

JOHNSON COUNTY IOWA MASTER GARDENERS
Johnson County Master Gardener Project Leader Annual Report



Core Project: Butterfly House

Johnson County Fair, July 23 – 26th, 2023

And other community events involving the butterfly house exhibits and JCMG's are listed below.

Name(s) of Project Leader(s): Carolyn Murphy, Mike Murphy

Number and names of Master Gardeners Involved: 42 master gardeners, 3 Forever Green staff, 2 family members worked during the fair. Another 25 JCMG assisted with butterfly exhibits at community events during the year.

Please include a description of project impact:

It is hard to estimate the total number of hours JCMG have volunteered for all the butterfly events because we don't have an efficient way to sort this information, however, we do get an average of 500 hours each year for the Butterfly House project during the fair (634.9 hrs. were recorded this year).

Provide a brief statement of the involvement/impact for the project:

Butterflies and pollinators in general are a hot topic and people are interested in how they can help. We love sharing our knowledge about butterflies, restoring their habitats and how everyone can help in one way or another. The Butterfly House project is more than 4 days of the 4-H county fair, it is talking to the public at every community event we attend either by giving a presentation or one person at a time. Besides offering the ISU brochures (my favorite is RG601, Gardening for Butterflies and Pollinators), we attend seminars, webinars, and zoom meetings across the Midwest and neighboring countries to keep up to date with what is happening with pollinator conservation. I enjoyed this summer attending the International MG Conference and visiting with other master gardeners from a variety of states and countries on what is happening in their areas. The conference itself hosted a variety of classes on pollinator habitats and conservation plus day trips to Monarch Watch, Long Lips Farm, prairies, and lowlands in the Kansas City and Lawrence areas. I joined an international group several years ago that follows the monarch butterfly progress from Canada thru the Midwest to Mexico and back. We communicate through email and zoom meetings monitored by Monarch Watch. Having been to Mexico to see the monarch migration, which is truly an experience I won't ever forget, fueled my desire to share this and other adventures with my community.

Provide a summary of project activities conducted throughout the calendar year and the results of the project (include data of the success(es) of the project and or partner(s)).

Prairie Preview

March 23, Iowa City Senior Center. Over 150 people attended. Setup educational butterfly display. 5 master gardeners involved. Kay Mohling and Jackie Wellborn set up a table with ISU brochures for the Yard & Gardening project. Sponsored by Bur Oak Land Trust.

Weber Elementary Earth Day Fun Fest

April 18th. Interactive pollinator games, plus the kids made milkweed and wildflower seed balls for RAGBRAI riders. 125 families attended. 9 JCMG involved. Sandy Gannon, Angela Murphy, Megan

Garrels, Lavon Yeggy, Mahmooda Ahmad, Mike Murphy, and Carolyn Murphy. Jackie Welborn, Yard & Gardening chair, and Mary Mascher set up a table with ISU brochures beside us. Sponsored by Weber Elementary PTO. Milkweed Matters supplied the materials for the seedballs.



Silent Auction Fundraiser

Proceeds from the silent auction go to the Butterfly House account (part of the Plant Sale & Flea Market event on May 20). The money is used to support the butterfly house expenses and educational materials.

Carolyn Murphy, with Pam Buethé's help, chaired the event. Angela Murphy, Mahmooda Ahmad, Sandy Gannon, Joanne Leach, Mike Murphy, and Frank Buethé helped.

JCMG and local businesses donated items for the auction. National Geographic, National Soccer Federation, Friday's Embroidery, and Monarch Research were a few of the new donors this year. Thank you to all the JCMG and community guests that generously bid on items. \$1,558.50 was raised, plus an additional \$100 free-will donation was received from a JCMG during the auction.

Thank you, Pam Buethé, for bringing your special guest, George, to the auction who helped generate a little additional revenue.



Iowa Arts Festival/Kids Art Fest

Downtown Iowa City, June 3.

I was unable to attend and share the booth with 100 Grannies this year, however, the group decided making seed balls was such a big hit last year, they wanted to try it themselves. I supplied them with the mixture for making seed balls, charts, and educational posters. It was a large crowd according to the ladies (800 or so). Partnered with 100 Grannies and Iowa Arts Festival committee.

Monarch Festival

Indian Creek Nature Center, Cedar Rapids, July 15. We provided supplies to make seedballs and set up an educational pollinator display. Angela Murphy, Carolyn Murphy, and Dave Cooney (Muscataine master gardener) ran the booth for an all-day event. The ICNC provided tents, tables, and additional volunteers to help with the crowd. Estimated over 1,100 people attended the festival.

Butterfly House training class

July 22, 9:30-11am at the fairgrounds. 23 JCMG attended the class given by Carolyn Murphy & Lucy Hershberg. We provided information about the 11 species of butterflies and moths we had on display. Showed the group how to handle them and talked about our responsibility as hosts of the butterfly house exhibit. We were very pleased to have several new interns join the project.



Johnson County 4-H Fair, July 23-26.

4,582 guests visited the butterfly house exhibit. This was smaller than our usual crowd of 6,100 visitors. The fair itself was much smaller than usual. One factor may have been the extreme heat. The fair fundraisers (merchandise sales, plant sales, henna tattoos) earned \$1,184 and another \$135.51 in free-will donations. A total of \$1,319.51. Thank you Mahmooda Ahmad and Liz Loeb for donating items. Our largest expense was the purchasing of butterflies/moths at \$1,299. This list included red admirals, buckeye, painted ladies, 5 types of swallowtails (Eastern Black, Giant, Zebra, Spicebush, Pipevine), question marks, and monarchs. With monarch butterflies being scarce this year, butterfly farms were not guaranteeing delivery. In the end we received 60, some adults and others in chrysalis stage. With the 40 or so that Lucy, Mahmooda, and I raised, we did have over 100 monarch butterflies to show. We also had 12 Luna moth cocoons that hatched during the fair. Repairs to Millie, the caterpillar tunnel, and other necessary items cost \$378.73.

The hoophouse, outside displays, merchandise and tattoos, seed ball making, and kids activities kept us all very busy. While we are used to having a few day care centers come to the exhibit, we were pleasantly

surprised to have a whole summer camp program from North Liberty come in groups each day (app 65 kids). We setup up a tour for each group which included inside the Butterfly House, hand-on displays, making seed balls, and showing a butterfly's life cycle using a paper plate and pasta while talking about pollinators and why they are important to the food we eat. The camp counselors took pictures of each group in front of the butterfly photo booth or by Millie the caterpillar tunnel. The 5th-6th graders were mostly interested in the magnifiers and displays with moths and the assortment of butterfly wings they could handle.



Due to the extreme heat, some vendors closed their booths early on the last day, so we were somewhat surprised at the large crowd that gathered for the monarch butterfly release at 5 pm. Around 60 monarchs were released. The remaining mating pairs were placed among the flowers in the Demonstration Garden. These gardens provide all the necessary habitat for adult butterflies and their caterpillars.

Monarch Tagging & Release Event

at Forever Green Nursery, September 17.

Mahmooda Ahmad, Angela, Mike, and Carolyn

Murphy ran the tagging process. We helped the guest place id tags on the monarch butterfly wings and release them for the journey to Mexico. Tagged 75 monarchs. Estimated around 100 guests enjoyed the presentation and tagging event.



Statement of what you consider the greatest success of this project:

Giving people the opportunity to experience butterflies up close and letting them see how easy it is to help pollinators. Raising awareness is important. It is rewarding each year to look back and see how many master gardeners and community people have been involved with all these events.

One of the activities that the community enjoys is making milkweed and wildflower seed balls. This year with all the events, we made a five-gallon bucket full. The seed balls will be given out to RAGBRAI riders by Milkweed Matters members this coming summer for riders to toss on the roadsides, increasing food and protection for pollinators.

Sponsors/partnerships are essential to the operation of the butterfly house at the fairgrounds. The original plan included Forever Green Nursery would provide the landscape materials and the expertise running the butterfly house, the JC Fair Committee would finance the purchase of butterflies until it was self-supporting and maintain the grounds in and around the hoophouse, and the JC Master Gardeners commitment was to host the butterfly house during the fair. The JCMG chairs job is to gather and teach enough volunteers (app 60) to run the hoophouse and exhibits during the fair. In 2018 with the change of manager at the fairgrounds and to keep the Butterfly House project going, Carolyn took on the task of managing the donations and started fundraisers with the proceeds to be used to purchase butterfly displays. We have successfully managed this since 2019. We have been fortunate to have community support for all our butterfly displays/events. Besides attending these events, they have generously given monetary donations, knowing we will continue to support butterfly education.

With these donations from the Butterfly House project account, we were able to purchase an interpretive sign (like in state parks) from VackerSign Company. The custom panel features pollinator gardening and is perfect for kids of all ages. I was able to make some changes to the



design to make it specific to our area. It includes a weatherproof frame and pole that can be relocated. There are many activities that take place at the Johnson County 4-H Fairgrounds year around and this sign is a great addition to the garden in front of the butterfly house. I also registered the Butterfly House as a monarch waystation with Monarch Watch. Our site is listed as Johnson County Master Gardener Butterfly Garden #41853. Both signs were installed before the fair in July. The cost was \$777 for the Pollinator Garden sign and \$43.95 for the Monarch Watch certification and sign.

What are the needs to help this project continue? What changes would you consider making for the future?

Without partnerships, especially Lucy Hershberger and her staff, the butterfly house exhibit would not be able to run. Besides her butterfly expertise, she supplies all the materials, hardscape, plants, trees, bushes, to landscape the gardens in the hoophouse during the fair. This year when she found out we had bought 2 new education signs, she donated a flat of native flowers and materials to fill the beds around them in front of the hoophouse. Pictured above.

Project Coordinators

Carolyn Murphy & Mike Murphy

1-2-2024

Thank you to the Silent Auction Contributors:

Businesses: Monarch Research/Cam Watts & Augie Bergstrom, National Geographic/Jill Tiefenthaler, In The Country Garden & Gifts/Josh & Sue Spece, Earl May Garden Center/Sami Narango (manager), Jerry Stevens (employee), Fridays Embroidery/Lois Friday, HyVee Garden Center/Bill (manager)& Barb Schintler (JCMG), Milkweed Matters/Nancy Crews (Director & book author), US Soccer Federation/Neil Buethe, Patrick Finn/Melissa Mandernach (4-H Leader), Shannon Bielicke (ISU JCMG Coordinator) – JC Master Gardeners: Pam Buethe, Janice Hining, Nany Wehrheim, Sandy Gannon, Chris Sedrel, Angela Murphy, Mike Murphy, Carolyn Murphy.