



Allamakee County Master Gardener Seeds of Wisdom

Iowa State University Extension — June 2022

Allamakee County Master Gardener Meeting

Thursday, June 23, 2022

Waukon City Park

Sweeney Shelter

6:00 p.m.

Hostess: Jane Meyer

Roll Call: Name your favorite gardening tool

Secretary's Minutes: April minutes published in this newsletter

Treasurer's Report:

- a. Motion to pay any bills

Old Business:

Plant sale update and suggestions for next year

By-laws

New Business:

Sign up for helping with Allamakee County Fair

Plant swap

Next Meeting: August 25, 2022, Waukon Wellness Center at 7 p.m.

Hostesses: Kayla Bjerke and Susan Cahoon

RSVP NOTICE:

PLEASE LET DON KNOW BY JUNE 17 THE NUMBER FROM YOUR FAMILY THAT WILL BE ATTENDING THE JUNE PICNIC SO HE CAN PLAN ON THE AMOUNT OF MEAT NEEDED.

CALL: 563-568-1714 OR

E-MAIL: HALER@ACEGROUP.CC

Farmers Markets

Farmers Market opportunities that are happening in Allamakee County!

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

SUPPORTING A VIBRANT LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

www.driftlessgrown.com

Waukon Farmers Market
Mondays, 3:30-6:00pm,
County Fairgrounds

Lansing Farmers Market
1st & 3rd Thursdays, 5:00-8:00pm,
Lansing City Park

Postville Farmers Market
Thursdays, 3:00-6:00pm,
NE Iowa RC&D

New Albin Farmers Market
Fridays, 3:00-6:00pm, City Porch

Harpers Ferry Farmers Market
Fridays, 5:00-7:00pm,
Church Parking Lot

Iowa Food Hub Online Market
Weekly Drop-site in Waukon & Postville
www.iowafoodhub.com

Don't wait to report your Master Gardener volunteer and continuing education hours for the year. Log in to the Volunteer Reporting System here:

<http://mastergardenerhours.hort.iastate.edu/>

Our Allamakee County webpage has been updated into a NEW format! The new website just went LIVE in April. We have been updating the county information into the new page. IF you don't see something that you are looking for, please reach out to the office.

~Thank you for your patience as we continue the transition.

Secretary's Notes – April

April 28, 2022 Time: 7:00 PM Location: Waukon Wellness Center The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM by Clara Lensing. Twelve members answered the roll call of their favorite spring flower. Minutes of the February meeting were reviewed. There were two corrections to the minutes. With the agreed corrections a motion to approve was made by Mary Trebbien and second. There were 12 ayes and 0 nays. The motion carried. Carroll Schreiber gave the treasurer's report. A discussion was held regarding payment to those who drove to recent trainings. A motion was made by Mary Trebbien and second by Diane Nolting to pay Judy Egeland for driving members to training in Independence and Don Haler for driving members to training in Caledonia. There were 12 ayes and 0 nays. The motion carried. A conversation was had regarding donating to the new building at the Allamakee County Fairgrounds. A motion was made by Cici Mueller and second by Mary Engstrom to donate to the new building on the fairgrounds. The motion carried with 12 ayes and 0 nays. The plant sale with Waukon FFA is approaching. FFA is selling flowers/baskets on May 7. Clara and Judy will attend that sale for sale of cooler temp vegetables. The following weekend, May 14, FFA, with any remaining flowers along with the Master Gardeners, will be at the Allamakee Fairgrounds Pavilion from 8:00 AM-12:00 PM for the sale of vegetables, etc. Mary Engstrom spoke on the plant sale with a reminder that cleaning of the pavilion is to start at 9:00 AM on Friday, May 13. Judy Egeland spoke on how full the FFA flowers were looking a few weeks before the sale and the plants were pinched and ready for the sale. Advertising was brought up with Kayla Bjerke working with Jessica O'Connor on the printing of the posters to deliver to the towns in Allamakee County along with publishing in the newspaper and shoppers and an ad through the radio station. A conversation was had regarding the pricing for single packs and 4-packs.. Any plants brought in by members need to have a money amount on them. It was discussed what amount of start-up cash is needed for the plant sale. A motion was made by Mary Engstrom to issue a check to Carroll Schreiber for start-up cash for the plant sale. The motion was second by Susan Cahoon. With 12 ayes and 0 nays the motion carried. A motion was made by Judy Egeland and second by Mary Engstrom to approve to collect all funds at the FFA and MG Plant Sale on May 14, 2022 and take them to the Extension Office. The Extension Office will deposit the funds in their account and write a check to Waukon FFA for their share of the sales. The remaining funds will be transferred to the Master Gardener account line. With 12 ayes and 0 nays the motion was carried. Clara shared with the group concerns about jumping worms and upcoming plant sales referencing her article in the newsletter. Suggestions of checking over plants to ensure no "friends" are attached and removing soil from the roots were mentioned. Kayla Bjerke has fulfilled all of the Master Gardener requirements. A motion to approve to pay for half of her Master Gardener Training was made by Mary Engstrom and second by Cici Mueller. The motion carried with 12 ayes and 0 nays. A discussion was started regarding returning to the by-laws now that covid is no longer as much of an issue. A motion that a complete copy of the Allamakee Master Gardener bylaws be mailed to each member and that we return to operating by the bylaws was made by Mary Trebbien. Phyllis Baker second the motion. The motion carried with 12 ayes and 0 nays. Judy Egeland gave a presentation on how she propagates plant cuttings. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mary Engstrom and second by Cici Mueller. The motion carried with 12 ayes and 0 nays. Thank you to hostesses Mary Trebbien and Diane Nolting. The next meeting will be the potluck at 6:00 PM at the Waukon Park Sweeney Shelter. Hostess is Jane Meyer

Clara's Clippings – President, Clara Lensing

Thank you to Mary Engstrom for heading up the plant sale. I was not able to be there on Saturday, but heard it was successful. Thank you to all who helped with this endeavor. Mary will update us at our June meeting.

Recently, I corresponded with McKayla Rethamel, the fairboard secretary. They would like us, again this year, to work with the exhibits in the open class building. At the June picnic, we will have sign-up sheets for helping at the fair. We will need help with cleaning the building the Saturday before (July 16), entering exhibits on Tuesday and Wednesday (July 19 and 20), judging and exhibit display on Thursday (July 21), and Sunday (July 24) clean-up. We will not be doing any "guard duty" in the building. Many hands make light work.

Jane Meyer is hosting the 2022 Master Gardener picnic at the Sweeney Shelter at the Waukon City Park. All members and spouses are invited. The meat and lemonade will be provided. We are asking that everyone bring their own table service. Please bring a dish to share. We will plan to eat at 6:00 PM with a meeting following.

"The philosopher who said that work well done never needs doing over never weeded a garden." Ray D. Eversen

Care For Blooming Hanging Baskets

Did you receive a hanging basket for Mother's Day? Many mothers (and others) will decorate their porches, decks, and other outdoor areas with hanging baskets this gardening season. Whether your hanging basket has just one or many blooming plants, care is required for best blooms throughout the growing season. Below are some tips for growing and maintaining hanging baskets.

Watering Hanging baskets often contain several closely spaced small plants and their roots grow quickly in the potting mix. Typical potting mixes are light and well-drained. With a well drained soil mix and an abundance of crowded and thirsty roots, frequent watering is necessary, especially during the summer. When the small plants have grown and established roots, check baskets daily for water needs. On hot sunny days it may be necessary to water more than once a day. When watering hanging baskets, be sure to water them until water runs out the bottom of the container. This ensures that all the roots have access to plenty of moisture. Try not to let the soil dry out completely. Not only will this cause the plant to wilt, it makes it more difficult to water. If the soil becomes too dry, it will separate from the side of the container. In this instance, remove the basket from its location so that you can place the basket in a tub of water for a couple of hours. This forces water to be absorbed slowly from the bottom of the container. Do not keep the basket in the tub of water for long periods as this practice may increase root rot.

Fertilization Plants in hanging baskets often require frequent fertilization. Water soluble fertilizers or slow release granular fertilizers may be used. Ideally, complete fertilizers with a 1:2:1 ratio of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium will keep plants healthy and blooming well. Fertilizers that are high in nitrogen should be avoided as they cause excessive vegetative growth at the expense of flowers. Always remember to read and follow the label directions carefully to apply appropriate amounts of fertilizer.

Deadheading Many annual species require regular deadheading to keep plants in bloom throughout the season. Deadheading is the removal of dead or dying flowers. This prevents seed from forming, and can ultimately lead to more flowers. Generally speaking, larger blooming plants like petunia and geranium require deadheading for continual blooms. Smaller blooming plants like lobelia and sweet alyssum are generally "self-cleaning" – meaning deadheading is not necessary. Regardless, inspect plants as you water and remove spent flowers, if possible. This will keep plants fresh looking and blooming throughout summer.

Tips for Starting Your Own Hanging Baskets First, start with a good, well-drained, potting mix. The best mixes for hanging baskets do not contain garden soil. Instead, these soilless mixes are made up of sphagnum peat moss, vermiculite, and perlite. Slow release fertilizers may be included in a purchased mix or can be added to the mix prior to planting. This will insure that the plants receive regular – low-doses of nutrients throughout the summer. Water-absorbing crystals are another additive that may be present in a purchased mix or that can be purchased and added separately. These crystals, while expensive, will absorb large quantities of water and help keep the soil moist between watering.

Plants for Hanging Baskets Plants with full or trailing habits tend to be preferred for hanging baskets. Yet, don't let that stop you from trying something else in a hanging basket – you might be surprised at how well it will perform! Like any plant, matching the right plant with the site is essential. Shade loving plants will suffer in full sun, and sun-loving plants bloom poorly in shade. Below is a brief listing of commonly available plant species suitable for hanging baskets in sunny or shady sites.

To read the entirety of this article go to: [Care for Blooming Hanging Baskets | Horticulture and Home Pest News \(iastate.edu\)](#)



Hanging Basket Ideas

Grow strawberries as part of your hanging baskets. There's no reason at all why you shouldn't plant edible crops at eye-level. Because of their trailing habit, strawberries are ideal for hanging basket ideas, and will be decorative as well as tasty.

The trick is to select plant varieties that produce small berries and are suited to the job. You'll also get to enjoy their flowers first before the vibrant red fruit.

Plant up unusual containers. Think outside the box when it comes to your hanging basket ideas. There's no reason why you can't use any kind of container you like, so long as you have a means of hanging it up.

Try recycling your baked bean tins or galvanised buckets (just make sure there are some drainage holes so your plants don't become waterlogged). Old tea pots, watering cans, fruit baskets and biscuit tins can all be turned into quirky hanging containers, provided you have a solid hook or chain to take the combined weight of the compost, plants and container.

Not only is it an eco-friendly option, but it's also good if you're looking for budget garden ideas.

How to Freeze and Store Rhubarb

Rhubarb season is short, but you can use the vegetable year-round if you follow our freezing and storage advice.

A delicious and underutilized vegetable, rhubarb is at its peak from April until June. Also known as pieplant, it has a tart flavor and bright color. While its leaves are poisonous, the stalks are safe to eat and are quite tasty when cooked with a sweetener, making them a great addition to a number of desserts. You can enjoy the vegetable for months to come despite its short harvesting period by freezing and storing them properly.

Prepare to Freeze and Store Rhubarb

The easiest way to store rhubarb so you can enjoy it when it's no longer in season is to freeze it—it's a simple and straightforward process. Begin by cutting stalks into one-inch pieces; lay them flat on a parchment-lined baking pan. Simply freeze them until they are firm to the touch, which will take a few hours. Then, place them in freezer bags and store them in the freezer for up to a year.

How to Use Frozen Rhubarb

Use frozen rhubarb the same way as fresh—in sauces, pies, and crumbles. They go well with fruits like strawberries for a lip-smacking Rhubarb Crumb Bars dessert and are a downright delight when used in our showstopping Rosy Rhubarb-Meringue Cake. Or make any classic piece of cheesecake or even a piece of toast a rhubarb-enhanced treat with our Rhubarb Compote. No matter which recipe you choose, rhubarb is a lovely springtime flavor that will add a little extra something to your next soirée.

Botany Beginners— Managing Prairie Strips

The Tallgrass Prairie Center will offer five one-hour webinars and one in-person field day focusing on the native plants and weeds of prairie strips. This course is designed for certified crop consultants, conservation professionals, farm managers, farmers, and landowners. It should be helpful to anyone involved in planting or managing CRP acreage that uses native prairie plants, such as the Prairie Strips practice (CP-43). Plant ID skills are essential to monitor establishment success and recognize troublesome invaders before they become too numerous to combat. Timely evaluation will simplify management decisions and improve the overall performance of these conservation practices.

Learn more about this opportunity on their website <https://tallgrassprairiecenter.org/botany-beginners-managing-prairie-strips>

New Gardening Podcast Available

Now you can listen to your favorite gardening experts from the popular “Horticulture Friday” segment each week on Iowa Public Radio’s *Talk of Iowa* any time! Iowa Public Radio has launched a new garden podcast, “Garden Variety.”

The podcast is a partnership between Iowa Public Radio and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. In each episode you hear from horticulturists, foresters, entomologists, and other gardening experts. Gardeners in Iowa and across the Midwest can learn about vegetable gardens, lawns, native plants, trees, and more. Garden Variety is the podcast for all the things you'd like to grow or grow better. The podcast can be found on Spotify, Stitcher, Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts, the NPR One app or anywhere you get your podcasts as well as at this website: <https://www.iowapublicradio.org/podcast/garden-variety>

Sign up for the Garden Variety newsletter and learn even more! In each issue you'll learn about gardening and all things horticulture, celebrate successes (and sometimes lessons learned) in the garden, share favorite recipes, and answers to popular questions. To sign up for the newsletter, visit this website: <https://www.iowapublicradio.org/garden-variety-sign-up-isu>

*As a reminder, listening to podcasts does not count for continuing education credits. This podcast is purely for entertainment.

“What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have never been discovered.” Ralph Waldo Emerson



“You can bury any number of headaches in a garden.” Charles Barnard

Cook's Nook

Rhubarb Oat Muffins –Pat Meeter

Dry ingredients:

2 1/2 cups flour:
1 1/4 cups packed brown sugar
1 cup old fashioned oats
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt
1 tsp cinnamon

Wet ingredients:

1 cup buttermilk or sour milk
using 1 tsp lemon juice plus
1 cup milk
1 tsp vanilla
1/2 cup vegetable oil

Combine wet and stir into dry.

Add 2 cups chopped rhubarb.

Fill sprayed muffin cups 1/2 full to make 24 muffins or 3/4 full to make 19 muffins.

Sprinkle with the following topping: 1/4 cup cold butter, 1/4 cup flour, 1/4 cup old fashioned oats, 2 Tbsp brown sugar, 1 tsp cinnamon.

Bake at 350 degrees for 20-25 minutes. Cool in pan 10 minutes.

Rhubarb Dump Cake

This recipe could not be easier to make. It turns out more like a crisp than a cake but is heavenly with rhubarb.

Ingredients:

- 4 cups fresh or frozen rhubarb, chopped
- 1 scant cup white sugar
- 1 package yellow cake mix
- 1 cup water
- 1/3 cup butter, melted

Cooking spray

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350F. Spray a 9x13" pan with cooking spray.
2. Add the rhubarb and spread out evenly on the bottom of the pan.
3. Sprinkle over the sugar followed by the cake mix.
4. Pour over the water and melted butter evenly. DO NOT MIX!

Bake for 45 min. until bubbling and the rhubarb is tender and the top is slightly browned.

Spring Produce— Spend Smart. Eat Smart

Each spring I love watching the plants pop up out of the ground. Some days I feel like I can see the plants growing in my yard. Now that we are in April, more and more fresh spring produce is popping up in the stores and in gardens.

Buying fruits and vegetables that are in season gets you the tastiest produce for the least cost. Here are some fruits and vegetables that are in season in the spring:

- **Asparagus** – snap off the woody ends and grill, steam, or roast.
- **Broccoli** – cut into florets and eat raw, steam, or roast.
- **Rhubarb** – eat only the reddish stalk; find out more on the [AnswerLine Blog](#).
- **Snow peas** – eat raw or add to stir-fry.
- **Spinach** – eat in a salad, top off a sandwich, or add to a smoothie.
- **Strawberries** – eat on their own or as a topping to your favorite dessert.

I hope you get to enjoy some fresh spring produce this week!

June Garden Tips

June is a great season for gardeners, and though much of the early season planting is already finished by June 1, there is much more care a garden needs throughout the month to have the best results for top produce, pungent herbs, and the most beautiful blooms.

In the garden, June is the time to...

- **Deadhead Blooms** Trim off spent blooms from annual flowers to encourage additional blooming and extend their growing season.
- **Trim Bulbs** Once spring blooms have finished flowering and the foliage is completely brown, trim the foliage to make room for summer flowers and to keep beds looking neat.
- **Prune Flowering Shrubs** After spring flowering shrubs have stopped blooming, prune them appropriately to keep their desired shape.
- **Adjust Watering** As spring rains taper off and summer temperatures heat up, adjust watering schedules as needed. Soaker hoses are ideal for beds and gardens, and lawns should be watered deeply but less frequently to encourage strong root growth.
- **Plant Warm Season Crops** Fruits and vegetables that require warm soil are best planted in June, such as corn, pumpkins, beans, squash, and cucumbers.
- **Deepen Mulch** Add additional mulch to gardens and flowerbeds to conserve water and minimize weed growth. Grass clippings are a good, inexpensive option.
- **Divide Perennials** If perennial plants are becoming too large or need better control, they can be best divided in June and transplanted to new locations. Now is also a great time to add new perennials to the yard.
- **Harvest Spring Produce** Cool season fruits and vegetables will be nearly spent in June, but there is time for one last harvest of strawberries, radishes, lettuce, and spinach.
- **Thin Seedlings** Before new crops get too dense, thin rows and beds to give them appropriate room for robust growth. Thinning blossoms and early fruits on trees will encourage larger produce instead of stunted crops.
- **Keep Weeding** Weeding is a never-ending task, and it is important to keep up on the chore in June when the garden is still getting a strong foothold. Regular weeding now will help crops get a good, sturdy start for better results in autumn.
- **Stake Plants** As new crops get taller, loosely stake thin or floppy plants to keep them from tipping and breaking. June is also the best time to begin training vines and climbing plants to keep them under control.
- **Watch for Pests** June is when pests come out in force, including slugs, aphids, and a variety of funguses and diseases. Watch for these pests carefully, and take steps to eradicate problems before they grow out of control.
- **Attract Bats and Birds** Nature can provide natural pest control for gardeners who attract bats and birds to their garden. Put up a bat house, add a bird feeder, and take other easy steps to bring wildlife to the yard and let them feast on garden insects.

While June may not be the biggest season for planting, there are plenty of garden chores that need attending to and will keep any gardener busy throughout the month.



“Gardeners wanted...must look good bending over!” Anon.

“I don’t know whether nice people tend to grow roses or if growing roses makes people nice.” Roland A. Browne.

Have you grown English Cucumbers along with regular cucumbers? Give it some thought to put a plant in this spring—Becky's Blog Submitted by Mary Kay Winke

I have been working with seeds and didn't know the difference between english and regular cucumbers. Had a hard time finding information on them, but this is what I found.

The perfect plant: Long English cucumbers easy to grow Jim Hole, Edmonton Journal

The perfect plant: Long English cucumbers easy to grow

I love Greek salads, but I've ruined a few by tossing in cucumbers with tough skins and big, chewy seeds.

Fortunately, making a tender Greek salad instead — with fresh, homegrown cucumbers — is simple. Now, I just include a few English long cucumbers in my garden each year.

English long cucumbers are excellent outdoors in pots, but not widely used in gardens because many gardeners still adhere to the myth that the thin-skinned, seedless cucumbers are only suitable for growing within the confines of a cosy greenhouse.

But they actually grow well outside — weather permitting, of course — and it's rare not to have a great crop by late July.

HISTORY—Cucumbers are indigenous to both the Old World and the new, and are members of the cucurbitacea family that includes squash, pumpkins and melons.

English long cucumbers are simply the result of extensive breeding work to eliminate the undesirable characteristics that many cucumber varieties possess: tough skin, tough seeds, and often, bitter fruit.

From a reproductive perspective, cucumbers have interesting sex lives. Some varieties have male and female flowers that are separate — but on the same plant — while other varieties produce a blend of entirely male or entirely female plants. English long cucumbers really have no sex lives at all and are classified as parthenocarpic, which means that they develop fruit without any pollination and are thus seedless. You might notice some rudimentary seeds in an English long cucumber fruit, but these are simply the beginnings of what would have been seeds had the seeds been pollinated.

BEST FEATURES—I think most would agree that the best feature of English long cucumbers is the fact that they are seedless. But having a nice, thin skin that doesn't require peeling is a close second.

I also find the rich-green, broad leaves and viney growth to be rather attractive and English long cucumbers look great on a trellis, even without any fruit.

Another great feature of English long cucumbers is their lack of bitterness. Other cucumbers inherently contain naturally occurring, bitter-tasting chemicals called cucurbitacins, but the English long cucumbers rarely have even a trace of these compounds.

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: EASY—

English long cucumbers are no more difficult to grow than any other cucumber variety, but they do require a sturdy, tall trellis. They will sprawl across the ground without support, but leaving the long fruit sitting makes it more prone to rotting and curling up like a snake.

Training the cucumber to climb up a trellis is simple. I just weave the new leaves through the structure and that works just fine. Tying the main stem to the trellis with soft ties also works well. Either way, it's important to train and support the cucumbers every few days because they tend to grow wild very quickly.

In the greenhouse, we grow thousands of English long cucumbers and would expect to harvest about 20 to 25, 30-centimetre-long fruit per plant over a 12-week period. In my garden, I grow four plants that begin production now and continue for about an eight-week stretch, with each plant producing about a dozen large fruit. Believe me, there are times in August when jumbo Greek salads are my entire meal!

English long cucumbers are rarely attacked by insect or disease pests, but they are heavy feeders. I apply Nature's Source fertilizer at least once a week and always blend in Sea Soil (composted fish waste and pine bark) with my potting soil to provide a few extra nutrients.

HOW PERFECT IS IT? - My Greek salad routine at this time of year is to head out to the garden and grab one tomato, one onion and one English Long cucumber, head to the kitchen, chop and throw the vegetables and black olives into a bowl with oil and feta cheese and eat. It is one of the simplest things to make and loaded with fresh ingredients from the garden.

The salad days of summer just wouldn't be the same for me without a few homegrown, English long cucumbers a mere hop, skip and jump away from the kitchen.

taken from <http://www.edmontonjournal.com/>

[perfect+plant+Long+English+cucumbers+easy+grow/](http://www.edmontonjournal.com/perfect+plant+Long+English+cucumbers+easy+grow/)

till next time this is Becky Litterer, Becky's Greenhouse, Dougherty Iowa



Invasive Species In Iowa

June is Invasive Species Awareness Month provides an opportunity for government agencies, businesses, industries, conservation and recreation groups, and community organizations to join forces, and take action against the introduction and spread of invasive species in Iowa. Invasive species are a significant challenge affecting the health of Iowa's natural communities. Most invasive species are exotic but some native species can become invasive as well. When species become invasive they often reduce biodiversity by out-competing native species, which can disrupt entire ecosystems.

Invasive species are a significant challenge affecting the health of Iowa's natural communities. Most invasive species are exotic but some native species can become invasive as well. When species become invasive they often reduce biodiversity by out-competing native species, which can disrupt entire ecosystems. Invasive species are introduced in various ways. They can arrive in new areas accidentally through human trade and travel, sometimes they are intentionally introduced for ornamental or ecological reasons, or they can naturally expand their ranges into new areas when the climate changes and no longer limits their growth. When a species is introduced into an area where it is not naturally found it becomes invasive if there are no controls such as predators, herbivores, resource competitors, diseases, or climatic inhibitors to prevent it from continuing to spread. Species that become invasive also often reproduce rapidly or have life cycle differences that give them an advantage over native species. Invasive species are often generalists that do not have strict habitat requirements, and can therefore have few limiting conditions that prevent them from thriving.

Iowa's forests, prairies, and aquatic environments all face unique invasive species threats. Certain invasive species affect specific species of plants and animals as well. In Iowa, invasive species come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from microscopic fungal pathogens affecting bats or trees to ubiquitous, easily recognizable species like feral cats or multiflora rose.

Luckily many invasive species can be identified and controlled and native communities can be restored. You can learn more about invasive species in Iowa here <https://naturalresources.extension.iastate.edu/invasives>

Additional Resources For additional information on invasive plants check out the [Iowa DNR Invasive Plants page](#) and the [Midwest Invasive Plants Network Plant List](#). We also have an [invasive species video series on YouTube](#).

The Benefits of Spiders in the Garden

Spiders are just one of the many beneficial creatures living in your garden. Get to know the friendly spiders, and learn how they can help improve the health of your garden.

While many homeowners are concerned with getting rid of garden pests, there are actually many beneficial insects living in the garden, and spiders are among them. While some pests will destroy your roses or other beautiful plants, many types of spiders can actually improve the overall health of your garden.

Get to Know the Friendly Spiders The most common garden spiders tend to be black and yellow, but that doesn't mean that you won't see other types of spiders in your landscape. (For example, in parts of the U.S., black widow spiders can be found in the garden, even though they prefer other habitats.) Once you know what beneficial garden spiders look like, you can evict the non-helpers and venomous types and leave the good guys to do their work.

How They Help Perhaps the biggest benefit of garden spiders is that they eat insects – mostly the unwanted pests that you don't want in your flower beds, like aphids, wasps, beetles, mosquitoes, and flies. They work hard, keeping those pesky populations in check before they can harm your favorite perennials or sting you. In other words, garden spiders help you maintain a healthy balance in your landscape.

Garden spiders begin removing insect pests from your garden beds early in the spring, as soon as they wake from dormancy (which is about the same time insect pests awaken), and continue eating them throughout the growing season. Garden spiders have voracious appetites, too, eating at least one insect pest per day, so the more garden spiders in your landscape, the more helpers you have.

Why They're Good for Plants By controlling pests, garden spiders can actually reduce harmful plant pathogens. Insect pests transfer many types of fungal and bacterial diseases from plant to plant. These diseases damage plant tissues and sometimes even kill the plant. The fewer pests there are in your garden, the fewer ways there will be for certain diseases to spread.

How to Attract Garden Spiders A healthy garden filled with lush bushes and perennials makes a great habitat for many garden spiders. Using grass clippings as mulch specifically attracts wolf spiders. While wolf spiders don't have the bold yellow and black markings that true garden spiders are known for, they benefit the garden in similar ways – and are more proactive about it. Instead of building webs and waiting for prey to come to them, these hunters actively hunt for their dinner. Grass clippings provide them with a hunting habitat.

Do Garden Spiders Bite? Most spiders will bite if provoked, but very few spider bites are actually dangerous to humans. If you happen to brush up against a garden spider's web and it bites you, the bite area may swell slightly and itch, but that's all. In most cases, these spiders will leave the gardener in peace.

As you can see, there are many benefits to having spiders in your garden. Of course, if you find that you have an abundance of pests, you should certainly try to decrease their numbers with an insect control product. Afterward, though, take steps to attract garden spiders to combat future pests that enter your landscape and garden.