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## **CCE-Monroe Front-Yard Gardening Program to Launch Award-winning Blocks-in-Bloom Program Enters its 7th Year**

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County is thrilled to announce the 2021 launch of its Blocks in Bloom program. This program, first launched in 2014, has received the Community Greening Award from the American Horticultural Society as well as recognition as a Horticulture Hero & Plant Champion by the nonprofit Seed Your Future.

Blocks in Bloom brings Master Gardeners from CCE-Monroe and residents of the City of Rochester together under the umbrella of front yard flower gardening in lower income City neighborhoods. Interested residents need to enlist at least five other participants who reside on their block to become part of the program, with one participant as the Block Captain. In early May, Master Gardeners will meet with the participants from the block to share information on how to install and maintain a perennial garden in their front yard. On June 5 block participants will receive an assortment of donated perennials for their garden and the planting will begin. CCE-Monroe will provide each participant with a Blocks in Bloom sign for their garden. Master Gardeners and other community volunteers will continue to be involved through mentoring, but the block participants will prepare their garden bed, plant the plants, and maintain the garden. At the end of the season, there will be a celebration and plans for the following year. Blocks in Bloom is a volunteer effort, with plants donated by area gardeners, garden clubs and Lowes. The City of Rochester provides compost, mulch and bedding plants.

After organizing their own block, block leaders can complete a training course and become Mentors for other City blocks, working alongside Master Gardeners.

In 2014, Blocks in Bloom started with 2 blocks and 15 participants. In the 7 years since then Blocks in Bloom has served 727 households on 79 blocks. One of the things that was broadly embraced over the past year has been the benefits of being outside. Blocks in Bloom offers healthy exercise and an opportunity to get in touch with nature, while spending time together building community.

Anyone living in a lower income neighborhood who would like to participate in future years in the Blocks in Bloom program should contact the Master Gardener Helpline, 585-753-2555 or monroemg@cornell.edu. Gardeners willing to donate plant divisions should contact Ashly

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