

# Green Thumb

The Newsletter for Polk County Master Gardeners

ISU Polk County Extension, 1625 Adventureland Drive, Altoona, IA 50009

515-957-5760

May 2009

*Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability.*

## Eddie's Ready!

Finally, we have beautiful weather. I am sure most everyone has been cleaning flower beds and getting ready to plant. The gardens are scheduling their clean up days so it cannot be too long before they can plant. As most of you know I am the project director at the greenhouse. I want to thank everyone who volunteered at the greenhouse this year. We had a wonderful and fun year. The plants are looking great. Remember all of the projects that are coming up. We have the Plant Sale, the Garage & Bake Sale, the Garden Tour, and the two Bus Tours. I hope that you can participate in one of these projects. I hope everyone has a wonderful summer.

*Eddie Cox, PCMG Steering Committee Chair*

## Greenhouse News

We had a wonderful year. The plants are looking great and I am looking forward to having a great plant sale this year. I would like to thank Ken & Shirley Sailer, Gladys Hertzberg, Jean Koch and Leon Shaw for their wonderful help. These folks have been helping me since I took on the Greenhouse three years ago and I certainly appreciate all their time and effort. I would like to thank Dawn Goodrich and Michelle Wiese from the Botanical Center for printing our labels for us. There were times when Michelle could not get the labels printed because of her work load. When this was the case, Mary Farlow stepped up and printed the labels for us. Thank you, Mary. I want to thank Nancy and Clel Ruppert for giving us some 246 Tomato and Pepper plants for our plant sale. This was a wonderful gesture on their part and we appreciate

it very much. Last but not least, I want to thank everyone who came down to the greenhouse. I hope you learned something and I hope you had an enjoyable time. I look forward to working with you next year.

*Eddie Cox, Project Leader*

## Farmers Market News

Planning for the Polk County Master Gardener's booth at the Downtown Farmer's Market is in full swing. We've finally confirmed our dates on the third Saturday of each month. The dates are May 16th, June 20th, July 18th, August 15th, September 19<sup>th</sup> and October 17th.

We sent out an email to our volunteer list last weekend, so if you were expecting a note but didn't receive one, please drop us a note. If you're not on our list, but would like to volunteer we've got lots of dates and times still open.

We're also looking for additional experts to host a topic. If you have a passion for an area of gardening and would like to share it, we'd love to have you be one of our experts. Just let us know what you'd like to do and we'll help make all the arrangements.

One final area of help we need is for someone to help transport the equipment back to the Extension office after the market is done.

It is going to be another great season at the Downtown Farmer's Market so sign up soon to help promote Master Gardeners and gardening education!

*Aaron and Sarah, Project Leaders*

## Botanical Center Show House News

Stop by the Show House during the plant sale to see our awesome "Around the World" display. We have some very creative MGs!

Work days will remain the same throughout the summer months - Tuesday and Saturday mornings. Come join us - there will be plenty to do. Our next change-over, "Tropical Summer", takes place in June. We are starting to plan display bays for 2010 – the theme for the entire Botanical Center complex in 2010 will be children's literature.

The Show House will be doing 4 change-overs within that theme, and we are always looking for new display-making teams. If you think this sounds fun, come to our next planning meeting: Monday, June 15th, at 6:30, in the Show House.

Contact Mary at 556-3684 or [mhwphoto@mchsi.com](mailto:mhwphoto@mchsi.com)

*Mary Howell-Williams, Project Leader*

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## Botanical Center Grounds News

Now is the time for all good gardeners to come to the aid of the gardens. Hmm, is it just me or is something about that which has a familiar ring to it - like I've heard it before or something close to it. Anyhow, starting in May there is a lot to be done, starting with a Volunteer's information meeting on Tuesday, May 5, at 9:30 AM in the Oak Room at the Botanical Center. Realize not everyone can make that and we'll have another in the evening or on a Saturday later on.

Then, on Friday

morning May 8th, we hope to finish re-working the soil in the Butterfly Garden adding compost and more soil to the beds, to put up the two new obelisks in Blue Wave Garden, and then also set the 6 new urns (that VAC bought) on the wall there. There is also a lot of weeding and planting to do so time to get organized and ready to roll. See you at the BC or somewhere.

Need to converse with me? Email [hostahunter@msn.com](mailto:hostahunter@msn.com) [<mailto:hostahunter@msn.com>]  
or call 967-3394.

*Melvin Visser Botanical Center Outside Coordinator*

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## 2009 Polk County Master Gardener Bus Tour Update

Registration forms for both of our trips are available on the Polk County Master Gardener Website.

**Kansas City One Day Trip:** Right now we have enough people registered to fill both buses. If you have not registered but would be interested in attending, please contact Jeri McGinnis to get your name added to the waiting list. In the event that someone needs to cancel their reservation, we will contact people on the waiting list to fill any openings.

**Decorah Two Day Trip:** We still have openings for this trip but the bus is filling quickly. Please get your registration form and money sent in as soon as possible. On August 1st and 2nd, we will travel to northeast Iowa to visit Seed Savers Exchange (an organization dedicated to saving and sharing heirloom seeds), Willowglen Perennial Nursery (including their display gardens), and Ion Exchange, Inc. (a native seed and plant nursery). We will also visit 3 spectacular private gardens and a new public garden in the Clear Lake area.

The registration form is on the Polk County MG website. We must have your registration and payment to reserve your spot on the bus! Questions? Call Jeri McGinnis at 515-276-2598 (home) or 515-314-1326 (cell) or e-mail her at: [jsmcginnis@netins.net](mailto:jsmcginnis@netins.net).

*Lauri Barrick*

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## 2009 Master Gardeners Plant Sale is Right Around the Corner

The Plant Sale is only a few days away and things look better than ever this year. There's still room for more perennial donations. Please bring them Friday during the pre-sale so we can have them labeled and priced when the sale starts Saturday morning. Thanks to the greenhouse staff and all the volunteers who helped make this a great year. See you all on Friday, May 1st, 5:30-7:00 for the pre-sale MG ONLY. Volunteers need to bring their watering containers with them as well as wearing their name tags and white or MG T shirt. They need four more volunteers for Saturday afternoon shift. If you can help, email [shalea1331@yahoo.com](mailto:shalea1331@yahoo.com).

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## Discovery Garden News

The Discovery Garden is clean and ready for planting. Thanks to seven freshmen, one teacher, and one parent, from Valley Southwoods School, the raking was done in a hurry. On Saturday about twenty MGS braved the cool dampness and completed the cleanup. The roses were pruned, compost was spread on some of the beds, grasses and perennials were divided. Some of the perennials made their way to the East High Freshman Academy and to the Plant Sale. The next project for the Garden is the renovation of the ponds, which means moving a lot of rocks. The students moved some of them, but there are still more to move. There may be a special work session dedicated to this project.

I have to say working with the students was very enjoyable. They were respectful, did not whine or complain, and seemed eager to work. They also seemed to have a good time moving the rocks. Cheree Tilton and I thought it was a very positive experience.

All of the Discovery plants have been picked up and hats off to Eddie and his crew for doing a great job with the seeding and caring of the plants. Let's hope the sale will be a HUGE success.

May is one of my favorite months, so I hope all of you have a joyous one.

*Jean Roe, Co-Chair, Discovery Garden*

### **A note from Dean Brand:**

The Discovery Garden is looking for rocks for the pond upgrade. Ideally, ones that a farmer has picked up and are in a pile or that we could pick up for free. We need a total of about 16 to 17 tons in a ratio of 1:2:1 of small (4-12") medium (12-24") and large (24" plus). The sizes would be the radius (distance across) the rocks, not that measurement around them. If you know where we could get these please contact Jean Roe, [ljroe@ecity.net](mailto:ljroe@ecity.net), Cheree Tilton, [tiltoncm@gmail.com](mailto:tiltoncm@gmail.com) or Dean Brand, [drbrand@quixnet.net](mailto:drbrand@quixnet.net). You can also contact Shelley Lande, [budstoblms@msn.com](mailto:budstoblms@msn.com), after May 2nd. We will make arrangements to get them moved to the Discovery Garden.

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## Enabling Garden News

When it comes to being a co-chair of any Master Gardener garden, in my mind, one of the trickiest things to deal with is Mother Nature-wind, rain, heat, frost and snow. You can plan and plan, and hope for good weather the day of your scheduled event or workday, and in the end She has the final say in whether, or should I say, weather, it will take place as planned. Needless to say our Arbor Day celebration was cancelled this year due to rain and cold temperatures. Only Sunday did we experienced the high seventies.

Thank you to the following Master Gardeners for their hard work in preparing for the event: Christine Barker, Mary Bernau & family, Dean Brand, Jane Ferguson, Theresa Garrison, Peggy Goetzke, Susan Genalo, Bill & Judy Goshorn, Tina Gosselink, Lauri Nelson, Nancy Nelson, Ruth O'Connor, Steve Perrin, Jolene Runkel, Tom & Margaret Mackie, Mel & Carol Visser and Valerie Singer! Master Gardeners like all of you; really make a difference in our community and county! We may have prepared so diligently that Mother Nature thought we needed some down time, no doubt the celebration would have been awesome, we have decided to rename it, "Arbor day in August".

Our next garden talk and demonstration will be on May 16th at 10:00am, By Bill & Judy Goshorn, topic, "Garden Layout". Tuesday evenings after 5pm are work-nights at the Enabling garden, and as quickly as Mother Nature allows it to warm up, we will be planting around four thousand annuals. We welcome all new interns and veteran Master Gardeners to join us!

Any questions please email Christine at [cgbark1989@aol.com](mailto:cgbark1989@aol.com) or me at [peaceinthegarden@aol.com](mailto:peaceinthegarden@aol.com), 515-967-3409.

*Paula Winslow, Enabling Garden Co-Chair.*

### ***Nature is always hinting at us. Robert Frost***

**NEWS FLASH:** We just learned that the City of Altoona is going to be renovating the bike path beside the EG this summer. Along with Hy-Vee's construction of new parking lot, it means the garden really won't be ADA accessible until fall. Boo Hoo.

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**The Garden and Bake Garage Sale** is June 6, 8:00 to 2:30. Hopefully you have checked your garden treasurers and have some to donate to our sale (anything to do with gardening or could be used as garden art). I will be at the site in Ankeny around 6 am for people to drop off their treasures. Remember we will be looking for bake goods also. If you have any questions, or are interested in helping (I need lots of volunteers), please contact me. Kathy Gocke - email [Gocke@aol.com](mailto:Gocke@aol.com) or my home 967-3832, cell 720-8881. Hope to see you all there.

## Empowerment Garden News

We are in the planning and design stages of the Empowerment Gardens in the King Irving Neighborhood! The Empowerment Gardens' mission is to empower individuals to cultivate themselves and the neighborhood through gardening and landscaping. The gardens are being established to meet specific pride and perception goals in the King Irving Neighborhood.

- \*Increase resident participation in King-Irving Neighborhood projects and activities
- \*Improve community pride and perception
- \*Increase the availability of affordable healthy fresh food in the community
- \*Create opportunity for residents to share their talents and get to know one another
- \*Enter at least one city garden tour per year.

The King-Irving Empowerment Gardens are a combination of vegetable garden (edible landscape) and flowers. The gardens will be in multiple locations serving as educational, social, and economic tools. We are looking forward to getting the site prepared and doing some planting on May 9th in conjunction with the neighborhood Habitat For Humanity Block Clean Up day!

If you are interested in volunteering in the Empowerment Gardens, please contact Alecia Kates at 515-419-6801.

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## Garden Tour News

Read a good blog lately? MG Carol Nading was featured in a wonderful article in the DM Register. She is also writing a blog on the DM Register website about preparing her garden for the Garden Tour. You can find it by going to [www.dmregister.com](http://www.dmregister.com), click on "blogs" in the light-blue band near the top of the home page, then click on "search people"- it's in bold brown type. Then you can type "Carol Nading" in the search box. You have to hunt a little, but it's worth it! Be sure to post a comment for Carol while you're there!

Word of mouth is the best publicity - you can help make this year's garden tour the best one yet! Be sure to tell your friends to buy their garden tour tickets starting May 15 at: all Polk County Earl May Stores, Goode Greenhouse, Herndon's DM Seed & Nursery, the Woodsmith Store and of course the Polk County Extension Office.

### An Outdoor Living Room

The peonies are blooming, the fountains are murmuring, the tomatoes are ripening, and the grill is sizzling. In a beautiful marriage of hardscape and landscape, Master Gardener Tricia Kovacevich cultivates a space big enough for sweeping Japanese maples and a barbeque crowd but small enough for fresh herbs and an intimate dinner for two.

In a backyard that backs up to a cul-de-sac, sculpted purpleosier willow and boxwood join columnar buckthorns to create a living privacy screen that frames a serene garden and patio with three different entertaining areas. Pick a seat near sun-loving azalea and dwarf lilac, Russian sage and lavender, lamb's ear and Maiden grass, or lounge in the shade among hostas and ferns, coral bells and bleeding heart, Jacob's ladder and Solomon's seal.

The main garden includes a three-tiered water fountain, while the side yard is anchored by a double rock fountain with disappearing water. Garden art, light fixtures, potted plants, and future plans for an outdoor grilling kitchen make this garden a haven for relaxation and a venue for celebration.

### Chaos Born of Chaos

On one of Ankeny's busiest streets resides a self-described "crazed" Master Gardener, Shelley Lande. Using her hectic location as inspiration, she has found balance by creating Chaos - her ever-changing garden. While a profusion of shade-loving flora fill the front yard, it's the backyard that lives up to the anarchic theme. Enter the back gate, stroll under the rose-draped arbor, and venture into a backyard with no design rules. Nothing except the greenhouse has a permanent home in Chaos; relocation is a way of life.

Nestled in with natives, shrubs, and a seemingly endless display of perennials you'll find landscape roses, cannas, dahlias, elephant ears, and several varieties of annuals. Yet amidst the endless stimulation comes the serenity of a pond under a purple ash, nestled amid Japanese maples and tree peonies. Goldfish glide lazily through shade that caresses lotus, water iris, and parrot's feather.

Browse through the Secret Garden, where fruit, vegetables, herbs, and annuals dominate, but dwarf bunnies Fred and Ginger reign. Explore many unusual container plants, including tropicals over-wintered in the greenhouse. Don't miss the handmade birdhouses, whimsical plaques, figurines, rain barrels, carved faces, and, of course, The Lobelia Man.

Tickets for the Garden Tour will go on sale in late May. Watch for more information in a future issue of the Green Thumb. *Michelle Walke, Garden Tour Publicity*

## Demonstration Garden News

I'm happy to report that on April 23 we had fantastic help from a group of 9th graders from Southwoods. They helped with garden cleanup, wood chipping new paths, and cutting down fall raspberries. And while we didn't have enough volunteers to do a true bucket brigade, Dale Millis came through and designed a sled to help facilitate a new path with consistent height and width of the chips. Great job Dale!

I am also pleased to report that the City of Urbandale has awarded us a \$3,000 grant for use in our garden. We are looking forward to using it for either pathways or bushes and/or trees. Our Design and Operations committees will continue working together to finalize those plans.

Thanks to Donnie Lenox, Dr. Loran Parker, Linda Dugan, Karen Schoenenberger and Sue Crawford for holding plants until the weather warms up and dries up for planting. Especially for some of the larger gardens, this is critical and very much appreciated since we need the space at the greenhouse for the plant sale and most don't have the required window space at home.

Work nights will begin the Monday after Mother's Day (May 11), and will be Mondays and Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. I am still looking for a volunteer to help coordinate the watering schedule. Finally, I am sending an email about every 7-10 days to let interested folks know what is going on at the Demonstration Garden. If you'd like to be on that email trail and are not, please let me know and I will add you. I'm looking forward to seeing you at the garden. Please contact Margaret Spikes at 557-8029 (w) or 984-9064 (h) or by emailing [margaretspikes@wellsfargo.co](mailto:margaretspikes@wellsfargo.co).

*Margaret Spikes, Project Co-chair*

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## Bits & Bytes

\*If you are looking for a local source for native plant starts, call Mary at 957-5761 before May 15.

\*Des Moines Parks Spring Perennial Divide will be May 16 - 17th. Plants need to be delivered to the City greenhouse at 2501 SE Maury. Contact Julie M. Stundins, [JMStundins@dmgov.org](mailto:JMStundins@dmgov.org)

\*If you want events listed in the Iowa Horticulturist magazine summer issue, email them to Mary by May 11.

\* Please visit the newly created and still developing Downtown Community Garden. This garden is located just south of the East Village at approximately E. 6th and Scott. The Downtown Garden is truly an amazing project....it involved transforming an underused city park into a magnificent place where Des Moines residents can come together to garden and connect with each other. Check out the website, join the group, pass on to individuals you think would like to become involved, and just generally support another great garden in Des Moines

\*If you have gardening friends in the Coon Rapids area, please let them know about this volunteer opportunity. (They should check with their local MG coordinator to verify that these qualify as MG hours.)

Whiterock Conservancy is looking for Master Gardener Volunteers to help get the Garst Farm gardens (now owned by Whiterock Conservancy) into presentable shape for the 50th Anniversary of the Khrushchev visit to Iowa, scheduled for late August. The Garst Farm is located exactly on the corner of Carroll, Guthrie, Audubon and Greene Counties. It lies 1/2 mile east of Coon Rapids, on the south side of Highway 141. Two workdays have been scheduled: Friday, May 1st and Saturday, May, 16. Each day we will convene at 10 a.m. and lunch will be served to volunteers. Volunteers should bring their favorite tool. Plant cuttings/starts (sun and shade) would be very much appreciated. In late afternoon, a brief tour of Whiterock will be provided for any interested volunteers. No RSVP is needed. For any questions, please visit [www.whiterockconservancy.org](http://www.whiterockconservancy.org) or contact Liz Garst at telephone: 712-684-5240 or [lizgarst@gliddenwildblue.com](mailto:lizgarst@gliddenwildblue.com)

\***DIRECTORY UPDATE:** Dee Tingle has gotten rid of her land line and only has cell phone 515-669-4745.

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## Upcoming MG Events!

May 1, 5:30 to 7 Plant Sale Pre-sale to PCMG only @ Botanical Center Greenhouse  
May 2, 8-4:30, Polk County Master Gardener Plant Sale @ Botanical Center Greenhouse  
May 3, 12:30 to 4:30 Polk County Master Gardener Plant Sale @ Botanical Center Greenhouse  
May 5, 9:30 am, BC Grounds Crew planning meeting. BC Oak room  
May 9, Planting at the Empowerment Garden  
May 15, Garden Tour tickets go on sale!  
May 16, 8:30 am, May 17, 1:30 pm & May 20, 4:00 pm: Discovery Garden Planting Days  
May 16, 10:00 am Garden Layout - Bill and Judy Goshorn at Enabling Garden  
May 20, 4:30 pm and other Wednesdays: Discovery Garden Work Nights  
June 6, Garden Garage Sale and Bake Sale Corner of 1st & Delaware, Ankeny 8 to 2  
June 6, 10:00 Creating Containers Melissa Holst at Enabling Garden  
June 13th, 11:30am - 4pm - Garden Tour "Pre-Tour"  
June 15, 6:30 pm Show House planning meeting  
June 16, 7:00 pm Tops in Pots - Susan Appleget-Hurst at the Discovery Garden  
June 18, 7:00 pm Growing Grapes & Making Wine - Stan Olson at Demo Garden.  
June 20, 9 a.m. to 4 pm: Polk County Master Gardener Tour  
June 23, 7:00 pm Rainscaping Iowa - Jennifer Welch, Urban Conservationist at the Discovery Garden  
June 25, 7:00 pm Rainscaping Iowa - Jennifer Welch, Urban Conservationist at the Discovery Garden  
August 1& 2 Polk County MG Bus Tour visits northeast Iowa

## Recurring MG Calendar!

**Farmers' Market booth** every third Saturday, May to October  
Monday evenings until fall clean-up **Demonstration Garden** work nights  
Tuesday evenings until fall clean-up **Enabling Garden** work nights  
Tuesday mornings Botanical Center **Gardeners' Show House** work sessions  
Tuesday mornings and Tuesday evenings Botanical Center **Grounds** work sessions  
Wednesday evenings until fall clean-up **Discovery Garden** work nights  
Wednesday evenings Botanical Center Grounds **work** session  
Friday morning Botanical Center Grounds **work** sessions  
Saturday mornings Botanical Center **Gardeners' Show House** work sessions

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