



Cornell University

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Monroe County

2449 Saint Paul Blvd
Rochester, NY 14617
p. 585.753.2550 f.
585.753.2560
e. monroe@cornell.edu
monroe.cce.cornell.edu

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For more information, contact:

Marci Muller, Horticulture Team Leader
585.753.2557
Email: mem545@cornell.edu

Blocks In Bloom Receives Another Award

Master Gardener Program Uses Front-yard Gardens to Build Community

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County (CCE Monroe) is pleased to announce that the Master Gardener program, Blocks in Bloom, has been awarded the Zone Civic Improvement Commendation from the Zone 3 of the Garden Club of America. This award is for projects that utilize horticulture to beautify as well as improve the area where it is offered. Blocks in Bloom, launched in 2014, has worked with 76 blocks and 812 families in low-income neighborhoods in the City of Rochester, NY.

People who live in qualifying neighborhoods and who are interested in bringing Blocks in Bloom to their block are asked to enlist at least 5 other households on their block. Blocks in Bloom is focused on developing perennial gardens in front yards. Residents do not need to be homeowners, but renters need to get approval from their landlord to participate. To date, not one landlord has refused. Once enrolled, the Master Gardeners from CCE Monroe coach participants on bed preparation, planting and maintenance of perennial gardens. When it is time to plant, the Master Gardeners provide compost and mulch, donated by the City of Rochester, and plants, donated from many area gardeners and a handful of retail outlets in the area. The Master Gardeners continue to guide the Blocks in Bloom participants during the first season, but all labor is performed by the participants. At the end of the season, there is a pot-luck supper to celebrate the success of each garden.

Blocks in Bloom, in addition to beautifying the neighborhood, provides an opportunity for its participants to get outside, enjoy some physical activity and interact with their neighbors. The participants take great pride in their accomplishments and some of the original participants are now sharing divisions of their perennials with new gardeners as well as mentoring new gardeners. A truly award-worthy program that utilizes perennial gardens as a way to encourage healthy habits and community building.

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