

**JCMG Steering Committee**  
Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, 6:30 P.M., Zoom Meeting

**Minutes**

**1. Call to order 6:32 P.M. (20/25 Quorum – yes)**

**Present:**

Jackie Wellborn, Chair, Yard and Garden Information  
Doug Geraets, Past-Chair  
Melissa Close, Vice-Chair  
Jean Holzhammer, Treasurer  
Barb Robinson, Secretary  
Chris Sedrel, Fairgrounds Beautification, Demo Garden  
Laurie Roehl, Demo Garden, Fairgrounds Beautification  
Lavon Yeggy, Plum Grove Gardens  
Carolyn Murphy, Plum Grove Gardens, Butterfly House  
Darlene Clausen, Plum Grove Gardens, Plant Sale & Flea Market  
Mike Murphy, Butterfly House  
Megan Garrels, Speakers Bureau  
Kay Mohling, Yard and Garden Information  
Linda Schreiber, Downtown City Gardens  
Michael Hesseltine, Ecumenical Tower  
John Weeg, Ecumenical Tower  
Melissa Serenda, Thymes  
Mary Starry, Hort Line  
Karen Martinek, Coralville Schoolhouse  
Kathy Erenberger, Solon Public Library

**Absent:**

Emil Rinderspacher, Plant Sale & Flea Market  
Beth Fisher, Social Events  
Barb Schintler, Firefighters Memorial  
Melanie Hauptert, Hospice Garden  
Vicki Siefers, Oaknoll

**Others present:**

Shannon Bielicke  
Sharon Rude, Buckets of Flowers, 4H Scarecrows  
Carl Hensley  
Mary Hensley

Laurie Canady  
Teri Berg

## 2. Chair Announcements

### a. 2024 Executive Committee

- Jackie Wellborn, Chair
- Doug Geraets, Past Chair
- Melissa Close, Vice-Chair
- Jean Holzhamner, Treasurer
- Barb Robinson, Secretary

b. In an effort to streamline communication among committee members, announcements from the Executive Committee will be sent from all 5 members. Communication from Steering Committee members to the Executive Committee should be sent to all 5 members.

c. Agenda items should be submitted to the Chair on the Monday before the scheduled meeting. Any items not on the agenda will be tabled until the next meeting.

d. Meetings begin at 6:30 P.M. and end at 8:00 P.M. In an effort to encourage more attendance at meetings, agenda items that are not addressed by 8:00 P.M. will be tabled until the next meeting.

## 3. Consent Agenda

### a. Approval of Nov. 15 Meeting Minutes

### b. Treasurer's Report (Jean)

- General Fund: **\$37,588.59**
  - Income: **\$2960.00** Virginia Stutsman memorial donations
  - Expense: **\$14.40** Ecumenical Towers (John Weeg, compost and river rock)
- Plum Grove: **\$736.01**

- Expense: **\$40.25** Plum Grove Gardens (Carolyn Murphy, compost and wire)
- Butterfly House: **\$4579.70**
  - No change from November
- New or Known Pending Receipts:
  - Community Speaker Series 2024 honorarium and mileage. Hills Bank is the 2024 sponsor, contributing \$1000; \$217.85 remains from 2023.
    - Natalie Ross, Cedar Rapids: \$200 honorarium + mileage
    - Chant Eicke, Iowa City: \$200 honorarium + mileage
    - Zac Hall, Iowa City: \$200 honorarium + mileage
- c. Review of JCMG Steering Committee Meeting Calendar (Doug)
  - **January**
    - Prep for Annual Spring Awards meeting and Potluck (publicize date and alternate date in advance); report budget, announce officers, present MG interns and MG service awards.
      - March 17, 2024, will be published in the Thymes
    - Prep for Plant Sale & Flea Market – initial meeting of 2024
      - Emil will send an email soon. There will be a meeting on January 24 or 25.
    - Prep for Plum Grove Gardens seed selection – set meeting date?
      - Seed selection will be held at the Extension Office on January 29 at 6:30pm. The scheduled meeting will be on the JCMG webpage calendar.
    - Prep for Demonstration Garden seed selection – set meeting date?

- Laurie, Chris and John are welcome to attend the Jan. 29 meeting or may do their own seed orders.

- February

- Annual reports & past year summary notes; updated MG Roster; project hours summary; JCMG state rank; project report yearly summary (Extension staff responsibilities)
- Prep for Seed Starting (March meeting?)
  - Linda said there are seeds left over from last spring for tomatoes and vegetables. Food pantries and seed libraries have been contacted to see if they are interested in presentations.
  - Doug will be helping with this project and Joel Wells will demonstrate stratifying seeds in jugs. Jackie volunteered to help as well.
- Prep for Community Speakers Series (Mar. 3, alternate date Mar. 24)
- Prep for Plant Sale & Flea Market (planning meeting)
- Demonstration Garden seed selection meeting
- Plum Grove Gardens seed selection meeting (Jan. 29, 6:30 P.M. at Ext. Office)

- March

- Annual Spring Awards Meeting & Potluck (Sunday, Mar. 17)
  - Shannon asked if there are concerns about having the event on St. Patrick's day; consensus was to go ahead with the 17th.
  - Shannon will be ordering awards and compiling data for the program. The date will be published in the Thymes and on the JCMG website calendar.
- Community Speakers Series (Mar. 3, alternate date Mar. 24)

- Kirkwood Scholarship requests
- Seed Share
- Prep for Plant Sale & Flea Market (planning meeting)
- d. Consent agenda vote: unanimous approval of Nov. 15 JCMG meeting minutes, Treasurer's Report and Steering Committee calendar

#### 4. **Extension Report / Announcements** (Shannon)

- a. Brittany in Extension office is on maternity leave and will be back mid-February.
- b. 4H is sponsoring an 'Extravaganza day' when they can come and learn about 4H activities at the fair. (Feb. 24)
  - Sharon Rude has been invited to give a presentation about Buckets of Flowers. Any expenses involved will be addressed at a future meeting.
  - Sharon has planned a 45 minute presentation on how to create buckets for the competition. She will have Extension handouts about container gardening.
  - This adds a much needed and welcome education component to the Buckets of Flowers project.

#### 5. **Old Business** – no old business

#### 6. **New Business**

- a. Community Speaker Series honorarium + mileage (Linda)
  - The date was announced in the Nov-Dec Thymes (Mar. 3, alt. Mar 24)
  - Linda has requested addresses and will get them to Shannon and Jean when she gets them.
- b. JCMG Memorial Garden working group (Doug)
  - Doug has established a Memorial Garden project working group. There was previously a planning group which which is now a 'working group'. (Lavon

Yeggy, Carolyn Murphy, John Weeg, Jeff Baker, Larry Roehl, Roger Jenson, Doug Geraets).

- The goal is to complete the garden this spring. It will be a cement pad (4ft x 6ft) outlined in brick, located between the Extension Office and the Demo Garden with a brick walkway from the road.
- The initial meeting will be Jan. 15. A proposal will be presented to the Steering Committee at a future meeting for further input and discussion.
  - Discussion:
    - The Fairgrounds uses engraved bricks, but Doug suggests a wall with plaques so that bricks don't have to be lifted for engraving and reinstalled (labor-intensive).
    - Jackie expressed concerns about having a brick walkway which might limit accessibility for the disabled.
    - Shannon said that once we have a final plan she will get Extension Council approval (the location is on Extension property so the Fair Board will not be involved).
    - Jean suggested plants instead of concrete walls. Doug will add it to the working group agenda.
    - Carolyn said that there will be plants in the plan. There will be landscaping opportunities around the memorial.
    - There is a drainage field (leach field north of aronia bushes) in the area which will have to be taken into consideration. Shannon will discuss this with the Extension Council.

c. Approved projects 2023 annual reports

- Year end reports have been posted to the JCMG webpage and Shannon will post the rest as she receives them.
- Project leaders present at the meeting shared highlights about 2023 successes and plans for 2024.

- *Yard & Garden Information* (Kay Mohling & Jackie Wellborn): We were present at several events in 2023 and would like to get printed resources in other languages and also information about sustainable landscaping and native plants for 2024.
- *Butterfly House* (Carolyn): 2023 was a good year at the fair and multiple community events. We have gotten positive feedback on the new educational sign on the fairgrounds. In 2024 we will continue butterfly conservation events.
- *Coralville Historical Schoolhouse* (Karen Martinek): 2023 began with a tour by the City of Coralville. We did lots of new planting and weeding, and got a tour of the Schoolhouse with the JC Historical Society. This resulted in a request to provide pollinator education opportunities for the community which is in the plan for 2024. Doug suggested that this project apply for the Project Green open gardens and Linda will send info. Karen would like MG sign. Shannon has one for her.
- *Ecumenical Towers* (Michael Hesseltine): 2023 was a big year with bed rejuvenation, raised bed installation for resident access, Hugelkultur bed installation & educational sessions with residents. 2024 plans include application for a butterfly waystation designation and educational signage. Linda will send information on joining the Project Green open gardens in 2024.
- *Demo Garden* (Laurie Roehl & Chris Sedrel): Produce donated in 2023 was a record 2200 pounds. New techniques were learned from experimental beds. In 2024 we plan to eliminate the grass to plant more for food donation and would like to buy a wheelbarrow. Doug suggested open house education sessions during the season.
  - Shannon said that the wheelbarrow has been requested through the Growing Together grant. If funding doesn't come from the grant then the funds will come from the General MG account.
- *Fairgrounds Beautification* (Chris Sedrel & Laurie Roehl): The project is becoming more landscape management (weeding) than flower bed work.

- *Downtown City Projects* (Linda Schreiber): In 2023 we finished planting over 440 native plants (2 year project) which has cut down on weeding and freed up time for group participation in other projects: Broadway gardens, Mercy IC, Seed Share, Dottie Ray Gardens, Firefighters Memorial, Fairgrounds, Grow Johnson County, Get Outside, Sycamore Greenway Trail, Ecumenical Towers, Whispering Meadows wetland, IC Landfill. In 2024 we plan to schedule participation in a prescribed prairie burn.
- *Raingarden* (Lavon Yeggy): There was not enough rain in 2023 to sustain the raingarden, but Chris helped with watering and the garden was blooming through October.
- *Hortline* (Mary Starry): We had lots of volunteers in 2023 and eight new interns have signed up for 2024. We now share Shannon's workspace. We would like new resources on native habitat and winter sowing in 2024.
  - Doug and Melissa S. encouraged Mary to submit questions (Q & A article) from the Hortline for the Thymes (as she has done before).
- *Oaknoll Garden Project* (Vicki Siefers): Vicki is recruiting new leadership: Deb Cassell & Julie Crockett.
- *Plum Grove* (Lavon Yeggy, Darlene Clausen and Carolyn Murphy): 2023 was a challenging year for watering. We have 20 regular volunteers. Darlene would like more regular volunteers for the vegetable garden and soil rejuvenation for the vegetable garden. Concord grapes (72 lbs) from the garden were donated to local food pantries. Plum seedlings were started and planted to replace the aging plum trees on the estate. All three garden fences need to be replaced or repaired.
  - Linda asked if we need to check with JC Historical Society about adding anything to the grounds (e.g., compost to the gardens).
  - Carolyn said that the gardens were originally constructed by a professor from the Archeology Department and raised up rather than dug down. This increases the need for amendments.



- We will have to use fencing materials and designs that are historically appropriate.
- *Solon Public Library Garden* (Kathy Erenberger): We have had a lot of interest in the project with 10 new intern volunteers and 10 current MGs volunteering. We are working on educational sessions, new gardens, and plant labeling.
- *Speakers Bureau* (Megan Garrels): There were three main events conducted in 2023. Alice Linhart presented on container gardening at the Swisher Community Library. John Weeg presented Hügelskultur at the Linn County educational day. MGs presented on cacti and succulents at the Solon Public Library on March 26 at 6:30 P.M.
  - Jackie reminded everyone that it is important to let Megan know if you are going to be presenting at an event.
- *Thymes Newsletter* (Melissa Serenda): In 2023 there were about 25 volunteers contributing articles. We are always looking for more contributions. Captioned photos are easy to submit and very popular. We have continued posting articles to the JCMG Thymes blog which has been very successful. We are happy to have Teri Berg joining for proofreading work. In 2024 we would like to train more users to post to the blog.

## 7. Administrative Reports

- a. Shannon will send the Sign-up Genius to general membership soon.
- b. Shannon is also updating the birthday list. There are some members who have indicated that they do not want their birthdays publicized.
- c. The next meeting is on Valentine's Day. We might consider a Zoom-only meeting to leave more time for celebrations.

## 8. Adjourn (8:03 P.M.)

- a. Date of Next Meeting: **Wednesday, Feb 14** at 6:30 P.M.
- b. Thymes Newsletter Deadline: **Friday, Jan. 26**