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Cornell Cooperative Extension's Blocks in Bloom Program Wins National Award American Horticultural Society Awards Blocks in Bloom its 2020 Community Greening Award

Rochester, NY: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County has been awarded the American Horticultural Society's 2020 Community Greening Award for their Blocks in Bloom Program. This award recognizes exemplary contributions by an individual, institution or company demonstrating the application and value of horticulture in creating livable communities that are greener, healthier and more equitable.

Blocks in Bloom began in 2014 as a pilot initiative of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County's Master Gardener program. It aims to bring together low-income communities in the City of Rochester by providing free perennials to resident participants. Master Gardener volunteers educate residents in preparing, planting and maintaining their front yard flower gardens. In 2018, a leadership development component was added to the program, enabling local residents to become mentors to other community members just starting their gardens.

Blocks in Bloom has grown from serving two blocks with 15 households back in 2014 to serving fifteen blocks with 135 households in 2019. The program is designed to be both sustainable – relying on volunteers and material donations – and replicable.

The 2020 Greening Award is one of the Great American Gardeners Awards that AHS presents annually to individuals, organizations and businesses that represent the best in American gardening. Each of the recipients has contributed significantly to fields such as scientific research, garden communication, landscape design, youth gardening and conservation.

AHS had scheduled Thursday, June 18, to honor representatives from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County and other award recipients during the Great American Gardeners Award Ceremony and Banquet. This was to be held at the Society's River Farm headquarters in Alexandria, Va. Sadly, due to complications from the COVID 19 virus, the awards ceremony has been canceled. For full descriptions of each award and brief biographies of this year's recipients, please visit 2020 Award Winners, <https://ahsgardening.org/gardening-programs/national-awards/great-american-gardeners/award-recipients/>

Since 1913, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County (CCE-Monroe) has responded to the needs of local residents with unbiased, research-based information, tools and education that people have come to depend on and trust. Our programs are developed in direct response to community input, and are based on the most current information available from Cornell and other Land Grant universities from across the nation.

The Master Gardener training prepares volunteers to be peer educators who build relationships with community audiences to integrate local experience and research based knowledge in planning for and initiating steps to manage gardens, lawns, and landscapes with an emphasis on food security and environmental stewardship.

Blocks in Bloom is always seeking local gardeners willing to donate perennial divisions, and residents of lower-income neighborhoods willing to organize new gardeners on their blocks. Please contact Sue Magee, Master Gardener Coordinator at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County, scm268@cornell.edu or (585) 753-2558.

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