

NEWS FROM EXTENSION

Wood County | October 2024



Science By The River
Wisconsin Rapids

Connecting Communities with Science and the Wisconsin River

by Anna Mitchell, Natural Resources Educator

Science by the River, a celebration of all things science and outdoors, marked its fourth anniversary and the Central Wisconsin community was excited for its return after last year's event being canceled due to weather. This year's event was held on October 5th and 150 visitors of all ages joined to spark their curiosity and engage with science and technology in their community!

Visitors had the opportunity to enjoy nature while exploring different fields of science through discovery stations that were located along the riverfront walking trail from Ben Hansen Park to the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market. This year's event had 17 discovery stations that featured hands on activities, demonstrations, and information on how to get involved with science!



A crowd favorite discovery station was hosted by Heart of Wisconsin Amateur Radio and the Marshfield Area Amateur Radio Society. Folks who visited this station got to learn the science behind radio operations and even got to talk to the International Space Station. Local biologists with Pheasants Forever hosted a station and talked about the value of native plants and visitors were able to make a seed ball to plant. Another crowd favorite was the station hosted by Necedah National Wildlife Refuge and Friends of the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. This station featured an interactive stream table where visitors could discover how natural stream flow can benefit the landscape and how degradation can harm the landscape. Thanks to the Center for Watershed Science and Education at UW-Stevens Point, visitors with private wells were able to receive a free nitrate screening!



All in all, this year's event was a smashing success for both visitors and discovery station hosts. Feedback from visitors showed that Science by the River is a great opportunity to increase their understanding of science in the community while also connecting with the outdoors.

A special thank you to Incurage Community Foundation, Clean Green Action, the planning team, and other Extension educators for helping make this year's Science by the River event possible!

Inspector Cabbage Returns to Science by the River

Science by the River is a STEM infused family fun festival, hosted along the Wisconsin River in Wisconsin Rapids. This year, Janell Wehr, Wood County Extension horticulture educator, returned with the booth, "Inspector Cabbage and the Big Reveal!"



"It's not magic - it's SCIENCE!"

The booth mesmerized youth and adults alike with a demonstration of how one can use cabbage juice as a pH indicator. Participants watched with glee as 5 clear fluids (baking soda water, soapy water, plain water, lemon lime soda, and vinegar) changed colors when combined with a little cabbage juice, each depending on the inherent pH of the solution.

Sowing Success is underway in Wood County

Sowing Success is a 12 week introductory course in horticulture. The Integrated Pest Management (IPM) course teaches participants how to link gardening practices and biology to prevent plant problems. Students learn how to select, grow, and maintain the health of plants, including lawns, woody and herbaceous ornamentals, fruits, and vegetables. Students learn how to apply the principles of IPM to pests, including insects, diseases, weeds, and wildlife. As they learn about how to grow plants in a way that helps them plan for gardening success, they will prevent plant problems before they start and manage issues when they happen. They will leave the course with a combination of practical gardening skills to try plus the knowledge of why they work.

Four students are enrolled in Sowing Success this fall. Students prepare for each session by reading assigned chapters and watching videos hosted on the web. During the sessions, students work through hands-on activities designed to reinforce the concepts introduced in the readings and video lectures. Pictured here, students are familiarizing themselves with all the information available on a pesticide label. Wood County Master Gardeners provide added support in mentoring students throughout the course.

Sowing Success is an approved learning opportunity for the Wisconsin Extension Master Gardener Program in preparation to become a Wisconsin Extension Master Gardener. The Wood County Master Gardener Association looks forward to adding these students next year.



-Update provided by Janell Wehr, Horticulture Educator