



Helen DeFlorio
Entrepreneurial Gardening
Coordinator

Helen DeFlorio, Coordinator of the Michigan WISEWOMAN Entrepreneurial Gardening Program, has been with the program from the beginning. With her dedication and commitment, Helen has helped take the program from eight women gardeners in Ogemaw County in 2008 to over fifty gardeners throughout nine Northern Michigan counties in 2012. The program that began with a small grant from the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network has grown to include many partners, the primary being Michigan State University Extension (MSUE).

Helen has a Bachelor of Science in Health Science with a minor in Community Development. Both have served her well in her work with expanding access to fresh fruits and vegetables in the communities where she coordinates WISEWOMAN gardeners. For more than 8 years Helen has worked as a Program Instructor for MSUE's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In the early years of the Entrepreneurial Gardening program Helen taught nutrition education and gardening basics to WISEWOMAN participants in Ogemaw County. She still works with WISEWOMAN participants in Ogemaw, but in 2011 she also became the part-time year round Entrepreneurial Gardening Coordinator for all of Northern Michigan. In this role she helps women purchase their gardening supplies, works with local suppliers, develops partnerships, and handles a host of other administrative duties.

Her tireless efforts in coordinating the Entrepreneurial Gardening Program won Helen the Michigan Department of Community Health's Hometown Hero Award in 2010.

Helen has been an avid flower gardener for over 14 years. About 8 years ago she started down the path of vegetable gardening. "My work with the Entrepreneurial Gardening Program really piqued my interest in vegetable gardening," said Helen. "Now I've also become quite the home canner with each year bringing new and more things to the cupboard for me and my family."