

September 27, 2004

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Ulster County's Master Gardener Program Is Tops In New York State

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County's Master Gardener Program has received statewide distinction garnering **First** and **Third Place** in the **2004 Master Gardener Search for Excellence Awards**. The recognition is bestowed on a statewide basis to Master Gardener projects and activities that have been judged to have a significant impact on the community and the environment. Master Gardener, Cheryl Alloway, will be presented with the award at the 2004 Northeast Regional Master Gardener Conference taking place in Maryland October 5<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup>. Winning statewide entries from Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, District of Columbia and West Virginia will also be recognized.

Ulster County Master Gardeners received first place in New York State for their multi-year project, **A Waterwise Garden: Xeriscape Garden at SUNY Ulster**. This teaching and demonstration garden was initiated in 2000 to promote stewardship of the Hudson River by familiarizing backyard gardeners with practices that allow for an attractive garden and landscape without inflicting harm from polluted runoff. The garden is used as an interactive teaching tool in the selection of waterwise plants, integrated pest management, conscientious watering practices and alternative landscaping techniques. The judges called it a "Terrific project; well-executed." and praised it as a "Wonderful tool for education..."

New York's Master Gardener Program awarded third place to **Garden Day 2003**, where hands-on and how-to classes for gardeners - from the newest beginners to the most advanced veterans - are offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County Master Gardeners and other area experts at a day-long Saturday event that stretches from 8:30 am to 4:05 pm.

Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who provide the public with gardening programs and activities that draw on the horticulture research and experience of Cornell University. Each master gardener receives an initial 100 hours of research-based instruction from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County, and continues to be exposed to the latest developments in horticulture through a variety of educational training methods. Training is held every two years with the latest class beginning on October 7, 2004. To receive more information about becoming a Master Gardener please contact, Dona MacWilliams, Master Gardener Coordinator, 845-340-3478.

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