Lueken (kllueken@yahoo.com). For more information on CWC Master Gardener programming, to access valuable horticultural information, and learn how to become a Master Gardener, visit the U of M Ext. CWC Master Gardener website. <http://crowwingmastergardeners.org> For more information about the Northland Arboretum in Brainerd or becoming a Master Naturalist, contact Peg at the Northland Arb. <http://northlandarb.org/>