



# AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

April 2004

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## GREAT IDEAS TO MAKE GARDENING EASIER

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### FRESH AND HOME GROWN

Green beans, radishes, and acorn squash are Dave Sample's favorite vegetables – and he hopes they're homegrown soon. Dave lost the use of the right side of his body due to a stroke in 1998. Since then he's been relearning how to do things again and usually learning how to do them a little differently – including gardening.

Because Dave uses a wheelchair, he has realized that raised garden beds make gardening possible. Raised garden beds are just that: soil and plants are brought up to a comfortable height for working. Currently, the only raised bed the Samples have is one for flowers next to their home, which was there prior to Dave's stroke. Dave helps his wife with the flowers on occasion, but he'd rather be growing fresh vegetables.

Another difference is the tool that Chuck Larson (Easter Seals Rural Solutions) helped

create. The tool is a crutch that rests against the back of Dave's arm. It can extend four to six feet and Dave has the option of attaching a rake, hoe, or shovel to the end of it. Dave knows that he can grow fresh vegetables, now all he needs is to get more raised beds made!

Other changes in his life and routine since his stroke are numerous. Dave still mows the lawn, just differently. Now his wife helps him transfer onto the riding mower and they use two-way radios to communicate if he needs assistance. Instead of going to work at the school, like he did before, he does the housework, laundry, and dishes while his wife does her work from a home office. He has become a grandparent and the family cook. He's relearning how to read, learning how to write with his left hand, trying to adjust to hunting with a new gadget his friends helped make, and continues to search for wild mushrooms.

Dave says that his friends and neighbors have been generous with their talents in the times that he's needed support. In fact, he acknowledged, "The outpouring of people helping me has really been something else." (EH)

### ENABLING GARDENS

A new barrier free garden is being built right here in Iowa, thanks to an idea from a

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couple of ISU Extension Master Gardeners, Paula Winslow and Michelle McManus, and the help of a group of Polk County Master Gardeners. Fundraising for *The Enabling Garden of Altoona*, “Where Disabilities Become Abilities” was started in 2002. The majority of construction was done in 2003 and sidewalks will be added in time for summer 2004.

In *The Enabling Garden of Altoona*, gardeners will be able to care for plants without bending, stooping, or reaching in *raised garden beds and containers*. Maneuvering in the garden will be easier due to *pathways that are wide, level, and hard-surfaced*. *Vertical gardening* makes the most of the growing space and is more convenient for people with low vision. Other noteworthy features are hanging baskets, raised lawns, plants for the senses, a butterfly garden, and native prairie flowers. These features are intended to make the garden a destination for all garden enthusiasts, regardless of age or ability.

*The Enabling Garden of Altoona* is a good place to gather ideas to create your own barrier free garden. Visit the garden, located off the Prairie Heritage Trail near 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South and 8<sup>th</sup> Street in Altoona, or call ISU Extension Master Gardeners Paula Winslow at 515-967-3409 or Michelle McManus at 515-967-4931 for more information. (EH)

### WHAT ARE MASTER GARDENERS?

Master Gardeners are people who are interested, educated, and trained in horticulture topics through ISU Extension. In exchange for the training they receive, the Master Gardeners help others by volunteering their time and services to their communities. Through the Master Gardener program, participants increase their personal horticulture knowledge, share information, plan projects, tour gardens, and have fun.

According to *The Extension Connection: 2003 Annual Report Edition*,

“Approximately 2,000 active Master Gardeners throughout Iowa contributed more than 67,000 hours of volunteer educational service to their communities.” Master Gardeners are available to answer your questions, too. Call your local Extension office to find a Master Gardener in your area.

If you would like to become a Master Gardener yourself, contact your local extension office or visit their website online at <http://mastergardener.hort.iastate.edu/> for more information. (EH)

### GARDENING RESOURCES

**Missouri AgrAbility Project**, through “Gardens for Everybody,” has information on container gardening, raised beds, pathways, trellis, health and safety, tools, and more. Contact the Missouri AgrAbility Project, University of Missouri-Columbia, at 1-800-995-8503 or [www.fse.missouri.edu/Agrability/new/](http://www.fse.missouri.edu/Agrability/new/)

The **Chicago Botanical Garden** is an overwhelming gardening exhibit on 385 acres in Glencoe, Illinois (near Chicago). The Buehler Enabling Garden contains an 11,000 square foot demonstration area on barrier free gardening. Call (847) 835-5440 or visit online at [www.chicago-botanic.org](http://www.chicago-botanic.org)

### American Horticulture Therapy

**Association** is a national organization committed to advancing the practice of horticulture as therapy to improve human well-being. For more information, contact them at 1-800-634-1603 or [www.ahta.org/](http://www.ahta.org/)

**ISU Extension** has numerous gardening publications, including tips on flowers, vegetables, herbs, houseplants, lawns, shrubs, and trees. In addition, there’s also information on growing organic, pest and

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insect management, controlling weeds, and soil quality. If you do not have access to the Internet, you can ask for publications at your local extension office. Extension publications are available online at [www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs/)

The **ISU Hortline** provides assistance to home gardeners on lawn, garden, and ornamental questions. Hours are Monday through Friday from 10 am to 12 pm and from 1 to 4:30 pm. Call 515-294-3108 or e-mail your questions to [hortline@iastate.edu](mailto:hortline@iastate.edu).

### ABOUT TRANSPORTATION

Carmen Schacht decided to offer her perspectives on independence, isolation, and transportation for her column as part of a series. Last month she wrote about problems she had with her van and this month she finishes the series by sharing her biggest transportation fear. (EH)

### CARM'S COMMENTS

I have always feared one thing with an accessible vehicle: having an accident. This past winter, my fears were realized. We had been to a meeting in New Hampton, came home, and the highways were fine. However, our gravel road proved to be a different story. It had drizzled all afternoon and there was just enough snow on it, which turned to ice and was very slippery ice. The van fishtailed and then went into an all-over-the-road skid. We were going north and ended up in the ditch on the opposite side of the road going south. We did not turn over nor did we get hurt (except for my pride), but as the van went into the ditch, it hit the side. This caused the windows to shatter and damaged the entire side of the van.

Luckily, neighbors were right behind us and called 911. I had to stay in the van until it was pulled from the ditch. Then I could get out and transfer to Everett's minivan and go

home. The van was laid up for quite some time getting repairs because the side of the van had to be replaced. The lift still worked and everything else worked fine, too. I just hope no one else has an experience like this. It was scary! (CS)

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### **Freewheeler's Friends and Family**

Saturday, June 5<sup>th</sup> 1:00 pm  
Pizza Ranch, Conrad, IA (CS)

#### **AgrAbility Family Fun Fest**

Do you want to...

- meet people like you and their families from across Iowa?
- mingle with AgrAbility staff?
- gather information on available resources?
- tour accessible kitchen and bathroom exhibits?
- try out universal design gadgets?
- learn how to simplify your life?
- have fun!

Then join us!

*Saturday, June 26, 2004*

9:30 am - 3:00 pm

Lon & Sandy Strum's Farm

Rural Roland, Iowa

Details will be mailed to you in early May!  
(EH)

### NEWSLETTER THOUGHTS

*Mental Health Focus* will be the theme of the June 2004 newsletter. Please call or e-mail me with your thoughts. I would be happy to write your remarks, suggestions, and experiences for others to learn from or be encouraged by in the upcoming Chit Chat Newsletter! My phone number is 515-294-8522 or send me an e-mail at [chaafke@iastate.edu](mailto:chaafke@iastate.edu). (EH)

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IOWA AGRABILITY - A joint effort of ISU Extension and the Rural Solutions Program of Easter Seals Iowa. The program can help farm family members with a disability stay in farming.

This newsletter from the Iowa AgrAbility Project will be sent monthly to AgrAbility families and other interested individuals. Please send comments and suggestions to:

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Web site: [www.extension.iastate.edu/agrability/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agrability/)

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### Iowa AgrAbility Project

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