

Horticultural Therapy Symposium – August 7, 2024

Edgerton Hospital and Health Services

Speaker Biographies

Jeannie Larson, PhD, CTRS, HTR, University of Minnesota, Manager of Nature-Based Therapeutic Services, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Graduate Faculty Lead in Nature-Based Interventions, Center for Spirituality and Healing

Dr. Jean Larson began her work for the University of Minnesota in 1992, where she developed the Nature-Based Therapeutic Services (NBT) a partnership between the Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing and the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. NBT provides a range of services including direct programming, training, education, research and outreach in the fields of therapeutic horticulture, animal-assisted interventions, facilitated green exercise, and therapeutic landscapes. The partnership provides opportunities to better understand and ensure students, professionals and the general public will have access to the most current research and practices. The unique partnership recognizes the strengths and expertise to make the best use of resources from both integrative medicine and nature-based science.

Jean has a Ph.D. in Education (emphasis in therapeutic recreation) with a minor in integrative medicine from the University of MN. Jean teaches eight graduate courses: Introduction to Therapeutic Horticulture, Introduction to Therapeutic Landscape Design, Nature Rx, Animals in Healthcare, Introduction to Nature-Based Therapeutics, Forest Bathing, Walking into Wellbeing, and Horse as Teacher: Equine Facilitated Education and Psychotherapy. She is a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, a Registered Horticultural Therapist, Registered Mental Health Advocate and has a certificate in Disability Services and Administration, with a specialization in serving people with neurodivergent and developmental disabilities, from the Institute of Community Integration.

Jean's work has taken her around the world - from Japan, England, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Taiwan, to Israel. When not working for the University, Jean is at home enjoying her family farm north of the Twin Cities along with her husband, dogs, cats, goats, chickens and horses or unplugged at their little cabin along the North Shore.

Sarah Palm, Nature-Based Therapeutic, Program Specialist and Nature Heals Initiative, Leader

Sarah is part of the University of Minnesota's Nature-Based Therapeutic Services - a collaboration between the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum and Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing. She wears a number of hats: as nature-based therapy program specialist, lead in animal-assisted interventions, and lead of the Nature Heals Initiative. Her work includes nature-based programming to diverse groups in and

around the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. She specializes in creative and safe ways for people to access and engage in the healing powers of plants, animals and nature.

When Sarah is not helping people with plants and nature, she is a volunteer and fosters for Minnesota Sheltie Rescue, a Team Evaluator for Pet Partners, and keeps busy training her own dogs in the sport of canine agility.

Jamie Viebach, Horticulture Educator, University of Illinois Extension

University of Illinois Extension Horticulture Educator Jamie Viebach believes in the restorative power of nature for all people. She loves to share her knowledge and experience as a backyard gardener with anyone interested in making their surroundings a beautiful part of the local ecosystem. Jamie believes that native plants are not only beautiful and beneficial, but also essential for fostering a connection to nature and a sense of stewardship throughout the community. Jamie received her master's degree in environmental biology from Governors State University. She then shared her love of native plants through local land trusts and beyond. Now with the Extension, Jamie appreciates the opportunity to really geek out about all things plants and how we all fit together in the ecosystem.

Danielle Stojan, Extension Program Coordinator, University of Illinois Extension

Danielle is a self-professed, passionate plant nerd who strives to connect people and plants via volunteer experts and university-based research. As an Extension program coordinator, she knows the value of collaborative education and how it helps strengthen communities benefiting everyone. Danielle has worked, interned, or apprenticed in various aspects of the green industry, including commercial landscaping, garden centers, public gardens, sales, procurement, and customer service. Most recently, she received a certificate in horticultural therapy, a step on her way to becoming a Registered Horticultural Therapist. She attended Kishwaukee Community College for Ornamental Horticulture and earned her bachelors in Plant and Soil Science from Southern Illinois University.

Paul Fasano, MA, CADC, Recreation Therapist

Paul grew up in St. Charles, Illinois, before attending Western Illinois University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in therapeutic recreation. After graduation, Paul continued his education and earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy from St. Gregory the Great Seminary. He then headed to Rome, Italy, where he earned a master's degree in theology. Upon returning to the United States, Paul has worked with a variety of clients. For over 15 years, he has provided recreation therapy for individuals with disabilities (early childhood to adults), as well seniors in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. In May of 2020, Paul joined the therapeutic recreation team at Rosecrance where he currently facilitates visual arts, fitness, horticulture, and ecotherapy groups.

Alicia Kaleta, BS, CTRS, Recreation Therapist

Alicia earned her bachelor's degree in therapeutic recreation with a minor in psychology from the University of Iowa. Throughout her college career, Alicia provided mindfulness skills courses, leisure education, and recreation therapy for both adolescents and adults with intellectual and physical disabilities. Before graduating in May of 2022, Alicia interned at a clinical psychiatric unit, where she gained experience facilitating psychoeducation and recreation therapy groups for individuals with a variety of mental illnesses and substance abuse history. She now works with clients at Rosecrance Harrison Campus, Rosecrance Griffin Williamson Campus, and Rosecrance Mulberry Campus facilitating DBT skills, leisure education, and expressive arts groups. Alicia has a passion for behavioral health and substance abuse treatment, believing everyone has the potential for lasting recovery.

Diane Kachel and Mike Hotter

Diane and Mike are a wife/husband Master Gardener team. Both have been gardening since they were children. They live on over an acre of land working together in their gardens. Diane tends to the perennial garden beds and Mike concentrates more on the vegetable beds. Diane has been a credentialed Master Gardener since 2004 and has helped with the start-up of several master gardener projects. Mike has been a credentialed Master Gardener since 2008. The idea of the Jefferson West Elementary school garden grew from a one-time project with the After School program of planting a bird and butterfly garden in the spring of 2011. That led to the development of a school garden based on the student enthusiasm for wanting to do more planting. They now have an after-school club, Green Thumbs Garden Club, and work with two first grade, two fourth grade, and the special education classes in the fall and spring during the school year.

Jennifer Fishburn

University of Illinois Extension Horticulture Educator

Jennifer Fishburn is a Horticulture Educator with University of Illinois Extension in Logan, Menard, and Sangamon counties. In addition to managing, promoting, and providing horticulture education programs in the area, Fishburn provides leadership to the volunteers of the Master Gardener and Master Naturalist program, which provides educational programs and service to audiences in this unit.

Barbara Thompson

University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

Barbara is retired from educating children in public schools for 25 years. After retiring she became a University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener Volunteer whose interests include educating children and adults on gardening topics. Through her career, Barbara has engaged children in gardening activities around the schoolyard, zoo, and

through park presentations. She enjoys seeing the spark of interest that can come from a child when engaged in gardening activities.

Amy Yocum

Amy has been a passionate gardener throughout her life. Growing up in the woods of northern Illinois, she gained a great appreciation of the natural world and spent most of her childhood outdoors with her siblings. She got her Master Gardener certification about 25 years ago and was instrumental in planning garden conferences in Marinette County, WI at that time. She worked as a hospice nurse for the last decade, but the ongoing climate crisis, increasing loss of habitat due to invasive species, and the subsequent disappearance of birds, plants, and insects led her to leave nursing and seek work to assist in healing the natural world. Now a Master Naturalist, she serves as the current president of Wild Ones Madison chapter and works as a horticulture assistant at a local hospice, tending the landscape and helping design healing gardens with an eye towards sustainability.

Jason O'Connor

Jason is the RECAP Site Supervisor at the Rock County (WI) Sheriff's Office and has been involved with the RECAP garden for many years where he has worked with and organized inmates with garden tasks and improvements. Jason has been involved with myriad projects around the county and specifically at the RECAP garden, including a successful CSA program.

Deb Grams and Jim Haseman

Jim Haseman and Deb Grams have been volunteers at the RECAP garden in Rock County, WI for almost 20 years. In retirement, they completed the UW Extension Master Gardener training. They have spread their combined knowledge throughout the area with various projects, including The Garden Festival, Rotary Botanical Gardens, Rock Haven, St. Elizabeths, a CSA program, open houses and the annual Farm to Table Dinner fundraiser. Committed to the RECAP garden in recent years, they both try to educate inmates with information they can use throughout their lives. They feel successful if each inmate takes away one new thing.

Dr. Darcie Olson

Darcie has been an Occupational Therapist for 40 years. Her focus has been on physical rehabilitation, geriatrics and ergonomics. She is recently retired as an instructor at Madison College in the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program. Dr. Olson has long been involved with facilitation horticultural therapy programs at Rotary Botanical Gardens (Janesville, WI)

Mark Dwyer

Mark is the garden manager for the Edgerton Hospital and Health Services healing garden. He has been with the hospital since 2021 and works with amazing staff and

dedicated volunteers. Formerly, he was the Director of Horticulture at Rotary Botanical Gardens (Janesville, WI) for 21 years. Mark designed the original healing garden at Edgerton Hospital (2011) and the Wellness Garden at Rotary Botanical Gardens (2018).

Ann Loper

Lifelong Gardening Committee, Master Gardener Volunteer

Ann Loper retired from working in an elementary school for 24 years. She became a Master Gardener in 2011 and Lifelong Gardening was one of her first ventures as a new Master Gardener. She enjoys sharing the knowledge she has gained to help keep other gardeners in their gardens for as long as possible with as little pain as possible.

Marilynn Cech

Lifelong Gardening Committee, Master Gardener Volunteer

Marilynn is a retired surgical nurse of 42 years, a Southeast Wisconsin Master Gardener for 18 years and a prominent member of the award winning SEWMG Lifelong Gardening committee for 13 years. Marilynn's passion is educating the public on ways to continue gardening throughout life.

Ginny Gest, MS, OTR

Lifelong Gardening Committee, Master Gardener Volunteer

Ginny has been an Occupational Therapist for 36 years. Her focus has been on facilitating the inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities at home, at work, and in community life. She has recently retired as a Community Integration Specialist at Goodwill Industries Southeastern Wisconsin. Ginny has long been involved with facilitating horticultural therapy as a tool to help individuals to gain vocational and social skills. She became a Master Gardener in 2018 and a Lifelong Gardening volunteer in 2019. She enjoys sharing the knowledge she has gained with people with disabilities and their families.