

Green Thumb

The Newsletter for Polk County Master Gardeners

ISU Polk County Extension, 1625 Adventureland Drive, Altoona, IA 50313

515-957-5760

February 2009

Eddie's Ready!

I don't know about you folks but I am ready for spring. The weather has been a real pain this winter. I have been looking at lots of seed catalogs and planning on what I am going to do in my garden this spring. There is always something to be done.

The steering committee has been working hard to get a budget put in place for this year. This has not been easy as everyone has had to sacrifice this year. This brings me to the idea of fund raisers. I know there are some people thinking about a garage sale. I believe this has been done in the past and, as I understand it, that was a success. If anyone has any ideas on fund raisers please pass them on to the steering committee, we would like to see them. I think a garage sale would be a good fund raiser. *Eddie Cox, PCMG Steering Committee Chair*

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## Botanical Center Grounds News

I shan't lament over the weather, we all know what that has been like as of late, thusly limiting what I have to write about as far as the outside grounds at the Botanical Center. I would, however, like to say thank you to all who have attended one or more of the educational presentations at the Botanical Center on Saturday mornings lately, as well as the presentation put on about urban water conservation and rain gardens by Jennifer Welch the other evening at the Extension Office. No matter how well I know a subject I always seem to end up learning something new at these presentations. It was Jennifer's informative presentation that prompted me to contact Elvin McDonald the next day about our meeting with Jennifer to see what we can do to help promote her ideas and educate visitors at the Botanical Center in water conservation. This resulted in his contacting Dawn Goodrich the Botanical Center Facility Manager on the subject and all are enthused about us setting up a meeting to share ideas on what we are doing and could be doing to help educate people in good urban water conservation projects. This includes such things as green roof buildings, vertical wall plantings, rain gardens and maybe someday even water permeable surfaces. So the bottom line is, that while no physical work is taking place outside, the mental work never stops. Need to converse with me? E-Mail [hostahunter@msn.com](mailto:hostahunter@msn.com) [<mailto:hostahunter@msn.com>] or call 967-3394 I would love to hear from you about any thoughts you have. *Melvin Visser, Botanical Center Outside Coordinator*

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Botanical Center Show House News

Put a spring in your step! Please come to our Open House on Sunday, February 8, from 4 to 6 p.m. The entire Show House will be turned over to Spring. Come and enjoy our new displays, sip some wine and sample some wonderful hors d'oeuvres, and see all your MG friends. Enter through the MG door to the greenhouses and wear your name badges. Hope to see all of you!

Also, remember the Show House when you clean out your garages and garden sheds this spring. We are always looking for new "props": old garden furniture, old wooden tools, ladders, metal buckets, window frames, window boxes, bricks and other paving material, doors, wheelbarrows... if you have been to the Show House, you know what I mean! Contact Mary at mhwphoto@mchsi.com, or 556-3684 if you have anything to share with us.

Our next planning meeting is on Monday, February 2nd, at 6:30 in the Riverwalk Cafe.

If you are interested in being involved in the Show House, especially for our summer and fall change-overs, please come. *Mary Howell-Williams, Project Leader*

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## Garden Tour News

Winter may still have us in her throes, but June is coming! The Polk County Master Gardeners' Garden Tour visits the Ankeny and Saylorville area on June 20. Here's a sampling of what's in store.

### A Little Bit of Many Things

When a neighbor commented on her new "stereo system," Master Gardener Cari Spear explained that the chorus of frogs and birds was real - nature flocking to the water features in her backyard. The trickle and burble of pond, stream, and waterfall complement her garden's opus. The lilies and lotuses in the pond have plenty of company - orchids in the trees, hostas in the shade, roses in the sun, clematis on the trellis. What began as a suburban lawn anchored by two lone trees is now a diverse landscape dotted with virburnum, lilac yew, hydrangea, and tree peonies, as well as crab apple, swamp oak, river birch, ash, maple, spruce, and service berry trees. Stroll through six berms of perennials and an ever-changing container garden while watching for interesting statuary and an abstract trellis.

### A Garden Expedition

Sunlit daisies, clematis, and salvia beckon visitors to begin exploring the evolving work of Master Gardener Carol Nading. Beyond the sunny plot and past the hosta garden beneath a 75-foot pine, this journey continues through poolside tropics of hibiscus, mandevilla, potted palms, and assorted annuals and alongside a woodland oasis of bleeding heart, lily of the valley, sedum, Japanese maple, and tiger eye sumac.

Look for Francophile touches of fleur-de-lis finials, a Parisian window box, a French-door garden gate, and even an Eiffel Tower.

Voyage onward and find yourself overlooking the Des Moines River Valley, with an enhanced view from the seat of a giant tree swing crafted from a fallen 50-foot pine. An inviting glider and bistro set call from a front porch cocooned in hydrangea, rhododendron, hosta, ferns, heuchera, spiderwort, and cascading impatiens - a shady respite often visited at dusk by a curious owl.

Save the Date!

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 Co-chair.*

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## Enabling Garden News

While January zipped by, it sure does seem like the winter drags on! The good news is that it won't be long before we are back out there, at it in our gardens again.

We are having a meeting at the Extension Office on Thursday, February 19 with a social at 5:30, meeting to start at 6:00pm. Please come and join us for treats as we discuss our preparations for our annual Arbor Day Celebration, April 25th. If you are interested in volunteering at the Enabling Garden, we would love to have you help plant, weed and water. If you want to try out your design flair, we have several open areas. Come share your passion of gardening with us.

For answers to questions you may have, just email or call Christine Barker at [cbbark1989@aol.com](mailto:cbbark1989@aol.com), 265-1384 or Paula at [peaceinthegarden@aol.com](mailto:peaceinthegarden@aol.com), 967-3409. Happy New Year to all the wonderful Master Gardeners and interns!

*Christine Barker, Enabling Garden Co-Chair*

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## Greenhouse News

We are opening the Greenhouse on February 7th. The first three (3) work sessions will be for interns only. Those dates will be February 7th, 11th and 14th. Starting the 18th we want all Master Gardeners to come to the greenhouse. The greenhouse committee and myself are looking forward to seeing everyone. *Eddie Cox, Project Leader*

## Demonstration Garden News

We are making great progress on our long term plans. Our 4 subcommittees and their members are doing a great job. I am especially grateful to Kent Zarley for his continued guidance and creativity in the master plan. Our Design committee has been working hard to identify options for over 15 components of the garden. It is great to see the different inputs. Our Operations committee is determining a timeline and working with the Budget and Design committee to identify priorities of which items can be changed based on varying factors. Our Communications committee is working on labeling standards as well as a website version. The committees meet at varying times but anyone is welcome to join. In particular, there are some openings on the Design Committee. Contact Larry Wilson ([ljdilwilson@q.com](mailto:ljdilwilson@q.com)) if you are interested.

We are also looking for someone to serve as a liaison between the various supporting entities (Urbandale Schools/Valerius Elementary and City of Urbandale). We would like to increase our communications and identify opportunities between the groups. Please contact Margaret for more information.

Mark your calendars! I have scheduled a spring planning meeting for Tuesday, March 3 at 6:30 p.m. at the Urbandale Library in Meeting Room A. We will be talking about the details for the long term plans and open areas. I am looking for volunteers who have a particular interest in roses, native plants and lilies. I am also looking for those who may be interested in helping on the Theme Garden. Please contact Margaret Spikes at 557-8029 (w) or 984-9064 (h) or by emailing [margaretspikes@wellsfargo.com](mailto:margaretspikes@wellsfargo.com). *Margaret Spikes, Project Co-chair*

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Farmers Market News

In only three short months it will be time again for the Polk County Master Gardener's booth at the Downtown Farmer's Market. We are currently in the initial planning stages and are looking for volunteers. We're taking names and emails of anyone interested in volunteering and will contact them with a list of topics and dates for the booth. If you're interested in volunteering, please send us an email or give us a call.

Also, if you're an expert in a specific area and would like to host a topic, please let us know. We're always looking for new and great ideas that Master Gardener's would like to share (email to aarongreiner@mchsi.com or phone 262-4187). Watch the Green Thumb for topic and date updates. *Aaron and Sarah, Project Leaders*

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## Discovery Garden News

Seems almost impossible that January is over and February is here. The greenhouse is getting ready to open and gardening season is just around the corner. I'm sure everyone is just as anxious as I am to get started after this long, cold winter.

At the Discovery Garden, we are in the process of trying to put together our summer educational talks, prioritize our projects for the coming year and look ahead to a gardening season full of surprises, accomplishments, and most of all enjoyment in working with fellow Master Gardeners toward a common goal. We are truly blessed to have such a great group of volunteers.

To help things along, we will be meeting at the China Moon restaurant in Ankeny on February 11 at 5:30 pm for a buffet dinner (cost approximately \$10/person). After dinner we will discuss some of this year's changes to the Discovery Garden, projects for the coming year, important dates to remember, ideas we may have to make the garden the best yet and of course anything for the good of the order. Family/spouses/significant others, as always, are also invited to come to the meal and enjoy the company of the other volunteers and may either stay or leave before the meeting. If you are planning on coming and haven't already signed up, please do so as soon as possible so we can get a head count to the restaurant. You may sign up by emailing or calling Shelley Lande, [budstoblMrs@msn.com](mailto:budstoblMrs@msn.com), 229-5496. Agendas will be sent out approximately one week prior to the meeting to help us organize our thoughts and make the meeting flow a little smoother. We hope to see as many of you as possible and look forward to working with all of you in the coming year.

*Shelley Lande, Co-chair, Iowa State Fair Discovery Garden*

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Education Opportunities

"Get a Jump on Spring" Workshop. ISU Polk County Extension will be offering a series of horticultural classes on Saturday, March 28 from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. to Master Gardeners as well as residents of Polk County. You will have an opportunity to take one class in the a.m. and one class in the p.m. Classes will include presentations by Master Gardeners as well as professionals. Please keep this date open and watch for a flyer on all the classes available. There will be a fee for each session.

Not only will you have a chance to learn but you will also be able to create/build a garden art project. Topics will include vegetable gardening, vertical gardening, composts - from the simple to build your own, water features - big and small, organic gardening and pest management and landscape designers to assist you in selecting plant materials based on soil conditions, sun/shade and color. Please make it a priority to support horticultural education at ISU Extension. Any questions, contact vhunnell@iastate.edu or leave a message at 957-5762.

Thursday February 19, 2009 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Composting X 2

Speaker: Diana Ronk, Polk County Master Gardener Worms can help you create great compost year round. They're a low-maintenance, high-reward gardening tool that reduces our land-fill needs and creates wonderful additives for our gardens.

Speaker: Bruce Travis , Polk County Master Gardener Bruce was instrumental in selecting and using three different styles of commercially built composters at PCMG Demonstration and Enabling gardens. He'll inform us on the process and this year's results.

Program held at the Iowa State University Extension Office, 1625 Adventureland Dr., Suite A, Altoona, IA 50009
You can report two hours of education credit (CEUs) for each class you attend. Remember travel time is volunteer time. All programs are free of charge for Polk County Master Gardeners, Master Gardener interns, and any Master Gardener seeking to recertify. For questions about these classes or any other Master Gardener training, please call 957-5761

For those of you who don't usually carry cash, please be aware that we will be collecting a free will donation this evening. It will be given to the Polk County Extension office as thanks for allowing us to use the facility.

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### Registration is now open for the May 30 bus tour!

Registration is officially open for the May bus tour to Kansas City. Seats are filling up fast, so you will want to get your registration and payment to Jeri McGinnis as soon as possible. Please contact Jeri with questions at [jsmcginnis@netins.net](mailto:jsmcginnis@netins.net) or by phone at 515-314-1326. The registration form is available on the Polk County MG website. (Or if you don't have internet access, you can ask Mary to print one at the Extension Office.)

Several people have asked us to hold a spot for them on the August 1st and 2nd trip to northeast Iowa. Please contact Jeri McGinnis to add your name to the list. On that trip we will 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).

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