



## Johnson County Master Gardener

# THYMES

**April 2021**

### MG Steering Committee Meeting

**Wednesday, Apr. 14, 7 P.M.;** virtual meeting via Zoom will continue for the foreseeable future. Interested MGs are invited to participate—contact Shannon for instructions!

### Thymes Deadline

Information/articles for the *Thymes* should be sent to Melissa Serenda at [msserenda@gmail.com](mailto:msserenda@gmail.com) or Doug Geraets at: [dougrph@aol.com](mailto:dougrph@aol.com).

Please send news, volunteer opportunities, stories, pictures, gardening book reviews, etc., by Friday, April 23 for the May issue.

### Johnson County Master Gardeners

**Sarah DeLong-Duhon and Dave Layton to present ‘Delightful Iowa Fungi’**



Johnson County Master Gardeners will offer a virtual continuing education program on Sunday, April 25, from 1:30–2:30 P.M. with Sarah DeLong-Duhon and Dave Layton, who are presenting *Delightful Iowa Fungi*.

Sarah and Dave have been hunting and studying mushrooms for decades. Together, they will share the satisfaction of identifying and learning about Iowa’s fungi and the internet tools they use. They will describe the tasty mushrooms that are found in Iowa and perhaps share characteristics of a good hunting spot as well as some cooking methods. Both are members of the

Iowa Mushroom Club which is a part of the Prairie States Mushroom Club.

The series will also be hosted live from 1:30–2:30 p.m. on the JCMG Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Johnson-County-Master-Gardeners-of-Iowa-240093463252>. The sessions are free and open to the public. City Channel 4 will live-stream the presentation and videotape for rebroadcast. Check CC4 for rebroadcast times. The JCMG continuing education programs are posted to its Facebook page.

*The final Master Gardener continuing education virtual program will be offered Sunday, May 23, ‘Iowa Bees’ from 1:30–2:30 P.M.*

### Growing Tomatoes... Inside the House— Final Episode

**BY LINDA DIGGELMANN**

Previous editions of the *Thymes* included articles on growing a tasty cherry tomato plant from cuttings taken in November, 2020. The plants thrived and produced several tomatoes.

The first harvest occurred on St. Patrick’s Day.



The tomatoes are tasty but quite a bit smaller than the ones grown outside last season. The fully ripe tomato is a robust red in color and maintains an intact skin even when quite ripe. The yield is small, as expected, due

to my decision to choose the simple pollination method of flicking each stem with my fingers.

## Lessons Learned

- Use a bigger pot (one gallon or larger) when planting the rooted cuttings. The mature plant consumes a lot of water in a day.
- Use an alternate method for enhancing pollination of the flowers, such as painting each stigma with pollen from the flower.
- Spray the plant with organic insecticide to control white fly infestation following the directions on the container.

Since it is nearing time to plant seedlings, today I dismantled the four tomato plants growing through the wire shelving I use for seedlings. I took cuttings of these tomato plants to plant in this year's garden. This was a fun experiment to do during winter and the COVID-19 isolation we experienced!

## Bees and butterflies aren't the only insects in Iowa!

BY LINDA SCHREIBER



It's not a miracle cure—but—if you are susceptible to blood-sucking insects like mosquitoes why not try planting a few plants to repel mosquitoes? It might discourage the blood-suckers from coming too close. When you're in the garden, crush the leaves of these plants and rub the oils on your skin to get the most protection.

- **Citronella Grass:** The essential oil from citronella grass is used to make insect-repellent candles. Be sure to purchase the tall spiky grass *Cymbopogon nardus*, not “citronella plant” (*Pelargonium citrosum*), which is a geranium that has an aroma similar to citronella but doesn't contain the same mosquito-repelling oils. Citronella grass prefers partial sun and moist, loamy soil, so water every day if you're growing it in a container. It is a perennial in tropical



climates but can be grown as an annual in colder places.

- **Basil:** Basil essential oil is being studied for its mosquito-fighting properties, and anecdotal evidence says just growing it helps keep mosquitoes at bay. But even if it doesn't have any impact on mosquitoes, you'll still be able to make fresh homemade pesto, so why not give it a try? Basil likes full sun and moist soil. Daily watering in the height of summer is essential, especially if the herb is planted in a pot.
- **Lemon Balm:** This member of the mint family gets its distinctive scent from citronellal. It's easy to grow—almost too easy. A perennial, lemon balm can quickly become invasive and take over your whole plot, so it's best planted in a container. Give it full sun to part shade and don't forget to water.
- **Peppermint:** Peppermint essential oil also repels mosquitoes. Related to lemon balm, peppermint has the same care requirements: lots of sun and water and it has a tendency to spread. You can also use the leaves of both peppermint and lemon balm to brew tea.
- **Lavender:** The scent of lavender is intoxicating. Anecdotal evidence and some tests on lavender essential oil suggests that mosquitoes do not like it. Drying lavender flowers and making sachets may also ward off mosquitoes. So you really can't go wrong growing lavender because it's so gorgeous. It prefers full sun and drier soil; water once or twice a week during the growing season. Lavender is a perennial, so expect it to come back yearly.
- **Catnip:** Nepetalactone, the essential oil that gives catnip its distinctive smell, has mosquito-repelling properties. Catnip, a member of the mint family, grows best in full sun in well-draining soil. It also tolerates partial sun and just about any type



of soil. Once established, deadhead the flowers when they appear, since catnip spreads quickly by seed and can easily take over.

## Plants Toxic to Pets

BY SHARON RUDE



As the spring weather warms up and plants start to emerge, or you plan your plant purchases, it is a good time to be aware of any potential poisons, which may be lurking in your gardens. A variety of plants may be toxic to cats and dogs. Both indoor and outdoor plants can cause a threat to our four-legged friends. Be careful not to confuse noxious with toxic. Toxic means poisonous. Some plants may contain oxalates, which can be toxic. The definition of noxious is a weed classified under the Iowa Weed Law. The law gives each county the authority to order the destruction of weeds classified as noxious by the state. Also be careful of plants with similar appearances and look-a-likes such as ground ivy which may be confused with henbit, but neither of these are considered toxic. As you plan your garden and plants for the growing season, be mindful to keep an eye on your four-legged friends to keep them safe from encountering plants which may be toxic.

According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) website, the number of phone calls to the Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) increased from 2019 to 2020 due to bouquets and plants. Check out their list at <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control> for a complete list, which includes links for cats, dogs, and horses. The list is lengthy but may not be comprehensive. Consumption of some plant material may cause vomiting and gastrointestinal upset for dogs and cats. Some plants may cause an oral irritation, pain and swelling of the mouth, tongue and lips, excessive drooling or difficulty swallowing. Some plants may be lethal. Some plants can cause tremors and seizures, and ingestion can cause incoordination or may cause

liver damage. In horses, some plants may cause colic. If you believe that your animal is ill or may have ingested a poisonous substance, contact your veterinarian or the ASPCA APCC 24-hour emergency poison hotline (888) 426-4435.

In the *Iowa State University Weed Identification Field Guide*, weeds are identified which are considered both noxious and/or toxic. Weeds may be annuals, biennials or perennials. Weeds are generally arranged into three categories: grass, broadleaf and other weeds. Weeds are broken down into their various families. Noxious weeds in Iowa include quack grass, poison hemlock, common cocklebur, field bindweed, and horse nettle.

### Toxic weeds include the following:

The Apiaceae or Umbelliferae is a family of mostly aromatic flowering plants named after the type genus *Apium* and commonly known as the celery, carrot or parsley family, or simply as umbellifers. The following toxic plants are in the Apiaceae family.

- **Poison hemlock** (*Conium maculatum*, also known as Deadly hemlock, poison parsley). As the name suggests, all plants are poisonous to humans and livestock. The foliage has a strong parsnip odor.
- **Wild Parsnip** (*Pastinaca sativa*) has become well known in recent years. If plant sap gets on skin that is exposed to sunlight, the skin may redden and develop a rash. Blisters and burning pain may occur in severe cases.

The family Asteraceae, alternatively Compositae, consists of a very large group of flowering plants. Compositae commonly refers to the aster, daisy, composite, or sunflower family. The following is in the Asteraceae family:

- **Common Cocklebur** (*Xanthium strumarium*) seedlings and seeds can be toxic if ingested.

The Convolvulaceae family, known commonly as the bindweed or morning glory family, is a family of mostly herbaceous vines, but also trees,

shrubs and herbs, and also includes the sweet potato and a few other food tubers. The Convolvulaceae family includes:

- **Field bindweed** (*Convolvulus arvensis*, also known as Creeping Jenny, field morning glory). These plants may become toxic to livestock.

The Phytolaccaceae is a family of flowering plants. It is also known as the Pokeweed family. All parts of the mature Common Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*, inkberry, pokeberry) plant are poisonous, especially the roots. The dark red berry juice easily stains.

The Solanaceae, or nightshades, are a family of flowering plants that ranges from annual and perennial herbs to vines, lianas, epiphytes, shrubs, and trees, and includes a number of agricultural crops, medicinal plants, spices, weeds, and ornamentals. Many members of the family contain potent alkaloids, and some are highly toxic, but many—including tomatoes, potatoes, eggplant, bell and chili peppers—are used as food. The following are in the Solanaceae or nightshade family:

- **Jimsonweed** (*Datura stramonium*, moonflower, thornapple). Crushed leaves and stems produce a distinctive unpleasant odor. All plant parts are poisonous.
- **Smooth Groundcherry, longleaf groundcherry** (*Physalis longifolia*). The leaves and unripe fruit are poisonous.
- **Horsenettle** (*Salarnum carolinense*, bull nettle). The leaves smell like a potato when crushed. Leaves, stems, and berries are poisonous, even when the plant is dead.
- **Eastern black nightshade** (*Solanum ptycanthum*, black nightshade) All plant parts are poisonous. Plant parts become more toxic with age, except for the berries. Berries mixed with harvested soybeans can stain beans and reduce the value of the crop.
- **Buffalobur** (*Solanum rostratum*, Kansas thistle, prickly nightshade). The leaves, berries and roots are poisonous. The spines can cause injury.

### **Houseplants which are toxic to cats and dogs include the following:**

The Araliaceae is a family of flowering plants composed of primarily woody plants and some herbaceous plants. It is predominantly distinguishable based on its woody habit, tropical distribution, and the presence of simple umbels.

[Australian Ivy Palm](#) (*Brassaia actinophylla*) (Schefflera, Umbrella Tree, Octopus Tree, Starleaf) is included in the Araliaceae family.

The Araceae are a family of monocotyledonous flowering plants in which flowers are borne on a type of inflorescence called a spadix. The spadix is usually accompanied by, and sometimes partially enclosed in, a spathe or leaf-like bract. Also known as the arum family, members are often known as aroids. [Devils Ivy](#) (*Epipremnum aureum*, Pothos, Golden Pothos, Taro Vine, Ivy Arum) and [Dieffenbachia](#) (*Dieffenbachia*, Charming Dieffenbachia, Giant Dumb Cane, Tropic Snow, Dumbcane, Exotica, Spotted Dumb Cane, Exotica Perfection) are included in this family.

The Crassulaceae, also known as the stonecrop family or the orpine family, are a diverse family of dicotyledon flowering plants characterized by succulent leaves. Flowers generally have five floral parts. The Crassulaceae family includes [Devil's Backbone](#) (*Kalanchoe tubiflora*, Mother-In-Law-Plant, Kalanchoe, Chandelier Plant, Mother of Millions).

*Crassula ovata*, commonly known as [Jade Plant](#) (*Crassula*, Baby Jade, Dwarf rubber plant, Jade tree, Chinese rubber plant, Japanese rubber plant, lucky plant, money plant or money tree) is a succulent plant. The jade plant is very toxic to dogs, causing gastric distress, heartbeat irregularities, and depression among other symptoms. When cats or dogs ingest this houseplant, they may vomit, become uncoordinated or have loss of muscle function, lethargy, slow heart rate, or depression. Your cat may be more aggressive, fail to groom itself as usual, or hide more.

Lilies, which may be found in a bouquet, are toxic to cats. Lilies in the “true lily” and “daylily” families are very dangerous for cats. The entire lily



plant is toxic: the stem, leaves, flowers, pollen, and even the water in a vase. Eating just a small amount of a leaf or flower petal, licking a few pollen grains off its fur while grooming, or drinking the water from the vase can cause a cat to develop fatal kidney failure in a very short period of time. Dogs that eat lilies may have minor stomach upset but they don't develop kidney failure.

Interestingly, not all parts of a Poinsettia are poisonous. The poinsettia is a commercially important plant species of the diverse spurge family. Though often assumed to be highly toxic, the poinsettia is not dangerous to pets or children. Exposure to the plant, even consumption may cause nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

So as you are in your yard with your furry four-legged friend, please remember to be aware of anything they may be interested in nibbling, and any potential hazards they may be subjecting themselves to.

**Resources:**

1. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Weed Identification Field Guide 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (copyright 2015)
2. American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals  
<https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control>
3. www.fda.gov

|  <b>MG Birthdays</b>  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>April 2021</b>  |                    |
| <b>3</b> .....   | Susan Ahrens       |
| <b>5</b> .....   | Carole Hanna       |
| <b>10</b> .....  | Jean Holzhammer    |
| <b>12</b> .....  | Betty Alfaro       |
| <b>13</b> .....  | Joni Jones         |
| <b>24</b> .....  | Michael Hesseltine |
| <b>24</b> .....  | Kathy Erenberger   |
| <b>24</b> .....  | Sara Maples        |
| <b>25</b> .....  | Kathy Patience     |
| <b>27</b> .....  | Janice Dallas      |
| <b>28</b> .....  | Jackie Wellborn    |
| <b>30</b> .....  | Gail Johnson       |

## MG Upcoming Events/Volunteer Opportunities

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

**April 2021**

### Johnson County-ISU Extension

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

**Wednesday, Apr. 14, 2021**

7 to 9 P.M. JCMG virtual Steering Committee Meeting via Zoom. All MGs are welcome to participate. Contact Shannon Bielicke at [bielicke@iastate.edu](mailto:bielicke@iastate.edu) or 319-337-2145.

**Sunday, Apr. 25, 2021**

1:30 to 2:30 P.M. JCMG virtual continuing education program *Delightful Iowa Fungi*. To register contact: Shannon Bielicke, Johnson County Extension, at [bielicke@iastate.edu](mailto:bielicke@iastate.edu) or 319-337-2145.

### Linn County-ISU Extension

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

**Saturdays in April**

Linn County Master Gardener Series. All events via Zoom. Register through Indian Creek Nature Center.

- Apr. 10:
  - 9 to 10 A.M. Square Foot and Raised Bed Gardening
  - 10 to 11 A.M. Hydrangeas
  - 11 A.M. to 12 P.M. Green with Envy
- Apr. 17:
  - 9 to 10 A.M. Connect, Grow, Share a Row
  - 10 to 11 A.M. Cheap Tricks
  - 11 A.M. to 12 P.M. Repurpose, Recycle...REJOICE!

Cost \$5 per person/session. Find details and register for all via ICNC's event calendar:

<http://indiancreeknaturecenter.doubleknot.com/event/calendar/3421>.

### Trees Forever

<http://www.treesforever.org/Events>

**Tuesday, Apr. 6, 8 to 11:30 A.M.**

Tree Seedling Giveaway at the Iowa State Capitol. West steps of the Iowa State Capitol in Des Moines. Parking available at the parking garage or on side streets. Trees Forever will distribute 150-200 seedlings to legislators and others at the Iowa State Capitol. Give a voice to the trees by promoting the importance of trees and woodlands to Iowa's senators and representatives.

Notes: This is an outdoor event, so dress for the weather. Trees Forever is following COVID-safe health protocols for all events. Note that all volunteers are asked to maintain proper distancing and wear face masks. RSVP to [lberckes@treesforever.org](mailto:lberckes@treesforever.org).

**Tuesday, Apr. 6, 12 to 1 P.M.**

Tree Chat. Trees Forever is excited to unveil a new feature Tree Chat; which is your opportunity to get up to speed on all things trees and forests. This informal Q&A is intended to answer all your questions about trees, prairies, seedlings and everything under the sun! This Tree Chat will feature Trees Forever Field Coordinators Jeff Jensen & Emily Swihart providing a sneak peak at opportunities to plant seedlings and larger shade trees in your community. If spring fever has you going stir crazy don't miss this chance to ask your questions and interact with a Trees Forever field coordinator. Register at <http://www.treesforever.org/TreeChat>.

**Thursday, Apr. 8, 10 A.M.**

Iowa Urban Forestry Virtual Awards Ceremony. Awards Ceremony and Keynote at 10 A.M. with optional workshop "The Ins and Outs of Urban Wood Reuse: Workshop Session" at 1 P.M. Keynote speaker Dwayne Sperber will be speaking about the history of the urban wood industry and why we should utilize precious and renewable resources. Registration link can be found at Trees Forever's events calendar: <http://www.treesforever.org/Events>.

**Additional Resources/Event Opportunities****100 Grannies**

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

**Backyard Abundance**

<http://backyardabundance.org/events>

**Bur Oak Land Trust**

<https://www.facebook.com/BurOakLandTrust/events>

**Eastern Iowa Bird Watchers/IC Birds**

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

**Iowa State Extension**

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

**Johnson County Conservation**

<http://www.johnson-county.com/conservation>

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/johnsoncountyconservation/events/>

**New Pioneer Coop**

<https://www.newpi.coop/community>

**Project GREEN**

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

**Seed Savers**

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



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***Mail can be sent to:***

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