

Eau Claire Area Master Gardener News



December 2022

Rita Gundry Tells the ECAMGVs How To “Clean Up Their Act”...



Photo by Carol Cox

Well, sort of. Rita Gundry, on November 21 at the 6:30 p.m. monthly educational meeting, gave a presentation on making soap. Soap is, after all, a mainstay in our lives if we intend to keep ourselves, our dishes, vehicles, and pets clean. In doing a little bit of research I found that (according to the American Cleaning Institute) soap dates back to ancient Babylon. Wow!

Gundry says that she loves working with herbs and essential oils so the idea of using them to make soap just seems to “fill the bill.” Those essential oils are made from the roots, flowers, and stems of various plants.

Rita grew up in the southern part of the state with fifteen siblings and, she said, they made “a lot of soap.” She can remember stirring that soap by hand in the basement of a “damp, dark, typical” farmhouse basement. That soap was made with rendered tallow by her mother, but Rita uses plant oils to create her soaps. The process of making soap is “saponification” with the end product being glycerin. “Sapo” is the root word here and it is the word for soap. Another word associated often with soap is the word “pumice” which is used for the product of the third or fourth pressing of olive oil, often also used in making soaps.

She uses the “cold process” of soap making but there is also a “hot process” but the end product is like slimy mashed potatoes. The difference is that it can be used immediately while the cold process requires a time for the soap to cure.

The basic soap recipe is a combination of fats or oils and lye. While our mothers would likely have made fairly large batches of the old lye soap, Gundry prefers to make smaller batches. Some of the tools she uses include a Pyrex measuring cup with a handle and she dilutes the lye in glass or pottery. Rita also uses her Immersion blender which alleviates a lot of hand stirring. She also uses only stainless steel, glass, or stoneware for the process. Plastic can be used but the lye will mar these materials.

Lye can get up to 200 degrees during the process. The material is hydroscopic so it is necessary to keep it covered as much as possible. She also keeps an open bottle of vinegar at hand when she is working and uses it to neutralize any spills that might occur.

When mixing the lye into the fats the temperature is critical and then the Material must be allowed to sit on the counter with a stir about every hour. This is important to allow the saponification to take place.

When setting up the molds to pour the soap into, Rita noted that one should Not use canola or olive oil to oil the molds. These oils will become one with the soap so she “oils” or “greases” her molds with mineral oil because this will not combine with the soap mixture when it is poured into the molds.



(Photo by Carol Cox)

Pictured above are some of the materials that Rita uses to finish up her soap product.

Once the saponification process is complete and it has been blended, then Gundry adds the essential oils. It is important that the ones purchased are marked as “pure” essential oil. Once that has been added the soap material can be poured into the molds with the mold being filled to the top. There can be air bubbles in the bottom of the mold so she also “bounces” the mold gently to bring those to the top. (Continued on page 3)



Local Master Gardener News

Changing e-mail? Moving?

If you do, please remember to notify the ECAMG and the newsletter editor of your new e-mail address and/or mailing address so you don't miss any Eau Claire Area Master Gardener happenings!



Email your new information to Carol Cox at c7w6c2200@charter.net or notify her by snail mail at 1908 Hogeboom Ave., Eau Claire, WI 54701 (or call her at 715-783-0016 - cell).



Bulletin Board Postings Stories and Opportunities!!!

ECAMGA Board

ECAMGVA BOARD MEMBER CONTACT INFO		
Name	E-mail address	Phone number
Louise White-Roach	White1roach@gmail.com	715-831-3352
Andy Heren	Rcktnut007@aol.com	715-831-9236
Sue Waits	waitsr@charter.net	715-829-5762
Jeannie Chromey	J_chromey@yahoo.com	715-5799607
Barb Huggins	http:barbahuggins@gmail.com	715-833-0224
Chris Southworth	Chris_southworth@yahoo.com	715-514-3358
Judy Mitchell	jmitchell@pobox.com	

Note:
The ECAMGVA Board minutes may be accessed at <https://www.eauclaireareamastergardener.org>.



Photo by Evening Snow

Photos Needed: Of Your Containers

What are your favorite container plants and combinations? The Education Committee is looking for photos of outdoor containers to feature in our "member share" Monday, January 16, 2023 meeting (on Zoom).

Please send your photo(s) accompanied by a list of the plants in the container to Andy Heren at Rcktnut007@aol.com.

During the meeting, you will have a chance to tell us about your container growing experience. What worked well? What could

have worked better? The more photos, the merrier (and the more we will all learn).



ECAMGVA 2022 Calendar

Watch for emails regarding location of meeting and/or Zoom link

December 5 Annual Holiday Party

January 16: member share on containers (Zoom only)

February 1: Seed starting and propagation (9 – 11)

February 7: Winter Sowing Workshop, 8 am to 10 am

February 20: Volunteer Launch

March 20: TBD

April 17: Growing citrus in Wisconsin

May 20: Alternatives to Lawns tour (to be hosted by another organization)

Life is like a photograph – you use the negative to develop.

-anonymous

Soap making – continued from page 1...

Gundry also went into how she adds lavender buds and rose buds and petals. This is done when the saponification process is fully complete so that there is no free lye left. If done too soon the botanicals will turn black which does not enhance the look of your soap. She also, when making “Goat’s Milk” soap mixes in the goat’s milk powder just before pouring the soap. In passing Rita also noted that the goat’s milk soap is excellent for the skin and for skin problems.

She then lets the soap sit in the original molds for about three days after which she puts it on a towel in a drawer to cure for about 3 weeks before using.

Gundry does not sell her soap but makes it for her own use and for gifts.

If you missed this event, you missed a very interesting presentation and, afterwards Rita gave each person present a bar of her soap.



A display of some of the soaps Rita makes. After the event she told those present to go help themselves to a bar of her soap to take home as a gift. (Photo by Carol Cox)

The meeting was also available on Zoom for those who were not able to attend. Andy Heren and Ellen Terwilliger were available to run the Zoom portion of the meeting and also Ellen talked a bit about the update that Jael Wolf, Chris Southworth and Ellen are doing on the ECAMGVA website. The newsletters can now be accessed under the “More” tab. There will

also be a membership directory that is yet to be put online and it will only be available to members using their log in.



(Photo by Carol Cox)

Meet Master Gardener ... Jeanne Chromey



Picture by Jeanne Chromey

As a child on the farm my mom always had a large vegetable garden and did a lot of canning to feed our family of 8 all winter. As I got involved in 4-H I spent more time learning about the garden. I always had trouble seeing those little plants crowded by weeds. As a result, I spent a great deal of time sitting in the dirt.

My interest in the Master Gardening program began when my sister started showing me what her Master Garden group was doing. I especially enjoy that as a group we have such diverse interests in gardening and that I can always learn something new. The more we share within our group and with other groups and clubs the deeper the well of knowledge we can all benefit from. I have really enjoyed my time on the board as an opportunity to get to know more of you and develop deeper friendships.



TO: All ECAMGAVs

SUBJECT: Directive to enjoy the very best of the holiday season

A thank you to all the volunteers who put in so many volunteer hours to help make this a successful year. Don't forget to record your hours and to send in those container photos to Andy for the January meeting.



Events

WIMGA Educational Events via CANVAS:

Green Thumb Gardening – Annuals, Monday, December 5, 2022 from 6 – 8 pm

Learn about growing healthy annuals for pots, window boxes and bedding situations. We will cover species characteristics and selection, siting, growing in containers vs bedding situations, watering and fertilizing. We will also address designing with annuals in ground and in containers.



Green Thumb Gardening – Native Plants and Pollinators, Thursday, December 8, 2022, 6-8 pm

This session will focus on groups of insect pollinators and how you can attract and support them by growing various native and nativar plants. We will also cover a number of recommended native plants for sun and shade and their growth and maintenance needs.

Registration information for both of the above events:

Location: Online Audience: Adults, Seniors: \$12:00 – \$170.00 (this is part of an ongoing series)

Registration is required This is a **virtual** event presented online

Contact Name: Lisa Johnson Contact Email: johnson.Lisa@countyofdane.com

Contact phone: 608-224-3715

Link: <https://dane.extension.wisc.edu/horticulture/fall2022series/>.



Down To Earth Garden
Center
6025 Arndt Ln
Eau Claire, WI 54701
715-833-1234

The FIRST & THIRD SATURDAYS of the month, November thru March, Down to Earth will host local farmers, selling everything from honey to beef to jams to pork! Veggies to syrup to honey to cheese! And so much more! Come stroll through the farmers' booths and enjoy the sights, sounds and scents of the greenhouse at Down to Earth.

Down To Earth also has a number of classes/workshops scheduled. They are as follows:

<u>Class</u>	<u>Date/Time</u>
Spruce Up Winter Workshop – Porch Pot or Wreath Make your porch the envy of the neighborhood! Bring in your own containers, or purchase here, and design your own project during the class! Workshop appointments will be scheduled on the hour, groups of up to 6 may be schedule together. Schedule a workshop for our greenhouse pros to guide you and your friends in creating unique containers or wreaths for this Christmas season! You get to choose to make a wreath(s) or porch pot(s)!	Dec. 1. 3. 8. 10 from 9 am to 4 pm
Holiday Centerpiece Workshop Looking for a gorgeous fresh centerpiece for your holiday table ? Or to “gift” someone, to brighten their holiday? Our greenhouse elves will lead you in creating a beautiful make and take holiday centerpiece! Private workshops are available at the top of the hour and groups of up to 6 may be scheduled together.	Dec. 15 from 9 am to 4 pm

Registration is required. To register, click the green button below and select the December schedule and then the workshop you are interested in. It will then provide information on the workshop plus a link to register for it. Or call 715-833-1234, ext. 3. We will be in touch to schedule your class. The workshop is free, cost of centerpiece depends on pottery and “bling” selected. A \$10 fee will be charged at the time of online registration, then deducted from the final project cost. If you are registering the day of or day before the workshop, please call in your registration at 715-833-1234. Thank you.

[REGISTER FOR A WORKSHOP](#)



S1 County Rd K
Fall Creek, WI 54742
Phone: 715-877-2212
<https://beavercreekreserve.org>

CLASSES



Woodpeckers Registration 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. (this is a Zoom Program)

What is there about woodpeckers? Well come and find out. Learn about this amazing group of birds and learn about the woodpeckers you might find in your own back yard.

Cost: Free for Members; \$5 for nonmembers

Last day to register (and submit payment) is 12/5/2022 at 11:55 pm.

CONTACT E-MAIL bcr@Beavercreekreserve.org



Forage Your Holiday Wreath Saturday, December 10, 2022 – 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Impress your holiday guests with a handmade wreath from natural materials found in our own backyard! Take a guided walk in the woods to collect and forage our own materials to create a beautiful holiday wreath. Supplemental supplies will be provided and feel free to bring your own. Cozy up with warm drinks next to the fireplace while we get in the holiday spirit. **Please meet at the Main Lodge on the Youth Camp side of our campus.**

Cost: Non-Members \$20; Members \$15

Ages 14 and up

Last day to register is 12/5/2022 3:00 pm

Wildlife Friendly Outdoor Christmas Tree December 15, 2022 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Bring your kiddos! We will be creating wildlife-friendly ornaments for an outdoor Christmas Tree. Get to know the birds and small mammals that will enjoy your addition to their diet! Please note any peanut allergies when signing up.

COST: Friends, \$5; Non-members \$8

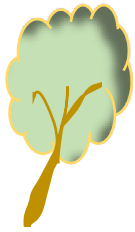
Last Day to Register is 12/12/2022 at 11:55 pm

Contact email: bcr@beavercreekreserve.org.





Bits and Pieces



THE QUEST By Judy Mitchell

Recommended reading for this month is *Create a Butterfly Garden* available on the Extension Horticulture website at <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/create-a-butterfly-garden/> This is a compact article on the habitat needs of butterflies. As you read it, take some time to reflect on the butterfly assets you already have in your garden and see if you can find at least one feature to add or improve. I found two.



The first requirement on the list is a sunny area. That brought me to a halt. I planted butterfly plants in my entry garden many years ago when it was full sun. I also planted a shade tree. The tree is now doing its job and parts of the entry garden have transitioned to partial sun. Hmmm. I think it's time to beef up the number of butterfly plants in sunnier parts of my garden.

The other requirements on the list are warming surfaces, water, flower type, flower color and food. Of these, water is the one that needs my attention most. There is plenty of water in close proximity to my garden during wet periods but in mid-summer the puddles are dry. I need to engineer a puddle that I can keep filled with water all summer long.

At the end of the article, there is a list of recommended annual and perennial plants for butterflies. Lantana is on the list. I tried lantana in a container on my porch last summer and loved it. Maybe I'll try planting several containers with lantana next year, put them in full sun for the butterflies and put them near a puddle.



When you've finished with *Create a Butterfly Garden*, try searching on "butterfly." That will take you to articles on butterflies (Painted Ladies, Black Swallowtails and Skippers), Monarch host plants (milkweed and butterfly weed) and to an interesting worksheet for a butterfly scavenger hunt.



Norfolk Island Pine



A native to the South Pacific, although not hardy in our zone 4 climate, never the less, it makes a great tabletop tree if you don't want to put up a full sized one and are using lightweight ornaments on it (it's branches are easily weighed down).

It requires six to 8 hours of light per day in medium-bright such as found in an east or west-facing window. Water when dry to the touch, but don't let it dry out too much or branches will dry up (and they won't grow back on the bottom of the tree). Fertilize every 6 to 8 weeks with a standard fertilizer.

About every two years, refresh the planting medium by topdressing with new soil. This plant likes to be pot-bound. It can be taken outdoors in late spring but keep shaded and bring back indoors before temps drop lower than 40 degrees. Toss when it gets too leggy.



Eye Candy



The 2022 Annual ECAMGVA Photo Contest saw some really good photos entered. The winners can be viewed in the November issue of this newsletter. To the left and below are some of the other photos submitted. To the left is "Garden Art" submitted by Jael Wolf



Again, to the left is JoAnn Clark's entry, "Garden Fellowship."

Items in this column and the one to the right are from the Pinterest website.



Below and to the left is Mikel Reise's submission, "Afton Hills Prairie Walk".

Once again, thanks to all



who submitted photos for the contest. They get better each year, and they also provide interesting "eye candy" for our monthly newsletter. The winners will have their pictures posted in the meeting room at the Extension Office for the coming year and awards will be given out at the December 5th annual Holiday Party.



*What is a shopper's favorite hymn?
"Sweet Buy and Buy"*

WIMGA

Annual Meeting Reminder

December 1, 2022 – 6:30 p.m.

[Click Here To Register](#)

If you already registered for the meeting,
please refer to your email for the ZOOM connection information.

Unless otherwise noted, articles for this newsletter are submitted and/or written by ECAMGA members or the newsletter editor, Carol W. Cox. Unless otherwise noted, graphics are from clipart. Newsletter layout by Carol W. Cox



For more Eau Claire County UW Cooperative Extension information go to our website:

www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/eauc Claire

Phone: 715-839-4712

Fax: 715-839-6277

M-F 8AM-5PM



First Day of Winter
December 21

The University of Wisconsin Extension provides affirmative action and equal opportunity in education, programming and employment for all qualified persons regardless of race, color, gender/sex, creed, disability, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, sexual orientation, pregnancy, marital or parental, arrest or conviction record or veteran status." If you need an interpreter, materials in alternate formats or other accommodations to access this program, activity or service, please contact 715-839-4712 as soon as possible preceding the scheduled event so that proper arrangements can be made in a timely fashion

**Eau Claire County
Extension Office
227 First Street West
Altoona, WI 54720**