

# Green Thumb

The Newsletter for Polk County Master Gardeners

ISU Polk County Extension, 1625 Adventureland Drive, Altoona, IA 50313 515-957-5760 January 2009

## Eddie's Ready!

Eddie is ready to get the Greenhouse started. The seeds have been ordered and it is just 38 days until we open the Greenhouse.

We have created a new project for Polk County Master Gardeners. As most of you know, Melvin Visser is in charge of cleaning up and maintaining the gardens along the river at the Botanical Center. The steering committee voted to make the grounds at the Botanical Center a project such as the Show House and the other gardens we maintain. This will mean we will need more volunteers to help Melvin. Please give this project some thought when you are working out your volunteer hours for the next year.

I would like to extend an invitation to everyone to attend a Steering Committee Meeting. We would like to have input from everyone. If you cannot attend a meeting please feel free to contact any of the committee members. You can find their name and number in the directory. Our next meeting will be January 12th, 2009 at 5:30 at the ISU Extension office in Altoona.

I hope everyone had a safe and happy New Year.

*Eddie Cox, PCMG Steering Committee Chair*

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## Garden Tour News

The 2009 Garden Tour committee is planning a tour of Ankeny and Saylorville gardens. Be sure to save the date (June 20) and spread the word to your gardening friends. Watch for descriptions of the tour gardens and ticket information in future issues of the Green Thumb.

Helping with the tour is a fun way to earn volunteer hours. Volunteers are needed to help prepare the selected gardens for tour day. Volunteers are also needed to serve as garden guides on tour day. Watch for sign-up sheets at MG classes this winter.

One last note, we will select the location for the 2011 tour early next year, so if you have a garden in mind, please let me know so we can be sure to consider your neighborhood.

*Carrie Buzzoni, Garden Tour Co-chair.*

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## Greenhouse News

We will open the greenhouse on February 7th, 2009 for interns only. The sessions for all Polk County Master Gardeners start on Feb. 18. Our work days will be Saturday and Wednesday mornings, 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. Please be there at 9:00 sharp so we can get the work passed out and **remember to wear your name tags.**

We held our first greenhouse lab for the class that just graduated and it went very well. The lab for the class that is starting on January 6th will be January 31st.

I am looking forward to working with all the new interns and all the Master Gardeners.

*Eddie Cox, Project Leader*

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## **Enabling Garden News**

Happy New Year to all the wonderful Master Gardeners and interns!

We are having a planning meeting at the Extension office on January 22 with a social at 5:30 and the meeting starting at 6pm. Please come and join us if you have an interest in volunteering at the Enabling Garden in 2009. We have some open areas if you would like to design, plant, and care for, this spring. No need to be overwhelmed, we are willing to help you as much as we can, and are excited to share our enthusiasm with you!

For answers to questions you may have, just email or call Christine Barker at [cbbark1989@aol.com](mailto:cbbark1989@aol.com) 265-1384 or me at [peaceinthegarden@aol.com](mailto:peaceinthegarden@aol.com) 967-3409.

*Paula Winslow Co-chair*

*"A garden is a link to the passing seasons." Sheryl London*

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## **Botanical Center Grounds News**

While it is still 2008 as I write this, by the time you read it, we will have said good-bye to 2008 and hello to 2009. If 2009 turns out anything close to 2008 in fantastic new experiences I'm not sure I can handle it. We ended up last year with 10 new faces helping out somewhere outside at some time and I want to say a big thank you to those people as well as a warm welcome to those planning on joining us next spring.

This last year we were a little loose jointed and unorganized at times and didn't get everything done that we wanted to but we got our feet wet and a better idea of the questions we need answers to. I know that I don't have a true understanding yet as to what we can become or where we will end up but the possibilities are endless. If I might use the analogy that I have felt like a child taking my first steps. I got up on my feet and I took a few steps but I also spent a lot of time falling down and wondering just how you manage this walking thing. Last summer when I got elevated from a grunt and groan position to one of organizing MG's into what I now call the BC Outside Gang we kind of needed to hit the ground running and did not have much time to figure out how to walk, let alone run, so there was a lot of stumbling around.

Now with summer/fall gone and winter's snow here, I assure you I will be working on learning how to walk better, maybe not running yet but at least walking better by next spring. With all gardening work outside now over till spring it is time to start making plans. I still want to have a planning meeting this winter sometime but so far every time I pick a date it ends up colliding with something else. So bear with me and we will have at least one and hopefully two before spring work starts. Currently I need to switch hats again and get to work on building 16 - 3' x 6' book cases for a return of the library at the BC. I can be contacted by e-mail [hostahunter@msn.com](mailto:hostahunter@msn.com) or call 967-3394.

*Melvin Visser, Project Leader*

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## **Farmer's Market News**

No Farmer's Market November to April but if you would like to schedule a shift or a presentation for 2009, we'd love to hear from you. 262-4187 [aarongreiner@mchsi.com](mailto:aarongreiner@mchsi.com)

*Aaron Greiner & Sarah Piziala, Project Leaders*

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## Botanical Center Show House News

A happy 2009 to you all!

I am a little tired of winter already, aren't you? We have a cure for that: Spring Ahead 2009 offers FREE classes, talks and workshops at the Botanical Center/ Show House through April 25th. January starts with a series of speakers and videos in the Levitt Room at the Botanical Center. All sessions start at 10 a.m., and are good for MG continuing education hours. If you want, order a picnic lunch from the Riverwalk Cafe, and enjoy it sitting on a bench among green growing things in the Show House:

January 10

10 a.m. Bob Oliver: Historic Villas, Gardens and Vineyards of Italy.

11 a.m. "Formal Gardens" from the Public TV series "Gardens of the World with Audrey Hepburn."

January 17

10 a.m. English-style Gardening in Iowa.

11 a.m. English Gardens video

January 24

10 a.m. Elvin McDonald on the making of the Emmy-award winning Public TV series "Gardens of the World with Audrey Hepburn." A slide talk of still photography from the Netherlands and Java, Indonesia.

11 a.m. "Tulips & Spring Bulbs" and "Tropical Gardens" from the TV series.

January 31

10 a.m. Prairie-Style Landscaping.

11 a.m. Jens Jensen Video

Next month, look for presentations by Deb Wiley and Marcia Leeper: and in March, workshops about building simple garden structures, leaf-casting, and more! And watch for your invitation to our open house at the Show House in early February.

There is no better place to be than the Show House on a cold winter morning!

*Mary Howell-Williams, Project Leader*

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## Plant Sale News

The Plant Sale committee is looking for a person to fill the SIGN committee chair. This person would be responsible for collection information about each of the plant varieties that are sold at the sale, and making signs for customer information. The Discovery Garden committee will be putting together a book with all the plants that they will be displaying in their garden, so most of the information will be acquired from them. Only the remaining varieties information will need to be collected.

If you have any questions please call. Anyone interested in this position please contact me at [gocke@aol.com](mailto:gocke@aol.com) or call 515-967-3832.

*Kathy Gocke, Project Leader*

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## **Demonstration Garden News**

Here's hoping everyone enjoyed their holidays and families. While I don't always enjoy some of the winter weather (it's raining ice right now), I do enjoy winter activities, especially the planning for the upcoming year. To that end, I have scheduled a spring planning meeting for Tuesday, March 3 at 6:30 p.m. at the Urbandale Library in Meeting Room A.

Currently, I am looking for volunteers who have a particular interest in roses, native plants, lilies and clematis. I am also looking for those who may be interested in helping on the Theme Garden. Or, if you would like to give a talk on a particular area, please contact Margaret Spikes at 557-8029 (w) or 984-9064 (h) or by emailing [margaretspikes@wellsfargo.com](mailto:margaretspikes@wellsfargo.com). And if you're not sure, feel free to attend the meeting or just call with questions. In the meantime, stay warm, dry and safe.

*Margaret Spikes, Project Co-chair*

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## **Discovery Garden News**

HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE DISCOVERY GARDEN!!

Now that the sparkle and wrappings of the Holiday Season are behind us, it is time to give some thought to all of the volunteer opportunities that lay ahead of us in 2009.

The Discovery Garden plans to start things out Wednesday, February 11, with their first meeting of 2009. The meeting will begin at 5:30 pm and will be held at the China Moon restaurant in Ankeny.

The staff at China Moon has agreed to put together a dinner buffet for those attending so we will need a head count. Watch "This & That" and look for other emails from the Discovery Garden heads with more information and directions to the restaurant. At the meeting, we will be discussing important dates for Clean-up, Planting Day, Work Nights, and more. We will also discuss the procedure for picking up our plants at the greenhouse, upcoming projects, budget, educational talks, the 2009 State Fair, and any other concerns that arise.

We do need a couple more volunteers (preferably interns who need hours) to help research and organize information for our 2009 Discovery Garden Plant Book. If anyone is interested in helping out with this, please contact Shelley Lande, [budstoblms@msn.com](mailto:budstoblms@msn.com), or by phone, 229-5496 for more information. It is a good way to familiarize yourselves with the many new annuals that will be used in the garden this year. We hope to have the preliminary plant book and plant list on our website by April.

If anyone has any good pictures or articles on the Discovery Garden before 2007, please contact Shelley, Jean, Cheree or Dean. Marnie Stein has been busily working on our historian's book and would appreciate any contributions.

Hope to see many of you this season.

*Shelley Lande, Co-chair*

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## Education Opportunities (in addition to those listed in the BC Show House article!)

**January 15** is the first of your own PCMG winter education classes and your chance to see the XL conference room at the new Extension office in Altoona. Jennifer Welsh, Urban Conservationist from Polk Soil & Water Conservation District, will speak on Rainscaping Iowa - Landscaping for Clean Water. Class starts at 7 and there is plenty of parking but the best seats will go fast.

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Dallas County Master Gardeners would like to invite Master Gardeners in your county to hear Amy Lenning from The Growing Concern, Monday, **January 26**, 2009, 7-8 PM. Her presentation will be held in the Dallas County Extension Office. Amy will be discussing indoor commercial plantings! If they would like to join us, please have them call our office at 515-993-4281 as we have limited seating available. There is no cost for the program.

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**February 7th** is the ISU - Linn County Extension Winter Garden Fair offered at the Kirkwood Center for Continuing Education in Cedar Rapids. Over 50 presentations are included within the two tracks attendees may choose from: Way to Grow, or Plants and Pots. Tuition is \$49 and includes a boxed lunch. For more information, call 319-377-9389 or visit their website at [www.extension.iastate.edu/linn](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/linn).

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Join the Warren County Master Gardeners and Indianola Parks & Recreation for a day filled with door prizes, garden merchandise and great programs at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Think Spring Garden Seminar on Saturday, **February 28**, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Great Hall on the Simpson College campus in Indianola, Iowa. Master Gardeners will earn 4 CE credits for attending this event.

Speaker/Program Information

**Jim Nau:** The Latest, the Greatest and the Unknown Greenhouse & Garden Manager, Ball Horticultural Company West Chicago, Illinois

Jim is the author of two books: the Ball Culture Guide and the Ball Perennial Manual.

**Erika Hodgson:** Rain Gardens

Designer, Perennial Gardens Ankeny, Iowa

Erika graduated from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree in Landscape Architecture and a minor in Horticulture.

**Missy Smith:** Ospreys in Iowa

Naturalist, Warren County Conservation Board

Prior to working with WCCB, Missy was Environmental Education Coordinator in Boone County, seasonal naturalist at Lake Ahquabi, and a program coordinator with an Arizona School District. She is a 2001 graduate of Iowa State University with a degree in Biology.

Tuition: \$40, includes lunch. Pre-registration is required. Deadline is Friday, February 20.

Register through Indianola Parks & Recreation at (515) 961-9420. For complete details, visit <http://www.indianolaparks.com/ThinkSpring.asp>

## Education Opportunities, continued

The Iowa State Horticultural Society presents the "All Iowa Horticulture Exposition" to be held **April 3-4, 2009** at the Ottumwa, Iowa Bridge View Conference Center. One of the largest All Iowa Horticulture Expositions ever, supported by over 20 State of Iowa Horticulture Associations & Organizations and Iowa State University Extension.

The All Iowa Horticulture Expo will feature continuous expert speakers covering a vast number of horticulture topics and a large 30,000 square foot trade show room representing many diverse exhibitors of the horticulture green industry. More information available at <http://www.iowahort.org>

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## Bits & Bytes

What is the best way to store left-over flower and vegetable seeds? PCMG Mary Belieu passes this along: If stored properly, the seeds of many vegetables and flowers will remain viable (alive) for two or three years. Ideal storage conditions are cool and dry. It is generally best to keep the seeds in their original packets. Fold over the ends of open seed packets, then place the surplus seeds in a tightly sealed jar or plastic lidded coffee can. Place one or two tablespoons of powdered milk in a small envelope and place the envelope in the container. The powdered milk will absorb the moisture from the air inside the container and keep the seeds dry. Place the tightly sealed container in the refrigerator or other cool location.

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From Master Gardener Ann Bublitz: I thought it might be good to make the local MGs aware of the new Iowa Food Cooperative that has been formed: [www.iowafood.org](http://www.iowafood.org). This is a group of producers that has just started to allow people to order food from them on a monthly basis. Order cycles open on the first of the month, close on the second Thursday of the month and delivery day is held on the third Thursday of the month. There is a fee to join.

Many of these producers have participated in the DSM Farmers Market in the summer and all of the food and non-food items are from the surrounding area. They don't have the variety of products of a farmers market yet, but an increasing choice. More information, including items available for purchase, is available on their website, [www.iowafood.org](http://www.iowafood.org).

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## Save the Dates for the 2009 Polk County MG Bus Tours!

**One Day Trip:** On May 30th our destination is Kansas City. The highlight of the trip will be a visit to Dave Bird's orchid collection which consists of over 4,000 plants happily growing in a 6,000 square foot cave. As always, our trip will include a stop at a garden center or two, plus more beautiful gardens to visit along the way.

**Two Day Trip:** The trip many of you have been asking for .... 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'll have more details as we get closer to the date of the trip.

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