



Gardeners Bloom Where They are Planted

by Kent County Master Gardener Cheryl Fisher

There's a saying often used "to bloom where you are planted," which means to be content where you are in life and make the most of your opportunities. For new gardeners or experienced ones, there's an opportunity to find ways to prepare for the spring garden season, and the Green Thumb Garden Club is the perfect place to learn new garden skills. The Modern



Kent County Master Gardener Photo

Master gardener volunteers prepare tomato plants for sale.

Maturity Center (MMC) President Carolyn Fredricks said, "I know for sure that when our members take a class or lecture to learn something new, it helps them feel a sense of

Highlights of the Green Thumb Club

Some of the highlights of the Green Thumb Garden Club are:

- A special propagation class with Dr. Rose Ogutu, Extension Horticulture Specialist for Delaware State University in March.
- Planting tomato seeds in March, transplanting tomato plants in April, with an annual tomato plant sale in May.
- Field trip to a special location in June; last year's participants visited Lavender Fields at Warrington Manor in Milton.

Green Thumb Garden Club 12 Week Series

The Green Thumb Garden Club is a 12-week series of classes on gardening for MMC members for a \$10 registration fee. The classes, which are held on Friday

enrichment, lowers stress levels, and just makes them feel good about what they have accomplished.”

Green Thumb Club is Created

The Green Thumb Garden Club was created by Col. Thomas John Dix (USAF Ret.) who died at the age of 80 in Dover on December 5, 2022. In 1999, Tom and his wife, Kathryn



Kent County Master Gardener Photo

Tom Dix, founder of the MMC Green Thumb Club.

moved to Dover, happy to start their retirement years. Tom became a Delaware Master Gardener, and in 2001 he launched gardening classes and facilitated the Green Thumb Garden Club at the MMC on a 10-year plan. When Dix proposed the idea, many master gardeners were skeptical, but Tom was determined to spread his joy of gardening with others. “He was a retired engineer who developed and implemented his plan and he was a straight shooter,” said Lori Ennis, who remembers Tom’s wonderful sense of humor.

Ralph Sena coordinated the club from 2012-2016, Mike Radeback in 2017, and Ellen Trier started in 2018. The COVID pandemic closed the sessions in 2021, but the club was restarted last year with Cheryl Fisher as the coordinator. During the past few years when the MCC was open, Charlotte Mathis has overseen the tomato plant propagation process and helped the class plant tomato seeds. Each year she watched over about 100 tiny

mornings from late February to early June, are led by Kent County volunteer Master Gardeners on various topics such as “Small Space Gardening and Raised Beds,” and “Native Plants for Birds and Bees.” The two goals are to provide the knowledge a new gardener needs to get started, and to provide interesting topics to keep students coming back in subsequent years. No previous gardening experience is required so the classes are perfect for new gardeners as well as seasoned growers.

plants in the greenhouse and in her basement as they grew into healthy tomato plants which were then sold to MMC members for \$1 each at the annual plant sale. “It was a lot of work, but it was truly worth it,” she said.

Carmen Bratcher, a participant in last year’s class said, “I joined the class after gardening for years to learn new ways of doing my garden. I enjoyed the class and learned a lot more about prepping the ground. It was wonderful listening to the master gardeners explain different techniques for different gardens. This class would be good for all levels of gardening.”

Kathy Doyle, a master gardener since 2019, said she first heard about the Master Gardener program when she was a participant in the Green Thumb Garden Club. “I’d been noticing Master Gardener events for years and recall being deeply disappointed to learn that all the coursework occurred during the day - I was not yet retired from teaching. I retired in 2017, dawdled for a few weeks, then learned I was too late to apply for the class of 2017. But I was so impressed with the presentations that I knew I was definitely going to apply to be in the class of 2019.” Doyle added that, “One of the highlights was Ed Hynes’ vegetable presentation where he gave each participant little lettuce plants to take home. Debbie Nicol did her popular sweet potato presentation, and Bev Gemmill talked about native plants. By that point, I had taken a few classes up at Mt. Cuba, so I was delighted to see that Master Gardeners were so well-versed in native plants.”

The Master Gardener volunteer training class will begin in the fall of 2023. To find out more about becoming a Master Gardener or to learn about our workshops, visit udel.edu/

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Questions

For questions on this subject or any gardening topic call the Master Gardener Helpline: In New Castle County, (302) 831-8862; in Kent County, (302) 730-4000; and in Sussex County, (302) 856-2585 x 535. The Master Gardeners monitor the Helpline in the winter but it may take a few days to get back to you.



For more information about Master Gardener workshops, garden helplines, presentations, becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer, or other activities, please visit these websites.

UD Website - <https://www.udel.edu/academics/colleges/canr/cooperative-extension/environmental-stewardship/master-gardeners/>

DSU Website- <https://cast.desu.edu/cooperative-extension/agriculture-natural-resources/delaware-master-gardeners>

