
Green Thumb

The Newsletter for the Polk County Master Gardeners

February 2012

ISU Polk County Extension
1625 Adventureland Drive, Altoona, Iowa
Phone 515-957-5760

[Visit the website](#)

Mike's Musings

It always amazes me how quickly the "darkness" of winter passes as the year progresses. We all know that the shortest day of the year, December 21st, the Winter Solstice, marks the start of winter in the Northern Hemisphere. In Des Moines, we get about 9.1 hours of daylight on that day.

It all has to do with the tilt of the earth, which is a constant 23.5 degrees in relationship to the Sun. The shortest day is the result of the northern hemisphere of Earth being tilted away from the sun, which then appears at its southernmost point in the South. As we move away from the short days of December, we see some rather dramatic gains in the length of the day. In January alone, the hours of sunlight increase by 47 minutes. We even pick-up an hour and 12 minutes during the short month of February.

The hours of sunlight continue to increase until we reach the longest day of the year, the Summer Solstice, with 15 hours, 11 minutes and 46 seconds of sunlight, on June 20th. The hours of sunlight begin to shorten once again, losing only a second the next day, but the cycle continues on.

So why do we see most of the hot weather after June 20th, when the hours of sunlight are decreasing? Simple, it takes a while for the earth to warm up! Another interesting twist... During our Northern Hemisphere Winter, we are actually closer to the sun than during the summer. Again, it all has to do with the tilt of the Earth. The sunlight energy falling on a square foot of the Earth's surface is spread-out over a square a foot and a half on a side during the shortest winter "tilt" day. No wonder it is cold! Thankfully it does not stay cold, and our gardens will again awake.

Mike Treinen, Steering Committee Chairman 240-4169 treinen1941@q.com

Discovery Garden at the Iowa State Fairgrounds

I hope everyone is enjoying the weather we have had thus far - so strange to have 50 degree temps in January. I saw some greenish grass today, so we know spring will be here soon.

It is sort of slow with the Discovery Garden crew right now, but I can say that we will be having our annual planning meeting February 23, place and time to be determined and we will share that information sometime soon.

The Discovery Garden is shopping for an irrigation service to maintain the system, at the garden, if anyone has any suggestions please share the information with Jean Roe. 279-8705 or email ljroe@ecity.net

"anything which grows is always more beautiful to look at than anything which is built" Lin Yu Tang
Jean Roe, Dean Brand, Cheree Tilton, & Patrick Schmitt, Co-Chairs

Demonstration Garden in Urbandale

Winter is a great time for planning...one of my favorite sayings is "Plan your work. Work your plan." I'm sure many of you do that on a daily, weekly and monthly basis! Right now I'm getting ready for the spring planning meeting, which is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 22 at the Urbandale Library at 7:00 p.m. in meeting room A. Please watch the March newsletter for confirmation.

I also have a few openings for interested Master Gardeners. One is to help with the Food Pantry garden. We have 2 people who share the responsibilities and are looking for one more to help lead that bed. This is a great opportunity to learn more about vegetable gardening. Besides normal planting, watering and weeding, the leads for this garden help coordinate getting the produce to the Urbandale Food Pantry. This may include coordination with the parents of Valerius Elementary students.

Winter and spring are also good times for discussion on the labels and database. We are working on getting perennials identified, cataloged and labeled. I will be setting up a meeting to continue those discussions so please let me know if you are interested.

Stay warm and safe!

Margaret Spikes, Project Chair 213-5353, 984-9064, margaretspikes@wellsfargo.com

Enabling Garden in Altoona

No matter what the Groundhog says, we all know that there are still too many weeks of winter left; so, we may as well spend it getting ready for spring.

We had a productive planning meeting in January and have established several committees to: facilitate projects, find speakers for our talks, set-up garden publicity and conduct fundraising. Committees will be getting together to start strategizing for the coming season. The projects committee will be coordinating and planning the work all the special projects this year. The publicity committee will focus on getting the word out to the community through a variety of different media. The fundraising committee will continue the drive to raise funds to replace our wind spinner that was stolen last July. Last but not least, the speakers committee is working on getting everyone one lined up for our Annual Arbor Day Celebration to be held on Saturday, April 28th at 11:00. As mentioned, our theme at this year's event will be on planning a small fruit orchard. There will be more to come, as each of these groups work on their plans for 2012.

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to be on a committee. We appreciate your time.

Our next planning meeting is set for Tuesday, February 28th with a 6:00PM meeting start with a 5:30 social. The meeting will be held at the Polk County Extension Offices in Conference Room A.

EG Co-Chairs: Christine Barker, Sandie Hamilton, Paula Winslow & Paul Wilkens.

Christine Barker, co-chair

Looking forward

In reviewing the requirements of a number of other states' Master Gardener programs in early 2011, Dr. Boussetot discovered that Iowa is very lenient. The average number of volunteer hours required from interns is 46, so we're not too far out of line at 40. But once someone is certified, the volunteer hour requirement ranges from 50 down to 5. So our 6 is well below the average of 21. And the education requirement is also higher in most states, ranging from 30 down to 5. Again our 6 is less than have the average of 11.

Even in Iowa some counties have chosen to raise the minimum to more than 6 & 6.

So, starting in January of 2013, the Iowa Master Gardener minimum requirements will be changing to 12 hours of volunteer time and 6 hours of education. Still pretty easy. Community garden hours will still count toward your lifetime total and toward our county's total for the year but we will ask that the minimum will be given on Polk County Master Gardener projects.

Directory Changes

Teresa Garrison no longer has a home (landline) phone. Please use cell # 515-779-8905.
Judy Bramhall is now Judy Bass and is changing her email to jrbass53@hotmail.com.
Betty Perry's email has changed to cloneman65@q.com.

2012 PLANT SALE

It's that time again . . . plans are in the works for the Annual Master Gardeners Plant Sale to be held Saturday, May 5, 8-4:30, and Sunday, May 6, 10 - 4:30 at the Botanical Center, 909 Robert D. Ray Drive, Des Moines, Iowa. And don't forget, as in the past, Polk County Master Gardeners with badges are welcome to shop the pre-sale on Friday, May 4, 5:30 to 7:00 pm.

Isabella Hurless and Stef McAdam, co-chairs of the event, have assembled their committee and are moving ahead with plans. They are being assisted by Joy Trueblood who has graciously agreed to oversee the Plant Sale in 2013.

Teri Peterson, co-chair of the Publicity Committee, has designed a new flyer that the committee hopes to use each year with the hope that it becomes the identifying "logo" of our plant sale. It is eye catching! Mary Farlow has posted it to the website. So please feel free to forward it along to all of your friends and relatives or print and post at your workplace or allowed to let everyone know that our welcome mat will be out.

As always, if you are interested in helping out, we have room for you! There is a need for workers all 3 days and any other number of opportunities to work in the greenhouse. Please contact either Stef or Shawnee so they can direct you to the right person to get you involved!

The 2012 Master Gardener Plant Sale Committee is already hard at work getting ready for the big fundraising event May 5 and 6. There are so many ways you can help. One important way is to collect cardboard or plastic pop and juice flats, paper ream box lids and anything else that could be used by plant sale customers to carry plants. Because of limited storage space at the greenhouse, we ask that you keep them at home until we put out the call to bring them to the greenhouse at a time much closer to the plant sale dates.

Isabella Hurless-Banks, 278-2067 or ihurless@cds-global.com

Stephanie McAdam, 225-6585 or smcadam@knappproperties.com

Shawnee Holtkamp, 515-868-3385, Volunteer Coordinator, shalea1331@yahoo.com

From the publicity committee, Charity and Teri.

Homegrown Lifestyles

In the spring of 2012, an ISU Extension program called Homegrown Lifestyle will be offered to train property owners with <10 acres on how to grow some of their own food. Training involves a 12+ week program (one 3 hour session per week on Thursday evenings from 6:30-9:30 pm + 3 farm visits) that cover the basics of preparing your land, growing food crops, and raising small scale livestock. The delivery will again be a broadcast to the training locations via a series of 1.5 hour Adobe Connect sessions from campus and field experts. The other half of each evening training session will involve hands-on activities that supplement the sessions provided by the experts. Price is \$179 per trainee. Besides training, a resource guide with additional information (speaker outlines and Extension publications by topic) and additional materials required for locally coordinated activities will be provided.

Gardeners Show House News

We have some great new displays in our current exhibit " Global Garden Styles". They are worth a look!

We have one opening left for display-makers in April exhibit: World Landmarks. Interns and new volunteer teams are always welcome. Need an idea? How about recreating Versailles? Or the Hanging Gardens of Babylon? Or Big Ben? It's easy, and it's fun. We also have three openings for the July "Climate Gardening" exhibit. Contact Mary Howell-Williams (mhwphoto@mchsi.com) or Ann Goecke (Goecke.Ann@principal.com) if you would like more information.

We will also be looking for a summer watering crew - once the weather gets warm in the spring, the watering schedule changes. It is a commitment of about 1 1/2 hours a week from about mid-April through September.

Finally, if you haven't "liked" us on Facebook yet, please do - the more hits we get, the more visible our page is to everyone: Search for PCMG Gardeners Show House.

Our next planning meeting will be Monday, March 12, at 6:30 in the Riverwalk Cafe. All those interested in the Show House are welcome.

Mary Howell-Williams 556-3684 mhwphoto@mchsi.com

Garden Tour Committee

Hello Interns! (and everyone else, too!)

A great way to accumulate volunteer hours is by helping get the 2012 PCMG Garden Tour Gardens looking spiffy. The gardeners who volunteer to be part of the tour can always use some extra help planting, weeding, watering, mulching - you get the idea. It's really like a gardener play date. If you are interested in helping, please email your info to: Beth Jordan (bethjordan@mchsi.com)

The 2012 Garden Tour is June 23!

Sneak Peek #2

This MG describes their garden as "a frugal, lazy gardener garden". Frugal tactics employed include: doing all their own work enlisting friends and family as needed and utilizing divided plants from friends. A garden made up of perennials and low maintenance plants allows the gardener to be "lazy".

This garden features two memorial gardens. A garden in the front yard is dedicated to the gardener's husband and features Colorado aspens, birds nest blue spruce, roses and family artifacts. In the back yard, a garden devoted to her mother features some of her mother's plants, oak swing and other items from her garden.

A two level deck and brick patio help define garden "rooms" in the shady back yard. Also look for the greenhouse attached to the home and a small pond.

Michelle Walke, Garden Tour chair, mwalkedesign@mac.com

Education Opportunities

You can come to the Polk County Extension Office at 7 on 2-16 and hear Marcia Leeper talk on "Container Gardens and other small spaces" for free.

OR

If you've ever wondered how new plants are developed for the marketplace, and want to know what's on tap for 2012, go to the Botanical Center on Thursday, Feb. 16 at 7 p.m. in the Schwarz Library to hear a talk by Danielle Ernest of Proven Winners. The fee is the same as Learn on Saturdays: \$5 for Botanical Center members, MGs and volunteers, \$10 for others.

Proven Winners is dedicated to bringing only the best plants to the gardens of North America. Working closely with plantsmen and breeders from around the world, new and innovative potential Proven Winners' plants are vigorously trialed for years before introduction. The process of product development will be discussed as well as unveiling the new introductions for your 2012 garden.

Greenhouse

As has been mentioned, our status at the Botanical Center greenhouse is still unclear with the new management group. A few of us met with the new Director in December and it was encouraging but it's too early for her to make a commitment to us about greenhouse space beyond 2012. Because our status is still unclear, we need a Plan B, so a committee is being formed to evaluate alternatives to the greenhouse at the Botanical Center. We currently have four people who have agreed to participate. Please send an email to us at bob@tsmcgrp.com if you would like to participate. If you don't want to participate, but know of an available greenhouse please send as much data about that greenhouse to us as you can so we can investigate it. Your knowledge of greenhouses is unimportant. It's your desire to help us develop a Plan B that is most important.

We never have enough people to water, so if you're available to water on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday through the middle of May and haven't already volunteered but want to, send us an email at bob@tsmcgrp.com if you can volunteer to water. Just volunteering one day a week for one month will help us. You'll be able to gain access at 9:00 AM on your day and need to be finished no later than Noon. That doesn't mean you can't join us on Wednesday or Saturday for seeding, transplanting, potting, and watering. We'd love to see you at the greenhouse to help us. Our hours are 9:00 AM until we're done. Keep an eye out for the Green Thumb and This and That for more info and key dates.

The greenhouse will be open to all PCMG February 22. Wednesdays and Saturdays prior to that are for Interns only. February 22 has a minimal number of seeds (160) to sow but may have some transplanting. Important dates to remember are: 2/25 - 6202 seeds to sow, 3/10 - 8545 seeds to sow, 3/17 - 4920 seeds to sow, 3/24 - 3090 seeds to sow, and 3/28 - 6545 seeds to sow. That doesn't mean you can't join us other days because we'll have seeds to sow and transplanting to do.

Intern lab dates will be 2/4, 2/8, and 2/18. Any PCMG wanting a refresher course in seeding, transplanting, watering, potting, and soils, is welcome to attend. You will earn two education hours. To participate, send your request to bob@tsmcgrp.com. Please prioritize the dates you are available for the lab. If there are any dates you're not available, for instance if you work and can't attend the Wednesday lab, indicate that as well. Dates will be allocated on a first come basis.

Bob Helvey, 515-224-6424, www.tsmcgrp.com

Freebies

Sherry Ewing is moving her potting shed and wants to give away a bunch of clay pots. She had quite a variety of sizes: small to large, all she asks is that you call her at 515 -964-3049 to arrange a time to pick them up. They are free for the taking.

Upcoming Events

Feb. 17 - Winter Program class with Marcia Leeper - "Container gardens and other small spaces". 7:00 at the Polk County Extension Office.

Feb. 4, 8 & 18 - Intern labs days for the Greenhouse.

Feb 11 & 15 - Interns only volunteer at Greenhouse.

Feb. 22 - First day for the non-interns to volunteer at the Greenhouse.

Feb. 23 - Discovery Garden planning meeting - time and place to be determined.

Feb 28 - Enabling Garden planning meeting at Extension Office.

March 12 - Show House planning meeting at BC Riverwalk Cafe at 6:30 pm

March 22 - Demo Garden Planning meeting at Urbandale Library at 7:00 pm.

April 28 - Arbor Day Celebration at the Enabling Garden at 11:00 am

May 5 & 6 - PCMG Plant Sale.

June 23 - PCMG Garden Tour

Recurring MG Calendar!

Monday evening work nights at Demonstration Garden, Urbandale suspended until spring

Tuesday & Saturday mornings Botanical Center Gardeners Show House work sessions

Tuesday evening work nights at Enabling Garden, Altoona suspended until spring

Wednesday and Saturday mornings at PCMG greenhouse, done until February 22, 2012

Wednesday evening work nights at Discovery Garden at the Iowa State Fairgrounds suspended until spring.

Friday morning work session at BC River Walk suspended until spring

Have you seen it????

Several of you have reported that the USDA Unveiled New Plant Hardiness Zone Map on 1-25. You can find the interactive map at www.planthardiness.ars.usda.gov.

It's interesting that Polk County is a maze of pockets of zones 5a and 5b. The Demonstration Garden and Enabling Garden are 5b but the Discovery Garden is now 5a. For the first time, the new map offers a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based interactive format and is specifically designed to be Internet-friendly. The map website also incorporates a "find your zone by ZIP code" function. Static images of national, regional and state maps have also been included to ensure the map is readily accessible to those who lack broadband Internet access.

Do you know about a Champion Tree?

The City of Des Moines is still looking for a few good trees within the city limits. Our Champion Tree program was designed to recognize large, healthy, out of the ordinary trees growing on private and public property in the City of Des Moines. If you feel you have a tree or have seen one in a public space and think that it merits attention, contact the Public Works department at 283-4950 and submit the physical location of the tree. The person/people submitting the largest trees, one public tree and one private tree, will receive a plaque from the mayor of Des Moines at the city's annual Arbor Day Proclamation.

Still Available

There are still a few discounted tickets available at the Extension Office for the Home & Garden Show to be held at the Iowa Events Center on Feb 9 - 12. Contact Mary to arrange to purchase if you are interested.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

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

