

Green thumb feelin' itchy?

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Sharing inspiration is as important as sharing information when kicking off the quickly approaching spring gardening season.

On Saturday, nearly 30 people attended a Washington County Master Gardeners' seminar at the West Bend Community Memorial Library to learn about how to plan and plant the increasingly popular miniature and fairy gardens. Master Gardeners is an all-volunteer group of green-thumbed experts who study and share the information that learn during extensive training programs.

Master Gardener Lora Schreiber has planted fairy gardens in her yard for years as a way to get her granddaughter, Daisy, interested in gardening.

"This just gets in your blood," Schreiber said. "Now I'm always looking at things differently. I'm wondering how they would fit into my fairy gardens."

Fairy gardens can be grown indoors or outdoors, usually in a container that can vary in size from a small planter or pot or a wheelbarrow or red wagon. Schreiber grows one of her fairy gardens in a child-size swimming pool half-filled with packing peanuts to maintain its portability. Fairy gardens are miniature creations containing living and artificial plants as well as structures and decorations. Many are designed to resemble a home or garden for fairies, Schreiber said.

A successful fairy garden is dependent on creativity or cash.

"You can spend a lot of money on accessories or you can use your imagination," Schreiber said.

Thrift stores, clearance sections and rummage sales can be perfect spots for finding accessories. A soap dish can become a boat or buttons can be turned into gold in a leprechaun's pot, Schreiber said.

Master Gardener Rita Lesch agreed. "You just need to look at things differently," she said. "There are useful items all around if you open your mind to it."

A passion for planting is a trait shared among all Master Gardeners, said Vicki Hopp, president of Washington County Master Gardeners. However, plenty of special interests abound. Some Master Gardeners are interested in ornamental or flowering plants; others prefer vegetables, fruits, soils, houseplants, landscaping, turf, plant pathology or entomology. Part of the program requires all Master Gardeners to share their education and advice with community members through a variety of ways, including



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Washington County Master Gardener Lora Schreiber discusses miniature fairy gardens during at workshop Saturday at the West Bend Community Memorial Library. The group's volunteer members share their gardening knowledge and passion with community members.

community gardens, seminars and even outreach at farmer's markets.

Anyone interested in joining the Master Gardeners program should call the University of Wisconsin Extension office at 262-335-4477. Enrollment in the program requires completion of 12 weekly classes followed by annual recertification achieved through 10

hours of continuing education and 24 hours of volunteering. Classes are generally held during winter to allow gardeners to be ready for spring.

The Washington County Master Gardeners' next presentation will be discussion of native plants April 14. For more information, check out the group's Facebook page.