

## **Theme Garden FAQ**

### *1. What are theme gardens?*

Theme gardens are small plots (about 150 sq ft) in the Demonstration Garden with a specific theme.

The current list of theme gardens include: Green and White Welcome Bed, Shade Garden, Friendship Garden, Cold-Hardy Tropical Bed, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Garden, Freedom Garden, Drought-Tolerant Garden, Native Plant Garden, Memorial Gardens, Herb Garden, Cutting Gardens, Perennial Bed, Conifer Shrub and Evergreen Tree Beds, Groundcover Bed, Entry Bed and Deer-resistant Bed.

See the MGUC web site for a description and map of Theme Gardens.

### *2. Who are Theme Garden Caretakers (aka Theme Garden Captains)?*

Caretakers of theme gardens are Master Gardeners who have volunteered to maintain the garden and ensure it looks presentable throughout the year. Depending on the size of the bed and level of interest, there may be 1-4 caretakers for a particular theme garden. Being a caretaker is a great way to learn about plants, create communities of interest around certain types of plants, make friends and continue to add beauty to the garden.

Please contact the Demo Garden Coordinator (Joanne Krueger) if you are interested in being a caretaker.

### *3. What are the responsibilities of Theme Garden Caretakers?*

The main responsibility of a Caretaker is to maintain the garden in accordance with the specific theme. This includes weeding, mulching, dividing, pruning. Also, a Caretaker is responsible for ensuring that the plants are correctly identified, labeled and inventoried to increase educational value. Note that divisions from the garden taken in the Spring (March/April) or the Fall (Sept) can be used as a source of inventory for the Spring Plant Sale.

### *4. What is the time commitment for being a Theme Garden Caretaker?*

Approximately 2-3 hours per month from April to October. Caretakers of a garden decide amongst themselves on a schedule for meeting at the garden that works for them. Some pick a day during the week (typically Tues or Thurs when there are other Demo Garden activities going on), or on weekends (particularly for those who work full-time). Also, the Demo Garden Coordinator will usually announce Spring and Fall Clean-Up Days each year for the Demo Garden which all Caretakers are encouraged to attend.

Please note: Working alone in the Garden alone is highly discouraged- there is safety in numbers.

*5. How much autonomy do Theme Garden Caretakers have?*

Within the confines of keeping to the garden theme, caretakers are encouraged to think of activities that would maintain the health of the garden, enhance its beauty and enhance the educational value of the garden. This can mean, for example, taking divisions of plants that are outgrowing their space, moving a plant if it requires a sunnier spot, replacing plants that are not healthy, or adding a new and improved variety. Caretakers are also encouraged to find ways to create informal communities of interest around the plants in their garden so one can learn from each other about particular plant species.

Some changes and additions to the garden do require Executive Board approval according to the MGUC by-laws, such as adding decorative accessories and structures (e.g. bird feeders, fountains, trellises), new trees, changing the theme of the garden, and extending borders of the garden. Please contact the 2<sup>nd</sup> VP who can help determine whether approval is required and the process to follow.

*6. What are the criteria for choosing plants for a Theme Garden?*

The first criterion is to be consistent with the theme of the garden. The second criterion is to not be redundant with plants in other gardens. Many plants can fit into more than one theme. For example, Monarda didyma 'Jacob Kline' is in the IPM plot. It could just as well be planted in the native garden, deer-resistant garden, and herb garden. When deciding on a new plant, please check with the Demo Garden Coordinator and consult the inventory list of all theme garden plots to avoid duplication.

*7. How do I sign up to be a Theme Garden Caretaker?*

The new class will have the opportunity to volunteer for a wide range of MG activities (including being a Theme Garden Caretaker) a few months into the academic year (typically Jan/Feb). Other Master Gardeners can volunteer at any time. Please consult the Demo Garden Coordinator about openings. You can either assist current caretakers with a particular garden, or "adopt-a-plot" if there is no current caretaker. Even if you cannot take on the caretaker responsibility for the whole year, assistance is often very welcome for those beds that have fallen into disrepair and require some "tender loving care" to get back on their feet.

*7. If I am interested in a Theme Garden, but don't want to be a caretaker, who should I contact to learn more about the plants in a particular garden?*

The Demo Garden Coordinator maintains the current list of theme garden caretakers. The information may also be on the website.

*8. Is there budget available to buy or replace plants for the Theme Garden?*

Yes, but it is limited. Many times, divisions are donated from member gardens. In addition, a division of an unusual plant donated to the Spring Plant Sale may be added to a garden so that we have a future source for the plant. New plants may also be picked up for cheap prices when nurseries are having sales.

If you need budget, please consult the Demo Garden Coordinator.

*9. What is the history behind the current Theme Gardens?*

Many of the theme gardens were developed by the new classes in prior years (1999 – 2004). These include the native plant garden (1999), Freedom garden (2001), Friendship Garden, Shade Garden, Drought-Tolerant garden, and IPM garden.

The Memorial Gardens & Pergola were a major garden design & development effort starting in 2007, with implementation continuing over a period of years into the present.

Revised: January 28, 2014 by Susan Thomson.