

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Sue Mings Class of 2010



As a child of the early burgeoning suburbs, a true “California native”, my first exposure to gardening was growing bean seeds on wet paper towels in a glass jar. Our suburban neighborhood had been carved out of a former walnut orchard, and fresh cherries, peaches, plums were widely available at nearby local fruit stands in what has now become “the Silicon Valley”.

I planted my first garden after my husband and I bought our first home in the Minneapolis suburbs, focusing mainly on herbs we could use in our experimental ethnic cooking. Being employed in the food industry, my husband brought home stories from the front lines marketing canned and frozen fruits and vegetables - Green Giant (Pillsbury) in Minneapolis, Birds Eye and VegAll (Dean Foods Vegetable Co) in Green Bay and Libby’s (California Canners and Growers) in Northern California. At one point, I worked on managing reprogramming of cost studies for the California and Midwest fruit and vegetable canning industries, putting that CAL Berkeley MBA to work for a while.

I enjoyed recipe testing and marketing as Co-Chair of the award-winning “California Fresh Harvest” cookbook with the Junior League of Oakland-East Bay.

During our many moves across the country, I have become a firm believer in “Right Plant, Right Place”, although I am often tempted to push the boundaries with favorite plants. The mint planted in Green Bay became so aggressive it is probably still popping up in the subsequent owners’ gardens. Rosemary planted on slopes in California spreads rapidly to create a fragrant ground cover and tasty addition to many of our favorite culinary creations. While my favorite hybrid tea roses, tomatoes, and herbs loved the hot, dry climate in Northern California, they were not nearly so happy in muggy Germantown, Tennessee. Nor was I, although I did come to enjoy the blooms of the azaleas, magnolias, and crape myrtles.

When we returned to Wisconsin without our grown boys needing rides to and from hockey and soccer, I was finally able to commit to weekly master gardener classes, joining the OCMGA class of 2010. I find fun-loving gardeners,

so willing to share time, knowledge and plants, keep me engaged in OCMGA activities, currently as Chair of Grants and Scholarships. I have been expanding my horticultural interests and knowledge, joining Wild Ones, the Paper Valley Garden Club, NEW Herb Society of America, and the Green Bay Botanical Garden.

Our favorite part of our current gardens in Sherwood, aside from the views of kite surfers and sturgeon spearkers on Lake Winnebago, is a waterfall cascading into our pond with our own little sandy beach. As winter becomes impossibly long, you’ll find me exploring xeriscaping projects with our grandson in Denver or planting new tropicals at the condo on Kauai, “the Garden Island”.

