



December 2022/January 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

Historic 1876 Coralville Schoolhouse (Open)

Ecumenical Towers

Michael Hesseltine, John Weeg

Demonstration Garden

Chris Sedrel, Laurie Roehl

Downtown City Gardens

Linda Schreiber

Fairgrounds Flower Beds and Rain Garden

Chris Sedrel, Lavon Yeggy, Megan Garrels

Firefighters' Memorial

Barb Schintler

Plant Sale/Flea Market

Emil Rinderspacher

Hortline

Esther Retish, Mary Hensley, Carl Hensley

Hospice Gardens

Melanie Hauptert

Buckets of Flowers & Scarecrow Contest

Lavon Yeggy

Oaknoll Garden Project

Vicki Siefers, Marilou Gay

Plum Grove

Darlene Clausen, Lavon Yeggy, Carolyn Murphy

Speakers Bureau

Jackie Wellborn

Thymes Newsletter

Melissa Serenda, Doug Geraets

It's Thyme to: Garden Chores for December/January

**BY LINDA SCHREIBER AND
MELISSA SERENDA**

We're hoping you've completed your outdoor garden tasks before the cold set in. If not, take advantage of these tepid days to complete some of your outdoor garden chores.

- Prune and trim dead branches – save major pruning for February-March
- Make plans to feed the birds
- Protect your fragile plants with mulch, straw, or other organic material like chopped leaves
- Continue to compost your food wastes
- Remove heavy snow when it comes (you know it will) from shrubs and plants to prevent damage
- Turn off outside water spigots to prevent damage
- Use deicing salts minimally to prevent damage to lawns and plants
- Clean and sharpen your tools if you haven't done so already
- Make a list of seed(s) to order

Important Reminder: Record Your Hours!

You've worked hard this year! Make sure your volunteer and continuing education hours are recorded: click [here](#) to access the Volunteer Recognition System and log your time.



The projects you work on each year not only offer community assistance but also raise awareness of our program and projects.

Hours must be reported by **December 31** for you to remain on the MG active roster.



MG Steering Committee Meeting

Next meeting **Wednesday, January 11, 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. Please send news, volunteer opportunities, stories, pictures, gardening book reviews, etc., for the February issue by **Friday, January 27**.

Musings on the Garden

BY DOUG GERAETS

Now that the growing season is over, reflecting on the past year in the garden is fun and informative. The calendar said the season started but warm weather and plant growth were delayed; perennials were especially behind (remember the MG Plant Sale preparation!). Setting plants in the garden wasn't delayed as transplants were hardened off and planted by early May.

Once my garden was planted and transplants settled in, growth proceeded rapidly. Sufficient rains kept things growing, although we experienced a few prolonged periods of dryness last summer that required watering, especially the tomatoes and peppers. I like to trickle water at the base of the plants using a single garden hose and a very slow flow of water.

Something unusual happened to my tomatoes this year—they suffered damage from *herbicide drift* from a nearby farmer who applied 2,4-D in his soybean field on a day with 10–15 mph SE wind. Half of my 15 plants showed injury: curled leaves, stunted growth, and no blossoms. It took many weeks for the damage to gradually reverse and when it did the plants produced new growth, flowered, and produced fruits. Much of that occurred late in



Tomato plant post-herbicide drift damage showing curled leaves and reduced blossoms

the season so the plants experienced top-heavy vegetation and much smaller fruits that did not ripen completely.

A lot of plant material ended up in my compost trench—notice I said *trench*. I don't practice traditional bin composting as I find it too time-consuming and labor-intensive.

Instead, I dig a large trench two feet deep and layer plant material and kitchen scraps between layers of soil until I cover everything with about 6–12 inches of topsoil ... more about that technique in a future newsletter.

Despite the herbicide damage, we managed

to harvest enough tomatoes for our canning and freezing needs, in addition to extras to donate to local food banks. When you plant enough tomatoes and peppers you will have a surplus to share!

It seemed to me that pest insects were not as bad this year. Gnats and mosquitoes did appear through the summer but not in insufferable quantities. In addition, the most damaging pests in the garden—Japanese beetles, squash bugs, and grasshoppers—did not seem to be as prominent this year.

Striped and spotted cucumber beetles, however, did make their appearance in July, and by early August my cucumber vines succumbed to the bacterial wilt disease they transmit.



Eggs of parasitic braconid wasp attached to hornworm.

One insect that we did find in large populations but not until September, which seemed unusually late, was hornworms. Not only can they decimate tomato plants in a very short period of time, but they are large and nasty looking. I probably picked off about 30–50 worms over a 10–14 day period. A few were covered in white eggs that look a lot like white rice protruding from the worm's body. Those hornworms I left alone. Braconid wasps, *Cotesia congregata*, lay their eggs on hornworms to provide their larvae food, killing the hornworms in the process.

We've had some spectacular late summer and fall weather to continue work in the garden. Just about everything is harvested, except for a partial row of Kennebec potatoes and some leeks, and some vegetation to be cleaned up and composted. I've managed to do some fall tilling to incorporate mulch and leaves into the garden.

So I guess you can say it was an eventful year of gardening. Every year is unique and I always learn something new or vow to do something better in next year's garden. That includes tying up my pea vines (sugar snap and snow pod) so they aren't blown over by stormy winds, and pruning my indeterminate tomato plants so they don't become out-of-control and excessively crowded. Now, about those weeds!



Project GREEN and the Iowa City Public Library present
Second Sunday
2023 Winter Garden Forums*
 Meeting Room A – 2 P.M.
Free to the Public



Sunday, Jan. 8, 2023, Dawn Bouslog, owner of Dawn's Pleasant Valley Greenhouses, will forecast *What's New in the Garden*. Using her knowledge and skills operating a popular greenhouse for decades, Dawn will guide new and experienced gardeners to find the appropriate plant selections for spring, summer and fall. Iowa City gardeners are familiar with Pleasant Valley which operated in Iowa City from 1952 until 2017 when the lot on South Gilbert Street was sold and developed as Iowa City Riverfront Crossings. Dawn continues the tradition to enrich the environment with plants and all that complements them in her new location offering a great selection of annuals, perennials, herbs and veggies at 29030 150th Street, South English.



Sunday, Feb. 12, 2023, Chris Henze, Johnson County Roadside Vegetation Manager, will address *Naturalizing Roadsides: Making a More Beautiful Iowa*. The prairie that once covered 85% of Iowa has dwindled to 1/100 of 1% which is protected and managed as prairie. Iowa's native roadsides help prevent soil erosion and provide important habitat while promoting the use of prairie statewide. In Johnson County, Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management maintains a safe travel environment on the county right-of-ways, controls noxious weeds and soil erosion, sustains water quality, improves wildlife habitat, and provides the public with aesthetically pleasing roadsides using a variety of management tools rather than rely on just one. Chris is also the county Weed Commissioner who oversees the control of legally noxious weeds on all public and private property.



Sunday, March 12, 2023, (Daylight Saving Time), Jane Wilch, Iowa City Recycling Coordinator, will discuss opportunities and options that citizens can make for *A GREENER Tomorrow*. Iowa City's Resource Management Division and staff are leaders in recycling programs that benefit our community and Iowa. The Iowa City Landfill offers gardeners compost to benefit the soil in your garden and mulch at an affordable price. Plastic is overtaking our oceans and our landfills. What can consumers do to take climate action and reduce their environmental footprints? Learn all about the waste reduction efforts happening locally, and how you can participate to be part of the environmental solution.

*Second Sunday Garden Forums are free and open to the public.

Attendance at the forum provides Iowa State University Extension Master Gardeners education CEUs. Second Sunday Garden Forums are live streamed on the Iowa City Public Library Cable TV and YouTube channel, and promoted in our newsletter and on Project GREEN's website – www.projectGREEN.org
 Visit Project GREEN website for more information www.projectGREEN.org or on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/www.projectgreen.org/>

The Plants We Eat: Seeds

BY MARY LOU MAYFIELD

Seed: A plant embryo encased in a seed coat and containing an energy source.

SNAP educational resource, “Growing Healthy Habits: Parts of the Plant We Eat”.Pg. 67

- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VG0PqcmLsFc2yOWekJzsyHq1W3UMd41/view>

You can see the plant embryo inside a dried bean that has been soaked.

- <https://www.exploratorium.edu/snacks/see-inside-seed>



There are some seeds, notably corn and peas/beans, that we eat in different ways at different stages of maturity. We eat “sweet corn,” or corn on the cob, while it is still tender and juicy. We eat “dent corn” when it is fully ripe, as a grain.

In addition to eating fresh green beans, lima beans, edamame, and peas, we also eat many kinds of dried beans by boiling them.

- <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/protein-foods/beans-and-peas>

Other seeds we eat as nuts and grains.

- <https://www2.palomar.edu/users/warmstrong/ecoph8.htm>
- <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/grains>
- <https://www.myplate.gov/tip-sheet/make-half-your-grains-whole-grains> (go to PDF LINK)

RECIPES

Corn Chowder (I like to add leftover cod)

<https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/ten-minute-corn-chowder>

Three Bean Salad (make it 4 beans by adding a can of chickpeas/garbanzos)

<https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/three-bean-salad>

Trail Mix

<https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/trail-treat>

Tubers Highlight Holiday Dinners

BY LINDA SCHREIBER

Did you know the two dishes that share a name and a spotlight at Thanksgiving aren’t related? Both are root vegetables, and both are native to Central and South America. Sweet potatoes belong to a group of flowering plants in the morning glory family – *Convolvulaceae*. Potatoes belong to the nightshade or *Solanaceae* family and are cousins to peppers, tomatoes, and eggplants.

Both derive their common name, *batata*, from a Caribbean term that morphed into “potato.” In the mid-1700s “sweet” was added to the orange-fleshed tuber to differentiate the two crops.



But wait that’s not all ... there is another root crop, yams, also unrelated, and served interchangeably with sweet potatoes. Yams belong to the *Dioscoreaceae* family.

Sweet potatoes have tapered ends and relatively smooth skin while true yams are typically larger with rough skin and a more cylindrical shape.

George Washington Carver, associated with legume peanuts, advised farmers how to grow tubers and eat them. His research included the

development of recipes and other food products made from sweet potatoes. One of his most successful inventions was using sweet potatoes to stretch World War II rations during a wheat shortage. It's still available today as a gluten-free baking alternative!

Which tuber is healthier? That's a story for another time.

Sources:

- <https://www.nps.gov/gwca/index.htm>
- <https://nutritionfacts.org/questions/what-is-the-healthiest-potato/>

Free Nectar? Don't Mind if I Do!

BY MELISSA SERENDA

Most people are familiar with the mutually beneficial relationship between plants and pollinators: plants offer up nutritious nectar or pollen to entice insects, birds, or small mammals to assist in their (ahem) sexual reproduction. Sure, in some cases the plants cheat and trick a bee into “mating” with a flower that resembles a female bee with no nectar or pollen provided, or a tricky bee will snip into a flower's base to drink the nectar while avoiding its pollen-laden anthers. But for the most part, it's a convenient system for both plants and pollinators.



Ants on Partridge Pea. The extrafloral nectaries are visible as small red spots near the base of each leaflet

Some plants, however, have a secret stash of nectaries tucked away on their stems or leaves. These little pots of sweetness offer up nectar to insects, apparently without a catch. Ants or flies may wander the leaves, sipping nectar, and going nowhere near the flowers. It's obvious what the insects get out of this—but how does it benefit the

plant?

The most likely advantage plants derive from extrafloral nectaries is protection. Ants and other insects that avail themselves of the nectaries will, in the defense of their wonderfully nutritious and low-effort food source, drive off or deter more harmful herbivores that may attempt to feed on the plants themselves.

I first learned of “extrafloral nectaries” when researching the partridge pea, which has fairly large nectaries on its leaves that are easily visible by the naked eye. Its foliage is often crawling with ants and other small insects, and if you watch closely you can see them pausing at the little nectar pots.



Assorted ants and flies visiting Partridge Pea nectaries.

When I observed an ant on the leaves of Illinois bundleflower, another plant in the legume family like the partridge pea, I wondered if it, too, had extrafloral nectaries to lure insects as a protective squad. I examined the leaf but was unable to find any obvious pots like the partridge pea had. Research online confirmed that the Illinois bundleflower did indeed have extrafloral nectaries, so I was determined to find them.



A fly foraging on Illinois Bundleflower.

First I staked out a patch of bundleflower on the Greenway and watched the ants and flies going

about their business. They seemed to wander aimlessly up and down the stems and leaves, but often paused at the petioles, where the compound leaves joined the stem. Armed with an idea of where to focus my search, I collected a stem to bring home for a closer look (doing my best to de-ant it before bringing it inside, with limited success).

It didn't take long at all, with a little extra magnification, to find tiny little nectar pots right at the base of the leaves, where the ants had paused in their journeys. Just a tiny round opening with a drop of nectar within, there for the taking by any passing invertebrate, no questions asked.



The minuscule nectary at the base of an Illinois Bundleflower leaf.

What other plants are harboring these secret sweets? You can bet I will be keeping a closer eye out for ants among the leaves.

Further reading/resources:

- [Many Plants Have Extrafloral Nectaries Helpful to Beneficials](#)
- [The diversity, ecology and evolution of extrafloral nectaries: current perspectives and future challenges](#)

(This article first appeared on [Sycamore Greenway Friends](#).)



Winter may have arrived, but some plants are already planning ahead for next year!

Many trees and shrubs, like this American Hazelnut, begin to develop catkins in the late summer; they will remain on the plant through the winter and, once warmer days of spring arrive, begin to elongate and mature to release pollen to the wind.

Look for winter catkins on hazelnut shrubs as well as on birches.

Photo by JCMG Melissa Serenda

Education Hours: ISU Master Gardener YouTube

Need another hour or two to fulfill your education requirement for 2023? (MGs who have completed their internship need to complete 10 educational hours during each calendar year to maintain their certification.)

Check out the [ISU Master Gardener YouTube channel](#). Videos between 30 and 90 minutes are available on a wide variety of topics, including:

- Exploring the Lives of Iowa's Bumble Bees
- Houseplant Propagation
- Gardening with Youth
- Planting Design Tips
- and much more!



**IOWA STATE
UNIVERSITY**
Extension and Outreach



Project Updates

Downtown City Gardens

LINDA SCHREIBER, COORDINATOR

The south garden facing Burlington Street at Capitol Street Parking Garage is undergoing a transformation to native perennials. The first phase was introduced last spring. A second phase will be implemented in 2023 along with updates to Melrose Avenue. Our Master Gardener volunteers streamline the work and make it fun—you are extraordinary. I appreciate your dedication and commitment so much. In this season of gratitude, I am thankful for all you do to help DCG, donating to food pantries, beautifying and maintaining neighborhood gardens, providing instruction and education, and/or answering the public's gardening and landscape questions. I appreciate you. THANK YOU! .

Ecumenical Towers

MICHAEL HESSELTINE AND JOHN WEEG, COORDINATORS

The existing beds have been well maintained and are a joy for the residents as well as those just passing by. Our season ended with a rejuvenation project which begins an expansion/rejuvenation cycle. We will roll into next year registering as a monarch waystation (which the monarchs knew already) and planning for the new pollinator beds (we hope the monarchs tell the goldfinches). Here we want to switch over to native plants with an eye on water management. This will be a multi-year cycle as we maintain what is there and continue to add new.

Thymes Newsletter

MELISSA SERENDA AND DOUG GERAETS, COORDINATORS

Thank you to those who completed the JCMG *Thymes* Survey. There were a dozen responses providing feedback on which features and articles are most interesting and great suggestions for topics that you would like to see covered. Some of the more popular items included Project Updates, Plant Profiles, Gardening Tips & Tricks, and Volunteer Opportunities. We hope to continue receiving your feedback—and your articles—to educate and inform JCMGs and the public in the year to come.





MG Upcoming Events/Volunteer Opportunities

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

December 2022/January 2023



100 Grannies

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

No events in December/January.



Backyard Abundance

<http://backyardabundance.org/events>

No events in December/January.



Bur Oak Land Trust

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

No events in December/January.



Eastern Iowa Bird Watchers/IC Birds

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

Sunday, Dec. 18, all day

THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT program is administered by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It is the longest-running citizen science project in existence. The Iowa City count has been conducted annually since 1951. Our count area is a 15-mile diameter circle which includes north and west Iowa City, Coralville, Tiffin, North Liberty, Solon, Lake Macbride, Kent Park, and most of the Coralville Reservoir. The circle is divided into territories, and a group with an experienced leader is assigned to cover each territory. The goal is to identify and count all the birds found in the count circle on that day. You can participate for part or all of the day.

We need field participants to cover local parks, wildlife areas, etc., as well as feeder watchers to count birds in their own yards. If you wish to be a field participant, you will be assigned to a small group with an experienced leader in an assigned territory. After you are assigned to a group, your group leader will contact you to coordinate a meeting time and place. Some groups look for owls before dawn. To be a feeder watcher, send your address to Chris Edwards and he will confirm that you are in the count area. If you know others who may want to participate as feeder watchers, please share this information with them.

To participate either in the field or at your feeder, please contact Chris Edwards at credwards@aol.com or (319) 430-4732 as soon as possible, but no later than Sunday, December 11.



Iowa State Extension

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

Monday, Dec. 5, 9 A.M.–noon

WINTER PROJECT EXTRAVAGANZA: SURPRISE & DELIGHT FLOWERS. Pick up kit from Wolf Floral in Washington Dec. 5–9. Kit includes materials to design four mini fresh floral arrangements in mini vases with blank cards for special messages. Learn, create, and then SURPRISE someone who is doing extraordinary work. Contact: Brandi Dawson, (319) 653-4811, bldawson@iastate.edu. Location: Wolf Floral, Address: 105 W Washington, IA.

Monday, Dec. 5, 9–10:30 A.M.

WINTER PROJECT EXTRAVAGANZA: WINTER WREATHS. Create 1-foot size winter wreath. Learn creative floral design, stem care, wreath/floral mechanics. Hear the story of this business entrepreneur. Contact: Brandi Dawson, (319) 653-4811, bldawson@iastate.edu. Location: Dallmeyer Hall, Address: Washington County Fairgrounds.



Johnson County Conservation

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

Wednesday, Dec. 21 6:45–9:00 A.M.

SUNRISE SOLSTICE SAUNTER. Celebrate the first day of winter and the lengthening of daylight as we watch the sun rise over the astronomical clock in this beautiful natural area. The walk is about 2.5 miles round trip.

Registration closes 24 hours in advance. If you are fully registered, you can expect to receive an email “receipt” from MyCountyParks after registration. You will also receive an email from the leading naturalist a couple days in advance of the program. If you do not receive these emails, you may not be registered; call 319-645-1011 for assistance in this case.



Johnson County-ISU Extension

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

No events in December/January.



Linn County-ISU Extension

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

Saturday, Dec. 3, 10–11:00 A.M.

GARDENER'S OFF SEASON – Davenport. Join Gretchen, a Master Gardener and licensed physical therapist, for a discussion on how to maintain health and wellness during the winter months. Topics will include current physical activity guidelines, benefits of physical activity, sample exercises specific for the gardener, and discussion of optimizing mental/social/spiritual health during the time of the year when we can feel more isolated. There will be the opportunity to participate in exercise if interested, so please dress accordingly. Free and open to the public. Will take place at the Davenport Library Eastern Avenue Branch 6000 Eastern Ave., in meeting rooms A & B. Seating is limited, so registration is required. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F4DAFAF22A5FCC34-gardeners>



Project GREEN

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

No events in December. Second Sunday Garden Forums begin in January (see related article above).



Seed Savers Exchange

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

No events in December/January.



Trees Forever

<https://treesforever.org/events>

Thursday, Dec. 1, 5:30–7:00 P.M.

GROW YOUR COMMUNITY TREE CANOPY. West Liberty Community Center, 1204 N Calhoun Street. West Liberty, IA. Join Trees Forever Field Coordinator Peter Lundgren to learn about the tree canopy in West Liberty and the importance of having a biodiverse and robust community of trees in urban areas. The purpose of this program is to advocate for increasing tree canopy in Iowa towns through improved community forestry management practices. We will be examining the new 2022 Iowa DNR tree inventory, explore local tree ordinances, and discuss current and emerging threats to trees— including the notorious Emerald Ash Borer. We will end the session by discussing 10 ways to grow our urban tree canopy and cover grant opportunities available to plant trees in town to improve biodiversity and canopy cover.

Thursday, Dec. 15, 8:30 A.M.–2:30 P.M.

OUR WOODLAND LEGACY SYMPOSIUM. Registration and fee required at <https://treesforever.org/event/symposium/>. Trees, Land, and Climate impact our personal lives, the success of our hometowns, and the future of our global community. Join us to hear from our world-class speakers and panelists and to network with environmentally-minded peers at the 2022 Our Woodland Legacy Symposium. Kirkwood Event Center, 7725 Kirkwood Blvd SW, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52404.



Winter Gardening Resources

From choosing and caring for a Christmas tree, to giving the gift of plants, the University of Illinois Extension has resources to help with your winter gardening needs.

Visit their [Gardener's Winter Corner 2023](#) to learn about preventing tree damage in the winter, indoor gardening, planning your summer garden, and more.

Earlier editions can help with [choosing a Christmas tree](#), [caring for a living Christmas tree](#), keeping those [holiday poinsettias](#) happy, and many other topics. View the entire collection at <https://extension.illinois.edu/newsletters/gardeners-corner/>.



MG Birthdays



December 2022

1 Lavon Yeggy
 1 Helene Donta
 1 Dan Berkowitz
 2 Mary Ann Murray
 6 Kristy Rekers
 9 Michelle Frauenholtz
 11 Emil Rinderspacher
 12 Barbara Robinson
 19 Chris Sedrel
 24 Alice Linhart
 27 Sharon Rude
 28 Melanie Hauptert
 30 Louise Murray
 31 Doug Geraets

January 2023

1 Joan Dinnel
 4 Fred Meyer
 5 Jim Ridenour
 13 Deborah Cassell
 17 Gerald Kealey
 18 Karen Martinek
 21 Maggie Elliott
 22 Darlene Clausen
 23 Michael Farran
 30 Beth Fisher
 30 Katherine Kelly



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

**IOWA STATE
 UNIVERSITY**
Extension and Outreach
 Johnson County Extension

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach does not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or status as a U.S. veteran. Direct inquiries to the Diversity Officer, 515-294-1482, extdiversity@iastate.edu.

Send email to: bielicke@iastate.edu