Saving the Planet
One Garden at a Time

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Ohio Master Gardeners

Ohio State Master Gardeners

- Over 3,165 MG in 62 counties
- Nationwide MG
  - 86,000+ volunteers
  - 5.6 million volunteer hours
  - Av. 60 hrs yearly/MG

The Master Gardener Mission

- California: To extend research-based knowledge and information on home horticulture, pest management, and sustainable landscape practices . . .
- Ohio: We are Ohio State University Extension-trained volunteers empowered to educate others with timely research-based gardening information
  - Integrated pest management
  - Invasive species
  - Backyard and local foods
  - Environmental horticulture

“When we tug at a single thing in nature, we find it attached to the rest of the world.” John Muir

https://www.antioch.edu/centers-institutes/conservation-psychology-institute/

Master Gardeners are a great audience!

- Enthusiastic and knowledgeable
- Gardeners trust MGs
- Offer solid, science-backed information
- MGs share their knowledge in person

How much do gardens matter?
Doug Tallamy

One Planet Living
Living within the resources of one planet

Botanic gardens
and other shared garden spaces

• Ideal setting to engage visitors
• Can offer models of sustainable practices
• Places to teach
• Places to participate

Making connections

• Urban centers to wild lands
  – Watershed
  – Neighborhood habitat corridors (shrub borders!)

Who is our audience?

• Divided by:
  – Age
  – Geographic location
  – Education/experience level
  – Subject
  – Entry motivation (gardens/institutions)

Moving towards change: one example
Pre-contemplation:
Nothing needs to be changed

Contemplation:
Does something need to change?

Preparation:
I've got to do something — but what?

Action:
I'm working hard to change

Maintenance:
I need a boost right now

Programming for change: the gardening audience

• Provide transformative experiences
• Provide multiple programs
• Develop imaginative and layered programs
Aquariums and zoos

The real-cost café at the Monterey Bay Aquarium is always eye-opening for visitors, an immersive, multi-layered experience. The take-away is a wallet card for their popular, nationwide Seafood Watch program, advising consumers on the sustainability of their seafood choices.

https://www.seafoodwatch.org

Challenges in shifting public conservation behavior

• change
• Humans are biased and short-sighted
• People perceive themselves as separate from nature
• Social norms guide behavior

Interpretation

• Engages hearts and minds in our mission
• Includes all the ways we share that mission

Interpretive Media: Passive

Language and communication

• Positive language is always preferable
• Be aware of your audience. Ask questions
• Programming and printed materials in other languages is helpful
• All messaging should be in close alignment
Environmental psychology

Power of the collective

Early adopters and the tipping point
- 2.5% innovators
- 13.5% early adopters
- 34% early majority
- 34% late majority
- 16% laggards

Information campaigns
- increased knowledge will change behavior
- that we systematically evaluate choices, and act in our best interest
- Easy to distribute
- Not much evaluation

Power of values
- Shared beliefs
- Focus on values in common
  - Family
  - Home
  - Children
  - Nature

Power of stories
- Speak to hearts
- A simple story can carry more weight than facts
- Know how to effectively frame your stories.
Community-based social marketing

- psychology
- Behavior change most effectively achieved through initiatives delivered at the community level
  - Remove barriers
  - Enhance benefits

Single achievable actions

- Messages that focus on single, achievable, specific actions are more likely to succeed
- Messages that promote positive behavior are more likely to induce change than attempts to prevent the behavior

Framing stories: Why native plants?

Coevolution

“One approach to what we would like to call coevolution is the examination of patterns of interactions between two major groups of organisms with a close and evident ecological relationship, such as plants and herbivores.”

Paul Ehrlich and Peter Raven, 1964

Herbivorous insects

- Plants convert sun’s energy to provide nutrients to planetary life
- Herbivorous insects
  - energy for use by other animals
- 90% of all herbivorous insect species are specialists
- Role in food web rarely discussed in horticulture

Bird food

- 96% feed their young arthropods
- 70%+ eat arthropods as adults
- 50%+ diet is Lepidoptera
- Provide pest control
- US bird populations down 60-90% in past 40 years
Oak trees

- Innumerable organisms of all kinds ecologically tied to oak trees
- 11 species of oaks in Ohio
- 800+ species of insects
- Dozens of bird species
- Mammals, reptiles, molluscs, worms . . .

Connecting the dots

The role of Master Gardeners

The role of Master Gardeners

The role of Master Gardeners

Full circle

- Another approach to behavior change: write about the change you want to see!
- Available at local independent bookstores, and the usual online sources

https://www.workman.com/products/the-nature-of-oaks