

## **EARTHFEST 2024: WHY YOU SHOULD BE THERE!**

By Theresa Furnari, Frederick County Master Gardeners, June, 2024

Summer garden season is here. You can get ideas for your garden in a beautiful Demonstration Garden, meet Master Gardeners and engage in fun activities, including a scavenger hunt for kids, at the third annual Frederick County Earthfest, hosted by the Master Gardeners of Frederick County.

This free open house takes place on June 22 from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the University of Maryland Extension Office, 330 Montevue Lane, Frederick, Maryland 21702.

To preview what you can see and learn, let's take a virtual walk-through of some of the displays:

Donning red shirts, Master Gardeners will be roaming the grounds to be of assistance but will be most present in the Demonstration Garden. There you can tour a beautiful display of native plants, herbs, and vegetables. While in the garden you may see bees, butterflies, and birds. The co-evolution between plants and wildlife pollinators is on display, defining a healthy ecological system.

The successful co-evolution you will observe in the garden is attained by native plants, defined by the National Wildlife Federation as having occurred "naturally in a particular region, ecosystem, or habitat without human introduction." Although non-native plants do not always pose a threat to native plants, they may not support ecosystem health as well as native plants do. Earthfest 2024 will teach you how to avoid invasive non-native plants, as they quickly reproduce and spread, crowding out or even killing native plants.

On one side of the Demonstration Garden, young attendees can participate in story time crafts, and a scavenger hunt in the Children's Garden.

On another side of the Demonstration Garden, through the Woodland Edge, you will see various shade plants and native trees. Similar to native plants, the benefit of native trees in the right location is immeasurable. Not only do trees provide shade, but they also absorb carbon, which reduces carbon dioxide in the air while releasing oxygen into the atmosphere. Tree roots absorb stormwater, decreasing erosion. The trunk, branches, leaves, fruit, and nuts provide habitat for birds and other wildlife. Entomologist Dr. Douglas Tallamy has shown that native oak trees support more than 500 species of caterpillars, whereas ginkgos, a tree from Asia, host five or fewer species of caterpillars. Because 96 percent of terrestrial songbirds rely on caterpillars to feed their babies, caterpillars are important for a healthy ecosystem.

Leaving the garden, you can visit an extensive insect collection by 4-H members or peruse additional reading from the Frederick County Public Libraries; learn about bees from the Frederick County Beekeepers Association; about birds from the Audubon Habitat Advisors or Frederick Bird Club; and see how to design a successful pollinator garden. Additionally, you can participate in rock painting or make bee and butterfly baths.

Visit the table of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin to learn how stormwater and salt can affect the health of our waterways, especially of the Potomac River, whose watershed is the second largest in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Because we are experiencing more intense and frequent storms,

the amount of stormwater has increased. Although stormwater generally drains into the soil, when it cannot, it may run along streets and parking lots, picking up trash, oil, salt, and other pollutants. The runoff flows into our rivers and streams and affects drinking water, fish, plants, and other aquatic species. Still another display hosted by the Frederick County Master Gardeners shows you how to create a landscape that helps keep stormwater draining into the soil.

A visit to the Master Naturalist’s display will teach you about wildlife and natural resource management. The Sierra Club Catocin Group display explains why you should reduce plastic use and action you can take in your daily activities to respond to climate change. A warming climate crowds out native plants and animals that have evolved together, harming our regional heritage, biodiversity, and introducing invasive species that do not support a healthy ecosystem.

How can you not come to Earthfest 2024?



**“Pollinators at Rest” signage** at the University of Maryland Extension Building encourages people to protect overwintering pollinators by leaving leaves and other plant debris undisturbed until late in the spring. Many insects burrow under the garden debris for protection from winter weather and foraging birds. (Photo courtesy of the author)

**Beehouse** - One way to attract bees to your garden is to provide a safe habitat for them to lay their eggs. Here, long wooden tubes are stacked in a beehouse. Solitary bees will crawl into the tubes and lay eggs, which will wait for spring to hatch. Bees are the only insect in the world that produces food that humans eat. Maryland has more than 400 species of bees in Maryland alone, and a bee will fly as far as six miles to obtain the nectar it needs to make honey. (Photo courtesy of the author)



**2023 EarthFest Rockpainting** -- EarthFest 2024 will have many activities for children, both indoors and outdoors, with everything from stories in the garden to rock painting. Last year, master gardeners gathered numerous rocks for children to paint, made “seed bombs” for them to plant, and provided samples of wildlife in our streams and ponds. (Photo courtesy of Frederick County Master Gardeners)

EarthFest 2024 will showcase many exploratory activities for both children and adults. Here, an attendee at the 2023 EarthFest shows off her hand-painted rock art. (Photo courtesy of Frederick County Master Gardeners)



EarthFest 2024 will showcase many exploratory activities for both children and adults. One of 2023's favorite activities was interacting with some tadpoles from a local stream. (Photo courtesy of Frederick County Master Gardeners)

Check our website or Facebook for upcoming free seminars, Master Gardener certification classes, as well as other announcements. For more information about the Frederick County Extension Master Gardener/Horticulture Program, gardening information and advice visit: <http://extension.umd.edu/frederick-county/home-gardening> or call Susan Trice at the University of Maryland Extension Frederick County office, 301-600-1596. Find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/mastergardenersfrederickcountymaryland>.  
UME Home & Garden Information Center,  
<https://extension.umd.edu/programs/environmentnatural-resources/program-areas/home-and-garden-information-center>.

**NOTE – 2024 Event was cancelled due to extreme heat.**

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