

## Cass Master Gardeners find ways to bloom where they grow

There's renewed interest in home gardening and David Williams, Atlantic business owner and past graduate of Iowa State University Extension's *Master Gardener* program, says that interest is only partly due to the tough economic times some lowans are facing. "Besides the opportunity to save a little money, I think some people just like to know what's going in their mouth and where it came from. Others are in it for the fun, relaxation and beauty of it," Williams said.

Williams was an early graduate of the Master Gardener program in Cass County, completing the course in 1999. In 2002, he purchased the venerable Malone Garden Center in Atlantic, and four years later expanded it into a larger, vacated facility, giving the business its current name, *David's Home Garden Center*.

Williams and 15-20 other Master Gardener graduates gather each month to stay abreast of the latest gardening trends and also organize a variety of community service projects. One of the oldest is the Atlantic Spring Garden Show. Iowa Western Community College started the event in 1999 and continues to co-sponsor it along with Extension and several other local organizations.

The show, held each April, has grown to attract more than 250-300 people annually. This year's event included break-out sessions on about two dozen topics, ranging from backyard ponds and butterfly gardens to tips for growing and preserving the bounty from your own, homegrown "pantry garden."



Local Master Gardeners also initiated a "Discovery Garden" on grounds of the Cass County Community Center in Atlantic, where ISU Extension is housed. The garden is redesigned each spring with new themes and colors and features the latest in



edible, medicinal and herbal varieties along with native grasses and other landscape plants. It's a popular gathering spot throughout the growing season for thousands of visitors to the Community Center and the Cass County Fair. In August, 2007, it was chosen as the site for a press conference by then candidate, Barrack Obama, during his presidential campaign.



"Master Gardener was just the beginning for many of us. What's really fun is continuing to meet on a regular basis to keep up with the latest trends and techniques; then sharing that information with others around the community."

- David Williams, Cass County Master Gardener

For more information about this and other Iowa State University Extension programs, contact Steve Olsen, Cass County Extension Education Director, 712.243.1132, [swolsen@iastate.edu](mailto:swolsen@iastate.edu).

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