



# Johnson County Master Gardener Thymes



April 2023

## Project Coordinators

*Click on a name to email the listed coordinator:*

### Yard & Garden Info

Jackie Wellborn, Kay Mohling

### Butterfly House at Fairgrounds

Carolyn Murphy, Mike Murphy

### 1876 Coralville Schoolhouse

Karen Martinek

### Ecumenical Towers

Michael Hesseltine, John Weeg

### Demonstration Garden

Chris Sedrel, Laurie Roehl

### Downtown City Gardens

Linda Schreiber

### Fairgrounds Beautification

Chris Sedrel, Laurie Roehl

### Firefighters' Memorial

Barb Schintler

### Plant Sale/Flea Market

Emil Rinderspacher

### Hortline

Mary Starry

### Hospice Gardens

Melanie Haupt

### Buckets of Flowers & Scarecrow Contest

Lavon Yeggy

### Oaknoll Garden Project

Vicki Siefers, Deb Cassell

### Plum Grove

Darlene Clausen, Lavon Yeggy, Carolyn Murphy

### Speakers Bureau

Megan Garrels

### Thymes Newsletter

Melissa Serenda, Doug Geraets

## 2022 Year-End Awards & Recognition

BY SHANNON BIELICKE

Johnson County Master Gardeners—we would like to express our gratitude for all you do and give recognition to a few folks who hit some milestones in 2022 and went above and beyond...congratulations!

At a well-attended potluck at the Extension Office on March 26 certificates were presented for the following:

### Fall 2022 MG Class

Individuals listed below are the newest members of the JCMGs. They have completed initial training and received their certificate of completion. Janlyn Slach, Melia Pieper, Melissa Close, Patrick Rossmann, Sarah Sobocinski, Byron Vandenberg, Julie Crockett, Natalie Schreffler, Carrie Parris, Susan Miller, Christopher Smith, Jeff Walberg, Mary Mascher, Emily Thomas, Raina Banh, and Leah Latella.



*Fall Class 2022 Attendees (from left):  
Mary Mascher, Susan Miller, Patrick Rossmann*

### 1st Year 40 Hour requirement

The following individuals are now an official JCMG and received their certificate, pin, and name badge. Anne Atkins, Deb Gaddis, Brandi Janssen, Roger Jensen, Julie Koeppel, Jenny Loeser, Kay Mohling, Michele Sorrell, Nancy Weber, and John Weeg.

## MG Steering Committee Meeting

Next meeting **Wednesday, April 12, 6:30 P.M.**; hybrid meeting at Extension Office and by Zoom. All MGs are invited to attend; [contact Shannon](#) for more details!

## Thymes Deadline

Information/articles for the Thymes should be sent to Melissa Serenda at [jcmg.thymes@gmail.com](mailto:jcmg.thymes@gmail.com). Please send news, volunteer opportunities, stories, pictures, gardening book reviews, etc., for the May issue by **Friday, April 28**.



*2,000 Hours: Mike Murphy*



*10 Years (from left): Sharon Rude, Joyce Miller, Holly Hotchkiss, Linda Schreiber*



*Lifetime MGs (from left):  
Linda Schreiber, Joyce Miller*

## 2022 Year-End Awards & Recognition (continued)

**Volunteer Hours Milestones** Individuals below received recognition pins.

- **2,000 Hours:** Mike Murphy

**Volunteer Anniversary Milestones** were reached by those listed below, who received recognition certificates.

- **10 Years of Service:** Jeff Baker, Connie Funk, Holly Hotchkiss, Joyce Miller, Cynthia Pickett, Sharon Rude, Linda Schreiber, and Miechelle Weber.
- **15 Years of Service:** Esther Retish, Priscilla White, and Sharon Jeter.
- **20 Years of Service:** Alice Linhart and Fred Meyer.

**Lifetime Master Gardeners** requirements were completed by the following, who received recognition certificates: Linda Schreiber and Joyce Miller.

Johnson County Master Gardeners (JCMG) 2022 year-end notes: (as of 12/31/2023)

- 6,332 volunteer and 1,017 education hours reported; 7,349 total volunteer hours which includes ~5,881 on approved projects.
- 16 students completed MG training.
- 10 interns completed first year of hours.
- 1 JCMG reached a milestone of 500/1,000/2,000/3,000 hours.
- 13 JCMGs reached anniversary milestones of 10, 15, 20, 25, or 30 years.
- 2 JCMGs reached Lifetime Master Gardener status.

Please welcome our new members and congratulate all who have reached these important achievements. Congratulations, Master Gardeners, you made an amazing impact on the program and in the Johnson County community in 2022!





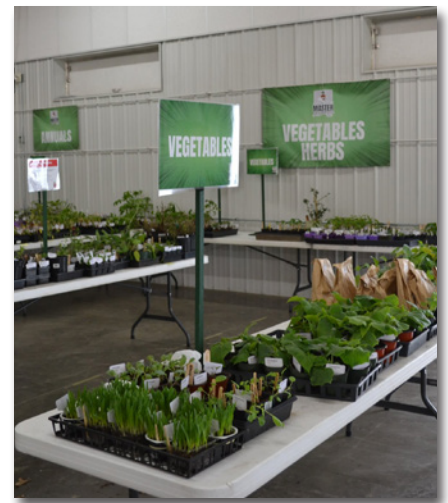
## Get Ready for the Plant Sale & Flea Market on May 20

The 14th annual Master Gardener Plant Sale & Flea Market is only six weeks away and we need your help! This week you'll receive a SignUpGenius survey to sign up to work presale activities and the sale. The sale is by far the biggest MG project. Please lend your time, your talents and your plant donations and sign up to help. Here's more information about how to donate:

### Perennials

We are repotting all perennial donations in sterile potting mix to guard against jumping worms. Bring your nearly bare-root plants to the Heritage Barn (near the demo garden) to one or more of the April/May potting events where MG will pot up your plants. If these potting times don't work for you, email me and we will make other arrangements. Here are the potting dates/times:

- April 29 (Sat.) from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M.
- May 3 (Wed.) from 5:30 to 7:30 P.M.
- May 4 (Thurs.) from 5:30 to 7:30 P.M.
- May 6 (Sat.) from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M.



### Veggies, Herbs, Annuals, Houseplants, Tender Perennials

If you have plants other than perennials to donate, let **Darlene Clausen** know at [clausendarlene@gmail.com](mailto:clausendarlene@gmail.com) so she can prepare the plant labels. You can drop off nonperennial donations on Thursday, May 18, and Friday, May 19, at the times listed below.

### Trees and Shrubs Gift Table Items

If you have trees and/or shrubs to donate or gift table items, let **Chris Sedrel** know at [oscarsgram@aol.com](mailto:oscarsgram@aol.com). Chris is also available if you need help digging. You can drop off woody plant and gift table donations on Thursday, May 18, and Friday, May 19, at the times listed below.



## Flea Market Items

We will accept Flea Market items from Master Gardeners and the general public. All items must be clean and in working order. No chemicals accepted. Questions to **Linda Schreiber** at [lschreiber@gmail.com](mailto:lschreiber@gmail.com).

## Drop Off Times for May 18 and 19

We will accept donations of Flea Market items, woody plants, houseplants, vegetables, annuals, and tender perennials, gift table items on Thursday, May 18, from 9 A.M. to 6 P.M., and Friday, May 19, from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M., at the **south entrance of Building C**. Trees and shrubs must be dropped off before noon on Friday, May 19, so they can be inspected by the state.

If you have any questions call me at 319-331-7451 or email me at [emil-rinderspacher@uiowa.edu](mailto:emil-rinderspacher@uiowa.edu).



## Wanted: Donations and Help with the Butterfly House Silent Auction

The Plant Sale & Flea Market also features a Silent Auction to support the Butterfly House at the Johnson County 4-H Fair. We are in need of your donations. We have auctioned off some unique items in the past.

If you wish to donate, let us know so we can arrange drop off/pick up. We are also looking for Master Gardeners to join our Silent Auction team. Volunteers will help with the planning of the auction, securing items to sell, as well as working the sale set up and the day of the sale.

Come join our team! Contact us if you have items to donate or would like to volunteer: Mike and Carolyn Murphy at [candmmurphy@aol.com](mailto:candmmurphy@aol.com) or 319-541-7079.



## Wanted: Donations and Help with the Gift Table

The Gift Table at the sale features an interesting array of garden/plant-themed items made by Master Gardeners. We usually have an array of succulent arrangements in china cups and other interesting containers. Past sales have featured terrariums, fairy gardens, houseplant arrangements and crafty or artistic creations that are garden-themed. Do you have a creative side? If so, plan to create an item or two for the Gift Table.

We also need a couple volunteers to help set up the Gift Table on Thursday and Friday and to work the table on Sale Day. If you have items to donate or would like to volunteer, contact **Chris Sedrel** at 319-330-8416 or at [oscarsgram@aol.com](mailto:oscarsgram@aol.com).



## JCMGs Share Seed Starting Tips in Swisher

BY ALICE LINHART

What do you do Saturday morning on a blustery day in March? You think spring and learn about seed starting and planting seeds!

Recently, JCMGs **Gail Johnson** and **Alice Linhart** led a class and demonstration on the basics of seed starting to an eager group of kids and adults at the Swisher Community Library. Growing your own plants from seeds provides the opportunity to select the exact plants you want to grow at a fraction of the cost of buying plants. All the participants were able to choose vegetable and flower seeds to plant and take home to grow. It was a fun way to spend a Saturday morning in March whether snowy or not!

Last year, JCMGs helped establish and maintain a seed library for the Swisher Community Library which has been well used over the last year.



## April — It's Thyme to...

BY LINDA SCHREIBER AND MELISSA SERENDA

Look into your crystal ball and check the 30-day weather forecast to bring your April gardening activities into focus. Number one on the list is clean or purchase a new rain gauge and post it near the garden so you can tell when it's time to water—the garden needs about one inch of rain per week from April to September.

If you didn't clean, sharpen, sanitize and oil your tools last fall, now is the time to get it done while the temperatures are too cool to be outside. Outside containers should also be cleaned and prepped for planting.

Earth Day, celebrated April 22, is a great time to get serious about gardening. Re-mulch walkways to provide a "clean" garden path and avoid walking in mud. Add compost to the garden and till it in when the soil is dry enough to avoid compacting.

Trim tattered foliage to encourage new growth. Divide your perennials including ornamental grasses, aster, mums, hosta, bee balm, sedum, yarrow, salvia and coneflowers. Consider donating excess plants to the JCMG Plant Sale & Flea Market. Check with [Emil Rinderspacher](#) to see if your plants are on the list of wanted materials.





## Weekly April gardening tips

Week 1 — Summer flowering shrubs can be trimmed back to the ground (spirea and Annabelle hydrangea) since they bloom on new wood and will quickly grow back and bloom in mid-summer.

Week 2 — Rake the lawn to remove dead grass, sticks and debris. It's also time to fertilize and reseed the lawn. Spring aeration is very beneficial. Going over high-traffic areas multiple times to reduce soil compaction is recommended. When you can work the soil easily, plant cool-season vegetables such as peas, radishes, spinach, and lettuce. [The average last frost date](#) for our area is somewhere between April 17 and May 4.

Week 3 — For seeds started last month, transplant seedlings into 4-inch pots when they are about 1 inch tall. Keep plants indoors in a warm, bright location until "hardening" off and transplanting outdoors in mid to late May.

Week 4 — Reseed bare spots in the lawn with a mix of Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass and fescue. Be sure to remove dead grass first so the new seed is in direct contact with bare soil.

Week 5 — Fertilize apple trees, grape vines and strawberries. When the forsythia blooms, it's time to tend to your roses. Pull the mulch away from the base of the plant, remove dead stalks and fertilize.

Spring is a good time to stake perennial plants before they need support.

If you've always wanted an asparagus patch, when the soil is dry enough to work, dig a trench, 6 to 10 inches deep (the depth will depend on the type of soil you have). Work in organic fertilizer before planting the crowns, spacing them 12 to 18 inches apart with buds pointing up, and cover with soil. If you have enough space to plant multiple rows, space the rows 4 to 5 feet apart. The site should be well-drained and receive 6 hours of sun. Be patient—because you should wait 1 to 2 years before harvesting your first asparagus crop.

The rhubarb should be popping out of the ground now. Harvest when the stalks are 10 to 15 inches tall. Grasp the stalk at the base and pull it up and slightly to one side. Do not remove more than half of the fully developed stalks from any plant at any one time.

Late in the month, acclimate transplants started

indoors or purchased before planting outdoors. Place plants in a protected shady area. After a day or two, gradually expose the plants to longer periods outdoors and in direct sun. After 7 to 10 days of "hardening," the plants should be ready to be planted in the garden.

This dandy downloadable spreadsheet from BetterHensandGardens.com is helpful to create a personal planting calendar. <https://www.betterhensandgardens.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2023-Vegetable-Planting-Schedule.xlsx>

While you are planning and planting, please consider **Plant A Row** and **grow to give** to area food pantries. JCMG tracks donations to area food pantries. Johnson County Master Gardeners' service hours and donations consistently rank among the high-population counties of Polk, Linn, Blackhawk and Scott.

Remember your houseplants—it's time to fertilize.

If you are interested in testing your soil to determine its fertilizer needs, samples can be submitted to one of the laboratories listed at <https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu/soil-testing-resources-home-gardeners>



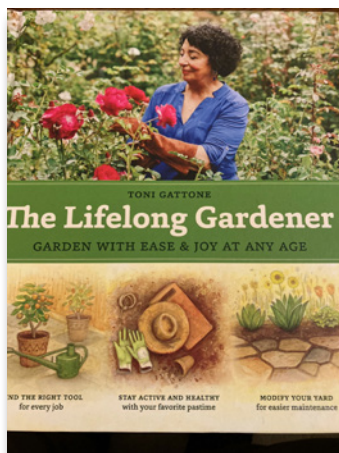
### Sources:

- <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/news/yard-and-garden-establish-asparagus-patch>
- <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/news/yard-and-garden-properly-planting-and-harvesting-rhubarb>
- <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/April-Ways-to-Garden-Gardening-To-Give>
- <https://housemethod.com/lawn/the-ultimate-planting-calendar/>
- <https://www.arboretum.umn.edu/aprilgardeningtips.aspx>
- <https://gardeningknowhow.com>

## Healthy Gardening

BY SHARON RUDE

Winter is a good time to read and start planning for the upcoming garden year. Following are three books worth the time to read. *The Lifelong Gardener* by Toni Gattone (\$20 Barnes & Noble) is about gardening with ease at any age, taking into consideration a person's body, their garden and the tools they use. No two people or gardens are alike.



She describes adaptive gardening that allows for gardening at all ages when a person may have limited range of motion, may want to reduce stress on joints, or may be wheelchair bound. Adaptive gardening techniques are a way to rethink easier gardening to ensure safety and comfort such as raised beds and using more containers.

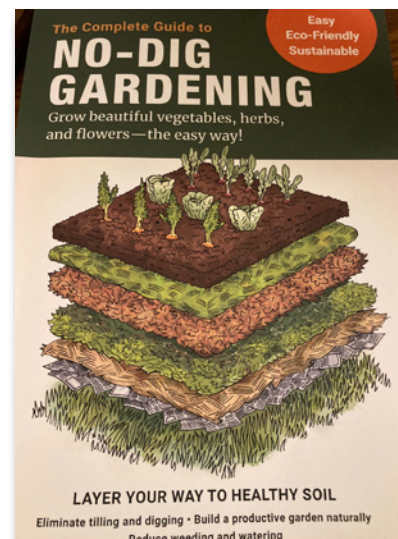
Toni reminds her readers our bodies change as we age, so keep yourself safe and comfortable. Consider stretching before and after gardening, and change up the order of your tasks to avoid repetition. Listen to your body and know your limits when it's time to take a break or get out of the heat. Consider ergonomic tools that make gardening easier for you. If you plan to be kneeling, have a plan for how you will get up or if you need assistance getting up. As hard as it may be, don't be afraid to ask for help if you need to lift a heavy object or if a task requires the use of a ladder. Keep yourself safe with gloves, sunscreen, a hat with a broad brim, avoid midday sun, consider tools with longer handles when needed, avoid tripping hazards, and keep your tools sharp. Gardening keeps us mentally active too. Toni says, "Old age is always 15 years older than I am."

Iowa State University Extension also has a publication in the Therapeutic Gardening series, *Gardening Tips for Older Adults* (RG 107). This publication describes the benefits of gardening, warming up, being sun smart, using the right equipment, garden access, taking care of tools, watering, and enlisting helpers.

*The Complete Guide to No-Dig Gardening* by Charlie Nardozzi is another book worth purchasing (\$25 from Amazon). The book provides a lot of information for growing vegetables, herbs and flowers without tilling the soil. The benefits of no-dig gardening take into consideration the health of the soil with no-dig concept variations, including containers. This style of gardening helps preserve soil life and the nutrients and organisms that support the soil's health, and provides a more productive garden with less work. Garden beds are more resilient to weather changes such as drought or heavy rains. No-dig gardens eliminate a lot of hard work preparing soil for planting. Soil pH needs to be considered, along with drainage, adding compost and nutrients, and the location (sun/shade).

Layering a no-dig garden bed is like a compost pile—layer newspaper, add green materials, compost, brown materials and continue layering (also known as lasagna gardening). You may need to add materials as layers decompose and break down over time. The book includes recipes for composting and lasagna gardening and instructions for constructing a raised no-dig bed or adaptations depending on your site. The book also includes a plan and tips for converting an existing garden to a no-dig garden.

If your tilled garden is under-producing, a no-dig garden can improve your soil health for better productivity. A good way to utilize space is to inter-plant (inter-crop) and utilize succession planting. Inter-planting utilizes different plant growth rates and shapes of various edibles by pairing the right edibles together. The author also describes polyculture beds such as a three-sisters garden (corn, pole beans, squash)—the beans fix nitrogen in the soil, which is used by the corn, the beans grow up the corn stalks, and the trailing squash keeps the ground cool, which preserves moisture, and limits weed growth. No-dig gardening also includes containers, straw bale



gardening, and a hügelkultur. I'm looking forward to seeing the results from the hügelkultur at the Demonstration Garden this coming summer. The book includes a recipe for organic potting soil, the selection of a variety of containers, and bringing containers indoors to extend your growing season.

Interestingly, I also subscribe to a free weekly email newsletter from *The Creative Vegetable Gardener* that is located in Madison, Wis. The topic of the newsletter on Feb. 26 was "Stop tilling for the best soil!" Successful gardening starts with healthy soil and a no-till garden builds healthier soil. Tilling the soil destroys the soil structure and brings weed seeds to the surface that you will regret. The top reasons not to till a garden, taken from the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service website are tilling destroys a soil's physical properties and the soil's ability to function properly. Tillage destroys or depletes the soil's stability, structure, pore space, water holding capacity, infiltration, permeability, gaseous exchange and nutrient storage ability. Garden soil holds bacteria, fungal filaments, protozoa and nematodes, all beneficial to keeping soil healthy, converting nitrogen into a form available to plants and helping plants access the nutrients and water in the soil. Tilling is like a tornado to the soil.

Another book by Charlie Nardozzi is *Foodscaping* (available at the Iowa City Public Library). The book describes innovative ways to create an edible landscape and replace ornamental plants with edibles, grow vegetables and herbs in with perennial and annual flowers. Choose the right plant for the right place (sun/shade, wet/dry, weather elements) to grow food. Consider the soil pH and drainage when considering where edibles will be located. Vegetables can be grown in groups, which can create an impactful visual effect, or they can be grown in borders and along walkways among flowers without sacrificing beauty. Edibles can be good fillers in flowerbeds and can add a pop of color too such as swiss chard, purple basil, and tricolor sage.

Some cool season vegetables can be grown in shade with shady perennials. Use raised beds, containers, and also consider growing vertically (trellis, chicken wire or fence). Grow herbs such as rosemary in with ornamental grasses in containers. Charlie provides a chapter on Foodscaping 101,

describing edibles which can be used the same as in ornamental gardens. Get creative and consider replacing some perennials with edibles. Replace groundcovers with edibles like sweet potatoes or

creeping thyme or mint for a scented ground cover.

Include edible flowers such as bee balm, daylilies or nasturtiums. Some edibles may look good all season long, while others may need to be replaced or inter-planted or utilize succession planting depending on how quickly or slow they grow. Maximize the use of

space with quick-growing edibles and slower late-maturing edibles.

You may have fewer pests since edibles will be interspersed among ornamentals, making it harder for the pests to locate. In fact, some ornamentals may deter pests from edibles. I'll be experimenting this summer by planting some of my vegetables and herbs in unexpected places among my flowers.



## Great Grandma's Sun Dill Pickle Recipe

BY MARILYN KEMPNIICH

Since I am a HUGE dill pickle fan, I have fond memories of my grandmother and mother making these dill pickles. They made many other types of pickles, but this recipe is my favorite. I grew up on the farm so most of our food came from the garden for eating, canning and freezing; and chickens and livestock we raised on the farm. I remember our large cucumber and dill patches in my mom's huge garden. Cucumbers were one of my favorites to eat right from the garden, sliced and salted out, sliced in salads, or especially dill pickles.

I know that my great grandmother passed this recipe down through the ages. This recipe dates back to the 1800s.

If you like dill pickles, these are the best dill pickles you will ever eat; and probably the easiest to prepare. (I am probably biased!)

Plant a large patch of pickling cucumber seeds and/or cucumber plants in the spring to be able to



pick a quantity of cucumbers that are the same size. Because of lack of space in my garden, I plant mine on a 6-foot by 5-foot string trellis. I have also seen them grow on teepees or pallets leaning against each other. The JCMGs working in the Demo Garden grow them on wire hoops. My garden is still not a large enough patch so I also buy small cucumbers and dill at farmer's markets, Kalona sale stands, Twin County Produce Auction, or from friends who have large gardens.

I like pickling cucumbers no more than four inches in length, preferably three inches. You can use larger cucumbers but they are harder to pack into the glass pickling jar. I only use pickling cucumbers for this recipe. I have found that the regular sized cucumbers tend to get soft when pickled.

Plant a fairly large patch of dill seeds in the spring that grow into dill plants. Dill is hard to find when you are ready to make pickles. Use dill sprigs when the seed heads turn brown. Also, use the hard stalks and green thread-like leaves in your pickling jars. The stalks and leaves provide the dill flavor to your pickles! NOTE: The seeds of the dill plant self-seed so be prepared to have a large patch the next spring. They easily pull up if you have too many plants.

I'm submitting this recipe now so you can think about your garden space for your patch of cucumbers and dill; and you can start looking for pickling cucumber and dill seeds.

Make these pickles the same day or the day after you pick or buy your cucumbers. The cucumbers will start to get soft or moldy in a few days if they set too long.

### Sun Dill Pickles:

- 6-1/2 cups water
- 3-1/4 cups Heinz cider vinegar
- 2/3 cup canning salt
- 1 teaspoon alum
- 1/2 large clove garlic (optional; I do not use garlic)
- Dill sprigs, heads, and seeds

Wash the jars, flat canning lids, and screw lids in very hot soapy water. Rinse thoroughly. Always use glass jars.

Wash cucumbers. Use a wide-mouthed jar of any

size you want (e.g., pint, quart, or gallon). They are easier to get your hand in to pack the cucumbers. Depending on the quantity of cucumbers I have, I fill my gallon jars first. If I am going to give jars to friends, I use wide-mouth quart jars or even pint jars. Pack the cucumbers as tight as you can. Less liquid is used if you pack them as tight as possible. Put the smallest cucumbers in the spaces. Pack the dill in the middle layer and top layer of cucumbers. This would be at least two heads, sprigs, and leaves in a large jar.

Mix the water, vinegar, canning salt, and alum. (If wanting garlic, add it here.) Do not heat this mixture. Stir the mixture until the salt has dissolved. Pour mixture into prepared jars. Fill jar with liquid to within one inch of top of jar. Make sure all the cucumbers are covered with liquid.

Cover jar with flat canning lid and screw lid. Set in sun for three days.

After three days, put the jars in the refrigerator. They must always be chilled to remain crisp. These pickles will be ready to eat after two weeks. I still have last year's pickles in my refrigerator; and they are still good.

Enjoy!



## Continuing Education 2023 Summary

BY LINDA SCHREIBER

Sixty-five people registered for Continuing Education 2023 held March 5 with 46 people attending in person and more than 50 people (at last count) viewing the presentation on City Channel 4's YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/live/RmGD4zaleis](https://www.youtube.com/live/RmGD4zaleis). Master Gardeners who participated in the in-person presentation or viewed the presentations online received 3 continuing education credit hours.

In-person participants evaluated speakers with a range of 1 to 5, with 5 as the highest score. Nearly 40 speaker evaluation forms were completed and returned. Evaluations ranged from 4.73 to 4.51.

Thanks go to GreenState Foundation for their support to bring three speakers to Johnson County, City Channel 4 for live streaming and videotaping the presentations and **Brandi Jannsen** and **Shannon Bielicke** for assisting with the program.

Speakers' resources are copied below for those who didn't attend in person.

**Chris Sedrel**  
supervises the  
tables at the  
recent JCMG  
Spring Awards  
Program and  
Potluck on  
Sunday, March  
26, 2023



## 2023 Continuing Education Speaker Resources

**Kristine Nemec**, Iowa Tallgrass Prairie Center ([www.tallgrassprairiecenter.org](https://www.tallgrassprairiecenter.org)), addressed the benefits of *Native Plants*. Resource material:



- <https://tallgrassprairiecenter.org/educator-resources-template>
- <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/native-plants-finder>
- <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>
- [www.monarchgard.com/](http://www.monarchgard.com/)
- *Prairie Up* by Benjamin Vogt
- Tallgrass Prairie Center website: <https://tallgrassprairiecenter.org>

**Aaron Steil**, ISU Consumer Horticulture Extension Specialist, presented *Community Gardening*.



- <https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu/>

**Nick McGrath**, Trees Forever, discussed *Planting Trees for Tomorrow*. Resource materials:



- <https://treesforever.org/>
- <https://species.itreetools.org/>
- [www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/DNR-News-Releases/ArticleID/670/Spring-Tree-Planting-Think-Before-You-Plant](http://www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/DNR-News-Releases/ArticleID/670/Spring-Tree-Planting-Think-Before-You-Plant)
- [www.americanforests.org/article/the-trees-that-miss-the-mammoths/#:~:text=An%20ecological%20anachronism%20is%20an,world%20of%20relatively%20small%20mammals](http://www.americanforests.org/article/the-trees-that-miss-the-mammoths/#:~:text=An%20ecological%20anachronism%20is%20an,world%20of%20relatively%20small%20mammals)





# Project Updates

## 1876 Coralville Schoolhouse

### KAREN MARTINEK, COORDINATOR

This project location is in Coralville at 310 5th St. The site has two perennial gardens, one on each side of the building. The gardens are filled with primarily native plantings that give a welcoming atmosphere to this historic school building.

I have worked on this project for the last three years and enjoy the quiet atmosphere and flexible work times. In the past, we have had group work sessions from 9 to 11 on Saturday mornings, which work out great for local traffic and parking. It is best to attend some of these work sessions to learn issues relating to these gardens and then you will be free to work at times that best fit your schedule. If the majority of those working on this project prefer a weekday instead of Saturday, that will also be acceptable. I am retired and only have firm commitments on Wednesdays. Scheduled work days will be dependent on decisions of the group and the weather.

In years past, we removed some overgrown areas that need new plantings in the summer. We also continue to fight thistles that really have taken hold in these gardens. As soon as the weather improves, I will schedule a cleanup work morning to allow the current plants to emerge.

This is my first year as the project coordinator, following **Cindy Parsons**. I've been a Master Gardener since 2014. I don't have all the answers or know all the issues in these gardens, so I am open to information and suggestions. I stopped by the garden a few weeks back and saw trash that had blown into the gardens from the apartment complex dumpster behind the building. I planned to go back to clean it up but then it snowed so that cleanup was delayed. When I went back, I picked up a large garbage bag of trash and removed most of the milkweed pods and seeds to keep our garden from replanting entirely with milkweed.

I'm looking forward to meeting MGs who are interested in keeping these gardens attractive for pollinators and visitors. Please contact **Karen Martinek** with questions. I live on Sugar Bottom Road in Solon.

## Yard and Garden Information

### JACKIE WELLBORN AND KAY MOHLING, COORDINATORS

Yard and Garden Information, previously known as Attended Displays, is chaired by **Jackie Wellborn** and co-chaired by **Kay Mohling**. The project allows Master Gardeners to staff an information table to provide printed resources, answer questions and provide recommendation throughout the year.

There are no set "workdays" as our schedule varies depending on upcoming events. The schedule this year included the Prairie Preview in March, the Master Gardener Plant Sale & Flea Market in May, and of course the Johnson County Fair and Taste of Heritage at Plum Grove in July. The Yard and Garden Information table is fun because you learn so much from the people who stop by to share stories and ask questions as well as from other Master Gardeners.

## Ecumenical Towers

### MICHAEL HESSELTINE AND JOHN WEEG, COORDINATORS

The Ecumenical Towers is a protected site that has been waking up for a few weeks already. It is never too early to plan for the coming year.

Last fall, we renewed one bed and this spring we will add color with early and late blooms. We will also be developing our "understory"—think forest but our forest is a tree and some benches. This will give us color and green as well as hold the much in.

If you walk by you will see a pile of river rock (thanks **Ann!**) that will be used for a water feature: a ground level bird/butterfly bath. We will shape this and get the water to it as soon as condensation starts to flow from the building.

This project also has some engineering—we will use a bell-siphon to lift and flush the water. As we develop more beds I expect this water feature to possibly move or grow (a new rain garden with water tolerant plants).

Not that a butterfly cares, but we will register as a Monarch Waystation. In the fall, we will have our bigger project—digging a new hügelkultur for a pollinator bed. We will plant some flowers from seed in the fall and add to the garden the following spring.

As usual, we are looking for material. If anyone has something like a large rubber/plastic garbage can lid, we would use it for the base of the bird bath.

We hope to see you the third Sunday of the month at 9 A.M. (when parking is free)!

## HortLine

### MARY STARRY, COORDINATOR

The HortLine is a great home for those who like to research and learn new information about everything involved with plants and gardens, as well as those who love to share their expertise with others. The nice thing about HortLine is you don't have to be an expert! Volunteers come to the Johnson County Extension Office, where we have a phone and computer connection. There is a HortLine voicemail, where anyone may leave a question, along with their name and phone number to get back to them. There is also a HortLine email address, where people can email the HortLine with their gardening questions.

Volunteering involves checking emails and voice messages for questions. Most of your volunteer time is spent analyzing various educational resources to find the best scientifically-researched answer to the question and responding to the person, either by phone or email.

Current volunteer times are Mondays and Thursdays, either from 9 to 11 A.M. or from 1 to 3 P.M. In the coldest winter months of December, January, and February we cover the HortLine one day a week

Please support HortLine by telling people about our services and encouraging them to email us at [johnsoncomg@gmail.com](mailto:johnsoncomg@gmail.com) or call us at 319-337-2145.

## Plum Grove Gardens

### DARLENE CLAUSEN, CAROLYN MURPHY, AND LAVON YEGGY, COORDINATORS

Spring cleanup will be held Saturday, April 15, from 9:30 A.M. to noon. Bring your own gloves and tools. In case of rain, we will start the following Saturday. Call or email Darlene, Carolyn, or Lavon if you have questions.





## MG Upcoming Events/Volunteer Opportunities

**\*\*\*Check organization website for cancellations prior to event date.\*\*\***

**April 2023**



### 100 Grannies

<http://www.100grannies.org>

No events listed this month.



### Backyard Abundance

<http://backyardabundance.org/events>

**Sunday, April 23 10 A.M. to noon.**

TEAM UP TO CLEAN UP 2023. Wetherby Park, 2400 Taylor Dr, Iowa City. Come join the Annual South District Neighborhood Team Up to Clean Up this spring as we beautify and clean up different sites within the South District.

**Saturday, April 29 10 to 11:30 A.M.**

MINDFUL MOVEMENT IN THE GARDEN. McPherson Park, 1858 7th Ave. Ct., Iowa City. Learn movement techniques to protect your body while enhancing your relationship with your garden.



### Bur Oak Land Trust

<https://buroaklandtrust.org/events-3/>

**Saturday and Sunday, April 1 and 2, 9 A.M. to 2 P.M.**

CHAINSAW ACADEMY. Kent Park. This level 1, two-day course is a mix of in-class instruction and field skill-building, and includes the following topics: chainsaw safety, required personal protective equipment, saw maintenance, starting a saw, basic limbing, bucking, and swamping. Participant cost: \$50/person; scholarships may be available to reduce participant cost (contact [sarah@buroaklandtrust.org](mailto:sarah@buroaklandtrust.org) for inquiry). Refunds will only be issued if the course is canceled. Participants must attend both days to complete the course.

**Saturday, April 28, 9 A.M. to 2 P.M.**

NATIVE PLANT SYMPOSIUM. Robert A Lee Recreation Center, Iowa City. Do you want to attract more pollinators and other wildlife to your yard? Maybe change up a landscape design by replacing invasive plants with native ones? Plan for your spring and summer gardening season while getting inspired by the power of native plants! Participants will enjoy a keynote address, breakout sessions, a catered lunch, and a sense of community among other native plant enthusiasts. Whether you are new to gardening or you've got the greenest thumb in town, there will be something for everyone at this event. Attendees will also have the opportunity purchase native plants and seeds from Forever Green Nursery and Allendan Nursery. Pre-registration is required. Follow the link to register: <http://bit.ly/3YlqRsU>



## Eastern Iowa Bird Watchers/IC Birds

<http://www.iowacitybirdclub.org/events>

**Saturday, April 1, 8 A.M. to noon.**

FIELD TRIP: LAKE MACBRIDE. Lake Macbride Beginning Birder Trip, but all are welcome. Meet leaders, Mark and Deb Rolfes, at Solon Recreation and Nature Area, W Sovers Street, at the far west end of the parking lot near the restrooms and splash pad. We'll go to various stopping points around both the north and south arms of the lake. Ending time is noon.

**Tuesdays, April 4, 11, and 18, 7 to 8:30 P.M.**

INTRODUCTION TO BIRDING COURSE: Basics of Birding at the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park. Learn about birding techniques, equipment, bird identification and more! Sign up for one session or all six! Advanced registration is requested, and is free to club members. Call (319) 645-1011 to register. <https://iowacitybirdclub.org/beginners-course/>

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## Iowa State Extension

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/calendar/>

No events listed this month.



## Johnson County Conservation

<https://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Johnson/Events.aspx>

**Wednesday, April 5, 10 to 11:30 A.M.**

NATURE BUDS-WORMS, Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park 2048 Hwy 6 NW, Oxford. Nature Buds is a program for kids ages 2-5. It involves hands-on STEM and arts stations around a nature topic. This month, we'll learn all about worms.

**Thursday, April 6, 3 to 4:30 P.M.**

JUNIOR EXPLORERS-WORMS. Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park 2048 Hwy 6 NW, Oxford. Junior Explorers is a program for kids ages K-2nd grade. It involves hands-on STEM and arts stations and exploration around a nature topic. This month, we'll learn all about worms.



## Johnson County-ISU Extension

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/johnson/>

**Tuesday, April 4, 5 to 7 P.M.**

FRUIT TREE WORKSHOP: HANDS-ON APPLE TREE GRAFTING. Johnson County Extension, 3109 Old Hwy 218 S. A fruit tree grafting workshop where participants will hear a presentation on why and how to graft fruit trees by commercial horticulture specialist Patrick O'Malley and take part in a hands-on apple tree grafting demonstration. <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/johnson/fruit-tree-workshop-offers-hands-apple-tree-grafting>





## Linn County-ISU Extension

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/linn/>

No events listed this month.



## Project GREEN

<http://www.projectgreen.org/> and <https://www.facebook.com/www.projectgreen.org>

Project GREEN asks you to Share Your Garden for Open Gardens Weekend 2023, Saturday, July 8, and Sunday, July 9. The free activity showcases the outdoor beauty of our area. Visit [ProjectGREEN.org](http://ProjectGREEN.org) to highlight your garden.



## Seed Savers Exchange

<https://www.seedsavers.org/events>

### Friday and Saturday, April 14 and 15

**VIRTUAL APPLE GRAFTING WORKSHOP.** In this workshop, you will learn the techniques and processes required to successfully bench graft new apple trees. We'll walk you through the process of splicing dormant scion wood and root stocks. Once the splice is made, the new trees will need to rest and heal under cool and damp conditions before planting outdoors. There are few things a gardener can do more gratifying than to graft and grow their own apple trees, and we look forward to walking you through the process.

<https://www.seedsavers.org/apple-grafting-workshop>



## Trees Forever

<https://treesforever.org/events>

### Wednesday, April 19, 7 to 9 P.M.

Think you know your tree knowledge? Come test it at Tree-via, a trivia event hosted by Lion Bridge Brewery and Trees Forever, 59 16th Ave SW, Cedar Rapids. Registration is \$20 per table of four and all proceeds go to Trees Forever. There will also be a special hazelnut beer on tap, so come on in and try it!

## Volunteer Opportunity

Volunteers are again needed to help clear brush from the [Sycamore Greenway trail](#) in south Iowa City: the small trees and shrubs threaten to crowd out the native prairie flowers and grasses that line the trail. Workdays are scheduled for various Sunday mornings September through November, from 9 to 10:30 A.M. The work will primarily involve using loppers to remove woody brush.



The hours can be counted towards non-JCMG-approved project hours (when recording hours, mark it under *other* and then make sure to include *location* and a *description of the task*).

This work is done with support of the City of Iowa City; please visit the SignUp Genius link for more details and event dates: [https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f48acab2fa4fdc25-brush3#](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f48acab2fa4fdc25-brush3#/). Email JCMG Melissa Serenda at [msserenda@gmail.com](mailto:msserenda@gmail.com) with questions.



### MG Birthdays

#### April 2023

Betty Alfaro  
Raina Banh  
Kathy Erenberger  
Carole Hanna  
Michael Hesseltine  
Jean Holzhammer  
Gail Johnson  
Kay Mohling  
Natalie Schreffler  
Janlyn Slach  
Sarah Sobocinski  
Jackie Wellborn

### 2023 JCMG Steering Committee Officers

Chair..... Doug Geraets  
Vice Chair ..... Jackie Wellborn  
Secretary ..... Barb Robinson  
Treasurer ..... Jean Holzhammer  
Past Chair..... Sharon Jeter



***The Johnson County Master Gardener Thymes is published monthly, except January and August. It is distributed under the auspices of Iowa State University.***

### Mail can be sent to:

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach  
Johnson County  
Attn: Master Gardener Newsletter  
3109 Old Highway 218 S.  
Iowa City, IA 52246

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